

Sermon John 20 19 31 2nd S of Easter S B

Sermon: 2nd Sunday of Easter – Mission Season

Text: John 20:19-31 (v. 21)

Theme: God's Mission in Mozambique

Goal: To share how a refugee became a missionary among his family and his people when he came back home to Mozambique.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Our Watchword is: “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” I will share with you a real story about a friend of mine that is a vivid example of our Watchword. This is the story of Pastor Joseph Alfazema and his wife Perpétua and of the mission they do in Mozambique. He experienced in his life what it means when Jesus said in our text: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” He was sent back to his family and to his people in Mozambique to preach the Gospel there. And he was blessed!

1 –God's Mission in Mozambique

2 – The Country: population: 22.9 million

religion: Christians 56%

Muslim 18%

Indigenous African+other beliefs 26%

- Mozambique borders : Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa.

3– July 2011: I flew from Cape Town to Joburg and to Beira, Mozambique, where I stayed one night. (This was my 4th flight to Mozambique) – Beira is the Provincial city of Sofala, in the center of Mozambique.

4 – It was a nine-hour drive to reach the village of Sena in the evening.

5 - Pastor Alfazema and the students were happy to see me arriving safely.

6 - Pastor Alfazema and his wife Perpétua. – He was a 15-year old refugee during the Civil war in Mozambique. He fled first to Tanzania, where he

became a Lutheran; then to Kenya, where he studied to be Evangelist at the Matongo Seminary; and then he moved to Canada as a refugee. There, when he was over 50 years old, he graduated as pastor and was sent back to his home village in Mozambique by his Canadian Congregation. He began his mission work in August 2006. He has now 9 congregations and about 1,000 baptized Christians. – His wife was also a refugee. She is the Coordinator of the Social Work in the Children's Project. They have three children, who remained in Canada, where they are studying.

7 - Mozambique is a Portuguese speaking country (Portuguese is my mother tongue) and I was invited to begin a TEE Program (Theological Education by Extension) there in 2010. The TEE Program is offered by the Seminário Concórdia of Brazil. – It is a partnership with the Kapasseni Project, which is in charge of that mission in Mozambique, managed by a Board in Canada. - The first classes were held in that church building...

THE TEE PROGRAM

8 - Every morning, at 08:00 am, Pastor Alfazema had a brief devotional session with the employees of the Project and the volunteers of the Children's Program. It's a very good missionary link to the village inhabitants.

9 – After this we began with the classes around a table. We had classes from 08:00 am to noon and from 02:00 pm to 06:00 pm. - The weather was very good every day while we were there and there were no mosquitoes (malaria danger...), thanks be to God! (It is very hot in summer!)

10 – This was my little hotel room in 2010, not far from the church.

11– We had all the lunches and dinners together, prepared by a cook in this rustic kitchen.

12– Our dining room was outside in the yard of the pastor's house.

13 – Beans and rice, or Ugali (chima, papa) and goat, or rice and chicken, added to dark green leaves cooked (sukuma wiki) was our daily and

nutritious food.

14 - A special dish was prepared for dinner last year: Hippopotamus intestine!

15 – Currently eight students are in training to be leaders in their villages.

16 - They lead the services in the absence of the Pastor, do counseling and visit the sick. They came from their villages by bicycle (some about 40 km far from Sena) and stayed in a small room in the church compound.

THE CHURCHES

17 – Pastor Alfazema drove us and some students in his car to visit the churches in the villages where the students live.

18 -We went to Kapasseni, the very first place where Pastor Alfazema began the work. It was a one hour drive from Sena. Pastor Alfazema was born in Kapasseni and he came back from Canada to see his mother, having been away as a refugee for many years.

19 - The chief of Kapasseni asked him to build a school and a medical center there. And this is how the mission began in this part of Africa in 2006. Rui, one of the students, is in charge of that congregation.

20 – We visited the church in Mpango as well. They have 97 baptized members.

21 - Their leader Marcelino was severely injured during the civil war in Mozambique, and due to the injury his right arm was amputated some months ago

22 – After this we visited the church in Morrema. Ernesto is the leader. They have almost 100 baptized members.

23– This is Ernesto’s family in front of their house. They have 7 children (two children are not in the photo).

24 – Most of the roads are in the bush, like this one.

25 – Once we realized that one of our tyres had a puncture. There was no cell phone coverage in that area and Pastor Alfazema didn't have the right tool to change the tyre...

26 - ... so, we went back to Sena by bicycle (more or less 1:30 hour by bicycle...). Zeferino is the name of the guy who took me back to Sena. - It was nice to cross several villages and to see the people waving at us!!!

27 – This is the church of Sena.

28 – The people were sitting on the floor (someone is making the benches).

29 – Mateus led the Youth Choir.

30 – People gathered outside the church after the service.

31 – Mrs. Alfazema was with the Sunday School children. They sang beautifully!

32 – After the service we visited the village around the church.

33 - This is Mateus' house and some of his nephews.

34 – Manuel lives in the same village. This is his family.

35 – Manuel's grandmother (on my right) and some people of the village.

36 – We went to Chemba on Sunday afternoon for another Service. (more or less a one-hour drive from Sena).

37 - The service was outside, under a tree...

38 ... because the church is under construction.

39– People sang so nicely, with a drum and some rattles.

40 - The Service was held under this big tree. The people were sitting on the ground. They stood up to sing and clap, in a very typical African style.

Suddenly, all jumped up and ran away: A one meter long snake was slithering out of the bushes among the people!!!

41 - One of the leaders killed the snake immediately!

42- God be thanked that no one was bitten by the snake!

43 – This is João Luis Nota’s family. He is one of the TEE students and is assisting Pastor Alfazema in Chemba. (He killed the snake!!!). They have six children.

44 – This is Julio’s family, leader in Chemba as well and one of the TEE students. They have 3 children.

45 – The Christians of Chemba gave us a special gift: a Guinea fowl and a chicken...

46 - ... those were served as our dinner two days later.

47 – Some carpenters were working in Pastor’s backyard...

48 - ... preparing three pulpits, three altar tables and three crosses, besides some doors and chairs for the three new churches that are being built.

49– The only tools they have are these in the pictures: Everything was very skillfully, hand made!

THE CHILDREN’ PROJECT

50 – Projeto Kwangisana (Sena) gives support to orphans, to HIV/AIDS infected people and to other needy people (like the Projeto Kapasseni, the first one of the mission).

51– Ryan Rushing, an American, stays by the Project several months a year, helping to develop the Project. He is working on behalf of an American Social Service entity that supports the Project in partnership with the two Lutheran Churches in Canada who began the mission and the Children’ Projects. – Mrs. Perpétua Alfazema is the Coordinator of the Projects.

52 – These are the premises of the Project in Sena, where we had the TEE Program.

53 – The well that supplies water to the entire compound.

54 - Children of the Project receiving orientation ...

55 - ... in that shelter. Rooms are under construction and new facilities are being built.

56 – Marimba: Children play it and it has a very nice sound!

57 – The kitchen to the children, where ugali and other dishes are prepared.

58 – A stretcher pulled by a bicycle helps to bring very sick people to the Project.

59 - The Kuwangisana Project in Sena has partnership with the International Medical Team, of the USA, and receives food from the World Food Program. It has more than 60 employees, most of them called “activists”, this means: they are volunteer workers who go to the houses of the HIV/AIDS infected people to give them orientation, medicament, food and counseling. Around 300 people are reached by the Program, in Sena, Kapasseni and Chemba. The Project also manages a school, which has new facilities on a big plot donated by the government.

60– Pastor took me to see the new campus where the new facilities are being built: It’s in Sena, a little out of the main village.

61 – They have there good fresh water.

62 – The cement bricks are made one by one...

63 - ... with this mold.

64 - They have just built a Library and are asking for books in Portuguese for the children.

65 – This is the dinning room for the children,

66 ... and these are the toilets.

67 - A new nursery school was dedicated on my last day in Sena, after we had finished the TEE course. It is on the same property as St. Paul Church in Sena. The chief of the village and other authorities were there.

68 - People sang, danced, presented a drama about the challenges of the orphans, and demonstrated some skills of the children.

69 – A new door is open: Pastor Davis Wowa, from Malawi, came to meet me in Beira and came with us to Sena.

70 - He traveled more than 1.800 km by bus from the north of Malawi to meet me. We had been in touch by e-mail. Dr. Mike Rodewald, LCMS World Mission Regional Director, had introduced me to Pastor Wowa.

71 -Pastor Wowa is the President of a new Confessional Lutheran Church in Malawi, a country that borders Mozambique.

72 - Pastor Wowa had good discussions with Pastor Alfazema. They both are working with people who understand a common language: Shichewa. Many of the Mozambique people used to be refugees in Malawi during the civil war and had learned that language while there.

73 - The students loved to talk with Pastor Wowa! - Maybe the two churches will join efforts in the future. We lay everything in God's hands and are praying for a good solution for the mission. - Pastor Helmut Straeuli and Dr. Mike Rodewald were there in February this year. FELSISA is planning to introduce a TEE Program there. Pray for this!

74 - Because of health issues, pastor Alfazema moved back to Canada. His 3 children are living there. His wife, Mrs. Perpétua, is Director of the Project Kuwangisana in Sena. She is planning to come back for some months every year. Pastor Alfazema is diabetic and realized last month that he has cancer. He is on treatment now. Please, pray for Pastor Alfazema and his family.

75 - The 8 students are already in charge of the congregations. They are not ordained, but they are accepted by their people to lead the services. Pastor Alfazema has trained them to do so, and the TEE course is giving them more knowledge and training to be faithful to the Gospel as they are ministering to their people. - A Brazilian pastor is going there in July to minister the TEE course this year.

76 - The church has Jesus' promise: “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20). The Christians are optimistic about the future of the church.

77 – This is the blessed story of someone who went back to his family and told them how much the Lord has done for him and how He has had mercy on him!

78 – St. Thomas is partner in this Project as your pastor is in charge of the TEE program in Mozambique. Pray for them and for Pastor Alfazema.

Rev. Carlos Walter Winterle – Cape Town, 15 April 2012

<http://pastorwinterle.blogspot.com/>