

April 2017

### Look to the Lord and his strength (Psalm 105:4)

These words recently struck me as a challenge that I would rather avoid. They immediately led me to ask myself the question: "God, where do I find your strength? Where can I see it at work? When will you really come and break into our land in your strength and power?" Did not Paul say: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power"? (1 Corinthians 4:20). I felt the temptation to ignore the tension in my spirit as I read these few words! How I would rather stay in my comfort zone and be thankful for the way things are. But the desire to see God's power does not let us go. As David called out: "O God ... I earnestly seek you ... I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and glory." (Psalm 63:1-2). Let us pray for our land with a new desire to see God's strength and power. -RS-

### The veiled gospel (1)

What kind of veil lies over Germany that keeps the people from a living relationship with Jesus? The gospel is "veiled" where "the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ". (2 Corinthians 4:4). "They are darkened in their understanding ... because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts." (Ephesians 4:18). They were also led astray "by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming" (v.14). They do not believe in a Creator or even a Redeemer – or they think everything will be fine because they belong to a church. They just believe in the prevailing view, the "spirit of the age", which is actually "hollow and deceptive philosophy which depends on human tradition and the principles of this world rather than on Christ". (Colossians 2:8). The "spirit of falsehood" (1 John 4:6) keeps the majority of the German population from seeking the living Redeemer Jesus and finding him.

An encounter with the risen Jesus breaks through unbelief. He appeared to the disciples and then once again especially to Thomas – and later to Paul and many others. The encounter with the risen Lord strengthened their belief and completely changed them. Throughout history, people have been encountering the living Redeemer, including those who knew nothing or very little about him, and have then put their faith in him.

#### Prayer:

- **"O come, Spirit of truth, come and dwell in us, spread light and revelation, banish falsehood and pretence ..."** - German Protestant Hymnal No. 136. (John 16:13)
- **Pray for teachers who "correctly handle the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15) and also expose false teaching (1 Timothy 1:3,4).**
- **That many people will have supernatural encounters with Jesus and so turn to him. (Acts 9:3-5)** -JB-

### A decisive factor in the German elections

In this year with elections at both the national and the local state level, our attention is drawn to one decisive factor. The preamble of the Federal Constitution (also referred to

as the Basic Law of the German Federal Republic) reads as follows: "In awareness of their responsibility to God and man ... the German people ... have drawn up for themselves this constitution." Such a reference to "God" by political leaders is very unusual and rare in Europe. It originated in 1949 from the all too recent experiences of the writers during the Nazi period. They knew where it leads, when politicians take responsibility for their work only "before man": to a "Fuehrer", to the "national entity", etc. Every political decision made only "before man" is in fact superficial. When the decision is not made "before God", it is made for some ideology other than God's. Therefore it is permissible for us to ask our candidates in elections the question:

*"Mr./Ms. XY, what does the first sentence in the preamble of the constitution - that political decisions should be made in the awareness of a responsibility to God and man - mean for you personally and for the way in which you will conduct your political activities?"*

We can be thankful to God that three of the highest representatives of our country – Steinmeier, Lammert and Merkel - are politicians who could answer this question positively. Furthermore, we are thankful that members of parliament from a cross section of all parties meet once a month, before the start of the parliamentary sitting, in a "prayer breakfast" for discussion and prayer where they always have the example of the person Jesus of Nazareth before them.

#### Prayer:

- **Give thanks for our Federal Constitution. (Psalm 22:4,5)**
- **Ask for many members of parliament to be elected who will follow the example of Jesus of Nazareth. (Matthew 7:24-27)**
- **Blessings for the leaders of "Initiative Responsibility before God and Man" and all members of parliament who attend the prayer breakfast. (Psalm 90:17)** -OS-

### Erdogan and immigrants of Turkish origin

On April 16<sup>th</sup> a referendum will take place which will decide whether the way is clear for the establishment of a presidential dictatorship in Turkey under Erdogan. This would have a direct influence on the relationship of Europe and NATO with Turkey and would at the same time be an encouragement to the Islamic religious leaders in our land. Without doubt Turkey stands at a crossroads. In his election campaign President Erdogan is intentionally seeking to create division among immigrants of Turkish origin living here. He wants to draw as many as possible onto his side in the referendum, as these immigrants for the most part have dual citizenship and have voting rights in Germany and Turkey. He is purposely seeking confrontation with much provocation and is openly threatening to cancel agreements on refugees and release a wave of immigration into Europe. Many Turkish immigrants are impressed by this show of strength as they feel that they are often treated as second class citizens and they identify themselves more with

Turkey than with Germany. They have been living here permanently since the 1960s, when for economic purposes Germany specifically recruited people from Turkey.

There has been much growth together in our society but disadvantages clearly still exist for "German Turks". The lack of acceptance leaves behind the wounds of rejection and further integration difficulties remain hidden because of their adherence to Islam. According to a study, Islamic law takes precedence over German law for almost one half of Turkish immigrants. We need an open and honest confrontation with Islam, but we also need forgiveness and healing in those areas where integration measures have failed.

**Prayer:**

- **That the referendum will not succeed in favour of Erdogan - for the well-being of Turkey. (Psalm 41:11)**
- **For healing of wounds of rejection among immigrants of Turkish origin. (Matthew 8:7)**
- **That God will show new ways and solutions for dealing with Islam in Germany and with the problems of integration caused by Islam. (Psalm 25:4,5)** -AS-

**German-Chinese relations**

Diplomatic relations have existed between Germany and China since 1972 and they have developed extensively. China is not an easy partner. The country is still ruled by a communist party which does not allow any criticism of the way its administration runs the country.

However since 2011 there has been close inter-governmental consultations whereby the cabinets of each country meet together with their leaders. The relations are described as a "comprehensive and strategic partnership".

In 2016 China was the most important trading partner for Germany when trade in goods was worth 170 billion Euros. Germany is one of the largest investors in China – ca. 5000 German companies have subsidiaries in China or are affiliated with Chinese firms. This often leads to patent theft to the detriment of our local firms. In the past year the purchase of German firms by Chinese companies has increased significantly, often simply to acquire their technical know-how. This is of great concern for Germany.

In the area of technical training and further education there is extensive cooperation. Tens of thousands of Chinese study here. And many of them come to faith in Germany!

What are God's plans and intentions for these relations? At the Global Gathering in Munich a friendship alliance was formed between Chinese and German Christians. Many Chinese pray for Germany. For sure this is not yet happening the other way round. Therefore it is important that we bring these relations before God in prayer to seek God's purposes in them.

**Prayer**

- **Thanks for the growth in the good relations with China. (Psalm 35:18)**
- **Pray for God's protection from deception and abuse of trust in the cooperation. (Psalm 119:114)**
- **Show us Lord your kingdom purposes and plans for these relations with China. (Psalm 86:8-11)** -RS-

**Think again: no alternative to a two-state solution?**

For the first time since the "peace process" between the State of Israel and the Palestinians was initiated by the USA and the Soviet Union after the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the USA is now giving serious consideration to the possibility of a one-state solution as well as to the two-state solution.

The first direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians took place under the mediation of Norway in Oslo at the beginning of the 1990s. The "Oslo Accords" led eventually to an agreement for a transitional Palestinian self-government in specific areas of the West Bank and Gaza under the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1994. All unresolved issues such as the status of Jerusalem, the right of return of Arab refugees and the Jewish settlements in the West Bank were to be clarified in later agreements. To date there has been no progress even though in 2000 at the Camp David Summit, sponsored by the USA, Israel offered wide-reaching concessions to the Palestinians. Since then there has been a constant build-up of pressure on Israel internationally for a two-state solution which would also mean the division of Jerusalem with the Old City and Temple Mount under Islamic Palestinian rule. After the withdrawal of Israel from Gaza in 2005 and divisive elections for the PA in 2006, the Hamas party took over control of Gaza from the PA in 2007. In Psalm 2:1 we read: "Why to the nations and the peoples plot in vain?" The peoples are continuously searching for a solution "in vain" because it is not grounded in the will of God as revealed in his Word. The process has stalled. God demands a rethink – true repentance! Let us pray for this also with regard to our government's policy towards Israel.

**Prayer:**

- **That the Spirit of God will make our politicians rethink their Israel policy according to God's Word. (Psalm 1:1)**
- **Pray for true repentance and forgiveness for the disregard for God's Word concerning Israel. (Joel 3:1-2)**
- **That new approaches towards the "peace process" will be recognised also internationally. (Luke 19:35-42)** -RS-

**The fight for life - euthanasia**

After much debate the German parliament decided in November 2015 to make euthanasia and assisted suicide punishable offences. But now the Federal Court in Leipzig has ruled that those who are critically ill have *in exceptional circumstances* the right to self-determination and therefore to take medication for a painless suicide. So the choice between life and death now lies in the hands of the state. Suffering is however neither measurable objectively nor definable in legal terms. The state should not be justifying euthanasia! Every life is precious and sacrosanct to God.

**Prayer:**

- **That life from beginning to end remains protected in Germany. (Deuteronomy 30:19)** -AS-

**Dates for your diary**

- 16.04-18.04** Pray on the move: a prayer walk for families.
- 28.04-01.05** Call of the Watchman Regional Leaders annual meeting.

*Blessings from Rosemarie Stresemann, Ortwin Schweitzer and Team*