



“All one In Christ”

THE UNITED CHURCH OF ZAMBIA

SYNOD MISSION AND EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT

MENS CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP (MCF) SUNDAY- SERMON OUTLINE

17TH TO 23RD JULY 2023

2023 THEME: UNDERSTANDING THE TIME AND WHAT TO DO- 1

CHRONICLES 12:32

SUB THEME: “MEN WHO UNDERSTAND THE TIMES BECOME ESSENTIAL”

READING: DANIEL 1:1-21

INTRODUCTION:

Yet again we are so grateful to God for granting MCF this great opportunity to discuss and learn from one another. Servants of God, this year the Church has taken up a theme for 2023 as “Understanding the times and what to do” from 1 Chronicles 12:32. In view of this theme, we want to allow God to help us understand our times and thereafter know what to do in response to that awareness. The expectation of the Church therefore, is to have Church groups such as MCF understand their works and mission. The call to understand our times demands that, we as MCF group and Church at large reflect on our families, our faith, our environment, as well as our responsibilities. Here we need to ask ourselves questions; where are we coming from? Where are we today? And where are we going?

However, in our quest for reflection, we have to understand that, the context in which we live and practise our faith, is packed with interesting and challenging issues. It's interesting to note how easy the flow of information is today and it makes the Gospel to reach masses of our people in good time.

Servants of God, in this year's MCF week and Sunday, we shall study and reflect on how **“Men who understand the times become essential.”** Understanding the times should be our focus and priority in our Christian life. When we understand our times in all areas of our lives, our group will be re-energized by the power and grace of God. I therefore encourage MCF group members to identify areas of need in local community and render Godly services on Saturday. In trying to unpack this year's Sub-theme, let us now look at some of the men in the Bible who understood their times and became significant or essential in their own times and seasons.

1. MONDAY: 17th JULY, 2023.

SUB-THEME- THE GOD OF RENEWED BEGINNINGS

(The story of Bartimeus)

BIBLE READING: MARK 10:46 - 52

INTRODUCTION:

In this life we all pass through difficult situations and challenges. When we pass through these challenges we hope to have a fresh beginning to rehabilitate, renew, transform or improve what was damaged. Thus, this study we will look at the God of renewed beginnings with special attention to Bartimeus.

BIBLE EXPLANATION

In the scripture, we have read we look at a special individual by the name of Bartimeus. Bartimeus merely mean Son of Timeus, he was a blind man, to whom Christ gave sight, by the wayside near Jericho. There were two healed, according to Matthew; but Mark and Luke only mention Bartimeus, who bore his father's name, as though of a well-known family. There is an apparent disagreement as to the time of the occurrence, which has led some to suppose there were two causes at different times, one as Christ entered Jericho and the other as he left it. We may rather suppose that Bartimeus heard the approach of Christ, Luke 18:35, and learned who he was on the first day; and encouraged by the mercy of the Saviour to Zacchaeus, and being joined by another blind man, called to Him for help as He again passed by on His way to Jerusalem. The touching narrative of His steadfast faith, and Christ's ready compassion, should encourage all to go boldly to Jesus.

It is also important to note that, this blind man sat begging; as they do with us here today. Note, those who by the providence of God are disabled to get a livelihood by their own labour, and have not any other way of sustaining their lives, are the most proper objects of charity; and particular care ought to be taken of them.

In vs 47, he cried out to the Lord Jesus for mercy; "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David". Misery is the object of mercy, his own miserable case he recommends to the compassion of the Son of David, of whom it was foretold, that, when he should come to save us, the eyes of the blind should be opened, (Isaiah 35:5). The particular favour he begged, was, that his eyes might be opened; that so he might be able to work for his living, and might be no longer burdensome to others. It is a very desirable thing to be in a capacity of earning our own bread; and where God has given men their limbs and senses, it is a shame for men by their foolishness and slothfulness to make themselves, in effect, blind and lame. In coming to Christ for help and healing, we should have an eye to him as the promised Messiah, the Trustee of mercy and grace.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- (i) What obstacles are stopping you to move as MCF members?
- (ii) How can you destroy these obstacles as MCF members?
- (iii) Do you let anybody silence your voice or dampen your enthusiasm when you chase after Jesus?
- (iv) How many times have you failed? Do you easily give up on them?

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can say that, the God of fresh beginnings reminds us that Jesus is the answer to our needs. He is the only one who can save us from our situations or circumstances that we find ourselves in. Further, this passage gives us practical lessons that highlight the power of having faith, knowledge, humbleness and persistence.

2. TUESDAY: 18TH JULY 2023

SUB-THEME- GOD VALUES US REGARDLESS OF WHO WE ARE (The story of the lost Son)

BIBLE READING: LUKE 15:11-31

INTRODUCTION:

The parable represents God as Father to all mankind, to the whole family of Adam. We are all His offspring, have all one Father, and one God created us. From Him we have our being, in Him we have life, and from Him we receive our maintenance. He is our Father, for He has power to educate and share the inheritance of His Kingdom with us. However, it must be noted that each one's dutiful works as children to Him determine whether enters or not His kingdom..

BIBLE EXPLANATION

This passage read represents the children of men as of different characters, though all related to God as their common Father. He had two sons, one of them a solid grave youth, reserved and ascetic, sober himself, but not at all good-humoured to those about him; such a one would adhere to his education, and not be easily drawn from it.

The other son was volatile and unpredictable, and impatient of restraint, roving, and willing to try his fortune, and, if he fall into ill hands, likely to be a rake, notwithstanding his virtuous education. Now this latter represents the publicans and sinners, whom Christ is endeavouring to bring to repentance, and the Gentiles, to whom the apostles were to be sent forth to preach repentance. The former represents the Jews in general, and particularly the Pharisees, whom he was endeavouring to reconcile to that grace of God which was offered to, and bestowed upon sinners. Further, the younger son is the prodigal, whose character and case are here designed to represent that of a sinner, that of every one of us in our natural state.

Let us remember that God does not always get in the way of our sinful nature. Sometimes we want things before we are ready. This is why, our Saviour hereby intimates to those proud Pharisees that these publicans and sinners, whom they thus despised, were their brethren, partakers of the same nature, and therefore they ought to be glad of any kindness shown them. God is the God, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles, the same Lord over all, that is rich in mercy to all that call upon him.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- (i) What value do we attach to our MCF members in our group?
- (ii) How can MCF and the Church be affected by the 'prodigal son mentality'? Is the prodigal son attitude present among Church or MCF members?
- (iii) How can MCF and the Church add value to their group?
- (iv) How do we welcome those who backslide or those who have departed from the presence of God and have now repented?

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study teaches us that it does not matter how far we stray from our heavenly Father or how much we squander the gifts he provides, He is always delighted when we come back to him. It is bad, and the beginning of worse, when men look upon God's gifts as debts due to them. The great folly of sinners, and that which ruins them, is, being content in their life-time to receive their good things.

Thus, as MCF who understand the times, we should not be negatively, we should have regard for our leaders, we should desire our Father's will, not our own will and we should not walk out of God.

3. WEDNESDAY: 19TH JULY 2023

SUB-THEME- WHAT GOD WOULD THINK (The story of Joseph)

BIBLE READING:GENESIS 39:1-23

INTRODUCTION:

In this life we all want to do what people would like us to do. But the question is what would God think of us when we do what we are not supposed to do? Always do what is pleasing to God regardless of the circumstances and relying on God's guidance to help us through and through because nothing stops God's plans on us. In this study we will look at the story of Joseph in Potiphar's House with the theme "What God would think".

BIBLE EXPLANATION

In this chapter we see the story of Joseph. A servant, a slave in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:1), and yet there greatly honoured and favoured, by the providence of God, which made him, in effect, a master, Genesis 39:2-6. By the grace of God, Joseph was made more than a conqueror over a strong temptation to uncleanness, Genesis 39:7-12. Then, we have him as a sufferer, falsely accused (Genesis 39:13-18), imprisoned (Genesis 39:19-20), and yet his imprisonment made both honourable and comfortable by the tokens of God's special presence with him, Genesis 39:21-23.

Joseph was the son of Jacob and his beloved Rachel. He is memorable for the wonderful providence of God, which raised him from a prison to be the grand-vizier of Egypt, and made him the honoured means of saving countless human lives.

From this passage we also see that, our enemies may strip us of outward distinctions and ornaments; but wisdom and grace cannot be taken from us. They may separate us from friends, relatives, and country; but they cannot take from us the presence of the Lord.

They may shut us from outward blessings, rob us of liberty, and confine us in dungeons; but they cannot shut us out from communion with God, from the throne of grace, or take from us the blessings of salvation. Joseph was blessed, wonderfully blessed, even in the house where he was a slave. God's presence with us, makes all we do prosperous. Good men are the blessings of the place where they live; good servants may be so, though mean and lightly esteemed. The prosperity of the wicked is, one way or other, for the sake of the godly. Here was a wicked family blessed for the sake of one good servant in it.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- (i) What lessons can we draw from Joseph's temptation?
- (ii) Can God's Dream for you or as a group make others uncomfortable?
- (iii) What are the benefits of remaining pure before God?
- (iv) How can we trust God's process?
- (v) How can we show integrity and obedience when people lie against us?

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, from the life of Joseph we can learn that, God's dream for you can make others uncomfortable, nothing can stop God's plan for you regardless of the circumstances, in hard times always watch for how God shows up, integrity and obedience beat lies all the time, God will test you even if you are called, your enemies will push you to your destine as well as pay much attention to others on your faith journey as MCF.

Amen!

4. THURSDAY. 20TH JULY 2023

SUB-THEME: TAKING UP AN OPPORTUNITY REGARDLESS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES (The story of Zacchaeus): LUKE 19:1-10

INTRODUCTION:

In this life, there are many of us who would like to make a solid effort to experience Jesus, unfortunately, there are so many obstacles that prevents us from doing so. Luckily, when we make that effort to experience Jesus, our efforts will be rewarded. This simply mean to seek Him with all our heart and doing everything he would have us do.

BIBLE EXPLANATION

Many, no doubt, were converted to the faith of Christ of whom no account is kept in the gospels; but the conversion of some, whose case had something in it extraordinary, is recorded, as this of Zacchaeus. Who, and what, this Zacchaeus was. His name signifies him a Jew. Zaccai was a common name among the Jews; they had a famous rabbi, much about this time, of that name.

Zacchaeus was the chief among the publicans, receiver-general; other publicans were officers under him; he was, as some think, farmer of the customs, superintendent of customs; a chief tax-gather at Jericho (Lu 19:1-10). Further, he was rich. The inferior publicans were commonly men of broken fortunes, and low in the world; but he that was chief of the publicans had raised a good estate. We often read of publicans coming to Christ; but here was one that was chief of the publicans, was in authority, that enquired after him. God has his remnant among all sorts. Christ came to save even the chief of sinners, and therefore even the chief of publicans. "The collection of customs at Jericho, which at this time produced and exported a considerable quantity of balsam, was undoubtedly an important post, and would account for Zacchaeus being a rich man." Being short of stature, he hastened on before the multitude who were thronging about Christ as he passed through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem, and climbed up a sycamore tree that he might be able to see him. When our Lord reached the spot he looked up to the publican among the branches, and addressing him by name, told him to make haste and come down, as he intended that day to abide at his house. This led to the remarkable interview recorded by the evangelist, and to the striking parable of the ten pounds (Lu 19:12-27).

Further, the Saviour drawing near and knowing his heart, called him to come down, and proposed to become his guest. As he held office under the Romans, he was called "a sinner" by the Jews, Lu 19:1-10. He showed sincere penitence and faith in the Saviour, who in turn promised him salvation as a child of Abraham by faith, Ga 3:7, as he also seems to have been by birth. The "house of Zacchaeus" now shown on the plain of Jericho is probably the remnant of a fort built in the tenth century, or even more recently.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- (i) What lessons can we learn from the story of Zacchaeus?
- (ii) As MCF can we break social norms just to see Jesus? Discuss
- (iii) Do we still have people like Zacchaeus in our MCF group or the church at large?
- (iv) Do you think the action Zacchaeus took to return the money back four times than what he got was necessary?
- (v) How do we perceive such a person like Zacchaeus in our churches, families, communities as well as in our group as MCF?

CONCLUSION

In summary, those who sincerely desire a sight of Christ, like Zacchaeus, will break through opposition, and take pains to see him. Christ invited himself to Zacchaeus' house. Wherever Christ comes he opens the heart, and inclines it to receive him. He that has a mind to know Christ, shall be known of him. Those whom Christ calls, must humble themselves, and come down. We may well receive him joyfully, who brings all good with him. Thus, the lessons drawn from Zacchaeus are that, no one is beyond saving, do whatever, it takes to get to Jesus, listen for the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ and not any other Voice, preach the gospel because everyone including the rich and poor needs Jesus Christ, break social norms to see Jesus. Thus, as MCF members, we have to take up an opportunity regardless of the circumstances to get to Jesus because He judges us fairly. AMEN

5. FRIDAY: 21ST JULY 2023

SUB-THEME – “LOVE OF TRUTH SHINE OUT IN THE MIDST OF HESITATION” (The story of Nicodemus)

BIBLE READING: JOHN 3:1-14

INTRODUCTION:

It is a pity that, most of us have a little spiritual pride or showmanship and we think we got it all together. Sometimes, we find life in doing church work activities, not because we are serving the Lord, rather because we want people to see all the great things we are doing.

At times we may want to change but because of our status, we fail to do it. Fortunately, today as we reflect on Nicodemus, let love of truth shine out in the midst of hesitation because we do not know what tomorrow may be. Nicodemus struggled in the same way we do as MCF leaders and members, but if we find Jesus the love of truth will indeed shine.

BIBLE EXPLANATION

Nicodemus (conqueror of the people), was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews and a teacher of Israel, whose secret visit to our Lord was the occasion of the discourse recorded only by St. John. He is first noticed as visiting Jesus by night (John 3:1-21) for the purpose of learning more of his doctrines, which our Lord then unfolded to him, giving prominence to the necessity of being "born again." He is next met with in the Sanhedrin (John 7:50-52), where he protested against the course they were taking in plotting against Christ. Thus, in Nicodemus a simple love of truth shine out in the midst of hesitation and fear of man. He finally became a follower of Christ, and came with Joseph of Arimathaea to take down and embalm the body of Jesus in the preparation for the burial of the body of Christ (John 19:39). We hear nothing more of him. There can be little doubt that he became a true disciple.

He knew not how soon Christ might leave the town, nor what might happen betwixt that and another feast, and therefore would lose no time. In the night his converse with Christ would be freer, and less liable to disturbance.

He was afraid, or ashamed, to be seen with Christ, and therefore came in the night. When religion is out of fashion, there are many Nicodemites, especially among the rulers, who have a better affection to Christ and his religion than they would be known to have. But observe, First, Though he came by night, Christ bade him welcome, accepted his integrity, and pardoned his infirmity; he considered his temper, which perhaps was timorous, and the temptation he was in from his place and office; and hereby taught his ministers to become all things to all men, and to encourage good beginnings, though weak. There are hopes of those who have a respect for Christ, and think and speak honourably of him.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- (i) What made Nicodemus visit Jesus Christ at night?
- (ii) What lessons can we draw from the story of Nicodemus?
- (iii) In our own context, do the learned as well as the unlearned desire wisdom from Christ?
- (iv) Do we have a heart to know the Lord as MCF members?

CONCLUSION

We can conclude that, birth is the beginning of life; to be born again, is to begin to live anew, as those who have lived much amiss, or to little purpose. We must have a new nature, new principles, new affections, and new aims. By our first birth we were corrupt, shaped in sin; therefore we must be made new creatures. Jesus came to bring hope and new life. Further, it also remind us the importance of personal trust and surrender. By surrendering our life to God, we can experience hope, life as well as peace as MCF members.

SATURDAY: 22nd July 2023

Community Charity work by MCF Group and well-wishers.



“All one In Christ”

THE UNITED CHURCH OF ZAMBIA

THE MISSION AND EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT

MCF SUNDAY SERMON OUTLINE, 23rd JULY, 2023

THEME: UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES AND WHAT TO DO,

1 CHRONICLES 12:32

THEME: MEN WHO UNDERSTAND THE TIMES BECOME ESSENTIAL

BIBLE READING: DANIEL 1:1-21

INTRODUCTION:

Servants of God, from Monday to Friday we have been looking at some of the men in the Bible who understood their times and later on became significant. Therefore as men and women in the church, we must acknowledge to be God's gift. The moment we do this we will be men and women who will understand the times and in the end we will become relevant or significant in our generation. It is also important to note that, even in our life time there are men and women who have understood their times and have become significant in our lives. Some of them are our parents, reverends or pastors, teachers, doctors, lawyers, policemen, businessmen, nurses, politicians and so on.

These people have become significant because of their contribution to our church and society. It is from this background that we look at the theme: **“Men who understand the times become relevant”**

BIBLE EXPLANATION

From the text read, Daniel is said to have descended from the royal family of David; and he appears to have been carried into Babylon when very young, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim king of Judah, B.C. 602, or 606 before the vulgar era. He and his three fellow-captives, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, being likely youths, were chosen to be about the king's court, and were appointed to have an education suitable to the employments for which they were destined. As they had been carefully bred up in the Mosaic institutions, they regulated their conduct by them, even in the court of a heathen king, where they were in the capacity of slaves; hence, though ordered to be fed from the royal table, they would not touch that food, because the Chaldeans ate of meat forbidden by the Mosaic law, and probably even that which might be dominated clean became defiled by having been sacrificed to idols before it was prepared for common use. At their earnest request, the officer under whose care they were placed permitted them to use vegetables only; and finding that they grew healthy and strong by this aliment, did not oblige them to use the portion sent from the king's table.

Thus, according to Daniel 1:17-21, Daniel and his fellows kept to their religion; and God rewarded them with eminence in learning. Pious persons should endeavour to do better than their fellows in useful things; not for the praise of man, but for the honour of the gospel, and that they may be qualified for usefulness. And it is well for our families, groups in church, our country, and for the honour of a leader, when he is able to judge who are best fitted to serve, and prefers them on that account. Let all men and women steadily attend to this chapter; and let all remember that God will honour those who honour him, but those who despise him shall be lightly esteemed.

POINTS FOR REFLECTION

Like Daniel who understood the times as well as knew what to do,

- 1. We have to encourage integrity amidst temptations.**

From the passage, it is clear that, the kind of food Nebuchadnezzar provided was a kind of food that the Jews were not allowed to eat. Keep in mind that, Jews had many dietary restrictions of foods that were declared unclean. This could be the reason why Daniel wasn't willing to compromise his standards. Even though he was away from home, in a foreign pagan kingdom, without his parents around, Daniel still stood firm to his religion. Further, according to the text, only Daniel and his three friends refused to eat the king's food while the other captives ate whatever the king was offering. This is why despite the temptations Daniel and his friends was decisive and stuck to their belief in God. No matter how good the food looked Daniel and his friends opted to be feed on vegetables only. Thus, despite the pressure from others as MCF as well as the church at large we should not fall into pressure from others to lose our faith. Most of the people have fallen into these pressures because of others. We must be determine that whatever comes our way, we are not going to forfeit what is acceptable in the sight of God.

2. Be willing to make tough choices.

Making tough decisions will always be difficult because it takes time and energy to weigh ones' options. Thus, when making a tough choice one should look beyond the current situation, consider also if you could survive if disappointed. Making tough choices also reminds us that, we need to make our intentions clear.

In the end when we make tough decisions or choices as men and women of God, God knows us just like he knew Daniel. He knows our needs and what we struggle with when we make tough decisions. Making a tough choice requires us to fall back on our values. This is because having clear values that one try to live by can make tough decisions easier.

3. We have to develop or demonstrate total dependence on God.

In the passage read, we are reminded that in the midst of great turmoil, our God reigns.

Thus, He has to be turned to in faith, trusted without fear and worshiped in praise. God was the central aspect of Daniel's life. This is because Daniel's life reveals the endless possibilities that awaits a man who dares put trust in God. Keep in mind that, God is faithful to those who trust in him. Daniel avoided defiling himself with sin; and we should more fear that than any outward trouble. It is easier to keep temptation at a distance, than to resist it when near. And we cannot better improve our interest in any with whom we have found favour, than to use it to keep us from sin. People will not believe the benefit of avoiding excess, and of a spare diet, nor how much they contribute to the health of the body, unless they try. As MCF as well as all of us, let us not push God back to just being part of our lives. As shown in the life of Daniel, God needs to be central part of our life that everything else revolves around. We all called upon to demonstrate total dependence on God.

CONCLUSION

In short, the church and society, need men and women who understand the times they are in and later become significant. We are all encouraged to be faithful to God and make right decisions that will make us significant in our church, family as well as in our society. No doubt Daniel deserved it, and recommended himself by his ingenuity and sweetness of temper. Keep in mind that, it was God that brought him into favour with the prince of the eunuchs, for everyone does not meet with acceptance according to his merits. Thus, the interest which we think we make for ourselves we must acknowledge to be God's gift, and must ascribe to him the glory of it. Whoever are in favour, it is God that has brought them into favour; and it is by him that they find good understanding. Let us distinguish ourselves as we stand out for God and don't hide in the Congregation or in the group. Therefore, let us know that the way to be acceptable or become relevant is to be obedient and well-behaved.

AMEN!

THE MISSION AND EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT WOULD LIKE TO THANK
REV KELLY BWALYA OF TRINITY CONGREGATION, LUNDAZI
CONSISTORY EASTERN PRESBYTERY

FOR PREPARING THIS YEAR'S MCF WEEK LESSONS AND SUNDAY
SERMON OUTLINE FOR 2023

FOR ANY FUTHER DETAILS GET IN TOUCH WITH THE MISSION &
EVANGELISM DEPARTMENT ON THE FOLLOWING NUMBERS-

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