

Sermon Ezekiel 2 1 5 6th Sunday after Pentecost Series B

Sermon: 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Ezekiel 2:1-5 (v.3)

Theme: "I am sending you"

Goal: God is continually sending His messengers to call people to repentance and faith, out of love for everyone.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: The latest decision from the Supreme Court of the United States of America giving marriage right to homosexuals in all 50 states was received as a shock by most of the Christian Churches. "The sky is falling", some shouted desperate with this anti-biblical Law. *It isn't. Jesus is still doing his job. This decision is likely more of a wakeup call to us that we are pilgrims here. Our real citizenship is in heaven. We are always uncomfortable in this life. We don't really belong here.* (Phil Brandt, p.25).

Is America still a Christian country? Are they (and other countries who took similar decision) rebellious and stubborn against God? Will God thunder from heaven and punish them? Or does He still love all and wants the salvations of everyone? What is the role of the church in this context?

I – Ezekiel

The situations change from time to time, but the human being is always the same: rebellious and stubborn against God by nature. Almost 90% of the people in Ezekiel's time had turned their back to God, following other gods and committing horrible sins against the Ten Commandments. *The story of the covenant people of the Old Testament is not simply a story of God's redemptive grace; it is also a story of rebellion and disobedience* (ABC p. 938). After several warnings, God punished them with a war and with the exile into Babylon. But God didn't abandon His people. He searched for them in the foreign

land and raised prophets to them. Ezekiel is one of them. Daniel is another. After five years in exile, God called Ezekiel to be a prophet. *God gave no assurance that the people will listen to his message, but simply said he is to speak whether they listen or fail to listen* (ABC p. 938). Ezekiel's call and commitment is our text for today. "God said: Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me... The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says.' And whether they listen or fail to listen – for they are a rebellious house – they will know that a prophet was among them. And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid. You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious."

Is this not a description of our society and of the challenges the church faces nowadays? In spite of 2000 years of preaching, the number of people who are falling by the wayside is growing and so also the number of aggressive and rebellious people against the truth of the Bible is growing. Others are lukewarm and don't react to God's Word. Even so, God's command is still valid: Go and preach, whether they listen or not.

It is easy to be pastor in an established congregation like St. Thomas and many others. It is easy to preach the Good News of God's love in Jesus. But when you have to preach God's Law and condemn what is wrong in the life of people and in the society, it is not that easy. Ezekiel faced a strong opposition at the beginning of his ministry due to the content of his message of repentance. Only after some years of preaching could he announce hope to those who repented. Do you remember the sermon on The Valley of Dry Bones? It's from Ezekiel 37 – a message of hope that God is powerful enough to give a new life.

## II – The Twelve Apostles

The Gospel for today presents Jesus being rejected in His hometown and the sending of the Twelve two by two to preach around the villages in Galilee. The task was not easy for the Twelve. They had just seen Jesus being rejected; and now they had to go and deliver the same message to a rebellious people. Jesus didn't promise them success, and He even warned them that they wouldn't be accepted in all places. But even so, He sent them, because His work cannot stop. People have to have the chance to hear about God's Kingdom and about God's plan to save everyone. God will never give up His mission and He will always raise messengers to proclaim His Word of repentance and forgiveness through faith in Jesus. *God's sending is occasioned by his persistent and durable love for people. The Israelites had turned time and again away from God. Yet Ezekiel was sent. Jesus was rejected in Capernaum yet he multiplied his ministry. God doesn't give up.* (Phil Brandt, p. 37)

## III – The Holy Spirit enables us to do God's work

We are not able to do God's work by ourselves and to go and preach by ourselves. Ezekiel was amazed by the vision God showed him as reported in the first chapter and was full of fear. He fell facedown, trembling. Then the Almighty said to him: "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you. As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me." The Holy Spirit enabled Ezekiel to preach to his people; the Holy Spirit enabled the Twelve Apostles to go and preach repentance and faith in Jesus; the Holy Spirit enables ministers to call people to repentance, forgiving the sins of the penitents who confess their faith in Jesus; performing Baptisms for forgiveness of sins of children and adults; and offering the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Holy Communion for forgiveness of sins and to strengthen the faith of the

believers. You know that the motto of my Graduation and of my ministry is: “We are not competent in ourselves, to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant” (2 Corinthians 3:5,6). Without the power and the guidance of the Holy Spirit no one can proclaim the truth of God. It was very visible on Pentecost Day, when the Holy Spirit came upon the Twelve and Peter delivered the strong message, when almost three thousands repented, confessed their faith in Jesus and were baptized. And the Holy Spirit is active among us and all around the world, in spite of the rebellion of so many who don't want to listen. As long as a person is alive, there is hope. - I received news of a very good friend of us this week. She wrote full of happiness that her husband, after 50 years of marriage, finally joined the Lutheran Church. She said: My prayers were heard. Better late than never. Hope is the last one to die.

Conclusion: I read: *The same God who sent Ezekiel and those twelve disciples is sending us, calling us to harvest fields and labour for the kingdom. It is unlikely that he is calling us to some wild adventure overseas, but perhaps he is. But he is calling all of us to our own homes, our neighbourhoods, schools, and places of work. There we are his masks, the agents by which he works his kingdom today.* (Phil Brandt, p. 37).

Not everything is lost. The church ministers of the State of Texas, in the USA, won a case in the court this week that they are not forced to perform same sex marriages because it goes against their conscience and against the rules and good customs of the church. God still has His faithful people among us and all around the world. God is still sending His messengers with His message to call people from the darkness to His marvellous light in Jesus. I saw this in a large scale in Mozambique. God is at work among us too. Praise the Lord. Amen.