

Ezekiel 2:1-5 (Sixth Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 9—Series B)

“That They Might Know”

Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT

July 4, 2021

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is the Old Testament lesson for the day from Ezekiel 2:

¹And He said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet and I will speak with you.” ²And the Spirit entered into me as He spoke to me and caused me to stand on my feet. And I heard Him speaking to me. ³And He said to me, “Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to nations rebelling, who have rebelled against Me. They and their fathers have revolted against me to this very day. ⁴The sons—hard-faced and hard-hearted—I am sending you to them. And you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord Yahweh.’ ⁵Then they, whether they listen or do not—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet of Yahweh has been among them.”

Imagine that you are looking for a job. You run across this ad for employment:

“Help Wanted—Individual needed to share information with others. Must speak exactly the words given. Most people won’t even listen to you.” Would you take that job? Probably not.

But Ezekiel did when God called Him to be His mouthpiece to the rebellious and sinful sons of Israel. And whether they would listen or not—for they were a rebellious house—they would know that a prophet of the Lord Yahweh had been among them.

Ezekiel was a member of the priestly family. Along with the king, Jehoiachin, and most of the nobility, Ezekiel was taken away into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon in 597 B.C. In the fifth year of his exile, 593 B.C., the Lord Yahweh called Ezekiel into the office of the prophetic ministry to serve God as His mouthpiece to the exiled sons of Israel. Two-thirds of the Book of Ezekiel record the prophet’s words and actions between 593 and 587 B.C. In that year, Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. Ezekiel wrote, “In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, a fugitive from Jerusalem came to me and said,

‘The city has been struck down’” (Ezek. 33:21 ESV). The rest of the book looks forward to when, in God’s good time, this sad history would be reversed.

And so it was that the Lord Yahweh chose Ezekiel to be His prophet, to speak God’s Word to the descendants of Jacob whom God renamed Israel. Perhaps you’ve heard it said, “Like father, like son.” The descendants of Israel were not a people obedient to the covenant promises God made to them and they affirmed. The Lord brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. He caused them to pass safely through the Red Sea, drowning Pharaoh and his army in the water. He brought them to Mt. Sinai to receive His covenant, His Words, His Promises. They built a golden calf and worshiped it as God. They grumbled and complained that life was better as slaves in Egypt because they were tired of the manna and the quail that God provided for them every day in the wilderness. God brought them into the land He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. They worshiped Baal and ignored God and His Word. In the words of another prophet, Amos, “For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals” (Amos 2:6 ESV). The sons of Israel failed to love Yahweh their God with all their heart and soul. They did not love their neighbors as themselves. They rejected and rebelled against God and His covenant Word of Promise to them—“They and their fathers have revolted against me to this very day!” (Ezk 2:3).

Let’s not be too quick to point the finger and say, “I wouldn’t have done that if I was part of the people of Israel.” The descendants of Israel were just like us, a people who cannot *not sin*. And when we sin, what are we doing? We are rebelling against the Word of

God that defines what is sinful. We think, act, speak, and desire that which is contrary to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scripture. We worship "Baal." No, not the ancient Canaanite deity, rather whatever we fear, love, and trust in, that is our god. Whatever we place as most important in our lives is our god—hobby, job, routine, possessions, or self. So God also says to you and me through His mouthpiece Ezekiel, "They and their fathers have revolted against me to this very day!" Hereditary guilt; original sin with which we are all conceived and born.

To the sons of Israel the Lord Yahweh sent Ezekiel with His Word as His prophet. Now a prophet did more than foretell the future. A prophet preached the full counsel of God, "Thus says the Lord Yahweh." A prophet like Ezekiel proclaimed both Law and Gospel. Like Israel, you and I must hear God's Word of Law that teaches us what we are to do and not to do. Through the Law, we are shown our sin and the wrath of God and our need to be saved from sin, death, and hell. And so the Law must be proclaimed to all people, but especially sinners who refuse to repent and acknowledge who they are before the Lord Yahweh.

But the message of God's Law cannot save. It only condemns. It reveals our fallen, hopeless condition, and our great need for God to act to save us. So the prophet Ezekiel also spoke God's Promises, the Gospel. The Gospel teaches what God has done, and still does, in Jesus the promised Messiah-Savior for our salvation from sin, death, and hell. The Gospel not only shows our Savior, Jesus, but also personally delivers God's grace and favor in the forgiveness of sins that Jesus alone won for the whole world with His perfect life and His sacrificial death on the cross.

The Book of Hebrews begins, "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb.

1:1–2 ESV). God told Ezekiel that whether the people listened to His Word or not, they would know that a prophet of Yahweh had been among them. This is God's way of saying that He means business, that once Ezekiel has delivered God's thunderous judgments against the sinful Israelites, they will definitely be aware that God's agent has been among them. He would make His presence vividly felt; there would be no doubt who Ezekiel is and what he stands for.

In these last days, God has sent to us a greater Prophet, His One-of-a Kind Son, Jesus. Like Ezekiel, Jesus too is called the "Son of man." Often in the presence of Jesus' mighty deeds, done as true God and true Man, people expressed their awareness that there had indeed been a prophet among them. When Jesus revealed to the Samaritan woman at the well His knowledge of her shenanigans, she replied, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet" (John 4:19 ESV). The crowd who saw the feeding of the five thousand reacted, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" (John 6:14 ESV). After Jesus raised the widow of Nain's son, those who saw it exclaimed, "A great prophet has arisen among us! God has visited his people!" (Luke 7:16 ESV).

When we read and hear the Word of Christ, the Word about Christ, we too can proclaim, "God has visited His people! There has been a Prophet among us!" In His Office as our Prophet, Jesus who is truly divine and truly human, proclaims His Word to us. He announces the full counsel of the God that He is—Law and Gospel. His Word in Scripture remains His Word to us, from Genesis to Revelation. It is the Word from Christ, about Christ, pointing us to Christ, and delivering the blessing of Christ to us in the forgiveness of our sins. Through the Office of the Holy Ministry, called pastors speak in the stead and by the

command of the Lord Jesus Christ as they proclaim Law and Gospel, the whole counsel of God—sin and grace, command and promise, death and life—for the forgiveness of your sins.

All baptized Christians also speak the Word of God—Law and Gospel—to their families and friends and neighbors. 1 Peter 2, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9 ESV). As you live the Christian life before others, you are witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ. Your lives testify to the death and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and the new life of faith which you live out in your daily callings as parent or child, employer or employee, as husband, wife, or single person. In your vocation, you are given opportunities to speak for Christ and to announce the blessings of the forgiveness of sins to all in need of His grace and mercy. You have the joy of being not only His mouth, but also His hands and feet to run His errands as you show love and mercy to all people in His name.

And whether they listen or do not, they will know that Christ, through you, has been there for them with forgiveness, life, and salvation. They will know that a Christian has been among them, that a son of God, a daughter of God, baptized into the Name of Jesus, has loved them enough to share Law and Gospel with them; has loved them so much as to point them to Jesus; has cared with mercy to help and serve them in their needs.

Imagine that you are looking for a job. You run across this ad for employment: “Help Wanted—Christians needed to share God’s Word of Law and Gospel with others. Must speak exactly the words given as you share the love and mercy of Christ. Most people won’t even listen to you. Nevertheless, you are serving Christ in love and mercy” This task has been

given to you through your Baptism. The Lord Christ has called you to be His witnesses in word and deed to all nations and people as you show love and mercy in His name. And whether they listen or not—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a servant of Christ has been among to the glory of God the Father. Amen.