

SERMON AT ALL SAINTS CATHEDRAL ON 12/08 2016

THEME: GROWING AND ORGANISATION OF THE CHURCH: LOOKING UNTO JESUS

INTRODUCTION:

The church is a congregation of believers- who have received and believed in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (Jn.1:12). It was born at the cross when Jesus paid the total price for the sin of the whole world and redeemed humanity from the wrath of God (Eph.2:3) and reconciled us to God. Jesus Christ is its foundation and its head (1Col.1:18). The true church has four fundamental marks/ characteristics. The Church is one- grounded in one Triune God (Eph. 4:1-6); its doctrine is based on God's word (Jn.17:17; 2Tim. 3:16-17); properly handles the two Sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion; and values prayer as a channel of communication with God. The Church is a living organism and can either grow or die.

The growth of the Church

Church growth started on Pentecost after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and Peter's preaching. Three thousand people believed and were added to the number of disciples (Acts 2:41). As the believers devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer, the Lord added to their numbers daily (Act 2: 42, 47). More and more churches were planted in Judea, Samaria, Asia and the rest of the world.

The Church can and should grow in two forms:

1. In numbers where more churches are planted or more people attend and worship in the same church. This comes as a result of preaching the gospel and witnessing Jesus Christ (Jn. 17:18-20). We as Christians have been commissioned to make disciples of all nations (Mat. 28:18-20). The growth of the Church of Christ depends on you. How well are you doing your part?
2. In depth by having greater knowledge, understanding and revelation of God's love, power and faithfulness. This comes from listening, reading, meditating, memorizing and acting or obeying God's word (Jos.1:8; Ps 119: 9,11,105; Ep.6:17). Do you meet God daily through quiet time through His word and prayer? Having a reading guide such as Daily Power, Daily guide, Daily Bread, and others will enable you to do this. You can also join a Bible study or Home cell group to learn God's word with others.

How do we ensure continuous Church growth?

1. Have unity and harmony (Jn. 17:20-23) by having a shared God-given vision, mission and strategic implementation plans. We all need to know where we want to be spiritually, numerically, structurally, and financially and how we can get there. We all have a responsibility to maintain our Christian unity.
2. Create an inviting atmosphere where people will proudly worship from. This will be characterised by love, practice of God's word, but also comfortable, clean and orderly.

3. Create a welcoming experience that is as positive as possible which will make people especially new ones experience God in a special way.
4. Be a caring church which takes time to understand the unique needs of its members and make effort to meet them.
5. Provides opportunity for service by enhancing the use of the various gifts of its members. We have many opportunities to serve God. How well are you using them? Are you involved in the ministry of prayer and intercession, children or youth, women or men, prisons and compassion, evangelism and nurturing? The Lord expects each of us to bring one more person for Jesus.
6. Proper management of church resources (Human, material and financial). God's resources need proper utilization and accountability. It establishes confidence among the people. We are called upon to be good stewards.
7. Effective handling of the challenges of growth which include divergence of views, misunderstanding and conflict, legalism and institutionalism, getting comfortable and maintain the status quo. The authority invested in various levels of leadership should be recognized and respected (Acts 15:5-20; 1thes. 5:12-13)

Fixing our eyes on Jesus (Heb. 12:1-5)

There cannot be a true church, and real growth except when modeled on Jesus. He is the foundation and the head of the church. Jesus is our source and the cross is the means of our Christian victory. Therefore, we should continuously and consistently fix our eyes on Him.

1. He endured the cross, shame, pain and paid the total price for us and our salvation (Heb.12:2-3)
2. He is all in all (Col. 1:15-20). He is the image of God, the first born of all creation. The agent and means of all creation, holds together all things, head of the church, channel of our reconciliation. Jesus is our Shepherd, Brother, Friend, Prophet, Priest, King, Lord, Life, way and our end.
3. He is able to keep us to the end (1Cor. 1:8)
4. He is able to keep us from falling (Jude 1:24).

It is possible to live a victorious Christian life to the end.

1. We have a crowd of witnesses (Heb.11; 12: 1) and many of our Ugandan brethren who lived among us such Bishop Festo Kivengere, Archbishop Janan Lumum, the Uganda Martyrs and many others. Since they made it by keeping their eyes on Jesus, we can make it.
2. We have to lay down every weight and repent every sin the entangles us (Heb.12:1)
3. Run the race with perseverance. Be heaven bound and fix our eyes on things above (Col.3:1-3)
4. Resist distractions (Mk.4:19), the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus. He is beckoning us and will walk with us.

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