

**Sermon – 7-8-2018**  
**Seventh Sunday after Pentecost – Ezekiel 2**  
**By**  
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**As the people of God, as brothers and sisters in Christ, we are called to proclaim his name not only in buildings like this, but beyond our walls. You've heard me talk time and again about being out in our community with the hope and love of Jesus Christ. Today takes a different angle. Today, we're going to talk about bringing the message to those who have already heard, known, accepted, and lived it. You may wonder, "Why do they need to hear it? They've, we've, already got it!" Well, you might be surprised. Let's start with Ezekiel.**

***Ezekiel 2:1-5***

**The prophets were always sent to the nation of Israel. Remember, in Israel, if you were a part of the nation, you were a part of the faith. This is Ezekiel's call to be a prophet to Israel, and notice what God says about that nation.**

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**There are three words used to describe the people Ezekiel is being sent to here: rebellious, obstinate, and stubborn. The word "rebellious" is exactly what it sounds like, going against the authority of its creator,**

**God. "Obstinate" is literally "severe faces". You know what that looks like. "Stubborn" is literally translated as "strong willed", that will, of course, being put against God. Sounds like the sort of conception that we put on the world, especially those who reject Christ. We think they're being stubborn for the purpose of being stubborn, like your toddler that you have to drag through the aisles of the grocery store in the midst of a huge fit. Just do what I say, and everything will be fine. But here's the reminder we need: all those words are describing the nation of Israel. These are the people that carry God's name, and God is calling them rebellious, obstinate, and stubborn. This is less about people you don't know, and more like your family members who won't listen to you. Parents, this is like your teenagers. Teenagers, this is like your parents. God knows what is in the hearts of all humanity. God knows that we are *all* rebellious, obstinate, and stubborn.**

**This is the argument that Paul makes in Romans. In chapter 1, he's talking about all these terrible things that the Gentiles are doing out in the world, the things that God gave them over to because they did not trust him. Then in chapter 2, he shows them that all those things are the exact same things that the Jews, and the people of the early church were doing. And Paul has other examples in the early church.**

## ***2 Corinthians 10:1-18***

**Look at this example. Paul encounters some of this obstinacy in the people of the Corinthian church, and in the people who claim rights to lead the Corinthian church.**

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**Let's work backwards to see what Paul is pointing out here. Based on what Paul is responding to, we can figure out their complaints. They think he should talk differently. They are looking to the appearances of their leaders. They believe that he is two different people, one while away and one there. Just like everyone else, Paul compares himself to others. He's boasting about work you did. Paul has to answer all of these charges. Well, let's fast forward 2000 years or so. You know Paul's name. Those who made these charges? We had to work backwards just to figure out what their complaints are, and their names are long gone. This is proof for us that the complaints were not about what Paul was doing, but who Paul was proclaiming. It was obstinacy and stubbornness that led to these complaints.**

## ***John 6:1-6***

**Obviously, Jesus is not immune from this either. In many small towns and rural communities, people are judged and not accepted into the community because they're "not from around here." I remember a town in North Dakota that offered free land and business**

**startup funds if families would move to town. I first heard about this offer when the last of four families to take them up on the offer moved away. As much as "not from around here" happens, so does "he's from around here, so we shouldn't listen", and that happens to Jesus here.**

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**What is Jesus' current hometown? Right here.**

**The stubbornness takes many forms. There are three pieces that we need to learn from these Scriptures.**

**1. We need to recognize these tendencies in ourselves.**

**Israel, the Corinthian church, the people from Jesus' hometown, they're all doing this for one purpose: to deflect the message of God from getting into their hearts. You might ask why we'd want to deflect that message. It's simple: We want to deflect it because it shows us how guilty we really are. Light is a great sanitizer. When something has the light of Christ shone on it, the darkness cannot survive. But we like our darkness. We get stubborn about it. We steel our resolve to hold onto whatever our pet projects are, and those pet projects are usually our self-salvation projects.**

**2. We need the Word to come to us too.**

**Even us, who have heard the word before, need it again and again. We often buy into the idea that once Jesus has come into our lives, he's kind of done with us. You're resurrected, so you're good. Well, there's**

**one thing that shows you that is not true. You're in church today. Many of you are in church every week. Your actions show you that there is something inside that tells you that you need to hear this again. The closer you get to the light, the more dirt you see. We do all that deflection to block the light, to keep our dirt firmly in place. We make it about the messenger, instead of about ourselves. We need that light to shine even on places in our lives that we think are just fine, because chances are, when we think we've "got" something, we're not even close.**

**3. God forgives even our stubbornness.**

**Ezekiel was sent to Israel. Paul was sent to Corinth. Jesus was sent to Nazareth. His word still comes, and remember, his word is Law and Gospel. The Word isn't just coming to you to make you straighten up and fly right. The Word has come to forgive your crooked ways and upside-down flights. That's why Christ came to earth in the first place: to take your sin, your darkness, your dirt, upon his shoulders, and replace it with forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. What he's replacing your stuff with is much better than it could ever be for you. So, let our call to God not be "Mine!" but "Yours!" We do that when God shows us the dirt, because we can't clean it ourselves. And he brings the best sanitizer ever, his glorious light. AMEN.**