

A Sermon Shared With the Church of Guatemala

John 16:31-33

Rev. Brett Shoemaker ~ September 16, 2018 ~ Iglesia Presbiteriana Monte Hebron

31 Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? **32** The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. **33** I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!”

NOTE: Thanks goes to Ron Sprinkle for his all night preparation of the translation and for standing next to me in helping me make this clear to the people. Thanks also to Osmundo, the revolutionary pastor bringing hope to his congregation in dark times. And thanks to the people of Guatemala for their inspiration and their joy.



Buenos Días!

First of all, my friends, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this morning! I called my daughter last night to tell her what a great country this is. I told her I would love to bring her back to Guatemala someday. She said, well.... I would prefer France.

I come here with great humility. In only one week, I have learned more from the people of Guatemala than I have ever taught in all my years as a pastor:

- From children, I have learned the freedom to love life simply.
- From women leading churches, I have learned courage no sermon could teach.
- From the beauty of your country, I have learned again how God cares for us with this Earth.
- And from young people in a concert this week, I learned about passion to be transformed and to transform the world through music that they wrote.

However there is the issue of my Spanish: I've been trying to learn...

PERO, MI ESPAÑOL NO ES BUENO...

AUN. LO SIENTO, IN AVANCE, Y...

GRACIAS PARA LA AYUDA DE MI AMIGO, RONALDO. TAMBIÉN, GRACIAS A OSMUNDO PARA COMPARTIR SU IGLESIA CONMIGO Y MIS COMPAÑEROS, LYNN Y RONALDO Y LORIE.

(But my Spanish is not good dot-dot-dot yet.

I'm sorry in advance, and thank you for the help of my friend Ronaldo. Also thank you to as Mundo for sharing his church with me and my friends Lynn and Ronaldo and Lorie for sharing the journey.)

Please be gracious to me. The last time I spoke in Spanish in front of a church, I called myself

Jesus. I mixed up AMO (I love) with LLAMÓ (I am called) when praying for a meal and said:

EL DIOS, GRACIAS POR LA COMIDA, ME LLAMÓ JESÚS CRISTO...

(God thank you for this food, I am called Jesus Christ)

Thankfully the translator fixed the problem and I was forgiven.

Please stand and hear these words from John's gospel:

John 16:31-33 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

31 Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? 32 The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. 33 I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!"

Please pray with me.

Lord, May the words that I speak, and the thoughts and our own heads be your words this morning. You are our strength... And life... And beauty... And courage... And our redeemer. Amen.

**ESTE ES DÍA EL SEÑOR HA HECHO!
ESTE ES DÍA EL SEÑOR HA HECHO!**

(This is the day the Lord has made)

Do you believe this?

With all that I hear in the news about your country, I wonder how you can believe this. In only one week in Guatemala, the political situation seems to be going the wrong direction.

Still, time after time, day after day, the people of this country have shown me joy, peace, and hope when everything seems so dark. But behind your smiles and hospitality, there is fear and

worry that you will be repeating a history that simply should not be repeated.

So in the midst of the darkness can we still say:

ESTE ES DÍA EL SEÑOR HA HECHO?

Are passage opens with Jesus asking, "Do you now believe this?" Jesus is asking his disciples, "Do you now believe I have come from the Father? That I am who I say I am?"

POR QUÉ? Why does he ask this?

The end of Jesus' ministry is coming. These are just the last few verses of a chapter in which Jesus is preparing his disciples for the most difficult time as his followers. His arrest. His death. His burial. Then the years to follow will be much persecution for all. But in the middle, there is Resurrection!

Jesus makes two promises here:

First, EN EL MUNDO, USTEDES HABRÁN DE SUFRIR (In this world you will have trouble.)

(You all should be nodding, ES VERDAD!)
But with God, there is always... A but (UN PERO).

PERO TENGAN VALOR: YO HE VENCIDO AL MUNDO

(Take heart, I have overcome the world)

This is the second promise. A promise of hope.

All week, I have been wondering, "As an American pastor, what can I possibly say to bring hope to this situation?" I cannot make the same promises of our Savior Jesus Christ, because as I said earlier, I am not Jesus. That much is clear right? But we can come together to encourage each other and remember the promises of Jesus, the power of his love, his sacrifice, his resurrection. We can offer each other encouragement, because I will be honest. Things are not exactly settled in our country

either. Our own leadership makes me nervous, and it is affecting Guatemala, too. So... We need each other, yes? As God's people.

I want to share with you some poetry I wrote. I warned you, it is not good poetry. It was a very short poem I wrote for my wife the night before I proposed. I have not shared this with many people. Only my family, and now Guatemala. That night before, I also wondered, "What do I say?" I was nervous. And to make it worse, I was going to do it in a canoe. They very unstable canoe. Here's what I wrote:

- *What can I say?*
- *What can I do?*
- *Can I kneel inside a canoe?*

I didn't know if it was a good idea to move toward her and try to kneel to propose. Maybe we would both end up in the water and I would lose the ring.
Can I kneel inside a canoe... And... I didn't know how she'd respond.

These are the three questions I want to think about this morning. In these times, when the boat is rocky: What can we say? What can we do? And... Can we kneel even in the middle of *this* situation?

Earlier in this chapter, Jesus says... "Now is your time of grief, but you will see me again and rejoice... And *no one* will take away your joy.

This is my prayer for Guatemala.

And so, the first question: WHAT CAN I SAY? Scripture tells us, God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power and love. Do you know how I learned this week but we can say? From the courage of young people who sang songs that they wrote at a concert in San Felipe, revolutionary songs calling for peace and Liberty. And from the courage of a pastor (thank you, Osmundo) to say that we must speak these words, sing these words, and leave them out. Hear the lyrics to One song written and sung by a group of young men called Banda Generación Cuatro:

*EN ESTE MUNDO EXISTE TANTA
MALDAD*

*LA GENTE HOY EN DÍA
NO PUEDE VIVIR EN PAZ
HAY HAMBRE Y SUICIDIO
EXTORSIONES Y CORRUPCION*

*(IN THIS WORLD THERE IS SO MUCH
EVIL*

*THE PEOPLE TODAY
CAN NOT LIVE IN PEACE
THERE IS HUNGER AND SUICIDE
EXTORTIONS AND CORRUPTION)*

That takes courage. There are those that would not want those words to be sung. Verdad?

But we must speak the truth. Jesus makes the promise: *In this world we will have trouble*. But it's an opportunity to be united, to put away our own barriers and borders and speak God's Word and Truth. Jesus knows what trouble can come when you speak truth, but he knows the rest of the promise too.

But it can't in there, with our words.

The second question we asked about our rocky situation is: WHAT CAN I DO?

It begins with what we say, but when we begin to walk the way we talk, that is when the boat really begins to rock.

I spent the weekend with all of the ordained Presbyterian women of Guatemala (every single one! - which is only 6 out of hundreds). What an Incredible Gift! Their stories are testimonies that, first, the world has great trouble. But also they press on because they are *called* by God, and their lives are lived in hope--their lives preach hope--that, second, Jesus has overcome the world.

Pastor Lorie, who taught a piece of the weekend describe the whole story of scripture as:

- The story of God's unfailing love.

- The refusal of God to give up on his children.

But first, we have to know and remind each other that we are all God's beloved children. All. TODOS!

EVERY... small child, woman, man, Guatemala, American, immigrant, indigenous person, business person, farm worker, tuk-tuk driver, and YES, even every president. What can we do? First, is to expand our idea of what it means to be God's child. Then we sing the songs we wrote, march for peace, stand up for the rights of a child of God deserves!

I have a feeling you have a leader in Osmundo, who will give you plenty of things to do in this world where we are promised to have trouble. Oh, I will pray for you. You must speak. **We** must speak. You must act. **We** must act.

But last week, one more question. It may be the most important. When the boat threatens to tip... even then... can we kneel before God and trust that he truly will overcome?

When it seems we are on the edge of disaster, the devil will tell us that prayer is a waste of time.

We must speak out!

We must act courageously!

But prayer?

It seems unproductive. Kneeling in the boat when it's unstable may just tip it.

One of the women at our Pastora's conference gave a prayer that moved us all to tears even if we didn't know Spanish. It gave voice to the struggle of your people, and women in leadership, and to a long history of Guatemalans with no voice. But, this prayer was a vision of what might be possible if God really is still on the throne. And guess what?

Jesus promised that he is!

There is a song I love called, *Volcanoland*, that comes out of Ecuador, by a group called Caedmon's Call.

The chorus talks about what it is like to live in the shade, or the shadow, of a volcano. You never know when it might erupt in change your life forever. I know you can relate to this. But it ends with us one line in Spanish.

EL SEÑOR ES SIEMPRE BUENO.

This is our declaration together. When Jesus says you will have trouble, he is saying, Volcanos will erupt. But to say, EL SEÑOR ES SIEMPRE BUENO is to kneel in the boat, in prayer, and to declare to each other and to the world,

Jesus had overcome the world!!

Even in the shade of a political volcano.
Even in the shade of a financial volcano.
Even in the shade of a relationship volcano.
Even in the shade of a *REAL* volcano.

EL SEÑOR ÉS SIEMPRE BUENO.

Speak the words. Act them out. And prayer is most important as we trust God together.

Finally, listen to the rest of the words written by the for young men from your own country:

QUE TIENEN DE RODILLAS
A TODA ESTA NACIÓN

(All of those in our nation that have knees...)

And allowed the continuation of this song to be our closing prayer:

ESCHUCHA, O MI DIOS
LA PETICIÓN DE ESTA GENERACIÓN
QUE CLAMA POR TODA ESTA NACIÓN
Y NUESTRA GUATEMALA
TIENE TRISTEZA EN EL CORAZÓN
SANA NUESTRA TIERRA

LO PEDIMOS POR FAVOR

(Listen, oh my God. The petition of this generation which calls for all this nation in our Guatemala has great sadness in the heart. We ask you please for health in our land) .

AMEN.