 ***“All One In Christ”***

**THE UNITED CHURCH OF ZAMBIA**

**MISSION AND EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT**

**MOTHERING WEEK LESSONS AND SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE**

**2022 THEME: ALL ONE IN CHRIST-JOHN 17:21**

**SUB THEME: “GOD’S EQUAL WORLD”**

**FROM 28TH FEBRUARY TO 6TH MARCH, 2022.**

**INTRODUCTION**

The reflections for this year’s WCF week are set in the global context in which the world seeks to see a more equal world among men and women. The word equality works well in mathematics, with all sorts of signs and symbols to show how things equate and relate to one another, but not so to human beings. A critical conversation that is in the world today is the oppression and discrimination of women, which often leads to their abuse sexually, physically, economically, socially and unfortunately, religiously too. For this reason, the recognition of the International Women’s Day which falls on 8th March, and the adoption of 5th March as an International Women’s Day for Prayer, is set in the context in which women (and men) recognise the need to advocate for women’s worth as being equal to men, and to achieve a status in which both men and women experience their fullness of life without oppression and injustice. How can Christian Women respond to this global agenda of achieving equality? Is it a global agenda or God’s Agenda?

**Monday 28th February**

**Text Esther 4:1-17**

**Theme:** **Positioned for Such a time as this**

Esther, a Jew, found herself married to the King of Persia, who at that time had conquered the world (see Esther 1:1) including making the Jewish nation, Israel, to be under his rule. The earlier texts describe Esther as having been raised by her uncle Mordecai, because she was an orphan (Esther 2:5-7). Her marriage to the King was at the instigation of the uncle, for whatever reason, but suggest that he saw an opportunity for her that could be of help to the family. He had given her strict instructions not to reveal who she was, until when calamity had befallen them through Haman, an official of the King who wanted to see that all the Jews in the kingdom killed (Esther 3:3-9). The whole nation was about to perish at the instigation of one man, how did God intervene? The text we are studying suggest that Esther was well prepared and positioned to be God’s agent for saving her people.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What do we learn from Verse1-3 on how we should be responding to troubles that befall us?

2. What could have made Esther to respond in a non-committed way to the troubles of her people in Verse 11?

3. The key verses of this study in Verse 12-17. Why does Mordecai’s response to Esther’s non committed answer make her to change her mind?

4. Think about the position that God has placed you in; in what way are you living up to be an agent of salvation to your family as well as your community/country?

**Conclusion**

God has positioned each one of us where we are for the purpose of being agents of Salvation and peace for others. The way Esther became queen in a foreign Kingdom may not be desirable to our human judgement, but God has always used unlikely individuals positioned to fulfil his will for humanity’s salvation that leads to peace. If you do not realise that position, God will take away His glory and use somebody else. Like Esther, let us commit our positions in life to God in prayer that we may fulfil His will, even under very difficult circumstances.

**Tuesday 1st March**

**Jesus Qualifies Women and Men for His service**

**Luke 8:1-3, Galatians 3:26-28**

The UCZ has upheld as its theme this year “All One In Christ” from John 17.21. Note that the focus of this theme is Jesus was praying for the disciples including those yet to be- you and I. From the text read, we observe that among the disciples that had accompanied Jesus, were women. In comparison to the male disciples, the women accompanied Jesus on His mission trips on the basis of what he had done for them e.g. as indicated ; the women “who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities” Verse 2a.

Society has stereotyped women’s place. For this reason, 8th March has been set aside as International Women’s day to bring out the plight of women issues. This day further aims to celebrate women’s achievements and contributions to society and to advocate for equal opportunities and value. Does the world’s need for equality affect women in the Church?

What does the Bible say about women’s place in the Church and society in general?

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Were the women who had been with Jesus also His disciples?

2. Think about how these women have been described. Why do you think that these women are described by their status, past and present?

3. What does this say about how women were and are still regarded in society today?

4. What do we learn from the text in Galatians about women on what it means to follow Jesus?

**Conclusion**

The UCZ believes in the supremacy of God’s word and the priesthood of all believers. In this, the Church affirms the dignity and value of women as of equal value to men. There are also various platforms in which women are commissioned to serve together with men. Let us not participate in the prejudice and oppression of fellow women by describing them negatively, but rather to see the good and affirm that for greater service for God’s service.

**Wednesday 2nd March**

**Deborah- a Change Agent**

**Judges 4:1-5, 5:6-9**

A change agent is a person who positions themselves to influence society for the greater good. She or he takes an unusual position that society normally would not accord to them. The text describes Deborah as such a person, who positioned herself as a judge and prophetess in Israel at a time that the nation of Israel had forgotten their God (Judges 2:10-11). It is possible that even the priesthood had compromised their faith because Deborah as a woman emerges as a prophetess and judge , who used to sit under a palm tree named after her, a place that became a place of hope and inspiration for the Israelites that needed counsel.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What was the situation that Israel found themselves in?

2. Why do you think Deborah sat under a palm tree?

3. How did Deborah support the leadership of the day?

4. What can we learn from her on how we can be change agents in supporting our leaders and our communities?

**Conclusion**

Deborah was a change agent for her nation. She did not consider the circumstances of her nation as a hindrance to do what she knew God had sent her to do that is, to provide spiritual counsel and guidance to His nation that had turned away from Him. In every bad situation, God raises a person to be His agent for change. We like to complain of evil times, but how are you influencing the times for positive change?

**Thursday 3rd March**

**The Cry of Tamar**

**1 Samuel 13: 1-22**

The world today has experienced many calamities, such as floods, Covid-19, HIV/AIDS and many others. One of the calamities that is slowly destroying our families and communities is sexual violence. The Zambia Police statistics of fourth quarter of 2021 show that out of 7,920 cases reported of Gender Based Violence, 1814 were cases of child abuse of whom 1342 were girls. of the 7,920, 6,132 were reports of women and girl abuses. The report further states that the nature of violence reported was physical violence(3,055 cases) and sexual violence (881 cases). Where do you think these cases of violence were taking place?

Tamar was physically and sexually abused by her half brother in her own home, and not just an ordinary home, for it was at the King’s palace.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What do you think or feel about this story?

2. According to this story, how does sexual violence take place in the home?

3. How many forms of violence did Tamar experience in the story?

4. What could have made Absalom the brother, and David the father, not to heed Tamar’s cry? (Vs. 20-22). What did they do about it?

**Conclusion**

If Tamar was not safe in the palace are the girl children in our homes safe? Are our homes safe spaces for children, especially the girl child? The passage helps us to see the effects of not taking the parental responsibilities seriously. There are many Tamar’s that are crying for help in our homes and Communities. How are we helping them as a Church?

**Friday 4th March**

**Living Victoriously**

**Text: Luke 8:36-50**

Living victoriously requires a conscious commitment to do so, because the weight of sin can weary one into inaction that is the lament of “ifwe nifino fine” (for me it’s just like this). This statement is an expression of a defeated life, a life wearied with burdens and concerns and does not see a way out. The story of this nameless woman, again described by her actions as a sinner in Verse 39, and how Jesus responded to her, gives us a firm foundation of how to live in victory as a Christian woman.

Firstly, living victoriously requires that you personally approach Jesus as the source of your deliverance and redeemer. What matters is your conviction to approach him and meet your need that will inspire you to follow Him where He leads.

Secondly, Living victoriously requires that you ignore the critics around you (Romans 8:1)

Thirdly Living victoriously requires that you genuinely seek for forgiveness for your past actions – the tears of the woman falling at Jesus feet and the kissing of His feet are a great symbol of a contrite soul!

Fourthly, living victoriously, will compel you to love and give your master Jesus, the best of your offerings

**QUESTION FOR REFLECTION**

 What is hindering you to worship Jesus freely? Lay them at the feet of Jesus

**Conclusion**

Spend time in prayer; laying your life once again before the Cross. Pray for God to help you to forgive any person that may have offended you. Pray for you to be a genuine worshipper of the Lord through your acts of sacrificial service to Him.

**Saturday 5th March**

**Mother and Daughter Date**

**This should be a practical event** – for us to achieve a world of equal worth, we as parents need to affirm our children in their worth and dignity. As WCF, we have as one of our objectives, to help girls to find true meaning of Christian love and marriage. Organize a mother –daughter date. Invite the young girls for an afternoon discussion on dating, love and marriage while having tea,. munkoyo or whatever is affordable for your group ( you don’t have to provide a snack, it is optional). The idea is that we begin to create safe spaces in which young girls are free to express what they are going through. If you organize it well, it can be an activity that can be organised for different age groups at other times.

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**MISSION AND EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT**

 **SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE**

**2022 THEME: ALL ONE IN CHRIST-JOHN 17:21**

**SUB THEME: ‘God’s Affirmation of Women Worth’**

**Texts: Genesis 1:26-28, John 20:11-18, Galatians 3:26-29**

 **6TH MARCH, 2022.**

**INTRODUCTION**

The women’s struggle as championed by the world’s agenda is real. The World’s agenda for Sustainable Development hopes that by 2030, among the 17 goals they wish to achieve is Gender equality (Goal No. 5) and reduced inequality (Goal no 10). The Celebration of Women’s day every year affirms that goal. Yet, history tells us that the idea of affirming women’s worth and dignity in serving God and humanity was begun by a Christian African American woman, Nannie Helen Burrough (1879-1961), from the Baptist Church , who championed for women to participate in the mission of the Church by organising fundraising activities for missions, as well as being a platform for women to participate with their spiritual gifts in the ministry of the Church ([www.blackwomenssuffrage.dp.la](http://www.blackwomenssuffrage.dp.la)). Therefore, the first Women’s day of prayer was held in July 1907 and it has since grown to be a global movement.

Similarly, the Women’s Christian Fellowship, in the UCZ, is a platform given to women to live out their faith and participate in God’s mission through the following objectives

1. To pray together and encourage each other in faith and to build inward life remembering the words of Paul: *“ I ask God, from the wealth of his glory, to give you power through the spirit to be strong in your inner selves, and that Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith”*.(Ephesians 3 :16).

2. To help one another and others in time of sorrow, distress, difficulty and joy. (Galatians 6:2).

3. To strive together in finding ways to:

3.1 Bring others to know God and the Lord our Saviour Jesus Christ.

3.2 To help young ladies to enter into marriage appropriately and have a Christian marriage and home.

3.3 To learn to live well and in peace in their homes with their families and with their neighbours.

3.4 To care for children, to teach them the way of God and that of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

3.5 To take care of God’s house (Church buildings) and God’s servants.

3.6 To raise funds and material resources to help in the work of God.

(Source: WCF Manual)

As we come to celebrate this year’s women’s week, we want to remind ourselves that our positions today have been built on the shoulders of giants that have gone before us and in the Word of God.

**Reflection on the Texts read**

**Genesis 1:26-28 –** this passage isset in the history of God’s creation and shows us that God’s intention for creating man and woman was primarily to be His representatives on earth. By this, God intentionally allowed human beings to bear His Image and were entrusted with His power to rule the world! The two greatest gifts God gave to both men and women is His Image and His power to rule! The power to rule or to govern the world was in the context of productivity and having control. Therefore, it is sad today to witness how human being are destroying the environment as well as ourselves, by producing things that are destructive to our health and wellbeing.

**John 20: 11-18** affirms the fact that women were the first to witness of Jesus resurrection. The absence of men when Jesus needed them most is louder and needs no explanantion! The text reveals how God continues to consider women as an equal partner in creation and salvation. Mary Magdalene‘s faith in Jesus was such even in His death, she still called him ‘my Lord’ Verse 13. She was even willing to reclaim the body and take it elsewhere, Verse 15. What a faith that she had in Jesus! Despite that society could have condemned her in her past life; she did not let that hinder the fact that she was a new creation in the Lord.

**Galatians 3:26-29** affirms what God has always intended for human beings, to live as co-workers, equal in worth as persons, without any form of discrimination amongst us. In principle, the text shows us that there is no discrimination of race, social status or gender, all are one in Christ. If God has always intended for both men and women to be of equal worth, where then is the problem?

Genesis 3: 22-24 shows that sin has become the barrier to humanity to live out a life of worth and dignity as God intended. Sin degrades the other person. It has no regard for the worth of the other. God in redeeming humanity and all creation sent Jesus Christ, His Son to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. God’s affirmation of women’s worth is evident in creation and in the salvation act of Jesus Christ. Therefore, let us strive to live as equal partners by:

**POINTS FOR REFLECTION**

1. **All to have an understanding of the dignity and worth** of God deposited in both men and women at creation.
2. **All to be expectant of the appearance of God’s Son as Saviour and redeemer** – This requires that we live a life of witnessing to the fact that he is “my Lord”
3. **That we respect one another in all ways** – In our culture, there is an idea planted in us early to respect adults, or women to respect their husbands. This is not to be taken for granted. Respect is earned – Jesus earned the respect of Mary Magdalene to the point that she was willing to take his body away!
4. **The Church takes its agency** seriously of being the place that affirms the unity of faith and unity of service to both genders as God surely does not discriminate. This is seen in the one baptism, or the Holy Communion Table, which invites all of us to participate in memory of Him. In doing this, the Church through its ministries such as WCF, should ensure that we create safe spaces for all people to experience the fullness of life that Christ promises in John 10.10. Let not the Church is seen as place where evil is being shielded, or remaining silent at the injustices that women and girls are facing in this world!

**Conclusion**

We, the human beings, male and female, are positioned in this world to be rulers and governors having dominion over all creation as caregivers or stewards of all of God’s creation and resources. God holds us accountable for its care or destruction. Therefore, as we celebrate the worth of women, we as a people of faith must take extra care that we do not participate or contribute to the destruction of life through violence. God hates violence as much as he hates divorce as it negatively affects the family, especially children (see Malachi 2:13-16). May we arise as change agents, who take risks of faith like Mary Magdalene did, to rescue those under oppression and difficulty to a life of peace in the Lord. We are in this Church to provide such agency.

Amen!

 **THE MISSION AND EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT WOULD LIKE TO THANK
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**MOTHERING WEEK LESSONS AND SUNDAY**

**SERMON OUTLINE.**