

Sing It Anyway

We're in a sermon series in which we're taking the words of some of the great Old Testament prophets and applying them to ourselves as if they were spoken directly to us and for us – because they were. This week's passage is Ezekiel 2:1-7.

1. Warm up question. Since Sunday was Mother's Day, many of the sermon illustrations were drawn from the lives of wonderful mothers. Tell us a fun memory you have of your mother or someone who has been like a mother to you.
2. The words of guidance spoken in Ezekiel 2 arose out of a vision Ezekiel experienced. Before we delve into the words of guidance, let's first get a sense of the vision itself. It happened as Ezekiel was worshiping at a riverside with a group of Israelites in exile in Babylon. Read Ezekiel 1:1-14 and 22-28.
 - a. As best you can understand, describe what Ezekiel saw as he moved through his vision, from start to finish.
 - b. What purpose do the winged creatures seem to serve?
 - c. From what Ezekiel says, describe how God "looked" in this vision (vss. 26-27). Do you think this is God's ultimate form or just a temporary form assumed for purposes of this appearance to Ezekiel?
 - d. What might be the symbolism of the rainbow around the throne (vs. 28)?
3. At the end of chapter 1, Ezekiel falls on his face and begins to hear "the voice of someone speaking." The words spoken are recorded in chapter 2. Let's explore these words in bite-size chunks. First, let's read Ezekiel 2:1-3.
 - a. At the outset of this sequence, Ezekiel is flat on his face and seems temporarily paralyzed – unable to stand up. Have you ever experienced that feeling? What brought you to that place of paralysis?
 - b. Given the way verse 2 is worded, Ezekiel doesn't appear to stand up in his own strength. Instead he says, "When God spoke, a spirit entered into me and set me on my feet." What Ezekiel is describing here has been experienced by many people of faith in many different forms – a sudden strength that fills us when God calls us to face a great challenge in life. Where does that power come from? What is it? And how do we get it?
 - c. As a modern-day example of the phenomenon of becoming "Spirit filled," Jeff described the experience of Malala Yousafzai [You-SHAF-sigh]. Looking back on her assassination attempt, Malala now says:

"God was with me. I totally changed, and I don't know how. After that incident when I was attacked, the fear just went away. My weakness, my fear, and my

hopelessness died on that day and I became stronger. Now I strongly believe that nothing can stop me in this mission to say that girls deserve the right to go to school.”

What most strikes you, or speaks to you, in Malala’s words or example?

- d. When in your life have you felt God’s Spirit stand you up? In other words, when have you been surprised at the level of strength you found to face a great challenge?
4. Read Ezekiel 2:3-7. In these verses, God warns Ezekiel that the mission he is being sent on may seem futile. The evil he will face may prove stubborn and persistent. The people may simply “refuse to hear.” This is a realistic reminder of the stubborn staying power of evil in the world.
- a. When in your life have you found yourself up against something that felt like deeply entrenched, almost unmovable evil? What did that feel like? What happened? How did it affect you?
 - b. What’s the point of trying to deliver a message to someone (or a group of people) if they won’t listen? If they’re not going to listen, why should we try?
 - c. What issue or cause is important to you, but feels impossible given the level of entrenched opposition?
 - d. Read through the words of Martina McBride’s song “Anyway,” found on the next page. What wisdom or insight do you draw from her words?
5. Like Ezekiel, we too are called to live like prophets, *i.e.*, to take a stand for what is good and right – in both our public and private lives – even when it’s costly.
- a. Jeff shared the story of Jeanne Manford, an ordinary mother and school teacher who found the courage to take a bold public stand on behalf of her homosexual son way back in 1972. She rebuked the police who arrested and beat her son, wrote an editorial published in the New York Post, marched with her son in the first Gay Pride Parade, and founded PFLAG. What wisdom or insight do we gain from Jeanne’s example?
 - b. Jeff also shared the story of the mother of Bill Fix, someone who lived her entire life in obscurity, yet had a profound prophetic impact on Bill’s life. She modeled for him what it looks like to live with contentment in the face of hardship and even death itself. Who has been a prophetic witness in your own life? What have you learned from that prophet?
 - c. Within your own circle of influence, who might be looking to your life for prophetic witness? How does that make you feel?

Anyway

Martina McBride

You can spend your whole life building
Something from nothin'.
One storm can come and blow it all away.
Build it anyway.

You can chase a dream
That seems so out of reach,
And you know it might not ever come your way.
Dream it anyway.

God is great,
But sometimes life ain't good.
And when I pray,
It doesn't always turn out like I think it should.
But I do it anyway.
I do it anyway.

This world's gone crazy.
It's hard to believe
That tomorrow will be better than today.
Believe it anyway.

You can love someone with all your heart
For all the right reasons.
In a moment they can choose to walk away.
Love 'em anyway.

God is great,
But sometimes life ain't good.
And when I pray,
It doesn't always turn out like I think it should.
But I do it anyway.
I do it anyway.

You can pour your soul out singing
A song you believe in
That tomorrow they'll forget you ever sang.
Sing it anyway.
Yeah, sing it anyway.

I sing,
I dream,
I love,
Anyway.