



Fasting: Climate Change is a Global Threat

From the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN)

God the creator of all humankind is the helper of the poor, helpless, and God can vindicate the innocent. Fasting is an intentional self-denial or abstinence from food, drink of any substances; fast is done for a particular threat being faced by people. Fast is a form of prayer that draws people closer to God, through self-discipline, voluntary suffering of the body, spirit, and soul. People call upon God to intervene, they gather up themselves; cry out religiously to be rescued from crisis and calamity by God (Ps. 18:6; 34:6; 130:2). It is a means of drawing closer and devoting self to God. The poor and the vulnerable call out for justice by intimating humankind with urgent need for care of creation. Climate change is not the problem of the poor alone, therefore, requires a collective response. The effect of the threat cuts across therefore includes those who think they are secured.

Period for fast varies by days, weeks, and months and even for years. Fast could either be absolute or partial whereby a person stops eating, or drinking one particular food or drink. Absolute fast similar to that of (Esther 4:15-5:8), the intention and encouragement is to seek for God's favorable move in response to

one's petition over calamity, conflict, and crisis. A person cleanses, clears up self for purposeful spiritual-thinking-connection. As we can see how, human beings can also involve in fasting to achieve economic and political objective, (*hunger-food strike*) a nonviolent complaining and drawing attention to a particular situation.

Absolute fast is practiced by both Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. This brings spiritual discipline for people involved in whether (absolute and partial fast). No matter what reasons people have for engaging in fast, their central point is seeking for God's will, help, guidance, protection, and intervention in their current circumstances. In Nigeria, this is practiced by people, regardless of their diverse religious and cultural differences, when faced with conflict or calamity people engage in fast.

Biblically, self-affliction in order to seek for God's favor, for example, Nineveh fasted and averted God's immediate punishment (Jonah 3:5-10). Through fasting a person comes closer to God and does not see worldly things as important again, rather turns absolutely to God. When the rich, the powerful, and the poor fast together in solidarity, they share with one another common human suffering (the King of Nineveh and his subjects). There are certain things that self-meditation alone cannot change; as a result, people willingly give themselves to God's guidance and to have intimate relationship with Him. Jesus says in (Mk. 9:28) some of these calamities and diseases cannot be healed without prayers. Self-suffering and prayers enable one to grow spiritually and in the end brings victory.

When people approach a major threat confronting them, they seek for God's favor in removing such problem. Today, the world is faced with rapid *climate change*, human life is in danger. This threat does not discriminate base on religious, racial, social, continental, or political affiliations. People are being killed in thousands daily through conflict, diseases, natural disasters. But climate change is going to be more destructive than any of these factors in human history.

Nigerians have a powerful concept of causation of problems that affects people. Any wrong-doing to the nature, ancestors, and God, it brings God's wrath and suffering upon the individual, family and community. Traditionally, there are mediating divinities, as Christians, people contact God directly through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, when they are faced with calamities such shortage of rainfall/draught, floods, locusts, disease outbreak, and other natural disasters. Communities engage in fasting in order to avert such as calamities or sins through confession, repentance practiced as a sign of obedience to the Most High (Neh. 9:1-2; Ezra 8:21-23; Joel 1:13-14). This practice can also happen with individuals facing specific problems in their lives. Suffering or spending time in solitude cleanses and purifies self and enables a person to intentionally name her/his problems before God.

Nigeria faces the threat of desert encroachment, food shortage, rivers and wells that have never dried up for many years past have dried up this year. As Christians, we fast consistently to face our current challenges. Therefore, as God's people and on behalf of the entire creation, let all humankind make common cause of safeguarding and restoring love for nature, peace, justice, and freedom. God always listens. Amen.

Rev. Sekenwa Moses Briska PhD

Bronnum Lutheran Seminary Mbamba, Yola

Nigeria