

- Communion Sunday; second in mini-series on key passages from Ezekiel

Introduction

- I don't know what the word "Gap" means to you:
 - Gap clothing!
 - "Mind the gap" from London Underground
 - Generation Gap
- At its root it is the space between two things...
 - between the train and the platform edge
 - between people of different ages
 - a gap in the wall is a space where you might naturally expect there to be wall, either deliberately (a gate) or not (a crack or breach)

There's no one in the Gap!

- Ezekiel in exile; contemporary of Jeremiah in Jerusalem
 - priest, upright, in-touch with God
 - called to speak uncomfortable truth to God's people
- This passage full of God's judgement against Jerusalem:
 - the section from 23-29 that we read is matched by similar material (different in detail) in vs.1-16 & 17-22, introduced by the formula, *the word of the Lord came to me, "Son of man..."*
 - and the chapter is concluded by the famous paragraph in vs.30-31, rounding off what God has to say to his people here

Exposition

- Judgement is announced in v.24, and confirmed in the summing up conclusion
 - and in the bulk of the rest of the section the particular sins of the people are detailed
 - why will this judgement come? because of vs.25-29!!
- (*note that though there has been judgement in the first exile, yet the sin continues and the final hammer blow against Jerusalem and its sacking has not yet happened*)
- What are the sins?
 - the rich & powerful are exploiting the poor (vs.25,27,29)
 - the priests (of all people) ignore God's law, in particular clean/unclean and Sabbath legislation (v.26)
 - and the prophets whitewash the evil (v.28)
- And it would seem that these were connected:
 - the rich had more chance to get away with their greed because the priests and prophets avoided upholding God's laws...
 - no-one was standing up and being counted!
- Image in v.30 is of defensive wall round the land:
 - without effective "at a distance" weapons, a good warrior in a key space could hold back a much greater force
 - God's wrath is like an attacking force or a coming flood...
 - yet even one suitable person in the right place would hold back that judgement
 - but God found none
 - no-one who was righteous, and whose prayerful intercessions would have stayed God's hand
- Not even Ezekiel or Jeremiah!!
 - for Ezekiel wasn't the man in the gap of his vision!
 - Ezekiel was a gap-man because he saw the gap, and the coming judgement, who saw the need, not because he could fill that role
 - (*I can tell you that the Scotland football team needs a good goalie or striker or defender without being able to fulfil the role myself!!*)

- Ezekiel was given discernment, insight, vision by God, but he was not able to stand in the gap
 - for he himself was subject to the same judgement as the rest of the people!

Jesus is in the Gap!

BUT

- **We are not in the same situation Ezekiel was in!**
 - for we live the other side of the Cross
 - we know one who can stand in that gap
 - one who is righteous
 - who does hold back the judgement of God!
 - we know one who will intercede on our behalf and avert the coming judgement!
- Jesus!
- *Hebrews 7:25-28: Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need - one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.*

We can stand in the Gap!

- We are a land filled with sin!
- We face judgement - perhaps some has already come, likely much is yet to come
- Over the generations sin seems to have abounded - Beslan school, North Ossetia!!
- We are as sinful as Ezekiel's generation
 - but we, as Christian believers, can "stand in the gap" because of what Christ has done for us
 - we can get involved in ways that will bring healing and restoration
 - nationally, in petitioning government over legislation
 - locally, in community projects that mitigate the effects of sin
 - and most of all **we can pray**
- Prayer Meeting!
- **All as a consequence of what Jesus has done for us!**