

Ezekiel 33:7–20

“God’s Word with Teeth”

6th Midweek in Lent

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Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

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Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Introduction]

When we want to emphasize the effectiveness of something today, we say, “It has teeth!”

Try to cut steak with a butter knife, and you’ll experience a long meal. If you have false teeth, try taking them out and then eating corn on the cob. It just doesn’t work!

Civil laws are thought to work better today if they have teeth. Some people may drive excessively over the speed limit knowing that if they get caught, they’ll receive only a minimal fine.

BUT if the law has teeth – the fine is considerable, they may think twice about their heavy foot.

[Ezekiel]

Ezekiel was called by God to be his watchman to the children of Israel. He went into exile with the first wave of those taken captive. Many false prophets were predicting a short stay in Babylon, but Ezekiel warned them to repent, for their stay would be long.

Ezekiel was called by God to remind the people that because of their unrepented sin, they would endure a lengthy exile.

In the previous eight chapters, Ezekiel prophesies against various nations, but at the beginning of chapter 33, Ezekiel turns his attention to the children of Israel.

With only slight variations, the words of Ezek 33:7–9 duplicate 3:17–19.

As God’s spokesman, Ezekiel became a watchman.

In Old Testament times, the watchman would stand on the highest point of the city wall and, by blowing a trumpet,

- warn the people of approaching danger,
- an incoming messenger, or
- the progress of a battle.

Ezekiel was to warn God’s people of their sin.

This warning was to be issued not as a bothersome disruption of peoples’ lives,
but so that they would repent of their sin
and experience the new life that only God could impart to them.

Ezekiel’s message of repentance and faith, Law and Gospel,
was not to be taken lightly. God’s Word is effective. God’s Word has teeth.

The Teeth of God’s Word Lead the Christian to a Life of Repentance and Faith.

I. God’s Word has teeth to work repentance in us: his Law.

A. When God, through his watchman, warns us of our sin, it is a serious matter.

1. It leads certainly to eternal death, for “the soul who sins shall die” (18:4; cf. 18:13, 18, 20, 24, 26).
2. Our good works and self-righteousness cannot save us (v 13; 1 Cor 10:12).

B. We don’t like the teeth of God’s Law; we feel that it is unjust (vv 17–19).

1. Sometimes we think God’s evaluation of our situation is too harsh.
Surely there is goodness in us!
Ask any man on the street and they will tell you they are good.
They are better than other!
They keep the 10 commandments!
2. God assures us that it is his nature to be just, and so he will judge us accordingly (v 20).

God’s Word is the bite of the Law.

[Transition]

When the Law has done its work, there’s no need to despair, as the house of Israel thought (v 10).

God’s Word also has teeth that cut quite the opposite way, for our salvation. Can we call these teeth? I think so.

II. *God's Word ALSO has teeth to work faith unto salvation in us: his Gospel.*

- A. When God's Law has convicted us of our sin, we turn to him in repentance and faith, asking with the Israelites, "How then can we live?" (v 10; cf. vv 14–15).
- B. God makes his promise with an oath (with teeth!):
"As I live, declares the Lord GOD" (v 11).
 - 1. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (v 11).
 - 2. His reason for using the Law is to have us turn from our sin (repent) and live (2 Pet 3:9).
- C. We have new life through Jesus, our Savior.
 - 1. Jesus didn't just talk to us about love; he put teeth in it—He acted in love by going the way of suffering and death on the cross.
 - 2. On Calvary, Jesus suffered the just wrath of God's punishment, the ultimate in punishment, punishment with teeth, as he died on the cross, not for anything he had done wrong, but for your sin and mine.
 - 3. As Jesus shed his innocent blood on the cross, justice was served, as atonement for sin was made once and for all.
 - 4. Jesus' death had teeth, as we see the curtain in the temple torn in two at the moment he died (Mt 27:51).
 - 5. His resurrection had teeth, as no stone blocking the entrance to the tomb, not even death itself, could hold him back from rising from the dead (Lk 24:6).
- D. Through his means of grace, God works repentance and faith in everyday life.
 - 1. Our God goes to the heart of the matter by transplanting our dead heart, killed by the Law, with a transformed heart (Ezek 11:19).
 - 2. Our faith is strengthened through a life of repentance as we daily drown our sinful nature by remembering our Baptism.
 - 3. Our sanctified life is uplifted as our teeth literally touch Christ's body and blood with his assurance of forgiveness in Holy Communion.

God's Word has teeth of nails for the Gospel!

[Conclusion]

God says to us,

*I have sent you watchmen to show you your sin.
When my Law has done its work, you need not despair,
for 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked,
but that the wicked turn from his way and live' (v 11).
And through my crucified and resurrected Son, you have new life—with
teeth in it—now and for all of eternity!"*

God's Word has teeth!

The bite of the Law and teeth of nails for the Gospel!

No doubt! God's Word has teeth! Amen!

You are the body of Christ, each one of you part of it! Amen!