

An Order of Worship for the Home

July 5, 2020

Ezekiel: Visions of Hope – week 2

This service is written for two speakers. Ideally, family members can speak and declare God's grace to one another following this format. For those who live alone, this worship outline can be followed with a brother or sister in Christ over the phone. You may call on a friend to fill this role, or your elder or pastor can worship with you by phone.

There is an "offering prayer" included in this outline. As we shelter in place, please continue to worship through giving. You can mail offering envelopes and checks to Calvary or visit www.calvaryslz.org to give online.

Invocation

I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. (Ezekiel 11:19b-20)

Reader 1: The Lord has promised to be our God.
Reader 2: The Lord has promised to make us His people.
Reader 1: We gather in the name of the Lord...
Reader 2: The God who is Father, Son and Spirit.
Together: Amen.

Psalm 34:1-3, 8-10

¹ I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
² My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad.
³ Oh, magnify the Lord with me,
and let us exalt his name together!

⁸ Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!
⁹ Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints,
for those who fear him have no lack!
¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger;
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

Confession & Absolution

Make sure each person present has opportunity to confess to a brother or sister in faith. Go through both parts as many times as needed to accommodate all who are gathered.

“Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live.” (Ezekiel 18:30b-32)

Christian Confessing: I confess that I have a stone heart. I don't love as I should. As a result, I don't act as I should. I don't speak as I should. I've hurt others. I've failed to help when given opportunity. Lord, forgive me and heal this heart of stone.

Christian Responding: Hear this promise: *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:25-27)* You are loved and forgiven! All these promises spoken through Ezekiel are yours in Jesus.

Together: Amen.

Mark 4:1-20

Please read from your own Bible. This is the gospel reading for today.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Ezekiel 2:1-3:3

Please read from your own Bible. This is the basis for the message which follows.

Message

All We Need for All He Asks

Ezekiel was among the Israelites deported to Babylon when Jerusalem was sacked. As his book opens, he's struggling with calling. He had been born into the priesthood, but what does it mean to be a priest when the temple is 500 miles away, and it's been looted and burned? Add to that, Ezekiel had recently turned 30 – the age at which he would have begun his service in the temple.

He was born and trained to serve Israel and God as priest in His temple. Now, there is no Israel. There is no temple. Ezekiel is a priest without a place to serve; without a people to serve.

It's at this point God gives a vision to Ezekiel. If you followed the reading plan this week, you've probably tried to imagine what Ezekiel saw. There are four creatures with four faces each, and something like wheels below which are part of their very being. It's mind-boggling! Did you notice that Ezekiel spends almost all of the first chapter describing these cherubim, and a mere 3 verses describing the Lord on his

throne above them? God is so high up from Ezekiel's vantage, he can only provide a distant description.

Still, this revelation has an effect on Ezekiel. He's moved to humble worship. He falls on his face in reverence. The awe and wonder which he's tried to describe for us drove him to his knees. Everything else fades from view as he is isolated in worship of the God who has revealed himself.

But this is not where God leads his people. Ezekiel's response was appropriate, but God always calls his people to more than one-on-one worship. He consistently calls his people to honor him through activity in the world around us. He invites us to worship by serving in this world.

And he said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you." (Ezekiel 2:1)

God says to stand, but Ezekiel cannot. He's been levelled by the majesty of God's presence – literally! Yet, what Ezekiel cannot do, God's Spirit does through him.

And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet... (Ezekiel 2:2)

Take note of God's action.

God supplies all we need to do all he asks.

Once Ezekiel is on his feet, God tells him what it will mean to honor God through service. Ezekiel is being sent to God's people in exile. He's being sent to his neighbors and relatives.

"Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me." (Ezekiel 2:3)

The challenge here is these people have a history of not listening. God calls them rebellious, transgressors, impudent, and stubborn. Not only were they like this in the past, God tells Ezekiel to expect the same hard-headed and hard-hearted reception now. However, God also tells Ezekiel his presence will be noticed, even if people try to ignore him.

And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them. (Ezekiel 2:5)

While in Texas I served as chaplain for our local fire department. A couple months into the role, I mentioned to some of the guys that Jacob was a really quiet guy, and they all laughed. They couldn't believe I thought he was quiet. Fast forward to almost a year later. During a debriefing, Jacob apologized for how he treated me when I came into the department. When I started, he had no desire for a chaplain, and his silence was an attempt to ignore my presence. Yet, even while he tried to ignore me, he noticed what I was doing.

And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them. (Ezekiel 2:5)

Ezekiel will get it far worse than I did as fire chaplain. God compares the taunts of Ezekiel's audience to sitting on scorpions. Still, Ezekiel is called to speak. The measure of his faithfulness does not depend on whether people repent, but whether God's word is shared. He cannot become like the rebellious people to whom he's sent. It may seem impossible, but he will be able to do what God asks. Afterall...

God supplies all we need to do all He asks.

"Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." (Ezekiel 3:1b)

The scroll is a tough message. We're told its words are filled with "lamentation and mourning and woe." But the message of the scroll is truth. God calls out sin, because he stands opposed to this sickness which seeks to destroy his good creation. God gives warnings because when sin is destroyed, he desperately wants his people to be separate from sin. He mourns, because some of his lost children refuse to come home to his loving arms. Ezekiel has a difficult message to share.

Yet, the taste of the scroll is an unexpected surprise! It's taste is sweet, like honey. Even when God's truth is received with contempt, for those who carry the truth faithfully, there is blessing. There is comfort in the midst of trial. There is grace in

the presence of hardship. There is joy, even in the most difficult callings. There's a sweet taste which comes from hope.

Ezekiel's vision was intended to give hope. God was calling Ezekiel to difficult work. It was beyond anything Ezekiel had trained for. It was nothing like the life Ezekiel imagined a few years prior. God was making a big ask. The sweetness of that scroll was meant to remind Ezekiel...

God provides all we need to do all He asks.

As you consider Ezekiel's call, reflect on your call as well. You may be a priest without a place to serve; without a people to serve. Did you forget you have this same calling as Ezekiel? At your baptism, you were anointed a priest.

...you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood... (1 Peter 2:5a)

You've had a revelation of God's presence, too. Your God revealed himself when he took on flesh and blood. Jesus was born into this world as an infant, and he grew up the way every human being does. He came to you this way, so that you might come close and see him. He walked this earth so that you might relate to him. He told stories and talked about God's love so that you might listen to him.

You've been drawn to him, because he is your God. The revelation of Jesus has captivated you and caused your heart to worship. But as he always does, God invites your worship to become service to this world. With Ezekiel, he calls you to stand.

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (Ephesians 6:11)

Likewise, as he did with Ezekiel, your God sends you. And he sends you empowered.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." (John 20:21-22)

God provides all we need to do all He asks.

He's called you to some difficult work, but he's provided all you need. You'll face rebellious voices. You'll receive some demeaning looks. But, these are small pains compared to the hurt he's removed for your sake.

*“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”
The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But
thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord
Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:55-57)*

The God who became man so you could know him, also died as man so you could live with him. Jesus rose from the dead, paving the way for you and I to live with him eternally. The small pains received in our calling now do not compare with the astounding joys which are ours eternally.

The message is sometimes difficult to hear as it enters our world. However, the message is sweet as it enters our hearts. The word of God we carry to the world is our hope and our joy. It is sweet to those who have seen Jesus!

Amen.

Offering Prayer

If you have an offering present as you worship, you may place your hands over it during the offering prayer.

Reader 1: With thankful hearts we receive from you, O Lord.

Reader 2: With thankful hearts we respond.

Reader 1: Receive our thanks and praise.

Reader 2: Receive our offerings.

Together: Receive us as your own.

Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

Share prayer requests with one another. Pray over the requests shared, then pray the Lord's Prayer together.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing *(adapted from Ezekiel 34:30-31, 23)*

Reader 1: The Lord our God is with us.
Reader 2: We are His people.
Reader 1: We are His sheep.
Reader 2: He is our Shepherd.
Together: We will not be afraid. Amen.

As applicable, please share this resource with others who would benefit. An electronic version is available at www.calvaryslz.org. We can also add friends to our mailing list if that is preferred.

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