

Lk. 6:1-12 + 17

Author: Festo Kivengere
Place: Diocese of Tennessee - PBF
Date: February 15, 1981
Event: Diocesan Mission
Theme: We are in partnership
Text: Luke 6: 1-12. 17

Poor tape
Echoes badly

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- greetings from Uganda and Sudan

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*The whole sermon is geared toward PBF

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..... in your Sunday service, I have heard thru the Episcopal, Episcopalian channels of information about this wonderful page, I would have never had a chance to be here and now my wife and I come together in many engagements sharing the message of Jesus Christ, and we want to bring you greetings from your christian brothers and sisters for whom we know you have been praying. You remember I was an exile in your country for 2 years running away from Amin, and of course I returned immediately after he was kicked out, and we are back in Uganda and we have met his people who did not hide their heads in the sand like an ostrich during the times of problems but who actually but who actually walked in the steps of the master and Lord and the church and the community as we went back we were amazed to find a tremendous momentum of faith increase in activity the response and commitment of thousands of both young and old, a tremendous heart moving singing among the people who have incurred so many wounds and carried so many burdens, we therefore thank you very much for your participation not only in prayer but in total, in actual giving of your hearts in love, these send you greetings and recognise the brotherhood which makes human beings a little more than, a little more human than they were.

Then I must before I forget bring you greetings from the Sudan, I have just been there meeting with christians in the Sudan, the Archbishop, his grace Alinana, sent his love and greetings back, a the representative of this church is by now in Southern Sudan. A tremendous country now open for the message of the healing of the Good News, no restrictions, you can preach any where, and many many people are responding this Good News so they sent their love and greetings, for they knew I would be here. Sudan

I think I want to take this opportunity to acquaint you a little bit the kinds of message and the kind of ministry in which we are engaged together, this

church or church here in America has taken more steps to get more involved in the pain and in the suffering of other people in the world, now sometimes that can be easily misunderstood and understood badly, that is what misunderstanding is, as activities from a donor community to a recipient community, if this is relationship, then it is absolutely miserable, and it doesn't do any good in the christian sense of the word. If that is relationship of people of people who give and people who receive are normal then we may as well remove the word christian and simply do social work, because there are even organizations which may do it better without putting the word christian. Ours is not like that, ours is completely different, it is a partnership, and partnership means that the activities are not a one way kind of street but you move forward and you meet another human being and in the meeting you cannot be the same. The one whom you met and you who met him in that actual encounter of the meeting, you cannot be the same, if you are the same, then the meeting did not achieve what it was intended to do. So therefore, this partnership is what I want to concentrate on and I was very much touched as we read and sung the first hymn, which spoke about the partnership of God the Savior and us human beings, so I am going to read with you a very simple story from St. Luke's Gospel, which will perhaps put in a nutshell the kinds of activity, the involvement that you and I are now standing in.

In St. Luke's Gospel 6, these are the words, the first 12 verses, verse twelve says, "Jesus went up a hill to pray and spent a whole night in prayer", that seem very religious to many, the kind of strained activity of prayer, all night prayer. The Lord Jesus never called that, He simply was in deep communion with the Father, and there was no better way of spending the night than that. It wasn't a strained activity, becoming purer and holier that was outside,

Read

this was a path, a fellowship of prayer out of which he chose ordinary 12 people to be in partnership with him, because that is what follows, and having chosen, and called and their names are mentioned here, I love the way the scripture puts it, I wonder why they should have left those names out, the scripture didn't leave the names out so that you may take heart, so you may know, he chooses the real people, with real names, with real characters and with real human weaknesses so the names are put there, then here is what I want to share this morning, chapter 6: 17 now after that wonderful time on the hill, choosing to the 12 partners, tremendous time of activity a movement following. I wonder what the disciples thought was going to be the next step, a sort of perhaps they would have expected a tremendous preaching mission and they were going to have many missions. Perhaps they expected a mighty movement of God in power, and power was going to come, listen how it is beautifully put here, "When Jesus had come down from the hill, with the apostles;" with them, when he had come down from the hill, with the disciples, this^{is}/the beginning of the mission of the partnership, He stood on a level place with a large number of his disciples, don't you think these words are random words, there is an economy of words in scripture, he came down from the hill where he had this mighty fellowship and in which he chose partners in the ministry, then he chose to come down, the church will never, never serve until we are there, that the direction of service is a down direction, otherwise there is no possibility, we may remain lovely christian people with wonderful litagies, lovely tradition great services, on the hill, and you know, geographically the higher you go the colder (laughter) and and but if we really need a human temperature, this is the direction, and he came down and he and his disciples and then listen to the next, point, point, and he stood on a level place .

He chose not a high place not even a lower place, just in case, but he chose a level place and he stood there, immediately he became available, he was standing, and he stood there not alone, in partnership with the apostles and the multitude of followers like you and like me. And He became, available why choose a level place, so that the short ones and the tall ones, the strong ones and the weak ones of all races, may actually touch him, he stood where he could be touched, a level place and once you stand with him in a level place or on a level place, immediately you become available but you can't be available without being venerable. Immediately you stand in the open level, then you open problems, then you become venerable to the feelings of the masses, so we read here.

A large crowd of people was there, I don't know who invited them, he did, he did because of large crowd, a multitude, gathered on this level place where the master stood, who attracted them, this magnet, where ever Jesus stood, you had a problem of keeping people away, not a problem of inviting them and encouraging them to come, they simply came anyway. He had something about him which was a tremendous attraction, I don't know what it was, you look into the scriptures, I am not going to pretend to tell you what it was, but I can guess by reading scripture, guess becomes truth, because then you see what it was that attracted them. Listen to this one, this crowd of people came from all over Judea and from Jerusalem and from the two cities of Tyre and Sidon. They have come to hear Him, one, and be healed of their diseases, those who were troubled by evil spirits also came and were healed, all the people tried to touch him, for power was going out from him and healing them all. You can see why, he stood on a level place, in order that he may be touched, and the touchers were attracted by one important factor, that power, healing power was running out of him and healing them all. He became available, he became venerable

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and if you were there with him my dear friends and brothers, what did he see? You stand there with him, you be one of the disciples or one of the apostles, in the church or in the community, what did you see? How many of us could have actually, stood and sustained strain under that pressure? Could we have taken the strain of the cries, the shrinks, the leaping the madness of those who were demon possessed, what a multitude of misery, that crowded round this beautiful person, son of God, it was indeed a valley, representing the humanity as it is in 1981. I

I have come

I have come from Karamoja, the area which has suffered from drought and therefore starvation, Uganda of course is a beautiful country, the pearl of Africa, Lakes, and rivers and rain and good soil, and wonderful people. But the ravages of famine, when nature did not respond and on top of nature not responding in the normal way by giving rain, then you had the chaos of man, guns and grenades and machine guns left behind the barracks of Amin, picked up by these people, used for cattle rattling, used for killing the fellow Ugandans, and then having killed and having murdered massacred and stolen property and such, and then people sit back and eat the little that was pity, and then they starve, and you heard that in 1980, end of 1979 -to 1980 lasted until about May, we had already lost well over 8,000 precious people in that area. Through lack of food, lack of communication, and we thank God for the response you see, and then you stand in the multitude, I was not in that part of Uganda, I came from the Southern part of Uganda, near Ruanda, I know you are related to the new problems of Zaire which we created a few years ago, which takes Burundi Ruanda and Zaire, and I live very near the boarder, southern Uganda, in the mountains, beautiful country, good farmers, plenty of food, in fact we have been able to take beans and peas to Karamoja, I will tell you how we

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got those beans and peas.

When Uganda opened up in 1979, I appealed to people, don't sell the food now, the country has got food, give us hoes and seeds and drugs to save cattle from dying, and in a matter of one year we will be producing, some christians don't respond to those, they only respond when people are actually lying down dying. And so that didn't get much response, I only had a few thousands of hoes and a limited amount of seeds and I put them in the hands of the farmers, my clergy, my priest became the agent to take the hoes to take them and give them parishoners, that is what we do, we preach and then do that sort of thing, which is beautiful and the farmers took the seeds planted them in the usual way, they hard working people, and you know the food we have taken to Karamoja when they said grain, and flour we have from the United States, some of your food companies are helping, and Swiss sent us powdered milk, the economic, the European economic community sent us more food, but the cry was we need protein food, protein and my farmers the parishioners had harvested peas and beans, so bags and bags we sent to Karamoja, some in gifts, others bought by relief money, now the other day I went to Karamoja to see them with a team of other men and women, so it was a mixed crowd of us, some came from Europe, some came from Australia, others were Ugandans, some were priests others were lay men and women, so we went as a group to see wether these people are receiving the food. It was a great joy when we stood in a feeding camp and we saw approximately about three thousand people, now able to make their own food and get some fire wood and get some water from a borehole, and we came the camp, the first time I had been there. These people came to greet us, and I am talking about being a partner now, and standing on a level ground, and as I stood there with my friends, two little children came running with excitement to greet the bishop.

Kigezi
Diocese

One stood this side held my hand and another one stood this side held this other hand, I don't speak their mother tongue nor do they speak mine, there was silence. The little children were just recovering from starvation hardly any flesh on their little fingers, they put their little hands in mine, there was silence, and a few tears began to come, I am loved by two little children who had just escaped starvation, you can say I was involved in helping to bring food and therefore I was the donor and they were the recipient, I want you to see another exercise taking place, the two children are ministering to bishop, in which way? By simply giving me that beautiful love thru hands which hardly have flesh on them, standing there, could I be the same, could I walk away from those two children the same man that I was when I came? Out of the question, I left there with a kind of new Gospel which had flesh and bones added on, the heart in pain, and yet the eyes saw the drop of glory, and I want to share this. This is what actually is meant when you hear you know people talking about PBF for World Relief and you hear your church trying you know, activities of venture into the mission, venture in missions coming with him, standing on level ground and let His words squeeze you, I think there are still many comfortable christians in America, and the Gospel, the Good News will never become good news until those who have received the Good News allow that Good News to evade their security. Share them from self-complacency, make their blankets a little cold, and the food on the table a bit, a bit of a challenge to shake the complacency and to bring the whole world of cries, and shrinks and misery and pain, and yet in the middle of these pains love, that is what I brought from Karamoja, and I went back and I saw some of my evangelists, we have got a team of evangelists, ^(someone coughs) arm of the church, called African Evangelistic Enterprise, I took them there, they engaged in feeding children, we are feeding 9,500 children giving them a meal a day they were all starving in the villages of

Karamoja and other places nearby, I saw the team of these men, they are priests many of them three of them, and they went to the kitchen and they helped in the preparing the porridge for 600 children, there was a man doing it, we receive this food and we share with these schools through their parents and teachers, but I stood there and saw the beautiful oatmeal prepared for the children, and the children now are picking up and they are beginning to lose the atmosphere of despair and the starvation which takes away the joy, and the eyes are beginning to be brighter, they are beginning to play with balls on the campus of their school and after we had seen the kitchen and seen the beautiful food prepared, by a local man there we sat under a beautiful tree, and we had a young man with a guitar, and he began to sing about the love of Jesus, to these young children, between 10 and 15, I wish you/had seen^{could} their eyes, you know you didn't have to preach long, we were there, they were there. We were in partnership receiving the heartbeat and they receiving a little bit to help their body to breathe.

I want to tell you, where are you?..... the question, where are we as a church? On the hill of spirituality? Or have we come down with him and become available and in our availability become venerable? Open to the pains, shrinks, are we willing to be touched and the touch never leaves you as you were, for power run out of him, and healed them all. May the Lord bless you as participate. And I always like to remind you Episcopalian, you, we have chosen as a church in our liturgy, the Eucharist as central, it is the central point in our worship, but do you know what that means, every time we come, the bread and the wine, what is that? I can tell you that the grain has gone through brushing, and the beautiful grapes have gone through squeezing, that the wine you drink,

the bread you eat, as a result of a painful exercise in the coming available, I hope that as you participate, you will always remember my body, broken for you, my blood was shed for you, come down, participate, put your hand in the hands of such a suffering humanity and you receive back double humanity. Let us pray. (short pause, clears voice)

Lord we do admit, with thanksgiving, that you did come down yours was stooping love, yours was available venerable love, open to the miserable humanity, but because you became available so we are here as witnesses of that unspeakable love, bless this community here, bless this congregation, this beautiful church, that it may become increasingly an available congregation; a venerable community, standing on the level, where humanity can touch and be healed, standing there and never alone, but with you who was wounded to heal our wounds, through Jesus Christ Our Lord. AMEN.

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