

Sermon Psalm 100 11th S af P SC

Sermon: 11th Sunday after Pent. – Mission Festival – Mozambique

Text: Psalm 100 (v. 1)

Theme: We are His people

Goal: To challenge the hearers to have a broader vision of the church: Christ died for all and He gathers His people from all nations

Dear Friends,

Introduction: As the apostles witnessed at the very beginning of the Christian Church: “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20), I cannot stop either speaking about my good experiences in Mozambique. And like the Ap. Paulo and Barnabas did when they returned to Jerusalem from their first Missionary Trip, when “they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how He opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27), I want to report some of God’s deeds in this Mission Festival as well. Because, as it happened in the beginning of the Christianity that “the LORD added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47), a new Pentecost is happening in Mozambique and God is adding more and more people to His family. While there were 10 congregations in August last year, now they have more than 30 congregations. While they had 1,200 members last year, they have now almost 3,000. And the church is also spreading from the villages to the cities.

I – We are God’s people

We confess in the Apostles’ Creed: *I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints.* Who are those saints? Psalm 100 says: “We are His people”. Who are this “we”? Our vision of the church is sometimes a little bit narrow and we are

tempted to think only about ourselves, St. Thomas, when we talk about the church: “We are His people.” Our concerns are about ourselves: What are our needs, what are our plans, what are our problems and challenges. Of course, we have to be responsible for the Church of God among us and for the people around us. This is our first duty.

For some Lutherans in the past, only Lutherans were part of the Holy Christian Church; and in their opinion only Lutherans would enter the heaven. Some of us experienced this during our childhood, when it was even forbidden to look inside other churches because *“they are wrong”*.

Even though the Israelites of the Old Testament had a very narrow sense of God’s people as well, God always tried to show them that His plan was to reach all peoples with His love and His salvation. Our Psalm begins with the words: “Shout for joy to the Lord, *all the earth!*” And many other passages of the Old Testament forecast that the Kingdom of God would expand to all the nations. The summit of this plan happened when the resurrected Christ said: “Go into *all the world*, and preach the good news to *all creation*”

(Mark 16:16), “and make disciples of *all nations*” (Matthew 28:19).

II – God’s people in Mozambique

And the Good News reached Mozambique as well, in a very special manner through a Lutheran pastor in 2006. The good seed of God’s love in Jesus was planted and began to grow. In a very short time, six churches were planted, many people came to faith and asked to be baptized. This was the reality when God sent me for the first time to Mozambique towards the end of 2007. I went there as a translator for the American Mission Director for Africa. But God had bigger plans. The doors were open to begin a Theological Training Program in Portuguese to prepare local pastors. Supported by the

Concordia Seminary of Brazil, I began with the Theological Education Program in 2010. Eight candidates were enrolled. Meanwhile, the church grew to 10 congregations. The eight candidates were a little scared to begin new missions while studying. After their graduation and ordination last year, filled with the Holy Spirit, they went to the villages around their church and to further places as well, preaching the good news of Jesus. They have now more than 30 congregations, and the church is growing toward the cities as well.

III – Some mission stories

Let me share some recent mission stories:

1) Ernesto was born in Chisomba, Province of Tete. He had many friends and relatives in Muanda as well. As a young adult, he decided to cross the Zambezi River looking for a better opportunity of life. His little farm grew well and was enough to sustain his family: his wife and nine children. – He became a Christian Lutheran through the mission efforts of Pastor Alfazema, the founder of the church; and very soon he became the leader of the church that was planted in his village, Morrema. When the Theological Education Program began, he was among the first students. But he was always thinking about his home village and about his friends. After he was ordained last year, he decided to visit them and to share the Gospel with them. He took his motorbike and crossed the pedestrian bridge over the Zambezi River, and faced several kilometers of dirt road to reach his home village, Chisomba. He was very well accepted; people asked him to come again and to teach more about Jesus. His friends from Muanda asked him to preach there too. Two churches were planted in that area and Pastor Ernesto goes there regularly, celebrating services under a tree. When we visited them, in spite of their poverty and the severe

draught they just had suffered, they gave us some gifts. It reminded me the Christians of Macedonia, as Paul reported in 2 Corinthians 8: “Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity” (2 Corinthians 8:2).

2) Rui was one of the first people who came to the Lutheran Christian faith through the mission work of Pastor Alfazema. He is from the same village where Alfazema was born and where the very first Lutheran Church was planted in 2006, Kapasseni. After his ordination, he invited his oldest son (Rui has also nine children), and some leaders of the congregation and they began to visit the other villages around. People were eager to hear what they had to share. Some said: ‘We always see your church in Kapasseni, but we never thought that you would come to visit us here in the bush.’ Four new churches were planted around Kapasseni: M’Bueza, Mosse, Galão and Khanako. Most of the new congregations meet under a tree and they need brick churches to make it possible for them to gather during the rainy season as well. Pastor Rui’s son, Horácio, is one of the candidates of the second Theological Class.

Conclusion: Many other mission stories were collected when we were there in June. You can read them on the BLOG.

Coming back to our Psalm. The KJV says in the first verse: “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.” This is literally how people in Mozambique worship the Lord. Before the Service begins, outside and inside the church, they sing and dance to the rhythm of the drums, making a joyful noise unto the Lord. But when it’s time to listen to God’s word, even the children sit quietly and concentrated. They are God’s people as well, by faith in Jesus, our brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen.