

## **Festgottesdienst aus Anlass der Weihe der Frauenkirche Dresden am Sonntag, dem 30. Oktober 2005**

### **Predigt von Landesbischof Jochen Bohl**

#### **St Marc 4, 30-32**

Dear congregation,

today is a great day we may live to see together, a celebration we know only a few. Our hearts and senses are moved by gratitude and great joy. Despite having waited for many years, we are astonished that this day has become possible. 271 years ago, when the new Frauenkirche had been consecrated, it might not have been different. "Has anyone come here only to see anything new and to hear about the customs of the new things in this world?" –asked then superintendent Löscher in his sermon, probably with a severe undertone, and explained to the congregation that especially on such a day it is important to listen carefully to the Gospel. He was right and so we want to turn to the parable of the mustard seed.

It is not easy to talk about the kingdom of God which we first of all know as being not from this world. Jesus from Nazareth, too had to think about an explanation for his disciples. He was looking for a good comparison and found it by the mustard seed: very small like the head of a pin, very inconspicuous among all seeds. But nevertheless, something great becomes out of it, a useful plant for people and birds. A token of the power of life. It like that, says Jesus, with the kingdom of God. It grows from the smallest beginnings. At first, you can hardly see it with the naked eye, but then it grows taller and shines with beauty.

On this day, dear congregation, we the modern people of the year 2005, are gaining another parable: the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche has started extremely tinily and inconspicuously. But it has become a great work in the spirit of reconciliation.

It started with the candles which adolescents lighted at the ruin, the 13 February 1982, the anniversary of the destruction of Dresden, to express the suffering from hostility by which Europe had been troubled for decades, and their longing for peace. They were not ready to accept reality. By that, they set an example of hope for healing wounds, overcoming injustice and violence and for the fact that enemies can learn to see the others in a different light. The ruin turned into a message. It admonished for peace and the pictures of the burning candles went around the world.

This memorable evening a few days before Christmas, when the German reunification became a real possibility and when besides the ruin of the Frauenkirche the people's excitement and attention reached a kind of density that only rarely exists in history but by which it is moved, belongs to the work of reconciliation and to the history of reconstruction, too.

A little later, the "call from Dresden" received the tokens of hope at the ruin and connected them with the impetus to reconstruction, "the Gospel of Peace" shall be announced at the reconstructed Lord's house. Within the last 15 years that have passed by since that, an immense crowd of congregationioners in the whole world have been moved by the hope that reconciliation can be realized as a result of confessed guilt. A deep wound having bled for a long time can be healed, too. A reconciled community can grow from hostility, making peace possible. On this day of consecration the Frauenkirche is calling for peace. Everyone shall hear this message. Full of power and in its shining beauty it will be sent into the world. With a view at the cross of the dome – a present from Great Britain – everybody can see a great, touching work of reconciliation. It started tinily, and so the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche becomes a parable for us, that something can grow from an inconspicuous beginning up to powerful importance.

It is the same with the kingdom of God. Jesus Christ said again and again that it had started yet. He encouraged people to see the kingdom of God as another reality. It rises up into the realities of our world where light and darkness are complected with each other in an eternal manner. Day by day we accept the challenge of organizing our life although we know that it is not arranged on how it will be then – if we are successful with our hopes? Can it turn out well if we accept our realities? What do we cause if we do not look for a perspective beyond one day?

We cannot plan the kingdom of God, the way we win our living spaces. We cannot construct it. It is rather a gift we merely need to accept. We recognize the other reality of the kingdom of God by looking up to God. With the Lord's Prayer we pray that it may come and see at the same time that it has already started with Jesus Christ. He himself is the token of this kingdom. Looking upon him, we

gain a new, very different view and we receive the gifts only God is able to give. Those are belief, hope and love.

We can believe and are given trust in God helping us to overcome the fear of life. Our hope is strengthened which is necessary to start something requiring courage and confidence.

We are open for love by which everything, enriching our lives, begins.

At this moment, too, among us, the kingdom of God is growing because it starts where people are following the good message, the Gospel.

Dear congregation, we are living in a strange world. Its luck is obvious and absolutely palpable. For 60 years we have lived in peace, as long as never before. With all our neighbours we organize the European future. The right to freedom of the citizens is guaranteed, and the world is open to us with the variety of its life. Our children are passing borders as if they had never existed before. We may expect a life so much longer than that of our ancestors.

But nevertheless a stiffness of fear is resting on the country. Worries are aimed at the danger of being excluded from the life of a still rich society, of losing one's work and of having no chance at all. Many are afraid of being alone since the marriages and love relationships and families are unstable and fragile. So many things have become uncertain, questionable. Even the most elementary thing, passing life on to the next generation, causes us uncertainty and difficulty. Not enough children – too little confidence into the future.

Almost astonished, hesitating, we discover the necessity of very old questions. What can I believe?

What may we hope? What kind of love lasts forever?

The most important thing our country needs at this undaunted time is a movement of ideas, a change of mentalities, an orientation to the spiritual dimension of life.

But this change has already started. The reconstruction of this Lord's house was brave, maybe even adventurous because reality spoke against it. With a realistic view, so many other things seemed more urgent during those years of change, closer than a ruin, that had been laying there for 45 years. That means, they needed a new view for being capable of seeing a different reality where the Frauenkirche stands for a bright, shining token of life in the spirit of reconciliation. They needed the viewing direction of belief that can overcome the world: the view of the kingdom of God. Only by that, elementary powers and gifts were released. Confidence and trust were growing, separating borders lost their importance. With a magnanimous attitude and generously, many donators participated in that. All over the world people recognized that they themselves can build bridges and realize reconciliation. Artists, architects, ingeneers, craftsmen of all branches considered it a s an honour to take part in it with their abilities.

By that, the history of reconstruction clears our view to the spiritual dimension of our lives. There, where we do good things that are possible for us and where we meet our fellow men in a very kind manner; where we are ready to forgive and to reconcile to each other, to serve the other people with our gifts, to share our goods with the poor – there, the kingdom of God is growing and we can live peacefully with each other. But the one who does not look at the other reality of God, the one who blindly feels comfortable in the reality of the world – will miss one's life. We need a power overcoming the darkness in the world and the people's suffering there, that it turns out well. Without any belief supporting us, we cannot live. Without any orientation at one reliable truth we endanger everything.

Dear congregation, the kingdom of God rises up to this world as another reality. We cannot make it, we can only receive it. But when we are open to this gift, we can contribute to its growth. We are needed with our powers and abilities. By that – the Frauenkirche – a work of reconciliation and a reminder of peace – has been reconstructed.

At first, Jesus had to think about an explanation for that. Some of his listeners were not able to see anything of the tiny beginnings of the kingdom of God and were in doubt. On this day we see in deep gratitude another shining reality, determined by God and opening us to belief, hope and love – the gifts that are given by him only. We can share them if we listen to his word, if we trust in Jesus Christ. Primarily, we shall try to make his kingdom grow among us – and then we will succeed in building bridges and realizing reconciliation.

Amen.