

Jesus Causes Us To Stand

Ezekiel 2:1-5 And He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you." ² Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me. ³ And He said to me: "Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. ⁴ "For *they are* impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.' ⁵ "As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse-- for they *are* a rebellious house-- yet they will know that a prophet has been among them.

How many of you have seen the movie Cool Runnings? In this movie based on real life events a group of Jamaicans try to make it to the Olympics as a bob sled team. In one of the last scenes of the movie their bob sled tips over just before the finish line. The team crawls out from under it and carries the sled across the line.

They did not come anywhere close to winning the Olympics, nevertheless there was tumultuous applause. Even though they had not won they had persevered. They had shown up. They had done much better than anyone expected. They stood up and finished the race.

Sometimes its enough just to show up. Sometimes the victory the goal is simply standing up.

The goal that our text lays before Ezekiel and us today, is not to win the Olympics but just to stand up. Just to stand up and preach. "Whether they hear or not at least they will know that there has been a prophet among them." That is the goal.

In our text Ezekiel is called on by the Lord to stand and hear. Ezekiel was on his knees because he had received a vision of the Lord. He saw the four wheels with eyes all around them, the four living creatures each with four heads. Ezekiel was confronted with the glory of the Lord, and he falls to his knees in repentance. But the Lord calls him to stand.

We do not usually think of standing as a position of repentance. Kneeling is usually the position of repentance. Nevertheless standing can be as well.

Kneeling is the position of the supplicant who begs for mercy. Standing is the position of receiving judgement. We have expressions like, "stand and take it like a man." These expressions indicate that we ought to stand and accept the judgement.

It is not enough that Ezekiel must encounter the Lord. It is not enough that he falls on his face in repentance. Now the Lord calls him to stand and hear what the Lord will say to him. It is a hard thing to stand and look someone in the eye when you know that you are in the wrong. It is impossible to stand and look the Lord in the eye when he is about to pronounce judgement,

To stand and hear the Lord is impossible nevertheless Ezekiel does by the power of the Spirit.

The same Spirit that gives the dry bones life. The same Spirit that fills Jesus with power at his baptism. The same Spirit that Paul says is our guarantee of eternal life.

John 6:63 ⁶³ "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life.

The Spirit gives Ezekiel the power to stand before the Lord. The Spirit gives us this power as well. Simply standing before the Lord is enough of a victory.

We do not need to be Moses. We do not need to save the world. We do not need to be famous or rich. It is enough of a victory if we are able to stand before the Lord in repentance and receive his judgement, a judgement of forgiveness and mercy.

This is not something we can do on our own, but we have the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:3 ³ Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

It is enough that we have the Spirit and by that Spirit we stand in repentance before God.

On this day of course we think not only of ourselves but also of our nation. It is enough for us that our nation stands, that it is here. Just as we are able to stand before God by his grace so also our nation remains and stands by his grace.

The puritans when they landed on these shores 400 years ago, had a dream. They had a dream of a new land, a land in which they could start over. A land in which they could establish God's kingdom on earth. Many people still think about America that way. They think that if we do the right things, preach in the right way, vote in the right way we can make America God's chosen nation.

That is rather an ambitious goal, even more ambitious than a group of men from Jamaica hoping to win the Olympic bobsled event. It is not only ambitious, but it often leads to an attitude that is contrary to scripture. It often leads to the idea that America is specially chosen by God.

The bible is clear that Israel was God's chosen people until the coming of the Messiah. Israel was an incubator through which the Messiah would be born. The Bible is also clear that now God does not esteem one nation above another.

Jesus tells his disciples to go and teach all nations equally.

Matthew 28:19 ¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

And Paul reminds us there is no difference between one or the other.

Romans 10:12-13 ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³ For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

America is not some specially chosen nation, more loved by God than other nations. And we do not need it to be. It is enough that America stands by God's grace. God blesses us through it and that is enough.

It is enough that we have a nation, that we have freedom, that our nation is still here. It is enough that it stands. It does only by the grace of God. But that is more than a good enough reason to rejoice and celebrate and thank God. We certainly do not deserve to stand before God as a nation. We have committed terrible sins against God. America is not the utopia that the puritans envisioned. Yet by God's mercy America remains and God blesses us through it.

More than that it is enough that they know that there has been a prophet among them.

God's goal for his people was only this "that they know there has been a prophet among them." God did not tell Ezekiel to make sure he preached well enough to convert all the people or half the people or a church of 10,000. Rather he says that they may hear they may not, but at least they will know that the word of God was preached among them.

When I was in college, I took a job collecting donations for a certain nonprofit. My second day the group leader asked me what my goal was for that day. I don't remember what I told him, but he gave me this look like don't you think you are setting the bar a little high.

The puritans set the bar a little high for this new land they were going to. And many evangelical preachers set the bar a little high as well. They end up thinking that by this method or that method we are going to bring America back to a Christian nation.

Even when sending prophets to his chosen people Israel God did not set the bar that high. Rather it is enough that they hear the word.

Our goal as a church, our goal as Christians is not to convert the whole world. Our goal is to share God's word, if they believe it or if they do not believe it, at least they will know that a prophet was among them. It is enough that God's word is preached.

It is enough for our life, and it is more than enough to celebrate today. God has blessed us, and America does still stand by his grace, and the word of God is still preached. There is more than one prophet among us. This is more than enough to celebrate today on the 4th. We stand by his grace and spirit as well, this is more than enough to be thankful for in worship today.

Amen