

Ezekiel 33:7-9 (ESV)

⁷ “So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸ If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the

wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. ⁹ But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

I greet you with, grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Risen Lord and the Holy Spirit who lives within us as believers, and empowering us.

In our appointed lesson for today in Ezekiel 33, how fitting is this lesson on what we called Education Sunday, the first Sunday when we start the Bible Studies of the school year, the first Sunday after our Lutheran School has started, and a time when we recommission our Lutheran School teachers and install our various Bible leaders – all of this is going on today, and God is speaking to Ezekiel saying I have made a watchman, now listen to this, because this speaks to every person here when God says, “⁷ **...Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.**” (Ezekiel 33:7 ESV) You warn them. God gave this to you, you give it out. That warning has a double edge, it first goes back to you, and then it goes out. The word comes from God, the warning, then the warning first comes to you before it goes out to others. It is for you and it is for you to share, for you to testify what you know. As Jesus says in the sermon on the mount, we are salt and light (Mat 5:13-16), light reveals, salt is a preservative, we are salt and light reveling the truth of God warning as the Holy Spirit brings others to faith and life.

THE WORLD NEEDS THE TRUTH

We live in a world that is desperate for the truth, for someone with conviction, someone to proclaim like Joshua, “¹⁵ **...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.**” (Joshua 24:15 KJV) Most of us are shocked at how brazen many people are today, as if they have no shame, and nothing seems to be out of bounds. It is not the time to ignore, retreat, or be passive about bad behavior, but to understand why they acting this way, it a cry for help, they are living out their sin. As we ignore they just get more brazen and more bizarre. Jesus did not retreat from sin, but confronted in a loving way, he did participate in the sin, but had compassion for those as it says in Matthew 9, where it says of Jesus, “³⁶ **When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.**” (Matthew 9:36 NIV) All of us are like that without Jesus, harassed and helpless. You need Him to save you, only Jesus can forgive sin. All sin is against a holy God who is perfect, and demands that standard now and for heaven. (Mat 5:48). God is just and as a just God, He must punish sin, your sin, my sin. Jesus took upon

Himself the punishment we deserve. The door is open to a new life, a new life here and with God throughout eternity as you trust Him, surrender to Him for the new life he grants. As believers, we are to testify of that truth. The world needs to see your conviction, we are to be bold, not timid.

TIMID TIMOTHY

Timothy, his name being used in books of the Bible, 1st and 2nd Timothy, letters from Paul, was a young pastor and he was timid. Try to say timid Timothy 10x really fast, it is sort of a tongue twister. Jesus changed his timidity. Paul encourages Timothy to receive and live in the power God grants, writing, “⁷ **For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.** ⁸ **So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,** ⁹ **who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,”** (2 Timothy 1:7-9 NIV) You too can live in that power. God is not asking you to be obnoxious in you witness, but loving, yet willing to take a stand. We too being equipped by the word, in prayer through the Holy Spirit, genuinely asking God for the words to give, warning as we speak the truth in love, love for those that do not know the Lord or those that know the Lord and are wondering away from His will. If we are honest, we all wonder from the Lord’s will at times, God is calling to you, to the new person you are in Christ, to live in the new reality that He brings through the cross, being God’s watchman for you and for others..

WATCHMAN

The term watchman would have been a familiar term to the hearers in Ezekiel’s day. Each city had watchman stationed on the walls to warn of approaching enemies. In vineyards and fields there was watchmen, especially during the harvest to guard and warn against animals and thieves. Ezekiel is given the task of a spiritual watchman. That call appears in our lesson as well as chapter 3. (Ezekiel 3:17) His ministry was to the exiles in Babylon. Already Israel, the northern kingdom, had fallen some 120 years earlier to Assyria. Judah had been conquered by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, Ezekiel and Daniel and some 10,000 others, carried off to Babylon. (2 Chronicles 36:6-7, Daniel 1:1-3; 2 Kings 24:14-16) Those left would pay tribute, and they revolt, and during the 7th year of Ezekiel’s ministry, (Ezekiel 24:1-14) the destruction of the city is foretold, and it is completely destroyed in 586 b.c.. All that happened was clearly foretold. The people through the prophets were warned, some 100 years earlier, (Isaiah 39:6; Micah 4:10). The warning continued, the call to repentance, yet they did not heed the call, and the judgment came. This warning and judgment of God did not bring repentance only greater wickedness. (Ezekiel 5:11) The call for us today is heed the warnings of the Lord in your life and avoid the coming judgment and destruction. The watchman is also given

a warning to sound the alarm and not to be silent but to warn or else the watchman will be held accountable. God states in our lesson, **“⁸ If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.”** (Ezekiel 33:8 ESV) You who know the truth have the responsibility to warn. Of course we warn in love, in Ephesians it says, **“¹⁵ ...speaking the truth in love...”**(Eph. 4:15 NIV), but the warning is given. The apostle Paul was a watchman and quotes Ezekiel referring to warning he gave.

THE APOSTLE PAUL AN EXAMPLE OF A WATCHMAN

Paul states in Acts 20, **“²⁶ ...I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.”** (Acts 20:26-30 ESV) This again is a reminder that there will always be those who would lead astray, and the serious responsibility of all believers to warn, especially the leaders, speaking the truth of God. Paul say here he is innocent of the blood of those who refuse, because he declared the whole counsel of God, proclaiming what he knew to be true.

WHO ARE THE WATCHMEN?

The Lord Jesus out of his great love for you watches for you and warns through the word. You are a watchman. The new man you are in Christ Jesus warns you and others. Your pastors, teachers, and anyone else proclaiming the counsel of God are watchmen, caring for you. May you heed the call, warning others in love the wonderful truth of God that has been given to you. 1st Corinthians 12, verse 3, says, **“³ ...no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit”** (1 Cor 12:3 ESV) The Holy Spirit has revealed to you, saved you, now calls you to share what know, giving the warning in love.

In His name we pray, AMEN May the peace of God that passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. AMEN.