

My surprise trip to Ohio in June of 2022

Dear Friends,

I have paused the series of articles about "my hometown" to share this note of gratitude with you. During my trip to Ohio in June of 2022, I was very blessed to spend time with friends and to visit with the congregations of both First Lutheran and also Bethesda on the Bay. I would like to extend my thanks to The Ghana Committee, the congregation of FLC and Pastor Rosy for the lovely birthday party, cake, and gifts that were a fantastic surprise on my actual birthday - June 26th. I would very much like to thank Pastor Angela and the congregation of Bethesda for the warm welcome, the chance to share the story of the mission, and the meet & greet after service on July 3rd. And a special thank you to Pastor Jimmy for his friendship and hospitality. I was so happy to see all of you!!

For this article, I am sharing with you the message/sermon that I gave at First Lutheran Church on June 26th, which Pastor Rosy adapted to be *Global Ghana Mission Sunday*. I know some of you had trouble hearing my message, or you may not have been able to attend that day. In case you missed it for some reason, now you can read my sermon below.

Thank you - God bless you, Pastor Ben

6/26/22 – FLC – Message/Sermon – delivered by Pastor Ben

INTRODUCTION

Beloved in Jesus Christ, it's a special day for me, today, being my 70th birthday, which should have been celebrated with my wife Julie and the family. However, by some interesting turn of events, I'm here, celebrating it with, you who, from 1993, have become a family to me. A relationship so cherished that I chose to come when the opportunity was offered to me by friends of my son Benjamin.

This is not a typical sermon. You may call it a conversation about the **relationship** that I have had with you, beginning when I met you in 1993/1994. Then from 1995; officially beginning the mission in Akrampa, which used to be a community overrun by the worship of fetish, of small idols, but now tells a different **story**. A story that continues to be told because of your continued support, a consequence of the Gospel preached to them, and the impact of the school. The current school will be celebrating its **25 years** in existence, all thanks to you.

BODY

I wish to speak briefly on two selected scripture texts for today, from two of the readings. One is focusing on 1 **Kings 19: 20 and 21**, while the other is **Luke 9:62**. In 1 Kings 19 and verse 20, the Bible says Elisha's initial reaction to the mantle thrown over him was that a call to discipleship and mentoring has been extended to him. It was quite clear to Elisha, that Elijah was passing on the prophetic authority to him, as it were, so Elisha would continue from where Elijah would leave it. That meant leaving all for the sake of God, and God's purpose in his life.

Elisha, according to the Word of God. . "returned to his oxen and slaughtered them. He used the wood from the plow to build a fire to roast their flesh. He passed around the meat to the townspeople, and they all ate. Then he went with Elijah as his assistant." (1 Kings 19:21 NLT). In a sense Elisha was ready to **trust** God for the work ahead and albeit, for all of his personal needs. After all, he literally cut off all links to livelihood and support from friends and family. We also need to trust God to do same for us. We can trust God's faithfulness any time.

Fast forward, it is like the disciples when they left "all and followed him". The Gospel of Matthew puts it this way: "They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind." (Matthew 4:22 NLT). This view is vividly expressed in the Hymnal #696. Please indulge me as I sing the first stanza: (*singing*)

In the Gospel of Luke chapter 9 and verse 62, Jesus makes a categorical declaration that might mean, to deny one's self of everything else, and to follow Christ so we may be approved of Him. The approval is contingent on not letting go of whatever task one is assigned to undertake, or to execute, for that matter. To be like Jesus who, with a face set like a flint (Isaiah 50:7), was all focused on the precise agenda on hand, and, to continue to be committed to the task, in spite of any difficulties.

To the glory and praise of God, in regard to being your missionary at Akrampa, because of your continued prayer and other support, we continue to be committed to the task on hand. The question, that has also been my **challenge** and **motivation** in continuing to serve in Ghana among my own people, with you, is: "**Why am I here?**" & "**Why am I still here?**"

The Challenge

The Akrampa Mission, *officially*, started in 1995, when Pastor Jimmy came to dedicate the **shed** which would, over the course of a couple years, also become the **first classroom** of what is now the Akrampa School. The school now has 2 blocks of classrooms housing grades Kindergarten through 6th Grade with a newly built multipurpose KITCHEN building for the teaching and learning of **Home Economics Subject** (as it is called in Ghana). And later a Junior High School – Grade 7th to 9th – was built by the government.

The **plough** we took hold of, was bringing the Gospel of Jesus to a people that '**walked in darkness**', as the prophet Isaiah (9:2) and Matthew (4:16) talked about. The **challenge**, was how to bring them to **Jesus, the Light of the world** (John 8:12).

The answer to this question **was, and still is**, to bring the Gospel to them, in a wholistic way. Not preaching to them, but demonstrating the **love of God** in Christ.

St. Augustine says, "[What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like.](#)"

The reception of the Gospel has freed the people of Akrampa from idol worship and opened up their community to the point that though previously socially **not** accepted, now even strangers are building their homes in the village and live among them.

The Motivation

The question then arises: '**what should be the motivation?**' It is the urgent need to be able to turn them to **Jesus, Who alone is their light and salvation** (Psalm 27:1) as He is for you and me, and continues to be so for us in this **dark and hopeless** world. The **motivation** ought to be relevant so once the hand grips the **plough** would not let go, and, by the grace of God, this has been the case, for the past **twenty-seven (27) years**.

Among the many paths of possible darkness, is/was the concern of the parents in Akrampa for the quality of life for their children's **future**. This is a fast-paced world driven by technology; technology that is the product of education. So, we decided to bring education to their doorstep by building a school for the children of Akrampa. I read somewhere that, "a human being attains his/her full heights by being educated". The **motivation** therefore is to attempt to bring development to them by way of educating the future leaders of the community.

CONCLUSION

We continue not to be distracted by any challenges, knowing that if we continue to preach the Gospel, of **love**, and prayerfully handle the motivation of **the future** of the children, Christ will be formed in them, so their future will be built on Christ, the Solid Rock. This is the **mantle**, the **plow**, and May the Lord continue to give grace to do all things through Christ Who strengthens us.

To the Glory of God. Amen.