

Sermon Isaiah 35 3 7 15th Sunday after Pent S B

Sermon: 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Isaiah 35:3-7 (v. 4)

Theme: Your God will come!

Goal: We are not able to solve our weaknesses and/or disabilities.

Only God, who comes to us in His Son Jesus Christ, is able to help us

Dear Friends,

Introduction: One of the aims of the Disability Sunday Awareness is to open our eyes and hearts so that we would not ignore or despise people who have any kind of disability, but to accept them in our society and in our church, without the slightest discrimination.

When James (Chap. 2) told us not to show favouritism receiving well the rich and despising the poor in our meeting, the same principle can be applied to the disabled people. Everyone must be welcome, because God loves all and wants to give forgiveness and life to all.

I – We all are disabled

In a general sense, we all have some kind of disability. Some are able to cook very well; others not. Some are able to make nice hand work; others not. Some have easy relationship with others; some not. Some need glasses; others see very well. Some can run, others can only walk...

Some disabilities are visible; others are hidden. If someone is deaf or hard of hearing, or has a physical or intellectual disability, everyone can see and note it. The Disability Sunday Awareness calls our attention especially to the visible ones, and what is the role of the church in welcoming these people and giving them opportunity to worship and to serve according to their skills. If someone has weak eyes, maybe he can read the screen. If someone doesn't hear so well, maybe the speakers help him to understand better what the

pastor says. If he needs wheelchair, we have special entrance for him, without steps.

## II – The list of disabilities in Isaiah 35

God doesn't ignore people with special needs, but He shows a special care for them. Our text is rich in comfort to these people, and is a prophecy that was accomplished by Jesus. Let's go through the many special situations mentioned in our text:

“Strengthen the feeble hands”, or, as it says in another translation: “Give strength to hands that are tired.” Has God Alzheimer disease in mind? or maybe just elderly people, who don't have that strength in their hands anymore? or a shoulder problem, like some of us had?

“Steady the knees that give way”; or: “Give strength... to knees that tremble with weakness.” When I visit Mrs. Louw (Lynette's mother), she needs someone to help her to walk, because her legs are too weak. She will turn 90 at the end of this year. As she cannot come to the church anymore, the church goes to her. The same with Bob and Lee Laspe, parents to Erica.

“Say to the fearful hearts”, or to those who are “discouraged”, or “to those who have an anxious heart.” Who doesn't have an anxious heart? Who doesn't need a word of encouragement? We all are included by God in His plans and He shows us our weaknesses, even if we try to show others that we are strong.

And then the text speaks about the blind and the deaf and the lame and the mute, that they will be helped and healed. The list can be enlarged and each of us knows someone among our acquaintances who has a special disability.

## III – The solution: Jesus

This text of Isaiah is a prophecy about the Messianic Period, when

Jesus came. The Gospel for today showed Jesus healing a demon possessed girl after her mother begged Jesus for help; and as Jesus healed a deaf and mute person. Many other miracles were performed by Jesus as a sign that He was the Promised Messiah. Jesus Himself quoted our text when John the Baptist sent messengers to Him, asking if He is the Messiah. And Jesus said to them: “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor” (Matthew 11:5). No one else performed these miracles but Jesus!

Therefore the Prophet announces hope to all these people as he says: “Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will save you.”

God comes with vengeance against the enemies of His people. It happened to the enemies of God’s people during Isaiah’s time, when the enemies were defeated and God’s people were restored. It happened when Jesus *descended into hell and rose again from the dead*, (as we confess in the Apostles’ Creed) showing to His enemies that He is the Son of God, the Saviour. And it will happen again in the Final Judgment, when God will show His justice and save His people.

Sometimes it seems that God’s people are in disadvantage and that nobody cares for the disable and the needy. But God has different plans for His beloved ones. “He came ... to save us”, according to our text, and “became flesh and made His dwelling among us” (John 1:14). The ministry of Jesus always shows God’s care for all, especially for those who were despised by the church and by the society. He was always on the side of the poor, of the needy, of the outcast, helping them. He didn’t heal all the blinds and deaf and lames of His time, as many

disabled people nowadays are not healed. But He gave and gives strength to all by His love and by the forgiveness and peace that he offers to all who believe.

Conclusion: God doesn't treat us as we deserve it due to our sinful nature. But He comes with His love and strength. When He speaks to us in the Bible, He lifts our eyes up from the day-by-day problems and concerns and shows us a future reality in the new heaven and the new earth that He has prepared for those who love Him. When He comes to us in the Holy Communion and gives us the Body and Blood of His Son Jesus Christ for forgiveness of our sins, He comforts us and strengthens us for another week of challenges, temptations and opportunities to serve Him and our fellows. God doesn't come to us only in words, but He acted and acts in our favour through His Son Jesus Christ, showing mercy to us.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews quoted part of our text and says: “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith... Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed” (Hebrews 12:2,12). The level paths are Jesus' paths, because He removed everything that was hindering the free access to God: sin, death, condemnation – and He gives us forgiveness and life. By following Him we will reach the goal: The eternal life with God. And this promise is for all, for healthy people and for sick, for able and for disabled people, for old and young, for Lutherans and for not Lutherans, because all “those whom the Lord has rescued... will reach (the new) Jerusalem with gladness, singing and shouting for joy. They will be happy forever, forever free from sorrow and grief” (Isaiah 35:9,10), and “He will wipe every tears from our eyes” (Revelation 21:4). Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, 06 September 2015