****

**THE UNITED CHURCH OF ZAMBIA**

**MISSION AND EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT**

**2022 THEME: ALL ONE IN CHRIST-JOHN17:21**

**WIDOWS, RETIREES AND ORPHANS SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE**

**11TH SEPTEMBER, 2022**

**SUNDAY THEME:** **CARING FOR WIDOWS, ORPHANS AND RETIREES**

**BIBLE READING: JAMES 1: 27**

**INTRODUCTION**

A sad fact of life is that there are many widows and orphans in the Church. In some Churches, they are well cared for. In other realities and circles of our society, many are left to fend for themselves. However, what many people do not realize is that Christians are called to have an active role in providing for widows, retirees and orphans. A widow is a woman whose husband has died and she has not remarried. An orphan is a child whose parent or parents are dead. The two are identified as being vulnerable because in many cases, they are unable to provide for their own needs. Sometimes we have some of the fathers and mothers who had served the Church and society in various portfolios but are now retired, once they retire some face harsh economic hardships and find it difficult to fend for themselves. It is only common sense to realize regrettably that others have found themselves entering the brackets of the vulnerable in society and in this context need our consented efforts too.

This year’s widows, retirees and orphans Sunday theme is **CARING FOR WIDOWS, ORPHANS AND RETIREES.**

**BIBLE EXPLANATION: James 1: 27**

In this text, the writer describes the Religion that is pure and undefiled. James begins by using words like “pure” and “undefiled”. Other translations might use the words “faultless, unblemished or spotless. Whatever the words, James is describing something for us here. So, while commonly referred to as a command to care for orphans, James 1:27 is in fact not a command verse, it’s a descriptive verse. There’s no command language in this verse. Instead, this verse is describing something that is pure and undefiled in its application and expression. Interesting fact-the Greek word for “pure” is translated as “catharsis” in English, meaning “cleansing”. This is the root from which our word “cathartic” is derived.

Therefore, the kind of Religion that is pure and undefiled must care for. “Care for” many translations use the words “look after” here, which is important to address because sometimes when we “look after” something or someone we’re able to still maintain a sense of distance between us, like when we were kids and our mom would ask us to “look after” our little brothers and sisters. We would maintain an awareness of their presence, safety and their needs but certainly didn’t want to get involved with what they were doing! So “look after” isn’t the best connotation here. It conveys far more than just stopping by and saying hello, but instead implies a sense of consistent closeness and nearness, and personal contact.

The phrase “Orphans and widows” -the fatherless and the husbandless-easily represented two of the most marginalized and pushed aside classes of people in James’ culture. They carried no legacy and contributed nothing to society, so society pushed them away. James is using them as representatives of the most marginalized, and vulnerable groups of people we can come in contact with. In the first century, orphans and widows had very little means of economic support. Unless a family member was willing to care for them, they were reduced to begging, selling themselves as slaves, or starving.

Women lost their husbands for a variety of reasons such as the dangers of travel, disease, war, and a host of other things. In those days, there was no government assistance and widows were an especially vulnerable class. Without their husbands, they often had to turn to begging or prostitution. Therefore, the church gave great attention to this neglected class**.**

**POINTS FOR REFLECTION**

1. **TREAT THEM GRACIOUSLY AND SUPPORT THEM**.

Supporting and treating them graciously carries the idea of both respect and material and financial support. These people are often neglected or even shamed in society, the Church should honor them by showing God’s love and care for them and walk beside them to help them spiritually and practically. The Church can support them by meeting their spiritual needs. This includes praying for them, encouraging their faith, and sharing the gospel. The Church can also support them by meeting their needs practically. This includes providing shelter, food, clothing, financial and emotional support. If you want to see pure Christianity in action, you witness it in the care for widows, retirees and orphans.

1. **CARING FOR THE NEEDY.**

It conveys far more than just stopping by and saying hello, but instead implies a sense of consistent closeness and nearness, and personal contact. Caring for the physical and spiritual needs of widows and orphans has always been an integral part of worshiping God. When harvesting their grain or fruits, the Israelites were guided not to gather everything in the field, what remained behind were for those who were vulnerable who would go through the same fields and find something for themselves after gleaning. The gleaning were to be left “for the alien resident, for the fatherless and widows (Deu 24: 19-21). During the early days of the Christian congregation, caring for those afflicted and truly needy as a result of the loss of parents or of a husband was a distinctive feature of true worship. By caring for these people, the church put God’s word into practice. When we give with no thought of receiving, we show what it means to truly serve others.

In essence, we are suggesting that we become the kind of people who move towards, give intense attention to and visit those in our world who have been outcast, marginalized and pushed aside the most. Therefore, let us show our Love for God through serving others. We demonstrate our true devotion to God through visiting orphans, widows and the retirees. We should reflet God’s concern for the poor by giving and helping those less fortunate than ourselves.

**CONCLUSION**

Brothers and sisters in caring for orphans and widows is part of pure religion. The act of caring and protecting orphans and widows as an act worship that falls in the list of things making up a pure religion. The Bible has a lot to say about widows and orphans and places great importance on their provision. Unfortunately, many local churches and individual believers do not engage in caring for widows and orphans. Let us make caring for widows, retirees and orphans a higher priority.

AMEN!

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

**REV DANIEL KAMBITA-ST ANDREWS CONGREGATION-KABWE NORTH CONSISTORY, CENTRAL PRESBYTERY**

**FOR PREPARING THE 2022 WIDOWS, ORPHANS AND RETIREES**

**SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE.**

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