

Sermon Is 50 4 10 16th S af Pent S B

Sermon: 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Mission Festival

Text: Isaiah 50:4-10 (v.10)

Theme: From Darkness to Light

Goal: To show how God's Light is shining in Mozambique calling people from spiritual darkness to the Light of Christ.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: We had some load shedding this winter. It was not comfortable just to sit and wait or to walk in the darkness. A candle or a torch is necessary if you need to go from one room to another into your house, even as you know every detail of your house.

Darkness scares us...

Mozambique doesn't have load shedding problems... Why? Because they don't have electricity in their villages! They have electricity in the cities and in the main villages; but where our churches are established there is no electricity. People live in darkness, total darkness. They light a fire on the ground to warm themselves and to cook. – Is this a picture of the spiritual darkness they live in as well? My answer is: Yes! Does this help to understand our text? It says: “Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the Lord and rely on his God.” How can they rely and trust in God if they don't know Him?

I – The darkness is real

Traditional religions play a very important role in their culture and day-by-day life. Everything is controlled by the spirits, evil spirits. People are scared and live in fear, and the witch doctors promise to calm the spirits and to heal the people. Some Christian Churches have been working there for longer time than the Lutherans; but the Muslim population is bigger than the Christians.

The devil is real in Mozambique. In our culture, the devil seems to be something from the past. *Satan is not a real thing for many folks* (Phil B.) We don't care about him anymore. But this is dangerous too! As he hides himself, he attacks from the back, in a dissimulated way to throw us down to the ground.

In one of the churches, when I was addressing the candidates before the Baptism, and I asked them the traditional question: *"Do you renounce the devil, all his works and all his ways"* – and knowing the big role evil spirits play in the traditional African religions, I added: *"and do you renounce all the evil spirits?"* all answered in a loud voice, YES, and an old lady shouted, *"NEVER MORE! NEVER MORE!"*

Advertisements of witch doctors can be seen along the streets. One of them was very near to our church, and when I saw it, I use it as a hug for my message. And I asked the congregation: *Are you still going to these traditional doctors?* They answered: *We used to go; but after we heard the Gospel and confessed our faith in Jesus, we never more went there. They deceived the people and use satanic art.*

This is really darkness, spiritual darkness. And our God invites: "Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the Lord and rely on his God." How can they rely and trust in God if they don't know Him?

II – Searching for Light and sharing the Light

Jesus came as the Light of the World. He said: "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). John testifies about Him: "In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness had not understood it" (John 1:5). In spite of many that didn't understand Jesus' mission and He was even despised and

killed on the cross, the bright light shone on Easter Sunday bringing life through His resurrection! And the resurrected Christ sent out His disciples to lighten the way of many, calling them out of the darkness of sin and condemnation and bringing them to Christ to receive forgiveness, life and to walk in the light of Christ.

The Lutheran Church reached Mozambique in 2006 with the pure Gospel. And God is merciful and is calling hundreds of people to faith in Jesus since then. I have had the privilege to go there since 2010, even before I came to Cape Town, to train the pastors by a Theological Education by Extension program, sponsored by the church of Brazil. This mission is part of my call to Cape Town as well and I have your support to go there.

The eight now ordained pastors are really working as pastors from the very beginning when they were chosen as leaders of their communities. And the seed of the Gospel was well planted and the church has up to now 10 congregations and more than 1,200 members. Especially after the big Ordination Service on 9<sup>th</sup> August, more and more people are searching for the Lutheran Church and asking the pastors to come to their villages or cities as well. The Ordination Service was broadcasted by the National TV channel and a 12-minute clip was shown nationwide. One of the government representatives is asking the church to come to her city. Last week, two people travelled as far as 100 km by bicycle and taking lifts in lorries in order to come to the service in the main church in Sena, and to ask the pastor to come to their town called Marromeu as well. The light is shining in Mozambique and people can see it and are walking to it. One of the prophecies about Jesus is accomplished again in this mission field. Isaiah wrote: “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord

riser upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of you dawn” (Isaiah 60:1-3).

Conclusion: Pres. Egon Kopereck, from the Lutheran Church of Brazil, told a modern parable in his sermon: Darkness and Light knew each other through Facebook. Then they wanted to visit each other. Light said: I will visit you first. When she entered Darkness’ house, she couldn’t find Darkness; she searched the house room by room, but always when she entered, only Light was there. And Darkness and Light were never able to meet ...

Darkness and light don’t match together. When the light of Jesus enters the life of a person, darkness must go out. Of course, sometimes darkness is very strong outside and we are scared when we look to it. Let us remain in the Light. Let us remain in the fellowship of the children of Light, as the apostle Paul wrote: “But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:4-11).

Mozambique has open doors for the Gospel. Pray and support the new church there. God has many people to call from darkness to His marvellous Light through us all, here and there. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 13 September 2015