

Entering In

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Preacher: Rev. Bernard Malango

[0 : 00] Let us pray. Lord, give me grace that I may speak in your name. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

I have two problems. The first one is that I am not used to speaking, using microphones because we do not have these things. And I remember a preacher or a priest who for several times would go to the rectum and examine the microphone and say, The Lord be with you and everybody would say, And also with you.

And this particular day he went and said, There is something wrong with this microphone. And everybody said, And also with you. So I have to be very, very careful on how to use the microphone.

And then two small kids were all discussing about sermons. The other one said, You know, my dad is a very good preacher.

The other one said, My dad is better than your dad. He preaches very good sermons. Have you ever heard him? And then the other one said, Oh, I'll prove it to you.

[1 : 36] My dad preaches for 15 minutes and he has notes with him. And the other one said, Oh, yeah. Now I've got you. My dad can preach for more than one hour and without thinking.

But I assure you I've got notes with me. And I will not keep you for one hour. It gives me great joy to be with you this morning.

And I bring you greetings from your fellow Christians in Central Africa. As we have said already, Central Africa comprise Botswana, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia, of which I am the servant there. And after serving as the Bishop of Northern Zambia for 14 years, I have returned to my homeland of Malawi to serve as the first Bishop of the New Diocese of the Upper Shire.

My new diocese is filled with excitement and expectations as we look to the future. The challenges are great.

[2 : 48] We are the most rural diocese in Malawi. Though there are many thousands of Christians, there are only 20 priests and 20 parishes.

That is earlier intimated. Out of the 20 parishes, we have more than 400 churches. A priest looking after at least 10 to 15 churches.

Malawi is gripped by a great drought, as I've said, that has caused a terrible famine. Only last week, more than 1,000 people died in outbreak of Koroa.

We fear that many more will die. In a few months, the famine will peak. We need rains.

We are grateful that we have prayed for us, that we should have rains. Help. And hope. It is very difficult. And it is a very, very difficult environment in which to start a new ministry.

[4 : 06] But we do not lose hope. Our God is the one who has raised Jesus Christ from the dead. If he can give new life to Jesus, dead body, then surely he can grow the church where there is faith.

From our conversations with your leaders over the last several days, I know that many of you are hurt, tired, and discouraged.

Please take heart that you are not alone. The same God who raised Jesus from the dead is looking after you. He has even sent brothers from Africa and Asia to come to dry hearts and spirits and pray for Holy Spirit, rain.

Many primates and other leaders understand that the issues that concern you here in this diocese are impacting other parts of the communion as well.

That is why we have come. That is why we are making a strong stand for the gospel. As Anglicans, we affirm the faith once delivered to the saints.

[5 : 41] No one has the right or power to change established their old faith.

Everyone must conform to God's revelation. Those who refuse are separating themselves from the life and the love of Jesus Christ.

No one has the power to change who God is or what he has revealed to us in the scriptures. We are called to come under his lordship to do things his way.

The gospel lesson that we have just read today, a rich young man comes to Jesus to ask a very serious question. Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

That is a very good question. It is good because it recognizes the reality that this life is not all that there is.

[6 : 56] Getting things and acquiring money is not enough. Instinctively, this young man must have known that or he would not have asked that question that he did.

This is the first mistake that many people in our time make. There is, in fact, eternal life and eternal judgment.

And every one of us will face it. Judgment, however, is not an angry God hoping to punish sinners. It is God ever endorsing the choice about who we will be.

Choose to be a child of God, respond to the love and the grace that he offers you, then you agree. And his agreement is forever. If a person chooses to live apart from God, apart from his love and grace, then God will allow it.

[8 : 14] That is judgment. God has established your wealth being willing to pour out his love on the cross.

He is not an angry God abusively seeking to punish his unlucky sons. Remember the Trinity?

When Jesus goes to the cross, it is the very heart of the Father that is broken in the crucifixion.

Remember the cry of that dereliction?

A loyal Lama Thabakkan? The Father is not insulted from the pain. The separation caused by our sin pierced his heart just as surely as the nails pierced Jesus' body.

Why would he do it? It was for love. Like the English poem says, it was not nails that held him there, but love that fixed him to the tree.

[9 : 29] Jesus willingly embraced the cross, as Hebrews says, despising its shame. He did it for the joy set before him.

What is the joy? Is it a victory party for him when he overthrows the devil? No.

You are the joy set before him. It is the purpose and joy of his life to share eternal and eternity with you.

And yet, make no mistake. He values your freedom so much that he will let you choose to refuse it. Look at what happened when the rich young man heard about the cost of discipleship from Jesus. He could not bring himself to release his wealth and follow Jesus. He loved the riches of the world more than of the riches of heaven.

[10 : 40] it was too hard to trust Jesus. You see, Jesus asks us to come empty-handed, to let go of all our prompts and supports and trust on him.

That is hard to do when your future is uncertain, but that is the time to trust Jesus. It does not mean much to say that we trust him when circumstances are not promising on us.

Let me tell you what Jesus is not saying. He is not saying that in order to inherit eternal life, we must deviate ourselves of all material goods.

some may be actually called to do that, but it is not for the purpose of winning God's approval. By the way, if God does not call you or does call you to give up all your possessions, then please remember my new young diocese.

But that is not the point. We do not win favor with God by giving resources back to him.

[12 : 06] What he asks us to do is trust him instead of money and things. In the parallel gospel about this rich young man, Matthew, we read that Jesus loved this young man.

He loved him and yet let the young man go. Not everyone will say yes to Jesus. Some will walk away.

Sometimes it will break our hearts. It should. But that is part of the truth about the gospel. All may come.

All should come. No one must come. It is a free choice. But we must choose to come on his terms, not on ours.

We must also always remember that our decision has consequences. Now, what does a community look like when it gives its future over into God's hands?

[13 : 20] First, it is a biblical community. A community founded on biblical faith. It is a community where the Bible is preached and taught.

Where the people take its challenges seriously and seek to confront God's hands. To conform to its teaching as well.

Second, it is a community of prayer. All through his ministry, Jesus took time out to pray, to spend time with his father.

And we are called to pray individually and cooperatively. We are called to worship God and celebrate his way. There is a story of a house servant who one day household master told him to remove the old carpet that he could replace with a new carpet.

He managed to remove the carpet. He asked the owner of the house and said, where do I put this carpet?

[14 : 44] He said, you can put it anywhere, even in the garage. So he did. For nine months, the carpet was lying in the garage. One day, the owner of the house hired a painter to do the painting of the house and went into the garage and found that carpet and went to him and said, can I buy that carpet?

He said, no, you don't need to buy it. Take it. Carpet, house servant said, ah, very well that you want to buy a carpet.

He sent that carpet to this house. master master said, the master said, did you ask for it?

He asked, and has got it. That's why I mean that we are called to worship God and celebrate his will. We can do it.

He said, it is a community of love. Those who have given themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ with wholehearted abandon do not have empty hearts.

[16 : 04] It is an amazing thing about the kingdom of God. Our love is not diminished when we give it away. It is multiplied.

Mothers and fathers know this very well. Love your first child with all your heart. You would die for you.

You love them and you love your children. A young father might ask, if I have another child, how can I have to love for that child when I give all my love to my firstborn?

But in kingdom mathematics, the more you choose to love, the more your capacity of love increases. Love means that you want, pray, and desire the best for others.

At the heart of some of the conflicts that are resulting the communion today, is the question, what does it mean to be loving?

[17 : 13] In simple terms, it means to encourage and support them into the fullness that God has revealed to us in Jesus Christ and the scriptures.

Sometimes that is costly, sometimes it is very costly, but Jesus does not let us off easily. To the rich young man, he says, everything, takes everything.

More often he says, trust me, trust me with your future, your church, your ministry, your friends, and your reputation.

Trust me, anyone who has walked with Jesus for long will recognize his call. He is offering it to you this morning, the call to trust, to embrace and believe the Bible, to pray and pray and pray and pray and pray until you pray no more.

And to love genuinely and practically, calling those around you to God's best. Being sure, as St.

Paul tells us, to take up the whole arm of God so that you may be able to withstand all that of your day.

[18 : 38] Having done everything, to stand firm. now that I have seen and met you, I have confidence in you that you will remain steadfast.

Know that we will not stop praying for you, nor will we forget you. Good Lord, bless you in abundance.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.