

# "Watchman, Tell Us!" -- Ezekiel 33:1-11

## Installation of Pastor Keith Allan Lingsch

Immanuel Lutheran Church, New Plymouth, Idaho  
and Concordia Lutheran Church, Weiser, Idaho

The Fifth Sunday after The Holy Trinity  
The Seventh Day of July Anno Domini 1996

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

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*O Lord, our Creator, Redeemer and Comforter, as we come together to worship You in spirit and in truth, we humbly pray that You may open our hearts to the preaching of Your Word, so that we may repent of our sins, believe in Jesus Christ as our only Savior, and grow in grace and holiness. Hear us for His sake. Amen.*

Well, dear people of Concordia and Immanuel congregations, you've gone ahead and done it, haven't you? Now, it's not that you shouldn't have done it, because indeed, what you have done is exactly what the Lord wanted you to do. You extended a Call to the man seated before you to be your watchman, calling him to stand high on Zion's wall.

Well, dear Pastor Keith Lingsch, son of Andrew and Beatrice, husband of Lori, and father of \_\_\_\_\_, (well that remains to be determined) -- but dear Pastor Lingsch, you've gone ahead and done it, haven't you? Now, it's not that you shouldn't have done it, because indeed, what you have done is exactly what the Lord wanted you to do. You have accepted the Call of the Lord to be a watchman standing high on Zion's wall.

Our sermon text for this installation service is the very sobering Old Testament Reading which you heard earlier. Please listen to Ezekiel 33:1-11 once more under the theme ...

... *Watchman, Tell Us!*

The Word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, 'If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman; and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people; then if any one who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes, and takes any one of them; that man is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.'"

"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. If I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die', and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way; he shall die in his iniquity, but you will have saved your life."

"And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus have you said, "Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?"' Say to them, 'As I live, says the LORD God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?'"

Thus far the inspired and inerrant Word of the Lord our God given to us by the Holy Spirit through the holy prophet, Ezekiel.

Dear friends in Christ, the picture given to us here is one of a city centuries ago. In fact, imagine an ancient city located on a hill and overlooking the surrounding countryside. To protect it from invaders, a massive wall around the city is built. Upon the stone wall, at the point for the best view of the entire area, is a tower. A monarch or the people of the city have called someone to ascend into the turret and keep watch over the land.

A lonely watchman stands at his post in the tower, anxiously peering into the deep darkness - trying to locate the pressing enemy - hoping to discern some sign of deliverance. Suddenly an unseen traveler from below speaks forth: *Watchman, tell us of the night; What its signs of promise are.* The watchman's task is to look into the distance and scan the horizon. If an invading, enemy army is advancing, it is the watchman's task to tell the people of the danger, giving them time to prepare for the coming battle. But, if the watchman sees the enemy's hordes approaching, but gives not warning, everyone will die or be captured, but the fault will be with the watchman.

In addition, the watchman is in such a position to see the returning of the city's king who has gone forth to lead his forces in a conquering campaign. It is the watchman's great privilege to proclaim, not only the victory of such a king, but to announce *The Advent of Our King*. Throughout the night of this world's present darkness, the watchman takes his place on the wall and tells the people about the advancing armies of the enemy and about the *Valiant One, Whom God Himself elected* (TLH #262).

Of course, by now, you realize that neither the Lord our God, nor Ezekiel the prophet, nor this watchman is primarily or especially interested in telling you about the early-warning features of an ancient city trying to protect itself from a physical army by posting a human guard in a tower. The message concerns the Lord, His Church, and the man called by both to be the pastor in a local congregation or, in our case, two local congregations. Our sermon text addresses the need for the pastor to proclaim and the people to hear the Word of God. The Lord tells the prophet to warn the people - to proclaim the Law in all its sternness and severity. 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.

Now, that is a Law directive about preaching the Law. Watchman, preach the Word. That is very sobering and godly pastors recognize the seriousness of their Call to preach the Word to the people of the Lord God Almighty. The writer to the Hebrews tells the people of God just what the Lord's expectations are for pastors working in His church. Consider the seriousness of the watchman's work as the holy writer indicates: *Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you (Hebrews 13:17).*

Watchman, preach the Law which serves as a mirror to show the people their sins and warn them of dying without repentance. Proclaim the Law which makes both pastor and parishioner to squirm and itch and have sleepless nights. The Law compels us to ask along with the Philippian jailor, *What must I do to be saved?* Or, in the words of our text, Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?

When that question finally arises, in whatever the form it may be asked, you, Pastor Lingsch are privileged to proclaim the Gospel, whether it be from congregational pulpit or confessional booth or hospice home or confirmation classroom or evangelism visit. It is the Good News that the Lord is a merciful, gracious God *slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

Dear watchman, when you hear the question, *How then can we live?*, it is your great duty and responsibility and privilege and honor to Say to them, "As I live, says the LORD God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" What a pure Gospel statement of the Lord's desire for people to be saved.

The Lord, wearing by His very being, indicates His intense and earnest desire for people to live with Him. Here is the only God Who desires the wicked to turn from his evil way and live, and then provides the Way for that to be done. Pastor Lingsch, tell your people of the Incarnation of the Lord God Almighty, come down to live the perfect life under His own Law, doing so for your sake, for mine, and for all people. Watchman, tell your people of this God, Who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and Who demonstrates such sacrificial love by the Father giving His Son to the world, by the Son giving His life for the world, and by the Holy Spirit giving faith when and where He wills through the Good News that you are called to proclaim. Tell them of the full forgiveness of sins, the completed atonement wrought on Calvary's cross as the Lord is crucified and announces from His lifted up and lofty position, *It is finished!*

Job asked the question, *If a man dies, shall he live again?* Watchman Lingsch, when you hear your people ask, *How then can we live?*, take them to the empty tomb of that first Resurrection Day and tell them the Word which you have heard today, the Word from Ezekiel. Say to them, "As I live, says the LORD God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Show them the glorious nail prints in the hands of our Risen and Ascended Redeemer and let them hear Jesus say, *Because I live, you also will live.* Let them hear the declaration of the truth from Job who confessed the answer to his own question, *I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last He will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see on my side.*

And, Pastor Lingsch, as you are telling these people the Good News of God in Christ, listen to what you are saying, for the message of forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation is intended for you as well. You are not immune from God's condemning Law. Neither does the red stole disqualify you from

His gracious Gospel. The Bread of Life, the One come down from heaven, is intended for you as well. And that is especially important for you members of Concordia and Immanuel congregations to remember. The same Good News that Pastor Lingsch proclaims to you with his mouth and serves you in the Sacraments is intended for him as well. Therefore, let him know of God's love for him and please permit your watchman to drink deeply from the same Cistern of Salvation.

Both pastor and people have been called by God to receive the many blessings of the Lord and His Word. Both pastor and congregations are to be people of the Word and, consequently, people of their word. You expect your pastor to be a man of the Word of God and, thus, a man of his word. What he promises you expect to be done. Likewise, your pastor expects you, both as congregations and as individual members to be people of the Word of God and, as a result, people of your word.

Both pastor and people have been called by Jesus to follow Him. He said, *As the Father has sent Me, even so, I send you.* Concordia congregation in Weiser, Immanuel congregation in New Plymouth, and you, Pastor Lingsch are called to stand together in the truth and walk in the confession of the One, Holy, Apostolic Church. There is one item in the Call document that congregations in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod extend and pastors in the same, receive and accept. It is especially important in our day, not only to review that particular paragraph, but for both congregations and pastors to abide by it as they have promised to do. The part referred to reads ...

"We authorize and obligate our called minister: ... To serve the congregation as an example of Christian conduct, to endeavor earnestly to live in brotherly unity with the members of the congregation and fellow workers and sister congregations in the District and the Synod, and by the grace of God to do everything possible within the sphere of his calling toward the edification of the congregation and the up-building of the church of Christ, both locally and generally."

That means, despite everything said to the contrary, that congregations and pastors are not autonomous. We are simply not free to do as we please. We have pledged before God and we have promised to each other to walk together in the truth, not only by confession and teaching, but also by practice. Neither congregations nor pastors are free to do their own thing. That is a tremendous problem for our synod today as some congregations, contrary to their promise, practice open communion and permit lodge membership. And some pastors, openly violating their Calls, unashamedly engage in unionistic worship services.

Congregations extend Calls obligating their pastors to "do everything possible within the sphere of his calling toward the edification of the congregation and the up-building of the church of Christ, both locally and generally." Pastors bind themselves to doing that when they accept the Call. Simply put, what you do as pastors or what you do as sister congregations has an impact on the pastors and congregations in surrounding areas. We have pledged and promised to walk together. We should support and uphold one another by being one in Christ, one in truth, one in confession, and one in practice. What blessings are our and how the Church is edified and the Kingdom is extended when this takes place. The psalmist declares, *Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!* Oneness in doctrine and practice! Truly, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, *unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.*

Members of Concordia Lutheran Church, Weiser, Idaho, members of Immanuel Lutheran Church, New Plymouth, Idaho, and those of you who are members of our sister congregations in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, one from among us, a man named Keith Allan Lingsch of Concordia Lutheran Church, McKeesport, Pennsylvania has been called by the Lord through His Church to step up to this pulpit and the one like it in Weiser to proclaim the Word of the Lord. For indeed, it is taught among us that no watchman should ascend into a pulpit of the Lord's Church and "publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call" (AC 14).

Pastor Lingsch, you are the watchman called to proclaim the Word of the Lord our God. The two congregations which have extended this Call to you have simply said, and continue to say, ...

... "Watchman, ... Tell Us!"