



*"All One In Christ"*

**THE UNITED CHURCH OF ZAMBIA**

**SYNOD MISSION AND EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT**

**2023 PASSION WEEK & EASTER SUNDAY**

**3RD APRIL TO 9<sup>TH</sup> APRIL**

**THEME: UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES AND WHAT TO DO**

**2 CHRONICLES 12:32**

**SUB-THEME: JESUS THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE OF THE LORD –**

**READING: JOHN 19:30**

**MONDAY -3<sup>RD</sup> APRIL, 2023**

**BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 16:21-24**

**TOPIC: WAY TO THE CROSS**

**INTRODUCTION**

Passion Week is the week leading up to Christ's crucifixion which is richly instructive procession of events that magnify the Savior and illuminate His earthly mission which culminates into His crucifixion on Calvary's cross and ultimate resurrection. Passion Week is in every aspect a period of worship service centred on explaining the salvific agenda of YHWH through which humanity was and is being saved from eternal death. In Jesus' death, there is no element of a political Messiah as was expected in the Israeli Messianic hopes for political liberation from the Roman oppression but a sacrifice of God for all humanity, therefore, let us take time reflecting on the act of love God has demonstrated towards us.

The **Way to the Cross** is our theme which implies aligning ourselves to the fulfilment of what is predestined for us be it good or bad in our journey of faith, taking on courage and facing all your fears. Reaching our destiny must be our goal and all our doings should be for such a cause and goal.

## **BIBLE EXPLANATION**

The text in consideration today reveals the journey that Jesus embarked on to the cross though it was such a painful and humiliating journey.

It must be noted that all the four gospels in the New Testament have recorded the death of Jesus Christ; according to the gospel of Matthew, he presents his gospel to the Jewish community and the text in our reflection is about the un-glorified Jesus Christ who understands his purpose and that the fulfilment of purpose was always coupled with the understanding of time.

Whoever failed to understand the times ended up missing his/her opportunity of greatness and Jesus understood that the time for his suffering and glorification had come and that he needed to be in Jerusalem to fulfil what was said about Him by the Prophets.

**Vs 21**, Jesus was fully aware on the things that should happen to Him and the need to be in Jerusalem where he should suffer at the hands of the elders, chief priests and Pharisees as they had developed grudge against Him and considered Him an enemy both to the religious and political circles for the large following He had commanded. Further, the Jews were in high anticipation of a revolutionary political Messiah who would come to overthrow Roman leadership.

**Vs 22-24**, Peter was strongly attached to Jesus such that he could not bear to think of Jesus' death thus taking his master and friend aside from other disciples for advice in form of a rebuke as he wanted Jesus to avoid the suffering ahead but Christ resented; note that for whoever takes us from that which is good and makes us fear to do too much for God, such a one speaks the devil's language and must be resisted with detestation and not be parleyed with. Jesus resisted the devil who spoke through Peter with intent to stop Him from going ahead to suffer and die. In Christ's address to His disciples, He declared His expectation that His followers would follow Him by dying to self and taking up their Crosses.

## **POINTS FOR REFLECTION**

With the above understanding and in consideration of the of today's theme "**The Way to the Cross**" three lessons are drawn as follows:

1. **The Need to Face Your Fears:** We are all confronted with many fears in our everyday life as we keep on pushing to fulfil the purpose of our existence, nothing good can come our way without facing our fears. I believe that some of us, if not all of us, here present, have had some fears though in different ways: fear of starting a business, schools, fear of marriage, fear of becoming a nobody etc. just as we have our fears, Christ was not exempted He was confronted with a traumatizing situation but went on to face His fears.

Beloved in Christ, there are things which no matter how you pray and fast , they would not go away, the only way out is to face them and hence the need to take up courage. Facing our fears will propel in us the gut or energy to keep forward. One needs to arm himself or herself with an attitude of a warrior or athlete, there is no need to delay ourselves further but to confront anything be it a spirit, good or bad that presents itself as a challenge or hindrance on our way. Christ confronted his fears thus we can also do the same.

## **2. Dealing With the opposer Of the Good Cause.**

It must be noted that every good work meant to be done will always attract opposition, those opposing could be yourself, friends, family, or Satan and his agents, now that we are aware that opposition of the good cause can come from anywhere within and outside our circles, what will give us advantage is to be knowledgeable enough and have capacity to counter that opposition just like Christ did. Jesus was knowledgeable about His purpose and the suffering was to encounter. Beloved in Christ, being ignorant will make us become victims and casualties of the scammers in the name of modern day false prophets and papas ; we ought to know that sometimes, pain and sufferings are part of our story weaved into our path to destiny until we reach our resting place in God.

It is therefore important to time study the word of God, to be persistent in prayer and patient in affliction that we may discern the perfect will of God for us and resisting the enemy to get behind us and not to distract us from our journey.

## **3. Carry Your Cross**

Jesus calls us to deny ourselves and to carry our cross and not his cross for his cross is the cross of redemption. Paul expressed it very sturdily in Romans 7:22-23a; denying self as a condition of becoming his disciple means putting off our selfish desires and gains becoming ambassadors of Him morally in a decaying world where evil has replaced good.

## **CONCLUSION**

**Taking our cross** means willingly and cheerfully bearing the trials and afflictions which God allows on our way; the cross of pain, the cross of disappointment in life, the cross of being abandoned, the cross of our emptiness for being followers of Christ. When we pass through that darkest valley of our life, beloved, always find solace in Christ as we carry our crosses, which makes have a reason to keep living.

Note that for the cross He bore for us makes us hopeful in the midst of hopelessness and adversaries, as believers we go home, men counting it all joy that we have been counted worthy to participate in suffering of Jesus for his names sake without which our faith would be in vain.

Let's continue reflecting on the redemptive power of God in this Passion Week Amen.

**TUESDAY -4<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2023**

**BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 27:17**

**TOPIC: A SINNER GOES FREE.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

A sinner is someone who has done something wrong according to religious or moral law, someone who has sinned or committed an offence. According to the scriptures, we can easily say that all who are born in Adam are sinners. It does not matter what kind of person one may be; as long as you are born from Adam, you are a sinner. Our topic today in this year's Passion Week discusses the nature of a sinner who lives without the law, one that is not righteous, and one that is unfaithful, one condemned to death and being set free while an innocent, righteous and blameless person (Jesus )is condemned to death.

### **BIBLE EXPLANATION**

The text in consideration presents a difficult situation for Pilate as Christ seems to be a threat to his leadership bearing in mind the large following which He had commanded. It was a very interesting to see if Pilate would use this opportunity to stopping the Jesus movement for his political mileage but interesting enough, in trying to be a just ruler, he sees no credible reason of executing Jesus. Pilate in the process tries to figure out what to do with Jesus who had been brought to him by the Jewish religious leaders. They are demanding a death sentence. Pilate couldn't find anything wrong with Jesus (John 18:33-38), and Jesus won't say much in His own defence.

Pilate had another idea as every year at Passover; the tradition required the release of a prisoner as a kind of gift to the people.

Then Pilate suggested as an alternative to exchange Jesus for Barabbas a confirmed rebel, criminal and murderer, so vile that he was described as "notorious. It's certain that Pilate knew that Jesus of Nazareth had been followed by a great number of people throughout Israel, at the same time, the other prisoner being offered was a rebel who had been convicted of participating in an uprising against Rome on which he was guilty of treason, and his crimes were usually punishable by the sword of justice.

Pilate, believing that the people would choose Jesus, instead of Barabbas the awful criminal, offered the two men for choice. Barabbas' crime had been so terrible that the people were not expected to be of that choice, but as they made their choice, surprisingly Barabbas was unanimously accepted by the People.

As the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus using their grudge against Him, little did they know that they are just pushing the agenda of God as the Latin phrase *Vox Populi Vox Dei* meaning "the voice of the people is the voice of God." **"All the whole people" say: "His blood be upon us and on our children"** (Matthew 27:25) Although chanting was a demonstration of a grudge against Jesus but it was at the same time, the true prophetic plan of God for all humanity who had fallen short of the glory of God to find true fellowship with God through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Remember that Jesus' blood speaks of better things from the blood of Abel (Hebrew 12:24): it does not cry out for vengeance and punishment; but brings reconciliation.

## **POINTS FOR REFLECTION**

### **1. Barabbas Represents You And Me**

This rebel, this murderer is the representative of the whole human race. Everyone in the whole wide world is in this Barabbas, all human beings born of a human father. That's the meaning of Barabbas (**son of a father**.) Apostle Paul in Romans 5:12 states that "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" By implication, this is you and me here, standing next to Jesus with all our evil passions, selfishness, our unbelief including all our weaknesses, you and I, all are rebels and murderers all through the weary years since the fall in Paradise. I believe that none of us can deny the reality of this unfortunate fall all. All that Barabbas was waiting for was death as a just punishment for his rebellion and I guess that's what the world is waiting for at this very moment.

Unrepented humanity too would be waiting for everlasting and horrible death, if it were not for the wondrous mercy of God, we would all head towards eternal condemnation and death. Beloved in Christ, this freedom given to Barabbas is for all of us including those considered in Latin as the *pessimus peccato* (**the worst sinners**) who we segregate and never want to associate with, therefore, none of us should boast about his or her salvation, it is the Lord's kindness and mercy that leads us to safety in God.

## **2. God's Grace Has Done All This**

We are what we are not because we deserve it, but because God loved us unconditionally. This is what the word “grace” means. It means undeserved favour. Grace has done all this. We have nothing to boast about. We only need to serve him with all our hearts, we therefore, call upon all those who have not been saved to give their lives to Christ.

This is our opportunity together with those who have fallen from Grace and Satan to return to God than to wallow and bury ourselves in our sins and weakness. This opportunity is given to all to renew our commitment to Christ and serve him with fear and trembling. Let His mercies speak for us as we seek Him in this Passion Week amen.

**WEDNESDAY -5<sup>th</sup> APRIL, 2023**

**BIBLE READING: JOHN 13:21-32**

**THEME: THE BETRAYER.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In every human history through the books we read, the movies we watch, there are always some persons who become the main characters whom they use to identify the happening of events in the story. Equally, the story of Jesus can't be told without the mention of the scribes, priests, teachers of the law, Pilate, and the disciple. Today we reflect on the character of Judas in Jesus' story on earth, and the theme of our reflection is the betrayer.

### **BIBLE EXPLANATION**

The text we are contemplating on presents Jesus emotional anguish as he was to face the suffering of his life due to the betrayal of someone He had moved with, ate with above all His subjects who had also been His treasurer at the same time. It must be noted that worry saps one's emotional feelings, it causes insomnia and stomach problems sometimes, one could assume that Christ was probably experiencing the above especially when reclining at the table with the betrayer.

The expression, “**Very truly, one of you will betray me**”, must have been said from an emotion of pain and disappointment. The Master's heart must have been very heavy when He uttered such words. One may wonder why Judas really betrayed Jesus.

It is believed that Judas must have come from the zealots who were assassinating the Romans as they targeted Romans and Jews who collaborated with Rome, their belief was to revolt as they were ant- Roman

governance and it can be right to probe that maybe Judas followed Jesus to champion a revolution and couldn't take it after realizing that Jesus was not going the direction he had always wished, it became apparent to betray Him.

## **POINTS FOR REFLECTION**

### **1. The Betrayer Within**

A betrayer is always someone who know you and whom you know. No betrayer come from afar, they are normally very close thus Jesus could not have been betrayed by an outsider, it had to be someone who was closer to Him. Judas was someone who knew where Jesus was found as they didn't stay in one place for a long time, they were itinerary preachers who moved across the country.

Further , Judas was someone who could give a description of how Jesus looked like; thus Jesus knew this reality and who it was who was to betray him while his other disciples were not aware of what Judas was about to do. They might have been all ignorant about Judas' plan but Jesus knew the thoughts of Judas. Take note that the scriptures clearly states that **"Satan entered into him."** It is important to know that no evil can be done without Satan's involvement and Satan can't get involved unless you open your door through your thoughts. It was in the thoughts that Satan found space to enter him. Therefore, this means that he was not acting alone. He was under the influence of Satan, whose work was to bring confusion, hatred and disharmony in an environment where there was love.

### **2. Never Make Jesus Be What You Want Him to Be.**

Judas tried but could not, we should never think that we can twist God's arm to make him give us what we want at our terms, timing and demand. These are some of the sad reality that we as Christians are doing. By doing such, we give a lot room to the devil to use us. There are times when people are shocked when they learn that a person whom they trusted had acted rather differently. Yes, like the disciples, it is the act of the devil but granted by man knowingly or unknowingly thus guard your heart, brush off all thoughts which are ungodly.

To those who have passed through betrayal, let us learn from the prayer of Jesus at the cross saying, **"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"**. In that prayer Judas was included. Let us forgive the betrayers and move on, when we learn from betrayal critically, betrayal when channelled positively can propel one into a better place and opportunity. If Judas did not betray Jesus, the scripture could not have been fulfilled and life lesson would not have be drawn from this

experience. As demonstrated, the secret is in moving on after betrayal, never to be obsessed with such a betrayal but to let it go and pray over it, thanking God for His faithfulness through the pain we experienced.

### **CONCLUSION**

Above all the best can still come out of the horrible situations we encounter. Beloved as we sojourn in this week and life in general, we too are not without fault, let us forgive those who have hurt us and seek peace with the people whom we have betrayed. Reconciliation is what bonds us back to one another and back to God.

Amen!





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**MAUNDY THURSDAY**

**6<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2023**

**BIBLE READING: JOHN 6:47-56**

**TOPIC: CHRIST THE BREAD OF LIFE**

This Thursday is a special Thursday on the Christian calendar called MAUNDY THURSDAY which is an Anglo-Franco word meaning "**Commandment**"; and refers to the **Commandment that Jesus left His disciples to love one another** as recorded in Mark 14:17- 26 in which the sacrament of Holy Communion was constituted and celebrated during the **Last Supper** with His disciples. Jesus gave a new commandment on this **Maundy Thursday**. In our reflection we will look at the topic, **Christ the Bread of Life**. It must be emphasized that full communicant members of this great Church are mostly familiar with the liturgy and words of the Institution of Holy Communion since they are always recited each time when the sacrament of Holy Communion is being celebrated.

Hearing these words twelve or more times in a year does not mean we have grasped their true meaning. Do these words carry the same message to us as they carried to the first disciples? What did Jesus mean? Do we really feel the same impact and power as then?

In light of these questions we should from time to time remind ourselves of these words because through them we come to realize and understand better the grace of God and thus avoid participating in the sacrament without knowledge and the true desire to commune with God.

Turning the sacrament into mere tradition passed on to us by our great fathers and mothers makes one miss the Grace bestowed on the sacrament.

### **BIBLE EXPLANATION**

The scripture for reflection according to the gospel of John, is not accounted among the synoptic as it presents Jesus Christ as Spirit, without a genealogy. In John 4, **the woman at the well had asked Jesus to give her living water so that she could no longer come down daily to draw water, others also said to Jesus**, equally in John 6 Peter and the disciples wished for such eternal bread,

**“Sir, give us this bread of life always”** and then Jesus responds, **“I am the bread of life, he who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never be thirsty”**. This statement was very hard for the Jews to understand as it could mean becoming human cannibals, particularly which the bread He was to give for the life of the world was His own flesh.” It made Jews angry as the Greek lexicon puts it as “machomai “mean **“How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”**

Jesus was not moved at all, instead, he continued saying; **whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me, and I live in him ...**

This is the bread that came down from heaven; it is not like the bread that your ancestors ate, but later died. The one who eats this bread will live forever.” Jesus was thus giving the new meaning of that Passover cerebation with Him being the reality as the Passover Lambo of God, the symbol of the new reality in Him as the life giver. Telling them of this cerebation of the sacrament of Holy Communion, or the Lord’s Supper in such a clearer language, the Act became a constant memoriam, renewal and a means of grace and fellowship with the Risen Lord.

It is a confirmation of our Christian experience and existence. A Christian does not live for himself or herself, we live in the Lord and Lord Jesus Christ lives in us. Therefore, Jesus talks about the need to eat His flesh and one if would be considered a partaker of His life, eating His flesh and drinking His blood has been interpreted by many, as anticipation of Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross because it was there, on the cross that he gave up his life, for the sake of us sinners.

## **POINTS FOR REFLECTION**

What then does the Lord's Supper mean? It carries a deeper meaning beyond being buried as a UCZ member:

### **1. We Tap Life From Jesus Christ Through Holy Communion**

As we go on with our daily chores, our lives need sustaining power; we live in the world full of frustrations and hopelessness, many times we feel like giving up on life, because we think we have had enough of it better going to the other side where our beloved had gone ahead of us. We call dying and being buried as our final resting place but think of it again, how can you think of finding rest where you had never been before.

Beloved, Christ is the Bread of life, participating in the sacrament with true knowledge and faith, through this, He gives us reason to keep going and never quitting because on His table He gives us courage, and renews our strength like that of an eagle.

Furthermore, Jesus Christ, being the bread of life, we are drawn closer to Him, as we live in Him and Him in us. Even though it is an outward event, it has inward means of divine Grace.

### **2. The Cup of Pardon.**

No one can claim to be pure before God, we are people full of inadequacies, and we stumble and fall from time to time. In light of this reality, we constantly need the mercies of the Lord that we may continue having the life of Christ through our fellowship with Him on His table.

The writer to the Hebrews in chapter 10 verse 14 to 17; puts it this way, **"14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. 17 I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more"** Through the table of the Lord we find full pardon for our sins and our sanctification and it's not only us receiving mercy from God, but also forgiving to those who have wronged us and also forgiving ourselves for not forgiving ourselves.

The apostle Paul says; **"The cup we use in the Lord's Supper and for which we give thanks to God, when we drink from it, we are sharing in the blood of Christ. And then the bread we break; when we eat it, we are sharing in the body of Christ, because there is one loaf of bread, all of us, though many are one body, for we all share the same loaf and drink from the same cup. 1Corinthians 10:16-17"**.

Beloved, the worst happening in the Churches today is that, we harbour a lot of deep seated grudges, hatred, evil plans against each other, pastors against pastors, members against members, Churches against other Churches, but we claim to serve the same Christ; it's time for forgiveness and reconciliation among couples, families, political parties, clans, Churches in order to heal society and our world.

## **CONCLUSION**

We are one people in Christ, never to be segregated by class, education, colour of the skin, ethnicity or any other status. As believers we all eat from same table and drink from the same cup. Let us live as one, we belong to each other. To those not yet committed into communicant membership, you are missing this reality of experiencing Gods power through Holy Communion and those serving disciplinary action, repent, work hard on yourself and be restored to the communion of the saints, whatever that is keeping us from communing with God, is not worthy having it around our lives.

It is time we cut ourselves off such, let us come to Him. As Christians, we serve at His terms and demands not ours, He loves us dearly, and died for our sins to save us and restore us to himself.

Amen!



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**2023 GOOD FRIDAY SERMON OUTLINE  
7<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2023**

**THEME: UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES AND WHAT TO DO**

**BIBLE READING: JOHN 19:30**

**THEME: JESUS THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE OF THE LORD**

**INTRODUCTION**

Reading through the Old Testament, it is undisputed that the Jewish religious life was characterized by sacrifices, for instance in the book of Leviticus, it opens up with a description of five different offerings for Old Covenant worship; the offerings are; **burnt offering, grain offering, peace offering, sin offering, and the guilt offering.**

Three of these offerings relate to particular sin and its effects, that is to say that, offerings were a way Israel approached God in worship and when pleading for mercy.

The revelation of God is that, He is good and holy who desires fellowship with His people though sinners. His holiness demands that sinners die, but God satisfied His own holiness and exercised goodness by creating a way to fellowship with humanity through the offered sacrifices as the first seven chapters of Leviticus stipulates. Although the sacrifices were just temporal as they were given to God yearly, the world patiently waited for God to give us the final sacrifice which would meet all the demands of the law and appease God the father for our pardon.

The prophet Isaiah was inspired by God's Spirit and saw how an end to animal sacrifices would come to an end by replacing the same with the sacrifice the person of Christ which God would later unveil to the world. Isaiah 57:7: **"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the Slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth"**

Beloved note that the offerings in Old Testament were symbolic and without permanent effect. In Hebrews 10:11-14 – it is recorded **"And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified."**

### **BIBLE EXPLANATION**

In our reflection, some of the last words of Jesus on the cross have been recorded (John 19:30); **"When He had received the drink, Jesus said, 'it is finished.' With that He bowed His head, He gave up His spirit."** The Greek word translated 'it is finished' is **Tetelestai** which means: **"to bring to an end, to complete, to accomplish,"** it is a crucial word because it signifies the successful end to a particular course of action, it is a present tense which has been completed in the past with results continuing into present.

The words Christ spoke before his death signified that He had met all the demands required for humanity's forgiveness and restoration to a fellowship with YHWH.

He laid His life for us all, the sacrifice for all. John 15:13 **"Jesus said "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."**

### **POINTS FOR REFLECTION**

Let us see some of the things Christ's death brought to all humanity:

#### **1. We Are Redeemed:**

Beloved, Christ's death was indeed for us. The words, **"redeem"**, **"redeemer"**, and **"redemption"** are used to translate derivations of two Hebrew roots **padha** and **ga'al**, which designate **a process by which something alienated, is recovered to its original owner by payment of a sum of money in full as per legal demand.** Therefore when Jesus said **Tetelestai** in his agony, He used it in

the concept of redemption thus we are no longer strangers before God, neither do we need animal blood to approach God.

We don't need to continue being slaves of profiteers in context of papas houses, neither in shrines so that our prayers could be heard nor giving our bodies for rituals and sacrifices in order to be rich.

We belong to God and nothing the devil does can alter this reality. Jesus was forsaken in order that you and I may be redeemed; He was abandoned by his father in order that you and I may be reunited with God through Him. **“He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all our iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.”**  
Titus 2:14

## **2. There Is No Record Of our Sins**

Many people are failing to enjoy the benefits of their redemption nor experience the joy of salvation which God has given to us through Christ Jesus. The world has painted the picture of God as a ruthless judge with a book and red bow point recording every sin we commit waiting for judgment. The teachings of condemnation making the conscience of believers weak and unworthy to meet their God have continued to be preached but the Apostle Paul puts this matter to rest in this way, in Colossians 2:14: **“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”**

## **CONCLUSION**

Beloved this is to tell us that when we bring the accomplished works of Christ to this equation, there is no record of our wrongs and as such we must worship God freely while making every effort to stay away from evil things which keeps us from living the life God has called us to live. This life is a life of holiness; under the new covenant, God being our father, promises to remember our sins no more because His one and only Son Jesus Christ, gave up his life on the cross as the perfect sacrifice. The writer to the Hebrews in chapter ten verses seventeen to eighteen puts it this way, **“17 I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more. 18 Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.”** Sin brought sickness, hopelessness, and made us aliens to our father the almighty God but now that we are redeemed, all these the things of the past just believe in Christ as your Lord and Saviour that you might be qualified to live a God-filled life with the assurance of His blessings guaranteed to you and your generations to come. Amen!



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**SYNOD MISSION AND EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT**

**2023 EASTER SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE**

**THEME: UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES AND WHAT TO DO: 2**  
**CHRONICLES 12:32**

**SUB-THEME: AN EMPTY GRAVE**

**BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 28:6**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The message we are celebrating today is not a mere feel-good religious balm, we rejoice, sing hymns, we praise and worship because of a singular fact that changed the world, an itinerant Rabbi from Nazareth named Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, is risen from death and an empty grave is there to prove that He is alive. He lived with both the human and divine nature, who took on the sins of a corrupted world and a broken humanity and bore them on a cruel Roman cross and died there, however, he triumphed and overcame death and walked out of a borrowed virgin tomb where His corpse had been laid three days later. By His resurrection, He defeated sin, death's victory and decay from which all human since ancient days had stayed in bondage.

Beloved in Christ, Easter presents us with revived hope in the face of a miserable and hopeless situation, a fresh reminder that the filthiness of a fallen world where sin's tentacles reached into every part of life, bringing death and despair to every corner of the world had now expired with Christ's victorious resurrection as its expiry date.



On Good Friday, when we read Jesus' gasping words, "It is finished," know that in His agony is hope, death had lost its sting, and that one day, we will see physical bodies rise to something new, beautiful and immortal.

## **BIBLE EXPLANATION**

Today we continue to explore the mystery of God in the world He created through the person of Jesus acting in the human life and experience as both God and man. Early in His earthly ministry, Jesus stated his mandate that He had come to save humanity from eternal death and restoring them back that which they had lost through the first Adam.

It is important and interesting to note that each of the four gospel writers differs with respect to certain details regarding the resurrection story of Jesus, for instance Matthew tells us that two women came to the tomb, while Mark and Luke say three, even then still differ with the identity of the third woman; the details of each writer differs in detail but they all agree on one big issue that Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead on the following day after Sabbath.

As we reflect on our text above, Matthew records an empty grave, the soldiers who guarded the tomb could not stop the resurrection; an empty tomb was there as prove that Jesus had risen from the dead bodily. I would not be surprised to see other people doubting the resurrection because they did not expect the master to be alive again. Even the disciples doubted as they received the news that he had risen, the things He had earlier told them what would happen. The news was too good to be true, and as such they had to rush back into town with doubts.

Beyond the resurrection itself, the gospel record that His disciples met with him for some days until his ascension wow, they beheld him ascending into heaven.

## **POINTS FOR REFLECTION**

### **1. The Resurrection Of Jesus Gives Life to all.**

This is so because Christ is alive, our faith will conquers our doubts, beloved in Christ, life sometimes can be very difficult making one to question his or her faith in God, we may be engulfed with a lot of doubts but listen to the words of apostle Paul 1 CORINTHIANS 15:17, 19 stating **"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins, we should be pitied more than anyone"**.

### **2. The Resurrection of Jesus is the bedrock of our belief**

Beloveds the case of resurrection is at the heart of the Gospel, it dispels all our doubts about life after death, doubts about our future, and perhaps doubts about ourselves.

Even the disciples were doubtful about Jesus rising again from the dead, but the reality was experienced when He appeared to them and they encountered the risen Christ, they were convinced that Jesus was indeed alive.

His death shattered them, but now they could no longer doubt but believe Him. All doubts were gone; their trust in him was rekindled; just as He addressed the grief-stricken sisters of Lazarus, Jesus gave them this promise as recorded in John 11:25: **“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die”**. Friends, Jesus isn't only predicting that He would rise again, he is now saying more than that; He is the resurrection and the life; and this is why everything we say and believe hinges on this one reality, it separates Christianity from just another fantasy or religious exercise.

### **3. The Resurrection Of Jesus Is The Hope Of A Victorious New Life In God**

This reality made Apostle Peter to write in 1Peter 1:3: **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”** Beloveds our joy cannot be shuttered or quenched, let us arise in power to live with full assurance of victory in each day we are given the opportunity to live and say to ourselves, **because Christ is alive evil is conquered - because Christ is alive, our hope is alive.**

### **CONCLUSION**

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, this Easter we are declaring that it is worth our time because the Easter story is declaring that Jesus put death to death; it means that the curse that takes mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, children and grandchildren, co-workers and neighbours isn't eternal. Friends this reality is only guaranteed to those who believes in him, spending a night in the garage does not make you to be a car, eating the chicken feed does not make you a chick, being found in a Christian family and being in Church doesn't make you a Christian but rather confessing the Lordship of Jesus Christ and genuinely repenting from our sins, knowing very well that that He is the Christ and his death was for your redemption, believe him today in Jesus name.

Amen!

**THE MISSION AND EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT**

**WOULD LIKE TO THANK**

**REV. ERICK MUYANGWA, LUNTE CONSISTORY-NORTHERN**

**PREBYTERY FOR PREPARING THE 2023 PASSION WEEK**

**LESSONS AND EASTER SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINES**

For any suggestion and comments please contact

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