

7th July 2024.

Scripture Reading: 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10.

Theme: “The battle within and before Us”

Introduction

It was in the 64th minute that Venezuela's soccer team scored against Canada's national team to bring the scores to a level pushing the end game to penalties. It was like a battle at this point, and the national soccer team needed to win. This was a tense moment knowing the whole country watched the game. Every soccer fanatic was looking forward to qualifying for the semi-finals. Alas, the big moment came when the last kick of the penalty landed into the net. Joy and wild celebration erupted among the soccer fanatics in Canada. Congratulations and all the best to our national team in the next fixture against Argentina.

Explanation and Application

When Saul and his son Jonathan died in battle, David declared a national mourning to express Jewish customs, values, and beliefs. Saul was a son to **Kish** who later became king of Israel and ruled for **forty** years. David was a descendent of Benjamin one of the twelve tribes of Israel. In ancient Israel, kings had special roles different from the roles carried by the prophets. The kings of Israel and Judah served as agents of God to rule the nation. They were expected to observe God's covenant and laws to defend the nation and engage in offensive war with enemies.

Kings were expected to rule the people with Justice **Mishpat** and righteousness **Tsedagah**. Although they were granted powers to perform these duties, they suffered divine punishment whenever they violated the covenant and the laws of God.

However, it is important to note that Israel was not happy with the idea of kinship. Kings had the right to take men for military service and women for domestic work. A situation that is still present in most parts of the world where women are excluded from taking part in jobs that are traditionally perceived as masculine. Additionally, in certain parts of Africa, biblical images are often used to intimidate and hold people captive. Women and Children have suffered more, and men have become powerful enough to decide the future of women.

The evil of oppression subjugates women to depend on men rather than self-emancipation from toxic patriarchal structures. Structures of superiority in our society have relegated minority groups by exposing them to extreme rejection and denial of the right to existence with equal rights and opportunities. The good news is that God's law permeates through these contextual challenges with the promise of hope to bring about transformation to oppressive social and political structures.

Friends of God, Saul has died, and David has a huge role in providing leadership oversight. The tribes of Israel pleaded with David to consider

taking over from Saul as king. At this point, we may recall that before Saul died, God spoke and appointed David as interim leader to Shepherd the people of Israel and rule them. Acting on God's word, the elders of Israel came to King David to make a covenant and to anoint him king over Israel at the age of thirty and ruled for the next forty years like Saul.

The first assignment David took was to wage war with the Jebusites and declare the city of David on the enemy land. David fought with God's favour on his side and grew his army stronger. **Friends**, Like David, God may be calling us to a spiritual war with the enemies of righteousness and progress in our societies. This war is not a physical war but a spiritual battle through conversation and dialogue. In this case, it is important to realise that God may be calling us by changing our perspective to consider life a spiritual Journey. A journey of the mind and heart “*emotions*” requiring spiritual weapons to wad off the evil around us.

The evil around us creates a battlefield within us and before us at various levels. These battles include fighting off habits and addictions that keep us away from living the life desired not only by ‘some’ but for all people. The apostle Paul in the second letter to the Corinthians said, “Our weapons are no carnal and have divine power to demolish strongholds.” **Friends**, the forces of evil present in our society are strongholds that cause harm to the creation spectrum resulting in a broken world.

Like David, using the name of the Lord is a spiritual discipline that brings the forces of evil under the reign of the children of God. God is inviting people through Jesus Christ to an everyday walk with God who is self-revealed to us through the creation and friends around us.

In this spiritual battle, Jesus is teaching us to be peacemakers over violence throughout our lives. This implies that one's faith in God leads to one's goodness to promote peaceful living and celebrate the “otherness” even differently. Our otherness should lead us to the cross where the unfamiliar cultures cross with each other in a way that we can remain united. The pictorial image of the cross as a Christian symbol represents the oneness of the otherness in Jesus Christ. The otherness is transformed in Christ to become the collective body built on love, acceptance, tolerance, and equity.

Conclusion

God's love is a gift from Jesus Christ when he left the realms of Glory in solidarity with humanity. Therefore, let us continue to embrace Jesus Christ to dwell in our homes and everywhere. I want to remind you that no evil will prevail over your joy, peace, and freedom when God is for you. Emmanuel - “God is with us.” Amen.

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