



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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July 15, 2012

Pentecost 7

Sermon Text: [Ezekiel 2:1-3:4](#)

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First Lesson: [Ezekiel 2:1-3:4](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 143](#)

Second Lesson: [2 Timothy 3:10-4:5](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 6:1-6](#)

### **Get Your Rebellion Immunization**

Speak the Word faithfully

Eat the Word faithfully

Shots may hurt a little... but the diseases they can prevent can hurt a lot more! Immunization shots, or vaccinations, are essential. They protect against things like measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, polio, diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough). Immunizations are important for adults as well as for children. Here's why.

Your immune system helps your body fight germs by producing substances to combat them. Once it does, the immune system "remembers" the germ and can fight it again. Vaccines contain germs that have been killed or weakened. When given to a healthy person, the vaccine triggers the immune system to respond and thus build immunity. Before vaccines, people became immune only by actually getting a disease and surviving it. Immunizations are an easier and less risky way to become immune.

God's message to Ezekiel that we learn from today gives us God's plan to keep us from being swept up by the disease of Rebellion.

God knows how inclined we are to follow the crowd. If the crowd doesn't listen to God and goes its own way, we are prone to follow. Rebellion against God poses a much greater threat than any of the diseases I mentioned before. God does not leave us to our own ways. He acted in love to save us through the life and death of Jesus. He continues to act in love toward us by striving to "keep us in the one true faith." He does this through his Word and Sacrament. Today his Word points us to God's Immunization against Rebellion.

God first wrote this prescription for the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel received his call to be a prophet on July 31, 593. We can be so precise because his book contains more references to dates we know for certain than any other book in the Old Testament. He was a prophet to the people of Judah who had been taken as captives to Babylon in 597. Jerusalem had not yet fallen. But some of the people, including Ezekiel, had been taken off to Babylon.

If you were one of the captives in Babylon, what message would you want to hear from God's prophet? I suppose you would want to hear, "Don't worry. God will deliver us soon. We'll be back in Jerusalem in no time." That would be an easy message to share with the people. However, that was not the message God gave Ezekiel to speak.

God told Ezekiel: “Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day. The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says.’ And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house. You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious. But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house.”

Did you notice how many times God told Ezekiel not to be afraid of the people he was serving? That was because the message God gave was one that they did not want to hear. Ezekiel had to proclaim that Jerusalem would fall to the Babylonians. This would happen because the people were rebellious. Ezekiel’s message was a hard, heart-wrenching, hope-crushing word of divine judgment. A rebellious people would naturally rebel against such a message.

In view of this, God told Ezekiel to focus on being faithful to God. Whether they listened or not, they would know he was a prophet when they saw his faithfulness. The best immunization against falling into their trap of rebellion was to take his eyes off of how he was received and focus them squarely on the God he was serving. This is not an easy task. It is incredibly difficult. In fact, God told Ezekiel that just as Jerusalem, the object of God’s love, was about to fall, in the same way, the love of Ezekiel’s life, his wife, was about to die. That was bad enough, but God also told him not to mourn openly for his wife. In this way the people would learn not to mourn for Jerusalem when it fell to the Babylonians. I can’t fathom the depth of the pain Ezekiel must have felt. His wife was dying. His people were dying spiritually because they failed to listen to or believe his message. He must have wanted to scream, rant, and rave against everyone he met! At times he may well have done that. But we also know that through it all he continued to serve God faithfully and spoke the message God gave.

In Chapters 1-32 of his book, we see him speak the message God gave faithfully. He did not give in to rebellion. He served the One who loved and saved him. In Chapters 33-48 he also faithfully spoke words of hope and consolation that God gave him to speak to the people. That had to be a wonderful relief to him to speak those words of hope. But what is amazing is his faithfulness to God in speaking words that were rejected and despised by the people. Many simply did not want to hear the Law.

It is really no different today. I don’t like the Law. It shows me my failures. It shows me the times I have disappointed the One who lived and died for me. It shows me how I killed him. It is no different for you. Yet you and I need to hear the Law so we flee to our Savior and find forgiveness in the life and death of Jesus. We know this to be true.

Here is another truth we need to be reminded of... we are called by God to speak his Law and his Gospel faithfully. God calls each of us to admonish our brothers and

sisters in Christ. This means we are called to do what Ezekiel did. We are called to tell people to turn away from sin and turn back to God. And just like in Ezekiel's day, it is not always well received. We know that. That is why we often sin against our God by remaining silent and failing to speak. Could we not learn from Ezekiel to take our eyes off of the possible reaction we might get from those we serve and put them squarely on God, the One who served us first by saving us. Then we can speak faithfully the message God has given us to speak!

For Ezekiel and for us to do this we need a strength that has to come from outside of us. It is the immunization against our rebellious silence and failure to speak that comes from God's Word. You see, God gave Ezekiel an oral immunization, literally. He gave him a scroll, the scroll of God's Word, and told him to eat it. God said: "But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.' Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. And he said to me, 'Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel.' So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, 'Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.' So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth. He then said to me: 'Son of man, go now to the house of Israel and speak my words to them.'"

Ancient scrolls were only written on one side. The one Ezekiel ate had words on both sides. God was telling Ezekiel there was a lot of work to do. The people would not easily be convinced of their sin. He would have to speak often and at length. What he would speak would be "words of lament and mourning and woe."

But notice the effect God's Word for Ezekiel to speak had on him. He says it "tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth." Serving the One who loved us first brings us blessings. It brings us joy. It brings us pleasure, not at all times and in every way, mind you, but when our focus is on God instead of on people, we will be blessed.

God's Word gives us the motivation and the power to serve God faithfully. God has written the details of Christ's life and death in our place on both sides of the scroll for us. As we eat it, it will strengthen us. As we spend more time with it, it will get even sweeter. As we see in his Word how he has forgiven us for our unfaithful action or inaction, we will be immunized against rebellion. Instead of joining in with those who stray from God, we find the courage to speak God's message. After all, that is the only thing we can do. Whether people listen to us or not, our goal is always to speak God's message faithfully.

Remember, you do not decide what is sin or what is not. God did in his Word. When you admonish, you speak for God, not for yourself. You produce the sound, but the message is God's, not yours. It will still hurt if people reject your efforts, but remember that the one they are really rejecting is God, not you. Amen.