

Predigt
über
Genesis 12, 1-4a (Berufung Abrahams)
im Dankgottesdienst zum 50. Geburtstag meines Mannes
BEN KHUMALO am 05. August 2000 in der ev.-luth.-Michaeliskirche
in Vryheid/KwaZulu-Natal, Südafrika

- Ubbo Seegelken -

Bazalwane!

Liebe Geschwister der Familien Khumalo und Seegelken, liebe Freundinnen und Freunde aus Südafrika und Deutschland!

Ben has asked me to use a few verses from Genesis 12 for my sermon. We are going to hear them first in Ben's own new isiZulu-translation. **Ben, ich möchte dich bitten, diese Verse für uns zu lesen.**

Ben: UGenesisi isahluko seshumi nambili, kusukela evesini lokuqala kuye kwelesine.

MaZungu: 1 Usethi-ke uSmakade kuAbhram:

„Shiya phansi umndeni nabozalo bonke,
uphume kwelakini - kweloyihlomkhulu -,
uye kwelikude, engiyokukhombisa lona!

2 “Ngizimisele lukhulu ngawe:

Uyoba nguyise wesikhulu isizwe lesi
engiyosiphemba ngawe.

Liyoduma umhlaba wonke igama lakho.

Ofisela omunye okuhle,

uyofanekisa alinganise ngawe!

3 “Ngiyomphatha kahle ophatha wena kahle,

ngimehlisele okubi ohlupha wena nokuzondayo.

Izizwe zonke zomhlaba ziyobusiseka ngawe!”

4 Wasuka-ke uAbhram ngengokusho kukaSmakade;

I am now reading this passage in German, in the revised version of Martin Luther's translation:

“Und der HERR sprach zu Abram: Geh aus deinem Vaterland und von deiner Verwandtschaft und aus deines Vaters Hause in ein Land, das ich dir zeigen will.

2 Und ich will dich zum großen Volk machen und will dich segnen und dir einen großen Namen machen und du sollst ein Segen sein.

3 Ich will segnen, die dich segnen und verfluchten, die dich verfluchten: und in dir sollen gesegnet werden alle Geschlechter auf Erden.

4 Da zog Abram aus, wie der HERR zu ihm gesagt hatte.

Let me start with a question:

Is Ben^o - who celebrates his 50th birthday with a church service today - like Abraham? Is he perhaps a new Abraham?

Definitely not.

It is true, however, that both left (better: had to leave) their home-country as a result of a call, which they themselves understood as a call from God.

But then look at the differences:

Abraham lived about 1 700 years before Christ; he was a nomad in Mesopotamia, the Iraq of today. And his way led him through Syria to the country of Palestine, in those days inhabited by the Canaanites. He even went to Egypt for some time according to the biblical story - until he finally found a permanent homestead in Palestine - Israel, the so-called promised land. The goods he took with him on this long journey were mainly animals = cattle, sheep, goats, large herds of them, a number of camels probably too, and, of course, a number of slaves. He arrived in his new home-country as a rich man.

Now look at Ben's journey more than 3 500 years later = no cattle, no sheep, no goats going with him when he left South Africa in the 70s; no slaves either. Just himself, a South African of black colour who had to flee from his home-country because of apartheid - with a suitcase in his hands, containing some clothing, some books. This is how he arrived in his new home-country of Germany.

Let us also look at the promises - **izethembiso** - Abraham got and compare them with Ben's. As far as offspring are concerned he can produce 3 children and 2 grandchildren. I have little hope that these will be the beginning of **isizwe esikhulu** - a great nation - **der Anfang eines großen Volkes**. And as far as a great name is concerned: there have been many zears, when the name of Ben Khumalo was not held in high esteem by each and everybody but when the powerful people of this home-country regarded him - who was fighting against apartheid - as an opponent, event an enemy to the official policy, a traitor, a communist and what else they labelled him.

An even more important difference: Abraham became the father of 3 religions - above all the Jewish faith, then the Christian faith and the Islamic faith. We are not expecting **Khumaloism** as a new creed to come into existence - thanks God!

Finally, let's not forget this: According to the biblical genealogy in the book of Genesis, Ben (which means Benjamin) was not like Abraham; he was also not his son, not even his grandson - but: Benjamin was (let me say: only) the great-grandson of Abraham, even more: he was the youngest of Abraham's great-grandsons. That makes a difference, I suppose.

So far so good about the differences between Abraham and Ben. But, of course, such human observations are not the criteria for God's actions. More than 3 600

^o "uBhen', Bhenjamin', Sthemb' amandl' eNkos'. Sicel' inhlanhla!" (Ben, Benjamin, We-hope-for-and-trust-in-the-Might-of-God. We-ask-for-Luck!) so he was named at birth.

years between Abraham's times and our times do not mean that God could and would not let us experience calls and face challenges that can well be compared with those in Abraham's life.

Think of the simple fact of God speaking to mankind. I admit it is sometimes difficult to discern the Lord's voice from the many other voices that try to attract our attention. It may demand to withdraw from the sounds and noises of daily life and then wait and listen to what God has to say to us, to you, to me. Even then it is sometimes only afterwards when we look back in life, that we realize: At that stage of my life God has been calling me but I didn't notice then or didn't want to listen - but God, being a good father who goes on loving his children - has led me good ways nevertheless.

From Ben I know that he has clearly heard certain calls from God. During our present visit in South Africa I heard him tell other people about his call to ministry. Another call was also quite distinct in early year = the challenge to fight any form of racism and discrimination. We are well aware how God used other people in Ben's surroundings to make this call be heard by Ben - to start with **Baba and Mama**, not to forget the brothers and sisters who gave him an example and influenced him and wakened his conscience. This gives much reason to say thanks - thanks to these people, thanks to God who used them as to let Ben clearly hear His message that *all human beings, regardless of their differences, are His creation and of the same value as human beings.*

To hear this call and stand for it, meant to Ben after some time: **ukushiya phansi umndeni nabozalo bonke** and it meant further **ukuphuma kwelakini - kweloyihlomkhulu** - and it meant **ukuya kwelikude** to a country, more than 10 000 km away, to Germany. That was in 1974.

Ben was not the only South African who had to leave his country and go to a foreign land. There have been others at that time who landed in Germany. Some of them I did meet at the come-togethers in a house that we had given the name of **Umphumulo**. Unfortunately, not for all who met there did Germany become a place where they found the desired rest and some inner peace.

Ben was able to keep on his feet and continue his studies and become a pastor and also to initiate many things on the political front. His stability has to do with many factors which I am not going to name in detail; but we didn't take it for granted. We knew that behind all he achieved there was God acting, going at his side, leading him, protecting him, strengthening him. From the outside it looked like human achievement, the fruit of character and education and personal effort - some would perhaps even say: Ben was just lucky. But we know better that behind it all is God's **impatho enhle, Gottes Menschenfreundlichkeit und Wohltun** und **isibusiso seNkosi** - was wir **Gottes Segen** nennen.

God used the circumstances of Ben's life for Ben's good and for the good of other people. The fact alone that Ben is still alive and healthy to celebrate his 50th birthday - while others, even in our own family, do not live to see this day though having been born after him. Than alone is reason enough to say: **Siyakubonga Smakade! Wir danken dir, Gott!**

Also, that we are able to celebrate this birthday in the country and in the place of Ben's birth - this is more than we expected, let's say 10 years ago. We must admit, Ben and I, that we had lost hope to see a peaceful change in South Africa, this beautiful country of ours, in our lifetime - but now we are here in a democratic though still struggling new South Africa. We can stay in Mama's house right in town, and no siren alarms the family members to immediately leave a so-called "white-by-night"-town. We regard it as one of God's most tremendous miracles in our lives that we live to see this and other good changes and we say: **Siyakubonga Smakade! Wir danken dir, Gott!**

Let me mention another important issue - this task of finding out who you are and then accept your identity - being a black man or a black woman, also being a white man or a white woman - and being happy with it. Or this other discovery that God made you a man to love men. God has created you (and me) thus - and now to stand to it and live a gay life and use this gift from God and show responsibility towards your partner. We also regard this as a from of God's calling, but it took you a long time to hear and to accept and be open about it. But after all, Ben and not least I as his partner - we are **gay for being gay** and are thankful for God's gift of our sexuality and love and regard it as a blessing, and therefore say: **Siyakubonga Smakade! Wir danken dir, Gott!**

Abraham and Ben - more than 3 600 years of time separate them - and the world has fundamentally changed since the days when Abraham drove his herds to his new home-country. But there are still human beings on God's earth that are being called by God to sometimes sacrifice something that is dear to them - to face unknown challenges in a new situation - but then also to experience that God's promises are no empty words but will be seen and heard to come true by those whose eyes and ears are open for what comes from God. In 50 years of life, you, Ben, have seen much of God's blessings: there is none amongst us who could not also tell of experiences with God's friendliness and love. Let us therefore join in praising the Lord and say: **Siyakubonga Smakade! Wir danken dir, Gott!**

Amen!

UMKHULEKO/FÜRBITTE (Ben):

°Smakade, siyakubonga

- ngabazali besinakekela sikhula, besakha!

Ewiger, Vater, wir danken dir

- für die Eltern. Sie sorgen für uns. Sie ziehen uns groß. Sie bauen uns auf.

°Malusi, siyakubonga

- neso lakho nangesandla sakho somusa, ekusiholeni naskusichushiseni kwakho ezinsukwini zobunzima, eminyakeni yokucindezelwa, usiwelisele emazibukweni amasha siphephile. Malusi, siyakubonga!

Guter Hirte, wir danken dir

- für dein Auge und deine Hand der Gnade,

Du hast uns sicher geführt und uns heil durch Tage der Not und durch die Jahrzehnte der Unterdrückung

und uns gut ans neue Ufer gelangen lassen. Guter Hirte, wir danken dir!

°Somandla, siyakunxusa:

- Njengenceku yakho uAbraham, siphe nathi ukwethembela kuwe okujulileyo. Nathi sibe yisibusiso kwesiphila nabo - namuhla nangomuso.

Allmächtiger, wir bitten dich:

- Wie Abraham, Deinem Diener, schenke Du auch uns, dass wir Dir mit ganzem Herzen vertrauen. Dass auch wir unseren Mitmenschen ein Segen sind - heute und morgen.

NgoJesu Khristu, indodana yakho, iNkosi yethu, esifunda kuyo ukukhuleka kuwe sithi:

Durch Jesus Christus, deinen Sohn, unsern Herrn, von dem wir lernen, so zu beten:
„Baba wethu osezulwini ... !“ „Vater unser im Himmel ... !“

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