**THE UNITED CHURCH OF ZAMBIA**

**SYNOD MISSION AND EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT**

**GOOD FRIDAY SERMON OUTLINE**

**15th APRIL, 2022.**

 **UCZ THEME: “ALL ONE IN CHRIST”- JOHN 17:21**

 **SUB-THEME: THE LAST WORDS**

 **READING: JOHN 19:25-27**

**INTRODUCTION**

Good Friday is celebrated by Christians throughout the world. It is a day on which Christians annually observe and commemorate the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In Africa, when a person is about to die or when bidding farewell, they usually have some last words to say. Last words can be words of forgiveness, words of wisdom, wishes etc. Sometimes we attentively listen to last words in the hope of discovering or knowing what had not been revealed during someone’s life time. In the United Church of Zambia, our theme for this year’s Good Friday is “***The Last Words***”. And so, today we will critically look at one of the final sayings of Jesus on the cross according to the gospel of John.

**BIBLE EXPLANATION**

The text under consideration gives us a picture of what transpired in the last moments of Jesus on the cross. In verse 25, we are told about the presence of the soldiers and the ladies (Mary the mother to Jesus, Mary the wife to Clopas and Mary Magdalene). At this point, Jesus was having a final chat with his Mother and the disciple He loved. He says “woman here is your son” and to the “disciple” He says “here is your mother”. From that day onwards, the disciple took Mary to his home.

The disciple who is been referred to, here is John, the mother to this John was Salome, who happened to be the sister to Mary the mother of Jesus. This entails that Jesus and John were cousins. In our African context we can simply say, Jesus and John were brothers. One thing we have to put into consideration is the fact that, the persons mentioned besides John, were all women, why? Jesus’ Ministry embraced everyone including women. We have to remember that, the area and context in which Jesus did His Ministry, was a context in which women were considered to be second class citizens, they were considered not to be brave, they were not counted and they were marginalized. These are the same people that Christ tried to help and ministered to.

For example He healed Mary Magdalene; in short Jesus had an impact on these women such that they never abandoned Him even at the point of HHhis gruesome death. One thing that stands out about these women is that, they were a real support system to Jesus’s life and Ministry. It is common knowledge that, the people we impact in life, turn out to be loyal to us. Such people do not leave us no matter what, they don’t leave when we fall, they don’t leave when we celebrate, they remain with us because of the impact we made and what we meant in their lives. Not everyone however, will be there for you in your low moments. Sometimes the people we expect to be there for us are nowhere to be seen, but it is normal, don’t hate them.

The area of our interest today however, is the last words of Jesus. Looking at how painful the situation of Christ was, how He was mocked, beaten, rejected by the people He came to save and criticized for the things He never did, one would have expected Jesus Christ to react. If He so wished, He would have remained quiet or cursed His accusers. His last words would have been words of cursing, but rather he chose to speak words of love, caring and unity. Christ knew very well, that His last words were cardinal to his family and disciples.

**APPLICATION**

Considering our theme, *“****The last words****”,* it is of great importance to know that, both in the Jewish and African context last words carry so much weight, but what are we learning from Jesus’ last words as we celebrate this year’s Good Friday?

1. **CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER**

In His last words, Jesus brings out the aspect of caring for one another. When Jesus said, “woman here is your son”, He was simply saying; take care of him, be there for him, advise him, teach him, direct him, the way you nurtured me, nurture him also. At this point, Christ is acknowledging and recognizing family and even a larger and extended family of the people of faith and their need to care for one another. John was said to be the son to Salome, the sister to Mary. Jesus gives His mother responsibility over John. This should be embraced in our time, parents should take up the responsibility to guide, teach and direct not only their children, but also the children of others. Like the African proverb puts it *“it takes the whole village to raise a child”.* Our youths today will grow up into responsible adults if parents took kin interest in guiding and teaching them. In the world of so much information, young people need proper guidance on what information is right or wrong and that guidance can only come when parents make themselves available to offer it.

Jesus turns to John and says “here is your mother” and from that time on, John took Mary to his home and started staying with her. Jesus was alive to the fact that, in life we have physical needs, we have the need for shelter, we have the need for clothing, we have the need for food, we have the needs and Christ was alive to that fact.

 It’s like Mary was staying with Jesus and Jesus was the one providing for her. Thus in His absence, Jesus knew that His mother would need someone to take care of her. John gladly took up that responsibility. You have the responsibility to provide for your family. You have to be alive to the fact that you have needs and your family equally has needs and they need help from you.

In this time and era people are more of nuclear family, we rarely recognize extended families, but Christ is encouraging us to recognize extended families. By so doing we will reduce the number of street kids in our streets, we will reduce the number of homeless people. If your brother or sister dies and leaves children behind, take care of them, because they are your children. We have the responsibility to take care of the widows and widowers especially those who are of age and unable to work. In short, Christ was simply showing us that, we ought to take care of each other and paying attention to the needs of others.

1. **THE POWER OF LAST WORDS**

As we celebrate Good Friday this year, we are reminded that, there is power in the last words. This can be seen in the last words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Last words brought about continuation of unity, caring and love for one another. Our last words can either bring about peace, unity and love or confusion, division and hatred. Today, we have families that are divided simply because of the last words their parents left before dying. We have people who have been accused and painted evil, because of the last words of someone who died in the family. We have seen individuals rejected in their community, because someone somewhere left a bad report about them. Church, last words carry so much weight, let us therefore, learn from our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ by speaking words of life, love, unity and blessings to those we are leaving behind.

**CONCLUSION**

Jesus’ last words showed exactly what was upon his heart, when He was dying. His words were anchored on the need to pay attention to other people’s needs and not only our needs. To those who are about to be transferred, relocate or retire, what words are you preparing for those you are about to part company with? What will be your last words about your company, your institution, your community, your boss, your servants, your parents and friends? May our words inspire and encourage those around you.

God bless you all.

**THE MISSION AND EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT WOULD LIKE TO THANK**

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