



## All one in Christ

### **THE UNITED CHURCH OF ZAMBIA**

### **SYNOD MISSION AND EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT**

### **2022 HOLY WEEK AND CHRISTMAS SERMON OUTLINE**

### **UCZ THEME: ALL ONE IN CHRIST (JOHN 17:21)**

### **THEME: THE PROMISE OF THE MESSIAH HAS BEEN FULFILLED**

### **BIBLE READINGS: ISAIAH 53:5-6, COLOSSIANS 1:15-20,**

### **MARK 1:1-8**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Christian calendar world over commences through an Advent Sunday which is four weeks before Christmas. Advent is an important day in the Christian calendar, as it signifies the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world to save God's people. The United Church of Zambia (UCZ) will this year observed this event on the 27th November, 2022 under the theme "All One in Christ". But what is advent week and how is it important to us today?

The word "**Advent**" stems from the Latin word *adventus* ("coming").

The word Advent means 'coming' or 'arrival'. In other words, this is about celebrating the birth and the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ the Messiah. It is important to understand that, Jesus Christ stands at the heart of our faith and therefore, as we prepare and celebrate Christmas we are to reflect on Christ's life and celebrate Him as we journey through this wonderful life.

## **ADVENT ORIGIN**

Advent began sometime after the 4th century as a time of fasting and preparation for Epiphany, rather than in anticipation of Christmas. Epiphany celebrates the manifestation of Christ, by remembering the visit of the wise men and, in some traditions, the Baptism of Jesus. Sermons focused on the wonder of the Lord's Incarnation or becoming a man.

At this time, new Christians were baptized and received into the faith, and so the early Church instituted a 40-day period of fasting and repentance.

### **WHAT PERIOD IS SAID TO DEFINE ADVENT?**

Advent begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day, or the Sunday which falls closest to November 30, and lasts through Christmas Eve, or December 24. When Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday, it is the last or fourth Sunday of Advent. Thus, the actual season of Advent can last anywhere from 22-28 days, but most commercial Advent calendars start on December 1<sup>st</sup>.

Advent is a period of spiritual preparation in which many Christians make themselves ready for the coming, or birth of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Celebrating Advent typically involves a season of prayer, fasting, and repentance, followed by anticipation, hope, and joy.

We Christians celebrate Advent not only by thanking God for Christ's first coming to Earth as a baby, but also for His presence among us today through the Holy Spirit, and in preparation and anticipation of His final coming at the end of the age. In this Advent period, we want to encourage everyone to prayerfully reflect on the following lessons of the Holy week and Christmas Sunday.

## **MONDAY, 19TH DECEMBER. 2022**

### **TOPIC: THE MESSAGE OF HOPE**

### **TEXT: ISAIAH 40:9-11**

### **INTRODUCTION**

We live in a world that is so uncertain, fearful, disappointing at times due to many factors affecting our livelihood like diseases, family breakdowns, rejection, economic hardships, coping with death and loss to mention, but a few. People are looking for the last hope, a place of refuge, safety and ultimately peace. We need to hear a message of hope.

### **BIBLE EXPLANATION**

In Isaiah chapter 40, Isaiah presents a story of a community that is in exile and closely to be wiped out, because of their sins. Israel understood that, they were supposed to speak to Jerusalem and cry to her, because she had served her penalty. It is worth noting that, God had promised Israel to be a great Nation that they would be kings and that favour would be upon them, one can imagine what was going through their minds while in exile, if truly they looked at God to be able to serve them at that point. The Babylonian exile experience caused the Israelites to lose their faith in God.

However, an announcement of **hope** and **comfort** was given to Israel. The people are told that, the Babylonian exile is over, Israel's sin had been dealt with and a new era was to begin. Israel is to return to Jerusalem, were God Himself, was to bring His kingdom and all Nations to see His glory. Isaiah's hope was for a new purified Jerusalem, where God's kingdom would be restored through the future messianic king and all Nations would come to peace.

### **APPLICATION**

Soon we are coming to the end of the year, which has been full of experiences to many of us. Perhaps, to some of us, it has been a year full of challenges and expectations of some goals achieved and to some yet to be achieved that we even thought by now we would have hit the goal. Throughout the year, we experienced different situations whether Christian or not, faced with challenges and sin. Sometimes we fail to understand the challenges that we go through to the extent that we became so deeply discouraged with our Christianity and life. We complain that God is not listening to us, maybe He is not all powerful, He does not pay attention to our cause, maybe like the Israelites we say, "the Babylonia gods" are better than God.

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

1. Reflecting deep upon our lives, especially the difficulties we have faced, and we have been going through. How does the "Message of Hope" help us to approach and face life?
2. There is usually a debate on the involvement of God in our painful moments in life. How can one see God in a painful experience or a prayer that seem not to be answered?
3. This is a period of advent where the good "Message of Hope" is declared from "a high mountain," and with "raised voice with strength." It is loud and clear, and so everyone must hear it. How is it impacting you in your situation?
4. What does it mean to be carried in God's bosom?

### **CONCLUSION**

Brothers and sisters, despite the troubles that we go through, God assures us of His existence and He cares about us, even when it is hurting or when we feel lost and confused, God should be our ultimate hope. God's care and love is beyond our understanding. There should be no doubt in us that, God loves us. To those of us who love God, be encouraged that, He is always involved in our situations and His message of hope for us is in Jesus Christ.

What God has said in the scripture and in our lives will surely come to pass. Let's trust and hope in the Almighty God.

**AMEN**

**TUESDAY, 20TH DECEMBER, 2022**

**TOPIC: HUMBLE YOURSELF BEFORE GOD**

**TEXT: ISAIAH 66:1-2**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this fast-paced world where we are all chasing after our big dreams, it is possible for one to remove God from the equation of success and claim that they have achieved all that they have, because of their might. The quest for greatness is not bad; it is the attitude we display towards others that are different from us that corrupts our moral judgment. Mostly we want to consider ourselves better than others and would want to be recognized as such while despising the not so -privileged as we are, we have to remember that without God's help, we are all limited.

### **BIBLE EXPLANATION**

Isaiah prophesied at the most crucial period in the history of Judah and Israel. Both the southern and northern kingdom were increasing in prosperity and power. Leaders had fallen into serious moral and spiritual decline. Secret places of pagan worship were tolerated, the wealthy oppressed the poor, the women neglected their families in the quest of carnal pleasures. In addition, many priests and prophets became drunken men pleasers. This became so clear to Isaiah that the covenant made with God had been violated. The consequence was that judgment and captivity became inevitable for these kingdoms.

In the text, we read God reminding the people of Israel about His greatness because they had fallen from His presence. God has always wanted to be with humanity and enjoy His relationship to the point that God wanting to have His presence in the temple and dwell with His people. God rebukes the children of Israel for their pride and arrogance because they took it that what they were doing was out of their own works.

### **APPLICATION**

People often work hard to achieve their goals in life however, few realize that after achieving their goals that pride overrides and many, unfortunately, maintain their pride.

There are certain people that are too much of themselves and they hardly consider others. Have you ever wondered why people easily change with pride even when you suffered with them to achieve something or when they become leaders or have achieved a thing out of many? Some of these, are actually, people who pray regularly, committed to Church work, while others have even fallen from their commitment to God.

### **QUESTION FOR REFLECTION**

1. What is your understanding of the text read vs 1 and 2?
2. Today we have people who are committed to some Church work, give offerings and are seen regularly at Church. What does God really want when it comes to humility?
3. In line with the theme, how are we living with our family members, neighbours, co-workers and friends?
4. What does it mean to be poor, of a contrite spirit and one who trembles at God's word?

### **CONCLUSION**

Beloved in the Lord, in our Christian journey, we need not to forget an understanding of who God is. Mostly we are occupied with our personal things such as building and trying to prove something by bringing things to the temple of God yet our relationship with God is not right as pride is evident in us.

This is not the pride of showing off to other people, but of not respecting the word of God. We need to humble ourselves before God, by listening to Him. What is our response to God's word to what we do and have become. How are we living with everyone else and how are we treating sin in our lives? Pride is a blind spot to many of us because we cannot easily accept that we have it. On the other hand, humility is knowing your limitations. Are you where you belong?

**AMEN!**

**WEDNESDAY, 21ST DECEMBER, 2022**

**THEME: FORGIVENESS**

**TEXT: COLOSSIANS 3:12-13**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In a world of social relationships, it is easy for people to hurt each other through words, expressions or actions because we all different and are prone to be at fault. Because of offence, people develop bitterness, anger and indifference that breaks down relationships in families, society and the Church at large.

FORGIVENESS is defined or said to be a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed us, regardless of whether they actually deserve our forgiveness or not.

### **BIBLE EXPLANATION**

We ALL need forgiveness at one time or another. Whatever our position, educated or not, male or female, talented or not, exceptionally good or not, single or married, young or senior, parent or child, we all need some forgiveness at some point in life among and between ourselves as social beings/family.

Then, we all need forgiveness from God (For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God – Romans 3:23)

Any person who has observed a car or a machine, understands that OIL is needed to lubricate mechanical parts and make them effectively work to produce the desired outcome, usually a movement. The success of a car is in its ability to move/transport people from place to another. But that success can not be achieved without OIL. OIL SMOOTHENS and makes the parts perfectly fit and work together, to produce the desired result. So, it is with FORGIVENESS, it SMOOTHENS our relationships and creates harmony, a necessary ingredient for progressing and achieving more with less effort.

The letter to the Colossians deals with some heresy that threatened Christianity. Some of the response to those was that enlightened believers could, achieve spiritual fulness through special knowledge and rigorous self-discipline. Therefore, with urgency Paul wrote to instruct the Colossians church the truth and alert them of the danger of returning to pagan vices and to inspire them to promote mutual love and harmony. In the text read Paul talks of the character of a new man who has accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour, one who is to be known as the elect of God.

He reminds the Colossians to be a people who should be able to bear with one another and forgiving one another, even as Christ forgave them. This he brings it out as a must do ( **COLOSSIANS 3:12-13** ).

### **APPLICATION**

Out of the many choices we make in our Christian life that has been so difficult and painful to do sometimes is to forgive. Today people die of hurt and anger because they failed to forgive or to let go. We can certainly think of a time we were hurt or a time we hurt someone, we can equally think of a time we forgave and a time we were forgiven. Sadly, we can even think of not forgiving because of the hurt, anger and pain that some of us are holding. It is said “to error is human, to forgive is divine”

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

1. Why is it so difficult for some Christians to forgive?
2. How can we help Christians that have vowed not to forgive because, they feel what they went through was so painful?
3. In the text read what is the character of a Christian “new man” And how can this help us today?
4. Is revenge necessary to a Christian?

### **CONCLUSION**

Forgiveness and revenge were and are both used to solve problems in families and communities to bring justice. However, as we celebrate this advent it is important to look at the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, what He has done for us. Yes, it was painful but what about being Christian? Let us choose peace to govern all our relationships. Fair enough it can be a process to forgive, but for how long must one hold hurt, anger, grudge and pain? We are the elect and there is no need of going back to the old being of vengeance. Paul speaks to us today “even as Christ forgave us, so we must do”. True to forgive is divine therefore, if we cannot forgive then we are not godly, heaven is not our place.

**AMEN!**

**THURSDAY, 22ND DECEMBER, 2022**

**THEME: A WORTHY RELATIONSHIP**

**TEXT: 1 JOHN 3:1-10**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Relationships are key to the growth and survival of societies. In the Ubuntu concept it acclaimed and asserted that “I am because you’re”, we belong to each other. My growth and my contribution to life is dependent on my associations. There are key strategic destiny relationships that we must invest into, protect and maintain for our good. It said that show me your friends and I will tell you who you are, because you are a reflection of the circle of friends you have. However all these are limited, our ultimate relationship must be with God the creator.

### **BIBLE EXPLANATION**

The letter read is addressed to the Church at large. 1 John 3:1–10 talks of God's love, and how that love results in believers becoming children of God. In vs 2-3 there are two important concepts presented as we celebrate advent. The first one is in v2 that of becoming like Jesus when he appears and the second one is in v3 that of becoming like Jesus now by purifying ourselves just as He is pure. In both verses there is an element of purification as we try to be like Him and as we wait upon Him. John states that he wrote to give assurance of the eternal life to those who believe in the name of the Son of God.

### **APPLICATION**

From the text clearly, we can see that God has a deep relationship with us that is worthy cherishing. He has demonstrated love in this relationship. We are usually involved in many relationships that can be classified in different ways. However, a good relationship should be healthy and bring about progress in one's life. There are important things that can be considered in any relationship such as love, trust, communication, and many other things. Furthermore, there must be something in common in a relationship to be shared.

Today we are called Christians because of what God has done to us, giving us Jesus Christ. This has an impact on our nature today and eternally. In our relationship with God, we are faced with a lot of different challenges and God has been faithful with us. Therefore, there is need for us to deeply investigate our lives and check how we have responded to this relationship with our God.



## **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

1. What type of relationship do we have with God? Does our relationship with God show the true essentials of becoming like Him even in difficult times?
2. What is the connection between Jesus' birth and our new birth?
3. What is the relationship between Jesus' incarnation and our regeneration
4. What is it that makes us slow to believe the love of God?

## **CONCLUSION**

Beloved in the Lord, the relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ proves itself worthy of the love of God. Not only today do we see people having difficulties to maintain their healthy relationship with God, but even in the old days due to different reasons. Sometimes it is unbelief, which cannot trust the love of God when it sees the hurt and pain of life. And sometimes it just takes time for a person to come to a fuller understanding of the greatness of God's love.

Our new birth should make us to be like Jesus in what we face and hope for in life. God took the form of a human through Jesus; God demonstrated the act of being fully God and fully human. Therefore, there is need for us to equally seek the depth of divinity within us and allow it to come into manifestation. In other words, there must be divine manifestations in a radical change in our moral character, from the love and life of sin to the love of God and life of righteousness. This will establish us in believing in our Lord Jesus Christ and hope for eternal life.

**AMEN!**

**FRIDAY, 23RD DECEMBER, 2022**

**THEME: MAKING CHRIST KNOWN TO OTHERS**

**TEXT: ACTS 1:4-8**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In our human experience, it is common practice to share the good news and share the joy of our achievements with others whether passing an exam, proposal for marriage, a new job, the birth of a child, a successful business undertaking and many others. It is however worth noting that as Christ Ambassadors, witnesses of the cross and the people that have been received Christ and had been impacted with the love of God should find it easier to share the good news of salvation.

## **BIBLE EXPLANATION**

Acts reveals the life of Christ, the works of the apostles and how Christianity spread from Jerusalem to Rome. The text read reveals the transfer of Christ's authority and mission to His disciples. It is the initiation of Jesus' great commission to make disciples of all nations. This is a call of all disciples to be witnesses for Jesus Christ. As we observe advent it is our mandate to tell the world about Jesus as this is our essence of being Christians.

## **APPLICATION**

Today we have some Christians who are failing to make the name of Jesus known to others because of their behaviors and excuses that sometimes would leave one to wonder who they really are. Sometimes we miss it because we think we are doing it, and all is well. It's worth noting that in the Old Testament only those uniquely called by God would receive the Holy Spirit and perform their given obligations, but under the new covenant every believer is offered this opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit and to serve God.

## **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

1. Reflecting on our Christian walk this year, how has each one of us made the name of Christ known to others that we can even attest to it?
2. If witnessing is Christ centered, how best can our behaviour and lifestyle help us to tell others about Jesus Christ?
3. What do you think about people who confidently talk about others easily to their friends but find it difficult to talk about the love of Christ or resurrection to them.
4. What is the main goal of telling others about Christ?

## **CONCLUSION**

Beloved in the Lord, making Christ known is our business that requires faith, prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. Shamelessly, we have seen our husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, children and friends living in sin. Some of them to the point where they even died. We had friends and relatives that died in accidents and of Covid-19 and we had time with them, but we simply thought it was not necessary to tell them about Jesus Christ yes, we supposed that they knew. Sometimes we can try to justify ourselves by pushing it back to God, that it's all up to God. Here is the thing.

We are Christians who have this responsibility to stand up as witnesses of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is about who we proudly are. If you and I will not take up this mantle who will? Let us allow the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, then we will perform what Jesus has commissioned us to do without fail.

**AMEN!**

## **SUNDAY SERMON 25<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2022**

### **THEME: THE PROMISE OF THE MESSIAH HAS BEEN FULFILLED**

#### **READING : ISAIAH 53:5-6, COLOSSIANS 1:15-20, MARK 1:1-8**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In our lifetime we have heard about promises and made them at the same time people have made them to us. Shockingly we have been disappointed and equally we disappointed people. It is important to note that a promise is a form of commitment which should be valued with seriousness for it to be fulfilled. In other words, a promise has value. Therefore, in trying to understand our theme this morning it is important to know and see God as one who always fulfils His promises. God has always given us many wonderful promises and honoured them throughout our lifetime to maintain a healthy relationship with us. During this advent we are worshiping and celebrating the fulfilled and yet to be fulfilled promises of God.

#### **BIBLE EXPLANATION**

##### **ISAIAH 53:5-6**

The book of Isaiah in summary reveals God's judgment and salvation on Judah. The prophet Isaiah was primarily called to prophecy to the kingdom of Judah at a time that Judah was going through times of revival and times of rebellion. The kingdom of Judah was threatened with destruction by Assyria and Egypt but was spared because of God. At that time Isaiah proclaimed a message of repentance from sin and hopeful expectation of God's deliverance in the future. In the text read we see that Isaiah's message focuses on the salvation that will come through the messiah. It is through the suffering of the messiah that our iniquities are taken away and through His wounds that healing is achieved. In addition, during the reign of the Messiah God's righteousness will be fully revealed to the world. This is revealed in Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

##### **COLOSSIANS 1:15-21**

Paul writes to the church in Colossae to encourage them in their faith and the hope that they had in Jesus Christ. He encourages them to be thankful that God had taken them from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom light that is; the kingdom of the Son our Lord Jesus the Christ. The passage read is about our Lord Jesus Christ, how powerful He is and how all things came into being in Him. How he shed His blood to bring peace between God and man. Meaning that at one point we were not at peace and not in a good relationship with God. Nevertheless, because of his love He gave us Jesus for us to be reconciled back to Him as His children. The text answers the question who is Jesus?

## **MARK 1:1-8**

The gospel of Mark gives witness of Jesus as the Son of God and as the Messiah. In the text read we see John's witness mission was to prepare the way for the messiah to make the path straight. John's gospel begins with a trumpet call of the Good News of Jesus Christ. He did this by preaching in the wildernesses, where he attracted great crowds by calling people to repentance, baptizing and by heralding the one who was to come. This gospel describes the salvation work of Jesus Christ. How God finally would love to have a good relationship with humanity and the world.

### **POINTS FOR REFLECTION**

#### **1. Align yourself with God**

Clearly, the text in Isaiah reflects our lives with God today. Does our relationship with God come easily and does it feel natural? Some of us our lives are questionable in the sense of our Christian faith. The quality of time we spend with God, the identity shared with Him, the aspect of being practical with our faith and how to realign ourselves with God. If there is anything that can separate us from God it is sin Isaiah 59:2 "but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that he does not hear."

Beloved in the Lord, some of the things we are experiencing in our lives it's because of being rebellious to God. The message is that salvation has come, and God's righteousness has been fully revealed to the world, but how have we responded or aligned ourselves with the message? There is need to stand by the choice we made of making Jesus our Messiah. Aligning oneself with God that is to love God, agree with God and work with Him to support His work. In other words, it is when our hearts are right with God, where our spirit, souls and bodies work together in peace and harmony to serve God. This will allow scripture to be fulfilled in our situations, our iniquities being taken away and through His wounds healing being achieved

#### **2. Know who you are in Christ**

Identity crisis of who we are is evident in some of us and challenges of recognizing Jesus in our lives, His kingship over our lives that we are His people in His kingdom created by Him and for Him. Learning more about Him what he has done for us and what we need to do for Him as ambassadors of His kingdom. To many of us it has been difficult to let go, that the lives we live in Christ are entrusted to us by God.

There are times that we are faced with difficult situations that are so painful and hard to accept, that we battle it within ourselves with a lot of questions. These are times when it becomes more challenging to maintain our identity and see God in it. Sometimes it's about our lifestyle, we have failed to come out of sin and resorted to live double standard lives with no regard to our loving God. Some of us are still in the wilderness.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, no matter how confusing and painful the situation may have felt or feel and turned to be, be encouraged that Jesus is in total control of all things. It's painful that it should be through us that certain experiences happen. But we need to understand that, by His ultimate power in Him all things hold together. Beloved as you and I observe advent let us see God in all our situations, even in the invisible and in the wilderness. He gave us Jesus and through Him we have our being and His likeness. Such a powerful actuality when attained and nurtured. The Church is what it is today because of Jesus who is the image of the invisible God. Therefore, we are to honor and worship Him as a church for the privilege He gave us to be partakers of His kingdom.

### 3. **Celebrate Jesus**

As we celebrate the life of our Lord and savior Jesus the Christ, sufficient preparation is very important, and the gospel of Mark leads us to see the most important preparation as we celebrate Jesus' first or Second Advent and that is we prepare our hearts. What is good about Christmas if we don't see the need for eternal salvation through Him and what good will be of His second advent to us if we have not or not ready to prepare our hearts for salvation and His coming. What is the most important thing in this celebration? Fair enough we have ways to celebrate Christmas, but let's celebrate it using advent. In short, beloved Jesus is the reason of the celebration today and always.

Through advent we strive to prepare our hearts to identify, those places where sin has taken a hold of us and to purge it from our lives. As we prepare and celebrate Christmas let it be in us to allow our being to find the true meaning of this celebration. A celebration with an open heart to see the love of God through Jesus Christ. A celebration that will bring forgiveness and repentance, a celebration that will bring reconciliation and a new start. Jesus did it on the cross and He is coming again for His own. Beloved let us go out there to celebrate the gift of Jesus and share it with everyone.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion beloved in the Lord, God has shown us His faithfulness in the ages past and the promise of the Messiah has been fulfilled. One who has brought reconciliation and healing in our lives. Therefore, a new birth with faith is necessary for our present and future perfection, giving our whole to God being aligned with Him. God has given us this great privilege to serve Him and to be partakers of His kingdom. We are the likeness of God what can challenge us if God is on our side. In all this we should never forget that God owns us, we therefore owe to Him our loyalty and respect in celebrating the greatest gift that has been given to humanity. May the almighty God and His fulfilled promise be nurtured in us.

**AMEN!**

**THE MISSION AND EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT WOULD LIKE TO  
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CHRISTMAS SERMON OUTLINE  
FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 2022.**