




Refreshing Times

ACTS 3 : 19

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SIR, WE WANT TO SEE JESUS!

ARTICLE BY
TAGUMA NYANGA

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” John 12:20-21 (NIV)

This is the cry of the Church and the unsaved world too – “Sir, we would like to see Jesus.” On the contrary, the preacher is guilty of showing people all else except Jesus. The Church needs to see Jesus in the preacher and the world needs to see Jesus through the preacher. It is a disservice to the intent of the gospel when those who carry the water (ministers and preachers), become more prominent than the one who is the source of the living waters (The Lord Jesus). Jesus warned the Samaritan woman about glorifying the well of Jacob and admonished her to embrace the source of living waters. The source of living waters is what the world needs. The world has a vacuum that cannot be satisfied by anything else except Jesus himself. Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” John 4:10. Sadly, many are not accessing these living waters as the preachers and ministers are representing, projecting and amplifying themselves. Meanwhile, the cry is louder by the day: Sir, we want to see Jesus. All else cannot bring salvation to people, “...for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12 (NKJV).



HE MUST INCREASE, I MUST DECREASE

When you show up at the altar or podium to minister, who do you showcase? Jesus or yourself? Are you not increasing as He shrinks? “He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.” John 3:30-31. The pre-eminence of Jesus must be evident in how we present the gospel and how we conduct ourselves. When Jesus started His ministry, the aim of John the Baptist was for his own ministry – one of heralding Him – to start fading and give way to the ministry of Jesus and to allow Him to be more visible. This only happens as we exalt Him and give Him his place. John shuddered to claim equality with Him, and he set the record straight: “You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent ahead of Him.’” John 3:28. John could have claimed to be Messiah, but he embraced his mission and made it clear: “I am not the Christ” but “I am the voice”. You too preacher, you are the voice heralding His second coming. No matter how much He has anointed you and how deep He has gifted you, your reputation should not dwarf the Master.

John denied being the focal point and redirected the focus of people to Jesus - “Behold the lamb....” People become what they behold. Preachers and ministers of the gospel must be wary of where they are directing people’s focus. There is no other place to focus but to that lonely hill where Jesus emptied His life. This resonates with the song “At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light and the burdens of my heart rolled away...it was then by grace that I received my sight and now I am happy all the way.”

“The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.” Matthew 4:16 (NKJV)

This light will not reach to people sitting in darkness if bearers of the good news are casting their shadows upon it. Give way! It must never be about you but about the one who died and purchased the Church not with perishable stuff but with His precious blood. We are not called to tell our story. We are telling the story of Jesus. How he walked down the staircases of heaven to reach to us with a gift of salvation. The price He paid is too much for this matter to be about us.



testimony

THE TESTIMONY OF TIMOTHY

“But I hope, in the Lord Jesus, to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 2:19-21 (NASB)

When Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians he was in prison and in the Scriptures above he expresses his concern for the church. It is clear that he needed to hear how the church was doing and if it was in his power, he could have gone to check on the brethren. But unfortunately, he was a prisoner of the gospel. He however expressed confidence in Timothy as the only worthy candidate to assess the welfare of the church. Why Timothy? Because everyone else was absorbed by their personal interests and not the interest of Jesus Christ. The Body of Christ, the Church, is in urgent need of selfless men and women. Men and women who will not put themselves at the centre but who will cry out “Not to us, LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, because of Your truth.” When you do what you do and serve the way you serve, is it about the interest of Jesus Christ or your own. If you want God to only move through you and you take offence when He does through others, probably you are seeking your own interests.



HE LIVES TO INTERCEDE FOR YOU

ARTICLE BY TINASHE MLAMBO

“Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.” Hebrews 7:25

Its common sometimes to feel that you are on your own down-here, its easy to gravitate to the feeling that ‘you have to make it work.’ So, you are always trying to make ends meet, pressing, striving & struggling on your own... yet Scripture shows us that there is Someone who wants for you what you want for yourself. In fact, the Hebrew writer says ‘He always lives... for you’ !

You are not the main actor in your life. Christ is acting more in your life. Your life is not about you, God is as much involved as you can ever be. So don't ever feel that you have ‘to do everything.’ What the Scriptures are teaching us when they say, “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” is that the Lord Jesus has not gone to heaven to “take a break”... He lives to make intercession for us. Neither, by interceding for us, does it mean that He is trying to “polish up” what He said it is finished. God has done enough for you, so that you are saved & taken care of. He has done enough to ensure that you are sufficient in His sufficiency, yet over & above that He still prays for you!

So why would He intercede for us if His death & resurrection secured for us peace with God? Why does He have to intercede for us if we can intercede and pray for ourselves? Why does He intercede for us... the answer is in the Word of God:

1. SO THAT OUR FAITH MAY NOT FAIL.

“Simon, Simon, satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail.” Luke 22:31-31

The Lord Jesus Christ speaks to Simon Peter and makes him aware that satan was making a demand to sift him, but the Lord gives him a most profound and comforting reassurance. He says, ‘I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail.’ I want you to know that this promise is as true today as it was true then. Christ prays for you just as He prayed for Peter, that your faith may not fail. Our Lord doesn’t show any favouritism, neither does He change. What He did then for someone, He can do it again for you and for somebody else. What’s good for one child of God is good for all of God’s children. The Lord is making intercession for you that your faith may not fail. When your faith feels like its failing, when it feels like your ‘faith won’t hold,’ when it feels like failing and falling is inevitable. Christ is praying for you. God doesn’t want us walking in life feeling vulnerable & exposed. He is interceding for us. He is the Author and Finisher of your faith. Your faith won’t fail!

2. BECAUSE WE ASK AMISS.

“You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.” James 4:3

The apostle James says we oftentimes do not receive the answers to our prayers because we ask amiss. Asking amiss just means you are so fixated with getting something that you miss the goal of having what you want. It doesn’t mean that asking something personal

The apostle James says we oftentimes do not receive the answers to our prayers because we ask amiss. Asking amiss just means you are so fixated with getting something that you miss the goal of having what you want. It doesn’t mean that asking something personal for us to enjoy is amiss, but being consumed by it to the extent that you see no good in it except for you alone.

3. BECAUSE WE DO NOT KNOW EVERYTHING.

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us.” Romans 8:26

What amazing grace, you have intercession inside of you and outside of you. Here on earth and in heaven. The Lord Jesus and the Spirit of God, making intercession for you. You are taken care of, you cannot, and you will not fail. What it shows you is that even if God asks you to do something, He will help you do it. So, one of the reasons the Lord makes intercession for you is that you do not know everything, you are limited. You can’t see every possible angle or likely consequences of your actions or inactions. You cannot pray for everything, because you don’t know everything. We know in-part. But the Lord Jesus Christ makes intercession for us beyond what we know or understand. We cannot be aware of everything, we cannot be everywhere, neither can we always be there for ourselves or for everyone we love or care about. That’s why God intercedes for us. Never feel ‘vulnerable’... because you skipped or forgot to pray, He is making intercession for you. Never feel ‘invulnerable’... because you prayed, you don’t know everything, that’s why He is making intercession for you.

4. BECAUSE HE LOVES US

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them, as you have loved me.” John 17:20, 23

Christ interceding for us is love at work. It's the natural thing that love does... He loves us enough to never stop doing good for us. The Lord simply can't stand there & "do nothing." Love keeps on giving even when there is nothing else to give. Christ has done everything possible to make you saved, justified, sanctified and glorified. He never left anything to chance, yet He still makes intercession for you because He loves you. He is compassionate & merciful & His intercession is a product of love. Rest assured, sleep easy, Christ neither sleeps nor slumbers, He lives to make intercession for you. Even if there was no other reason to, He would do it because He loves you. May we comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; of His love, 'yes, to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, so that you may be made complete in accordance with God's own standard of completeness.' Eph 3:19 (WNT)





JESUS OUR HIGH PRIEST

ARTICLE BY ELTON TOFA

In the Old Testament, priests were chosen by God to represent men in matters pertaining to God. "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Hebrews 5:1). No one could just assume the role of a priest; it was an honour bestowed by God Himself. Among the many priests, one was chosen by God as the High Priest. In the case of Jesus Christ, He became the ultimate and only High Priest. While we have also been made priests unto God, there is only one High Priest—Jesus Himself. "And You made us kings and priests to our God, and we will reign over the earth" (Revelation 5:10).

The role of the High Priest was to act as a mediator between God and men. Once a year, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies, but not without blood. "But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins" (Hebrews 9:7). The High Priest would offer the blood of animals on the mercy seat for atonement. Jesus, our High Priest, after His death on the cross, entered the true Holy of Holies in heaven with His own blood for the remission of sins. "But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:11-12). He declared, "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28)



The high priest was chosen from among the people to represent them before God. He had to identify with people and empathise with them, understanding their weaknesses. Jesus came as a man, not an angel, so that He could identify with the people. "For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16). He had to experience the same sufferings and temptations that humanity faces, so that He could be a merciful and faithful High Priest. "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17).

Because Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, He can sympathise with our weaknesses. He understands what it means to be tempted, and therefore, He is able to help those who are being tempted. "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). He knows rejection and betrayal. He experienced everything that we go through. This is why, in the letters to the seven churches, He begins by saying, "I know." For example, to the church in Smyrna, He says, "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich), and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not but are a synagogue of satan" (Revelation 2:9). When He says, "I know," He is saying that He understands what they are going through. Jesus knows and understands us because He took on our nature and lived on this earth for thirty-three years. He was tempted in every way as we are. Therefore, He can have compassion on us and is ready to help us. He is our ever-present help in times of need.

That is why He says, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). Why should we be bold? Because we know that the One who occupies the throne of grace knows and understands us. He is touched by the feeling of our weaknesses, and He is ready and willing to help. "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).



When we come to Jesus, our High Priest, we come to "obtain mercy and find grace." This assures us that what we seek is readily available. Grace is receiving what we don't deserve, and mercy is not receiving what we do deserve. Grace is given to help us even when we don't deserve it, while mercy keeps us from receiving the punishment we deserve. This is the greatest invitation: "Come boldly and obtain grace and mercy." When we understand this truth, we will realise that all our burdens belong to Him. Our duty is to cast our cares upon Him. "Casting all your anxiety onto Him, for He cares for you." (1Pe 5:7)

That is why when Saul was persecuting the church, Jesus said it was Himself being persecuted. "And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'" (Acts 9:4). In Matthew 25, Jesus says that whatever is done for His brethren is done for Him. "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me'" (Matthew 25:40). This is what Paul understood when he said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." The marks were no longer his but the Lord's. "From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 6:17).



Merry Christmas

AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

From our hearts to yours, we wish you a merry Christmas. The miracle of Christmas is the mystery of godliness... that God became flesh! The Only Man born to die: May you remember His birth, because of what His death meant: our complete & eternal salvation.

AND BECAUSE OF CHRIST, YOU WILL HAVE A PROSPEROUS & HAPPY 2024!

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