

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

May this divine presence of his grace love and fellowship, **reform, renew and release** us to live lives in which people see and experience grace love and fellowship. May this be further manifested in the One Church of Jesus Christ and in our One World irrespective of denomination, religion, race, tribe, colour or status in society, while we all are caring for God's creation.

Sermon Text: John 8: 31 – 36

31. To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free". 33. They answered him, "We are Abrahams descendants and have never been slaves to anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" 34. Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. 35. Now a slave has no permanent place in my family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36. So if the Son sets you free you will be free indeed.

Prayer

Here we stand o Lord, in your world wherein so many acts of hatred and violence are committed. We are remembering with deep pain and tears in our eyes the many who perished in horrific acts of gender based violence especially women and children, and heart-breaking car accidents in the past weeks and days in Namibia, in which tragically many lives have been lost. Yes, here we stand with tears in our eyes when we remember what happened on Palm Sunday in Egypt.

We cannot do otherwise o Lord, because we are your servants, carrying your Word for the liberation of the world from hatred, violence and death.

God help us, because on our own, we will not be able to do anything. Only in your grace, will we be able to fight the good fight, to finish the race and to keep the faith. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters from different parts of the world, welcome to Namibia and greetings to you all who are attending the Worship Service this morning here in Katutura-Sam Nuyoma Stadium, in the Name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Despite all the dangers and darkness covering our world, we remain people of HOPE, covered and protected by God's GRACE! Yes, this is real, because we serve a God who is not static, but He moves, reforms and makes a new covenant. We will not give up and will never quit, because we firmly believe that hatred, violence, greed, the growing gap between rich and poor, abject poverty, injustice, exploitation, terrorism, extremism, discrimination and death, do not have the last word. The darkness we are seeing and experiencing today with the horrors taking place even at this moment, will come to an end. We will not only see the light at the end of the tunnel but in the whole tunnel.

He does not repeat the old covenant but makes a brand new-new covenant with us. Therefore the 500 Reformation Anniversary and the 12th Assembly of the LWF is called upon to share this brand-new covenant of God's grace, love and fellowship within this divided, broken and bleeding world.

We are meeting here in Windhoek at a difficult, unpredictable and dangerous time in the history of human kind, therefore what we need now is not the justification of the wrongs of the past, but that God in his grace, blot out all our iniquity, and create in our world pure hearts of love, justice and peace.

Dear sisters and brothers, as we are gathering here this morning in Worship and deliberate about the state of our world today, let us not focus on our weakness in view of the huge task given to us for the healing of the divided, wounded, broken and bleeding humanity, but let us focus on the gospel which is the power of God that liberates all who believe. Even in the darkest hour where death seems to be ruling everywhere and justice completely absent, the "righteous will live by faith".

In Namibia we have examples in this regard; during the darkest hours in the history of our country under Colonial and Apartheid Rule, Bishop Dr Leonard Auala of the Evangelical Lutheran Ovambo/Kavango Church (ELOC) now ELCIN, and Moderator Pastor Paulus //Gowaseb of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa (Rheinis Mission) ELCSWA now ELCRN sent an **Open Letter** to the Prime Minister of the then Apartheid Government in South Africa, i.a demanding elections in Namibia under the **supervision** and **control** of the United Nations. Yes, indeed the righteous, even when they are surrounded by death continue to live by faith and shine like stars in the darkest night. This letter was read in all our congregations on Sunday the 18th of July 1971 and gave **hope** and **new strength** to the oppressed.

During the workers strike of 1971 - 1972 in Namibia, Judge Willian H Booth, A New York Judge and Civil Rights leader, was sent by the **International Commission of Jurists** to observe the strike trial. On Wednesday the 1st day of March 1972, I invited him to preach during the prayer evening in our church in Katutura, where I was serving as a vicar. He chose the sermon text of today verse 32: "*And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free*". This powerful sermon was preached during the time when any opposition was brutally crushed and hope for an independent and a free Namibia was fading. But with Willian Booth in the pulpit, the church gathered in that historic church building, was overflowing with new strength and HOPE. The congregation was on its feet throughout the sermon. Yes, we experienced the power of God at work.

The following morning Thursday the 2nd of March 1972, Rt. Rev. Collin Winter, the Bishop of the Anglican Church who was the leader of the program during the Wednesday prayer evening service, received deportation orders by the Colonial Government. Bishop Collin Winter, Stephen Hayes a priest, David de Beer the Diocesan Secretary, Antoinette Halberstadt, were ordered to leave Namibia on Saturday the 4th of March 1972 before midnight. But this oppressive Government didn't succeed to deport the **Truth** with them, Namibia become independent and today we are remembering the 500 years of God's grace in Namibia.

The question of the Jews in our text, who believed in Him, does not sound out of place, because today we also think, behave and act the same. "From what can we still be freed? We are proud Africans, independent for many years and having our destiny in our own hands"; "we are proud Europeans and sit on top of civilisation and development. What can we be released from?" "We are Americans, the most powerful country in the whole world and need nothing from any other country. What can we be released from?"

All this can be true that we are not slaves of any one, but certainly we can be slaves of ourselves. Racism, tribalism, casteism, greed etc. are sin. When you behave and act as such, you are a slave and in bondage of those sins within yourself. By denying this sins and to try to justify it, we exclude ourselves from the divine heritage of being daughters and sons of the Kingdom of God and true disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear sister and brothers, Jesus tells us this morning to let go of the things which enslave us and deny us the inheritance of the Kingdom of God. When we hold unto his teaching of love, caring, sharing and fellowship, we become truly his disciples. By doing that, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. Jesus told Thomas, in "I am the way and the truth and the life John 14 v 6", this simply means that He is the truth whom we will know and who will sets us free for his service in the world.

Dear sisters and brother who are commemorating 500 years of the Reformation, let us go out from here with this liberating TRUTH, our Lord Jesus CHRIST, to be reformed and reformers, renewed and renewing, liberated and liberating and to live lives in which people see and experience grace, love, justice, unity and peace.

When this happens, the amazing **GRACE** of our **Lord Jesus Christ**, the over the top **LOVE** of **God** and the **INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP** of the **Holy Spirit** will be with all of us. AMEN

Bishop Zephania Kameeta