

Words of welcome

Welcome, especially the Brass Band from Germany: 12 highly talented musicians who will take us on Journey through the music which is played by Church Brass Bands these days. We are so glad that you are here, not only to entertain us, but also to experience that it is not the praise of God alone, which was seen as the primary purpose of Church brass choirs for a long time, according to **Psalm 150**:

1 Praise the Lord!

3 Praise him with trumpet sound;

Today the music has become also a method of interpretation, of proclamation. That we will see later on and again, our congregation welcomes you and is very grateful that you are here.

Today's topic is characterized by the watchword for this week:

Psalm 103, 2:

Lobe den Herrn meine Seele und vergiss nicht, was er dir Gutes getan hat.

Praise the Lord, o my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Praise, thankfulness on one hand, the problems, the challenges of our lives on the other, which often have the tendency to erase the memory of God's blessings we have received and still receive.

We will explore this further when it comes to today's sermon.

Evangelium Lukas 17:

Die zehn Aussätzigen

¹¹Und es begab sich, als er nach Jerusalem wanderte, daß er durch Samarien und Galiläa hin zog. ¹²Und als er in ein Dorf kam, begegneten ihm zehn aussätzige Männer; die standen von ferne ¹³und erhoben ihre Stimme und sprachen: Jesus, lieber Meister, erbarme dich unser! ¹⁴Und als er sie sah, sprach er zu ihnen: Geht hin und zeigt euch den Priestern! Und es geschah, als sie hingingen, da wurden sie rein. ¹⁵Einer aber unter ihnen, als er sah, daß er gesund geworden war, kehrte er um und pries Gott mit lauter Stimme ¹⁶und fiel nieder auf sein Angesicht zu Jesu Füßen und dankte ihm. Und das war ein Samariter. ¹⁷Jesus aber antwortete und sprach: Sind nicht die zehn rein geworden? Wo sind aber die neun? ¹⁸Hat sich sonst keiner gefunden, der wieder umkehrte, um Gott die Ehre zu geben, als nur dieser Fremde? ¹⁹Und er sprach zu ihm: Steh auf, geh hin; dein Glaube hat dir geholfen.

**Sermon on 1. Thessalonians 5, 16-18 and the song "Like a Party After A Long Time Of Mourning",
17.09.2006**

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

Text:

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Dear Congregation,

A lecturer was talking about what he called "the most dangerous road in the world." Most people in the audience began to think of a journey into the African jungle, or facing shipwreck going through the Straits of Magellan. The lecturer explained: "More and more books are being sold about escaping prison with a toothpick or journeying up the Amazon on stilts. But the most dangerous journey is the journey of our everyday living. It is dangerous because it ends, for all of us, in death!" Not a very pleasant way to put it, but it does make one think.

The journey I have in mind this morning doesn't end in death, it ends in wholeness, in completeness, in maturity. The Apostle Paul describes it a little bit further in chapter 5 of 1. Thessalonians: "The God of peace sanctify you completely." The word "completely" means "through and through" or "reaching that end for which it was made." Paul is portraying for us the Christian's journey that ends in a state of wholeness, a state in which we can sense that life, at last, has meaning and purpose, life "adds up."

Unfortunately this sense of purpose is not grasped by everyone. Ernie Pyle, a reporter during World War II, once wrote to a friend: "There is no sense to the struggle, but there is no choice but to struggle. It seems to me that living is futile, and death the final indignity." He then concluded with, "I wish you would shine any of your light in my direction. God knows I've run out of light." I don't know what response came from his friend, but I feel some of us can share this feeling in the light of current challenges and sorrows.

Now, I want to paint the picture with the colour of this feeling through the help of our brass band. We have just sung a song, which has two parts. One part leads to the other. One part describes in the music I think very clearly this most of being lost, the situations which burden us, and the sorrows we have to deal with. But let us listen to this once more, now as a composition based on the song. You might recognize some it.

(Part 1)

We can fill books with the sadness and the troubles of our lives. And I must say that own but also experiences of others can have the effect that our emotions take over and we end up in a state of despair.

There are extreme examples:

- Man who killed students in Montreal
- Career woman
- Single mom

There might be little things which disappoint us and effect the way we perceive our life.

- Brass Band second time in a row in an almost empty church.

- The exhaustion when you have tried make room in your calendar and when the time is there it just adds up again and you can hardly manage to get your work one.
- The frustration when you have tried so hard to get work after you have been laid off by your company, and you have send out many applications, but all you hear is: “Sorry, but we can not give you the job” – and you know someone else got it.

There are many things which happen every day to us, that our health is failing which challenges us to a point where we ask ourselves: How do I get out of this! I have run out of light! Where does my help come from! How do I manage to go on with my life and move forward?

Let us listen to part two, actually the chorus of the song.

The tone has changed, the challenges might be the same, the world is still like it is, but there is something which goes beyond all this and ends in a powerful harmony, for me it sounds like hope, like someone who has finally managed to get on his feet again to move on, to move forward actually.

I have learned a lot through the song, which tried to translate in a way that it fits the music and gives everyone, especially those who do not speak German, an understanding of what the song is all about.

Like a party after mourning,
like a fire in the night,
an open gate in a big wall,
which was opened for the sun,
like a letter which breaks silence,
like an unexpected word,
like a leaf on a dead branch,
a kiss "I love you anyway":

Conciliation,
such must be true peace,
conciliation,
such is forgiveness and pardon

Like a rainfall in the desert,
And fresh dew on droughty grass,
Familiar sounds for those went missing,
long standing foes hand in hand,
like a key for the imprisoned,
for the shipwrecked land in sight,
like a way out of all hardships,
like a radiating face:

Refr.

Like a word from lifeless lips,
like a glance that promised hope,
like a light on steep escarpments,
like a new discovered land,
like the springtime, like the morning,

like a song, or like a poem,
like the life, like sincere love,
like God Himself,
the true light:

This is a song of someone who finally after contemplating on his problems and getting carried away with how bad things are lifts his head, looks ahead, lets go of the past, which no one can change and enters into a new stage of his life by realizing there is Reconciliation offered by, God was the one who reconciled the word with himself by giving his son to die for our sins (that is in one word the theology of the cross, which is supposed to lead to a theology of glory, which again, we can hear in this song, when someone can say: I forgive.

Like the Life, like sincere love, like God himself, the true love, such is Reconciliation and such is forgiveness, such is true peace.

In Paul's words: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances."

We all agree that it is not always possible to rejoice always, but this is actually the road we must travel, when we want to reach fulfillment.

There are two sources from which our joys may come. They may come from the outer occurrences of our lives which are pleasant and gratifying or from our inner fellowship with Christ, which the praying in the text refers to. Depending on outer experiences to keep us happy, causes a lot of disillusionment and wretchedness. The Christian answer to the rise and fall of outer circumstances is faith and the confidence that God's love inspires as we face any situation.

I think songs like this one, are supposed to remind us, that there is not only us and the things which go on in this world and are almost impossible to understand. We have the possibility to draw our strength, the courage it takes to move on, and the faith it takes to do so from God himself. We do not depend solely on ourselves. We have God at our side who walks with us into the future.

I still may take a lot until we finally arrive in the attitude of thankfulness. It still may take some practice to include ways to remind ourselves into our daily practice of faith, so that we do not forget God's benefits.

Maybe it is the melody of this song which we recall the next time when we are just about to lose our nerve and which conveys the message that God is the light we are looking for. Amen.

And the Peace of God which passes all understanding, may keep our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.