

WE WATCH OVER ONE ANOTHER EZEK 33:7-9
THIRTEENTH SUN. AFTER PENTECOST SEPT 7, 2014

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.

When is the last time you saw a watchman?

We don't have one on wall above city gate as Ezekiel may see.
But this is time of year you may see one holding a stop sign.

School crossing guards are watchmen who watch traffic
and tell students to stop if it is not safe.

Then they tell the traffic to stop so it is safe to cross.

As we celebrate beginning of school & children's Sunday classes

God tells us that we, like Ezekiel, have responsibility
to watch out for children and others like a crossing guard.

We are to watch carefully what is going on around us.

WE NEED TO WATCH THE WORLD AND GOD'S WORD

We need to say "stop" stop when it is not safe.

WE NEED TO WARN THE WICKED TO STOP

But God also says "stop" to what threatens us

which means we and others can safely go the cross.

WE NEED THE WAY OF GOD'S DELIVERANCE

WE NEED TO WATCH THE WORLD AND GOD'S WORD

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.

May seem obvious, but first job of a watchman is to watch.

Crossing guard needs to watch in more than one direction.

Like Ezekiel, are responsible to keep our eyes open and watch.

we need to watch two directions: the world & God's word.

In Ezekiel's day, watchmen were posted to watch for enemies.

We are surrounded by dangers in our world,

not just enemies and accidents that would hurt us

but temptations that would cause us to hurt ourselves.

We have gotten used to warnings from scientists & doctors
about things that are dangerous for us:
air & water pollution, global warming
fattening and highly processed foods.

There are so many warning labels on things
we sometimes don't pay attention.

But even more dangerous than what may go in mouth & nose
is what can come in through our eyes and ears,
not just UV rays and deafening noises
but pornography, profanity, lies,
temptations to selfishness, prejudice.

God says "watch out!" Don't get distracted, desensitized
by things that look fun, feel good, seem far away
so that you not notice the danger to you or others.

Because of the dangers all around us, like Ezekiel,
we also need to listen to the words of God's mouth.

God's word tells us what is right and wrong.

Many of the dangers around us can be recognized
only in light of the truth of God's word.

Paul says that even though you can look around and see
that it is obviously wrong to steal and kill,
he would not have known it was wrong to covet
if God's law had not told him so.

Lust and greed may seem harmless but are not.

Another thing God's word shows us is that
beside the consequences of evil we see in this world,
there are eternal consequences of sin.

God says watch out for my punishment & separation from me
if my punishment doesn't make you wake up.

Because we live in this world, we can't just ignore it,
think it will have no effect on us.

But we must be careful not to just mindlessly absorb
everything we find around us.

Think about that that show, video, song, advice or opinion column.
advertisement. What is it saying? Is that really true?

Be a watchman, watch and see what is good or bad & dangerous.

But we are to do more than just see this for ourselves
we are responsible for helping others see them.

We are to stand in front of those about to step out into danger
and say "stop"

WE NEED TO WARN THE WICKED TO STOP

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.

In schools, there is lot of testing, not just to see how students do but to see how the teachers are doing.

Schools are held responsible for student achievement even when there are many factors they don't control.

God says we are responsible as watchmen for those around us even though we don't control over their response to warning.

We are responsible for how we deliver the message for making sure it is loud and clear.

This is one reason our church has school and classes.

We are responsible for what our children and others learn about what is good and bad, right and wrong.

Gospel reading says if we don't feel weight of responsibility for our children, we might as well have weight of millstone around our necks & be thrown into the ocean.

Every single one of them is God's precious lamb.

In some schools, children themselves learn to be crossing guards as part of safety patrol.

Learn to watch for danger themselves & look out for each other.

We want to train our children to be spiritual watchmen as well.

So that each one of us is able to go to a brother or sister and say, "Watch out for that sin. That is dangerous."

It would be easy for us to see all the wrong & sin in our world and just shake our heads and think it is a shame and a good thing we are not like that.

But just keep it to ourselves because no one wants to hear us.

God says: I want to hear you speak up.

When we see people whose lives are full of problems we may think about how they come from their mistakes but not think about what we should have done to help.

What we can do as watchmen and what God does for us is more than just say "stop" when there is danger.

There is also a time when crosswalk guards say go.

There is a time for us to go to the cross.

WE NEED THE WAY OF GOD'S DELIVERANCE

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.

And what if wicked, including us, do listen & turn from that way?

Ezekiel goes on to say they will not be punished & not die.

If we don't warn others of danger, the guilt is on us,

but when anyone is warned of sin and stops,

all of their guilt goes on Jesus instead.

God doesn't hold us responsible for what others do wrong,

Instead, Jesus offers to take responsibility for all we do wrong.

Jesus has come to step out in front of sin and death for us

and to die in our place to take all the punishment we deserve

and give us his free forgiveness.

We have another warning to listen to and to share.

Don't think you can ever avoid sin enough

and do enough good things for other people

that you can deliver your own soul & be totally free from guilt.

The only way this can ever be is by the free grace of God.

As watchmen, we stand and watch

as God defeats all our enemies for us.

And we have this wonderful good news to announce.

When our brother who sins against us repents,

we get to say, "Your sins are forgiven."

Now Jesus says "stop" to our fear, guilt and shame.

He says "stop" to the attacks of sin and the devil.

He says "stop" to death and eternal damnation.

When he does this, he is saying "go" to us.

He holds out his arms on the cross

so we can safely cross over to be with our loving Father.

God doesn't want anything to keep us or our children from him.

This is why he calls us to watch over one another.

WE NEED TO WATCH THE WORLD AND GOD'S WORD

We need to know God's truth and so be aware

of the dangers coming from all directions.

WE NEED TO WARN THE WICKED TO STOP

We are especially responsible for teaching our children

and training them also to be watchmen for others.

WE NEED THE WAY OF GOD'S DELIVERANCE

Most of all we need Jesus watching over us

to deliver us from every danger by his death in our place

so we can safely walk with him now and forever.