

Moderator's Sermon at Fellowship of Men Conference

“THE YOUNG AND THE OLD, SET THE CHURCH FREE”

Genesis 37:1-5

1 **Jacob** lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. 2 This is the account of Jacob's family line.

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a robe of many colours for him. 4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

5 Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.

Firstly, let me locate myself in the issues of boys and men. I live with my husband, the Rev Paul Neshangwe, and we have two young adult sons. Basically, I live with men only, and I take care of men, both young and old. I deal with men's issues every day of my life; men's issues similar to the Prostrate Cancer talk you had yesterday at the conference. So, I am doing the job of raising men, and in our house we have honest discussions about what it means 'to be a man.' And so it looks like I have a purpose and a calling around men's issues; and I'm feeling 'at home' in this conference 😊

As I was praying for a message for this conference, God led me to this text. While this Bible passage focuses on males, this sermon is for all present – males and females, because Jacob and his sons represent us, the people of God today, both males and females, young and old, existing in the church, and in the society.

So let me introduce *Tata* Jacob who has a son, Joseph, in his old age. He's been busy in his old age. But he decides to practice favouritism by loving Joseph more than the other 11 sons. So he makes Joseph a coat of many colours, but no coats for the older brothers. I can tell you that just with these facts alone, you know that this is not going to end well. Joseph is hated by his brothers. That's no surprise. In addition, Joseph is a dreamer of dreams that show him in a better position over his older brothers, and he decides to share his dreams with his big brothers!

There are 5 points that I will highlight from this text for us as the church; 5 points for each side – the young and the old.

(YP = Young People)

THE YOUNG	THE OLD
<p>1. HAS ACTION BUT NO KNOWLEDGE Joseph: has a young active mouth YP today: active mouths and active irresponsible behaviours.</p> <p>YP today will not think before they act – they act before they think!</p>	<p>1. HAS KNOWLEDGE BUT NO ACTION Jacob: the old man heard the dreams, but just watched and kept things inside (v.11) Men today: not intentionally sharing their knowledge, experience and wisdom.</p>

<p>'Action without knowledge is dangerous!' Set the church free from your ignorance by seeking God's wisdom as to how to engage with others around you.</p>	<p>Where are there similar dysfunctions in your families or in your churches, oh men, while you are there? 'Knowledge without action is useless!' Set the church free from your inaction because God is looking for those who are willing to demonstrate faith through their actions.</p>
<p>2. FANATICAL <u>Joseph</u>: kept sharing more and more dreams <u>YP today</u>: are more over-stimulated than ever before – they have visions, hopes, dreams, energy; they think future. They are frustrated with hanging around visionless, lifeless churches and settings.</p> <p>The church needs you to redirect your energy, your vision. Be fanatical about discipleship.</p> <p>Se the church free from fanaticism about 'minor' issues. It has been said that "The major thing is to let the major things remain the major things."</p>	<p>2. CYNICAL <u>Jacob</u>: kept on watching and doing nothing <u>Men & women today</u>: in church, spend most times complaining but bringing forward no solutions. Prophets of doom. "Don't find fault, find a remedy."</p> <p>You need a personal spiritual renewal. So that you take on a spirit of hope, of encouragement, of accompaniment, of evangelism, of mentoring. Set the church free from the pervasive cynicism of our times; the cynicism that comes from experiences of hurt and disappointment.</p>
<p>3. EMBRACES CHANGE <u>Joseph</u>: looked forward to seeing what his dreams would become; ready for new chapters. <u>YP today</u>: Unhealthy change - trying out various types of relationships: Open relationship, Friends with benefits, No strings attached, 'It's complicated.'</p> <p>Healthy change: new ideas & strategies. New & contextual ways of doing church.</p> <p>Set the church free from 'change for the sake of change' because this brings about unnecessary divisions in the church and in your life.</p>	<p>3. PREFERS CONTINUITY <u>Jacob</u>: "lived in the land where his father had stayed" (v.1). No change. <u>Men today</u>: traditional methods and ways, no questions asked, in the family. In the church, resistant to change, to letting go of traditions.</p> <p>Beware of leaving no room for the Holy Spirit. New wine cannot be held in old wineskins. Set the church free of the old wineskins; identify the old wineskins that you are hanging on to and let them go. Old wineskins of bad attitudes, meaningless traditions and old grudges.</p>
<p>4. APPEARS POWERLESS, BUT HAS POWER <u>Joseph</u>: Youngest and therefore powerless, but the favourite because of "power by favour" <u>YP today</u>: Are powerless (unemployment) but have unhealthy power: in compensatory</p>	<p>4. HAS THE POWER, BUT IS IN PRACTICE POWERLESS <u>Jacob</u>: The head of the family has power, but powerless to guide his children relationally. <u>Men today</u>: Have power and priviledge from paternalism, culture, education, social status,</p>

<p>behaviour such as crime, substance abuse, sexual indiscipline, destructive behaviour.</p> <p>Young people need to take on ‘healthy power’ which lies in their God given potential, their personalities, talents and skills.</p> <p>Set the church free from the power hunger that demands rights without accompanying those rights with responsibilities or accountability to others.</p>	<p>family status, leadership positions etc, but fail because they abuse these powers.</p> <p>Learn to have a healthy understanding of power. No power ‘over,’ but share ‘power with.’ Declare that “the power and the glory” belong to God! And God will do wonders.</p> <p>Set the church free from an unhealthy and abusive use of power. Embrace Jesus style power which is “servant leadership” the power that serves others and creates good.</p>
<p>5. IS WOUNDED BY LIFE <u>Joseph</u>: is hated and sold to slave traders by his own brothers. <u>YP today</u>: suffer various forms of wounding: betrayal, rejection, inadequacy, inferiority, hopelessness and father/mother wounds. And unfortunately they then perpetuate the cycle!</p> <p>Young people need to seek their own healing; to break the cycles in the society and in the church.</p> <p>Set the church free from your ‘stuff.’ Learn to take your “stuff” and leave it at the foot of the cross so that God can use you.</p>	<p>5. WOUNDS OTHERS IN LIFE <u>Jacob</u>: In chapter 49 Joseph blesses his sons before he dies with both positive and negative predictions about each one’s future. <u>Adults today</u>: Can bless or curse their children, both boys and girls. Especially when the child makes a mistake.</p> <p>Can bless or curse their churches too. Break the cycles of unforgiveness.</p> <p>Set the church free from your cycles of bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness. The young people are watching – and they will follow that example.</p>

When we set the church free from ‘ourselves’ we will be able to access what the prophet Joel was shown by God that:

***“In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.
¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy...***

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord, will be saved.” (Joel 2:28-32)

UPCSA, boys and men, girls and women, the Lord is ready to re-pour out His spirit upon you and upon this church. It is time for a spiritual revival which will set the church free! Get ready for it! May start with you young people, or with you old people, but whichever way it starts, may you allow the Spirit to start a revival. Because the Lord is up to something in this church. I don’t know what it is, but I know that we must be humble enough to let God do God’s thing among us.

It's time for the Lord to do a spiritual overhaul of this church – upon both the young and the old. Open up your heart and let it start with you. Let us be stronger together – for a revival of God's perfect timing!

May God abundantly bless you with the power to embrace the revival of the Lord. It's yours.