

## Toetrede

### Liturgie van die Lig

## Woorddiens

### Lesing 1: Jesaja 40:1-11 (1953)

<sup>1</sup> TROOS, troos my volk, sê julle God.

<sup>2</sup> Spreek na die hart van Jerusalem, en roep haar toe dat haar stryd verby is, dat haar skuld betaal is, dat sy uit die hand van die HERE dubbel ontvang het vir al haar sondes.

<sup>3</sup> 'n Stem van een wat roep: Berei in die woestyn die weg van die HERE; maak gelyk in die wildernis 'n grootpad vir onse God!

<sup>4</sup> Elke dal moet opgevolg en elke berg en heuwel klein gemaak word; en die bult moet 'n gelykte en die rotsagtige plekke 'n laagte word.

<sup>5</sup> En die heerlikheid van die HERE sal geopenbaar word, en alle vlees tesame sal dit sien: want die mond van die HERE het dit gespreek.

<sup>6</sup> 'n Stem sê: Roep! En hy vra: Wat moet ek roep? Alle vlees is gras, en al sy aanvalligheid soos 'n blom van die veld.

<sup>7</sup> Die gras verdor, die blom verwelk as die asem van die HERE daarin blaas. Voorwaar, die volk is gras!

<sup>8</sup> Die gras verdor, die blom verwelk; maar die woord van onse God hou stand in ewigheid.

<sup>9</sup> O Sion, verkondiger van goeie boodskap, klim op 'n hoë berg! O Jerusalem, verkondiger van goeie boodskap, hef jou stem op met mag; hef dit op, wees nie bevrees nie! Sê aan die stede van Juda: Hier is julle God!

<sup>10</sup> Kyk, die Here HERE sal kom as 'n Sterke, en sy arm sal heers; kyk, sy loon is by Hom, en sy beloning is voor sy aangesig.

<sup>11</sup> Hy sal sy kudde laat wei soos 'n herder; Hy sal die lammers in sy arm vergader en aan sy bors dra; die lammeroë sal Hy saggies lei.

### Broodjies vir die Pad

Geloof gaan oor hoor, nie oor sien nie, herinner Michael Horton ons in sy kraakvars sistematiese teologie, Christian Faith. Hiermee staan hy in die tradisie van die hervormers, wat na Bybelwoorde, eerder as ons selfgemaakte beelde van God, teruggegryp het. 'n Belangrike verskil tussen die Joodse en Grieks-Romeinse kultuur was dat laasgenoemde op "sien is glo" gereken het, maar eersgenoemde op "hoor is glo". (Omdat dit hier nie slegs oor letterlike Godspraak gaan nie, maar 'n metafoor, kan dowes ook in dié sin "hoor".)

Die hoor waarop geloof in die Abrahamitiese tradisie berus, teenoor die sien van die antieke filosofie, het daarmee te doen dat God ons aanspreek – die inisiatief lê nie by ons nie. Baie Bybelskrywers praat so, soos die skeppingsmites in Genesis: Eers God wat deur woorde skep, en daarna meneer Mens (Adam) en mevrou Lewe (Eva) wat aangespreek word.

Abraham en Moses word geroep en gestuur. Die Woord van Jahwe kom na, en deur, profete. Selfs

wanneer visioene gesien word, gaan dit met spraak en uitleg gepaard. Geloof kom deur hoor, sê Paulus later, en Jesus weerstaan die Duiwel se versoekings met Skrifwoorde.

Dit maak 'n verskil of ons sien of hoor. Horton verwys na Paul Tillich se onderskeid tussen twee soorte godsdiens: "overcoming estrangement" en "meeting a stranger". Die eerste is óns werk; die tweede kom van buite.

Die antieke blik, daarenteen, wil insien dat God sus of so moet wees – soos in die Middeleeue, toe dit skynbaar ooglopend was dat God die grootste denkbare wese moet wees, en glashelder watter "grootmakende eienskappe" dit impliseer. Insig in die Goddelike kom dan deur wat ek sien, die klaarblyklike – hetsy deur introspeksie of in gewaarwordings deur ervaring. Die vader van die moderne kennisleer, René Descartes, was weer op soek na "helder en duidelike idees" as vertrekpunt van alle kennis – ook empiriese wetenskap. So dink ons vandag nog: I spy with my little eye!

Wat toevallig ons retina indring, of waarvoor ons gretig op die uitkyk is, verskil van 'n stem wat ons aanspreek. Só 'n stem is nie toevallig nie; nog minder onder ons beheer. Die ander kan praat wanneer ons stilte sou verkies, stilbly wanneer ons 'n antwoord soek, anders praat as wat ons verwag of gehoop het, verras met iets wat ons nooit kon bedink nie. Godskennis is dan nie ons prestasie of goeie werk nie, maar 'n geskenk oftewel genade.

Skeptici soos Marx, Freud en Feuerbach kan ons herinner dat, as God nie self praat nie, ons gedagtes oor God hersenskimme (!) is – magspeletjies, onvolwassenheid, projeksie. Hierop sê die beste teoloë, soos Karl Barth, amen, want wat kan ons van God weet wat God ons nie láát weet nie? As dit by Godskennis kom, en daarom by die belangrikste kennis oor onself, sê die Abrahamitiese tradisie, moet ons waak teen spekulasie – van die Latynse "speculari": spioeneer, waarneem of uitkyk.

Jesaja praat op 'n vreemde manier oor die krag van God se Woord. Dit dra nie net inligting oor nie, maar laat dinge gebeur. Wat God onderneem, sal God ook uitvoer. God se woorde kan vrees inboesem, tot inkeer bring of juis hoop gee, bemoedig. In talle Bybelverhale spreek God se spraak vanself – niemand wonder wie daar praat nie! Deur ons aan te spreek bring God 'n verhouding tot stand – of ons dit wil of nie. Ons kan sê: "Hier is ek!", soos Moses of Samuel, of probeer wegkruip, soos Adam en Eva, maar ons bly aangesprokenes.

Dit is waaroor Advent gaan: Wag op 'n Woord wat vlees word. As ons die getuïenis oor Hom nie hoor nie, sal geen kyk ons help om Hom te sien nie. (Gerrit Brand)

### Brood vir die Pad

#### Weeskinders...

A guest essay by Arthur J. Ammann, MD, President and CEO of Global Strategies for HIV Prevention. Art Ammann was the former Director of the Pediatric

Immunology and Clinical Research Center at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco. In the summer of 1981, Ammann cared for a woman who was a prostitute and intravenous drug user and three of her children. All four presented with unusual deficiencies in their immune systems that were aggravated by opportunistic infections that did not fit normal medical models of disease. He determined that the mother and all three children had contracted AIDS, a tragic diagnosis because the disease was at that time fatal. Perhaps equally devastating was the disturbing conclusion, hotly contested and very controversial at the time, that HIV-AIDS was not limited to adults. Ammann determined that HIV had passed from the mother to her children as an "acquired" and not an "inherited" disease. In 1982, he thus documented the first cases of AIDS transmission from mother to infant, and also the first blood transfusion AIDS patients.

"Comfort, yes, comfort my people, says your God," we read in the lectionary for this week (Isaiah 40:1).

As I travel to some of the most neglected regions of the world where the HIV epidemic has raged for over 30 years, I see the reality of this epidemic and its disproportionate impact on children. The number of children affected by the HIV epidemic increases each year almost as if the numbers are simply meant to convey what we already know — that not much is being done to care for those who are orphaned or to slow one of the most neglected complications of the HIV epidemic. None of this, of course, is of much comfort to the orphaned children.

I look into the faces of the orphaned children I meet, and often wonder what they are thinking as they struggle each day to survive. What is it like, for example, to get up as the sun rises and realize that it is unlikely there will be enough food for the day, or that you will again stand and watch all the other children go to school with their books and uniforms while you remain still and staring. I also wonder if they look at me, or any visitor like me, as an individual who might, just might, change their daily lives and their future. Or maybe they have gotten so used to visitors from foreign lands who come and look and listen and then never return that their hopes never reach the level that creates disappointment.

In the most remote and least visited orphan programs the children run up to and surround visitors, grab their hands, and at the urging of the local caretakers, often sing a song of welcome. In spite of their enthusiasm, these orphans are frequently the most impoverished, and yet, somehow, they manage a smile that breaks through their obvious poverty. It moves me to see so many orphans in need and to watch individual children jockeying to the front to get a space where they will be more visible. It reminds me of the scene in the movie *Cider House Rules*, adapted from the 1985 novel by John Irving, where the orphan children line up waiting to be adopted and shout out to the potential parents, "Look at me, look at me." Today the HIV orphan epidemic needs to be made visible and needs to be seen as individual children who deserve the love and care that all children long for.

On this World AIDS Day I am more worried than ever about the HIV orphan epidemic. Perhaps I shouldn't be. Maybe some big international organization or some large nongovernment organization or a

benevolent government will take up the cause. But in reality there are too many orphans and so someone's got to worry, and in fact, a lot more people need to be moved to worry. We all need to recognize that there is an entire generation of children orphaned by the HIV epidemic that are in desperate need of being rescued. Just as Jesus recognized the potential of the children who sat at his feet and refused to send them away at his disciples urging, we need to acknowledge that orphans are also welcomed inhabitants into the kingdom of heaven.

In 2011 the orphan crisis looms large. So large, in fact, that many will turn their eyes away, overwhelmed by the enormity of the need. Currently it is estimated that there are over 16 million orphans worldwide, with 6 million added to that number each year. Less than 20% of the orphans are infected with HIV. The majority have escaped HIV infection but not orphan hood. In two to three years there will be more orphans as a result of the HIV epidemic than there are adults living with HIV.

Every life is important, but over the last decades the priorities for the HIV epidemic have been to provide education to adults to help them to protect themselves from getting HIV infection, or if they are already infected, to provide them with drugs to control their infection so that they will have a normal life expectancy. All this is extremely important. But the orphan crisis is a direct consequence of placing their needs at an unacceptably low priority. Children do not choose to become orphans of the epidemic, nor is there a magic medicine that will erase their orphan status.

We are in good company when we advocate for orphans. We join with God, the prophets and Jesus in urging the Christian community to care for the widows and the orphans of this present world. It will be a tragedy if the Christian community looks back years from now and says that more should have been done to rescue the oppressed.

In Isaiah chapter 40:11 we read, "He tends his flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young." In the flock I see not just individuals, couples and families. I also see widows and orphans. God has given us the privilege of gathering them together and bringing them close to his heart.

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." James 1:27. (JwJ)

## Wegsending

Liefdegawes

Mededelings

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