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FESTO KIVENGERE - ST. PAUL'S R.C. CHURCH Daytona, Fla. 11/9/77

Heb. 12:26 - The Good News -

Lk 24:13 or The Love of God demonstrated on Calvary
or the liberating power of the Cross of Jesus

You will notice in many advertisements, since I came to this

diocese to share the good news of our Lord, I have noticed that you do things here that I don't see in Africa. For instance this mission is called 'The Bishop Festo Mission' back home you never call a mission by the missionary because the missionary is only a carrier of the message, therefore, the mission must be called not 'Festo Mission' but 'Jesus Mission'. You see, he is the Lord. The Bishop here is only a little servant running around with the messages of the King. So if you'll shift the emphasis and you put it on the little man running around with the message you see you are concentrating on the wrong thing.

I want to take the opportunity to greet you on behalf of the christians in Uganda, which is my home country, and the other parts of Africa because my ministry takes me round. I was in Ghana just recently, Kenya, Tanzania, then in many European countries, meeting Christians of all kinds, of all denominations, but I particularly want to bring you the greetings of the christians in the church in which I serve primarily as a Bishop, and now as a Bishop in exile.

The church of Uganda celebrates a hundred years this year. Our brothers of the Roman Catholic Church will be celebrating their 100th year in two years time 1979. The Gospel reached Uganda in 1877 brought by missionaries who came from Britain. The gospel took root immediately, but not without a price, not without a cross. Our mission here has got a theme, you see it on your papers, it is called 'The cross in a changing world.' Now, when the gospel came to Uganda it did not come without the price. What is the gospel anyway?

Theme
→

The Gospel

The gospel is the good news that God stepped into human history at a particular time and when he stepped into the arena of human history, he stepped in it at the price of sacrificing himself. The good news centers on God's sacrificing love and it has demonstrated very clearly, not in giving the hungry some bread to eat, that was only the progression. Not in touching the blind so that they could see, that was progression. Not touching the lepers and making them clean, that was progression. Not in the teaching alongside Galilee, that was progression. The climax of how much God loves you as a member of the human race took place when the saviour of the world bowed his almighty shoulders physically and his heart opened to the terrible breaking of the pain of Calvary - the cross.

It was when Jesus went all the way until they drove nails into his hands, and of course you must remember that nails could never have held him tight. He is the creator. St. Paul and St. John say it that nothing was created that is existing now that was not created in him, therefore, it was not the nails which held him tight on the cross. It was not a piece of wood which was too heavy for him to carry, he created the universe. What was it that held him tight? It was that love which refused to give you up. It was that love which the writer of the Hebrews says, "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross despising the shame."

The Cross

Therefore, whenever we talk about the good news remember it is the love of God sacrificing itself, demonstrated through Jesus Christ as he hung on the cross of Calvary. I know that we Christians have a tendency to neutralise parts of things. We take parts of things and make them absolutely neutral so that we go on hearing about the cross,

we put the cross in our church, we wear the cross around our necks, does it ever touch you? Don't you wear the cross, speak about it, sing about it and remain completely unchanged? And carry the burdens of your miserable sins, guilt, fear, suspicion, jealousy, things which break humanity, don't we carry them even if we are singing about the cross? And therefore, we have neutralised the cross.

St. Paul said, The cross of Jesus Christ, the Christ crucified is the power and the wisdom of God. The beauty of the cross is that it took place in human history. Jesus was not crucified among angels, they did not need that. Christ was crucified among the human beings as the divine one who put on our shattered humanity, he was wounded because he had our body on him. This is why, as we expose ourselves to the cross, we are exposing to the only power which can deal with a number of things I am going to share.

The church of Uganda started with a cross in 1885, only ten years since the gospel came in 1877, barely ten years, the church was in the fire of persecution. Our first Bishop was murdered in Uganda by the command of our King. Many young and old people, Catholics, and Protestants were eliminated, thrown into the fire, had their bones cut to pieces, they died. Some of them had just become Christians. But they had fallen in love with power. Weak as they were, Hardly Christians, hardly any backgrounds of faith, yet they put up a fight including three young boys, Ugandan, the youngest eleven, the oldest sixteen. They were servants in the King's court and the King called upon them to serve him in a way which was opposite to their faith. And the three boys said to the king, "Your majesty, we cannot serve you that way

*early
martyrs*

because we love Jesus." The King was furious. No one has ever said that to me in this way. So they were put into prison, brought back to the king, given a chance to change, but the boys didn't change. They led them from the palace a mob behind them brandishing their clubs and knives, they took the three boys four miles away and a big fire was made. Their little bodies were put in dry wood, their arms were cut off mercilessly, and as this terrible experience was going on the three boys sang a song, "Oh that I had wings like angels, I would've flown and been with Jesus." They took these three little boys and they threw them in the fire, they died. You think they were safe from that? Didn't they have a body like yours and mine? What is it that sustained three young boys with the pain of the body so that they could sing as they were being thrown into the fire?

Crowds of Ugandan non-Christians who watched it saw what no one had ever seen. They had never seen anybody die like that. So, forty men and women that day, at night, walked to the missionaries house and they said to the missionary who was trembling with depression and anxiety, and malaria, "Sir, seeing the boys die they way they died we have accepted their God, baptise us." Three died and forty became Christians and now the churches in Uganda claim nearly eight million adheres out of 11½ million people of Uganda. Why? Because you see, the foundation was _____ in the cross, self-sacrificing now. These young people were captured by the love of Christ and then they were liberated by the love of Christ, and then they were encouraged by the love of Christ, and all this I am telling you is what ~~the~~ ^{the} CROSS does for people.

I could tell you story after story of christians including the recent one. The Arch-Bishop Of Uganda Janani Luwum, who on the 16th of February in the hundreth year of the church, was taken by President Amin's agents, by the order of President Amin, from in front of me and was shot dead. And others, like myself, were advised to get away and escape before we were eliminated. This has taken place this year, and this dear man of God knew, he was not ignorant. He told me before the shooting came because we were sitting together, he said "Three days ago a girl came to me and said that they had overheard the agents of Amin talking amongst themselves saying that the first man they were going to get rid of was the Arch-Bishop." He knew, but he stood where the master stood, not with fleshly courage, but completely captured by the love of Christ which when it penetrates the heart, that heart becomes wider, that heart becomes warmer, that heart can no longer be for itself, it is liberated from self and it becomes the heart for all.

I'm going to read with you a verse or two then I want to share with you this evening, 'the liberated power of the cross in a changing world.' The liberating power of the cross of Jesus. Or if you don't like using that expression instead of 'the cross' let us say, 'the liberating power of the self-sacrificing love of Christ.' That is what the cross means. The liberating power of the self-sacrificing love of Christ. Now I am going to take an incident from the New Testament, an incident which covers us all in order that we may see the context of liberation in the context of this group of people. I am reading from St. Luke's gospel, chapter 24, the story of the disciples,

*liberating
power of the
cross*

St. Luke writes like this: On the day of the resurrection Jesus Christ accompanied two disciples and when they came to the village he made as if he was going to go by on the road to Emmaus, they pleaded with him, "Come and stay with us it is evening and the day is nearly over." He agreed and came in with them. He reclined at the table, they gave him bread to break, and as he broke the bread the disciples with whom he was in conversation on the road, recognized who he was. Their eyes were open, then he disappeared physically. St. Luke says; And then the disciples said, "Didn't our hearts burn within us when he was opening the scriptures about himself?" So, they got up. The writer doesn't tell us whether they finished the meal or not. They got up with excitement and they run back to Jerusalem. When they got into Jerusalem they found the crowd of disciples there all excited telling the story, He has risen, Peter saw him, and Jesus came and joined in. When he joined in they were scared. They thought they had seen a ghost, then Jesus spoke to them like this.

"WHY are you troubled and why do doubts abide in your hearts? See my hands, and my feet that it is I myself. Touch me and feel." John 20, same day, John reporting: When, therefore, it was evening on that day that wonderful day of resurrection, the first day of the week. The doors were shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." And when he had said this he showed them both his hands and his side, and the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Now here is the situation. I'd like to go with you in your imagination, let us go to Jerusalem - historically.

*Hospitality
at Emmaus*

*Touch me
& feel*

It is the day of the resurrection, the highest day of the Christian _____. You see, God has done what history had never seen. Death had been overcome, sin has been conquered. The provisions for forgiveness have been made, angels are excited. The disciples have got a tremendous experience, it is the day of the resurrection. The highest conquerer has come into the history of the human race. Is this true? What would you have expected the disciples to be? They would have been all over Jerusalem singing, rejoicing, talking about it, and jumping around like madmen. Why? Because God has done what no man had ever done or could ever do.

*day of
resurrection*

But the disciples, as you read, were completely the opposite, completely the opposite. As far as the disciples were concerned it was winter. They were full of fear. The two who went to Emmaus left Jerusalem because it was so depressing in Jerusalem for the disciples that the two decided to get away from it. "We are tired. Peter is sitting there he is miserable, Thomas is there he is full of doubt. The women are broken-hearted, how can you continue sitting in this misery?" When they looked back to Good Friday, it was a bad Friday, very bad. Their Lord had died tragically. When the intent of Good Friday did not bring any spark of joy. There was no message except tragedy, so they were depressed and they walked away to Emmaus, just miserably walking up there. St. Luke says: They were in discussion. In another translation it says that they were discussing, putting it back and forth, back and forth without ever getting any conclusion at all. They were discussing church without any answer.

*Winter time
for disciples*

Do you know that many of our churches have become like a lecture

room, discussion and more discussion. Theological problems, doctrinal problems, denominational problems, you name it, we keep giving up. The christian church has become a problematic church. It is no longer a church with excitement and proclamation. It has become a church under depression, because you see, these disciples were like that. Can you imagine Peter singing? Every time he wanted to open his mouth the mouth was frozen, the heart was very cold. Guilt was there, shame was there, doubts were there, the future had no hope at all. The past was miserable, the present was threatening. Where do you begin? What can you do? How ^{can} you reach the waiting world when you don't have anything to say?

For these disciples, of course it was Christianity yet, but their experience was an embarrassment. I wonder whether there are people in this beautiful church to whom Christianity is an embarrassment? No excitement. Christians with their lovely hymn books singing, "Oh happy day..." half dead. You see them singing the words 'happy day' and they sing as if they are carrying a dead person. The world looks on and says, "They are singing happiness but they look miserable." Then the world says, "Do they mean it? Can they sing 'Oh happy day,' and then look as if they are coming from a funeral?" And I don't mean a christian funeral. So you see, we christians are like that. The disciples were like that. On that day if you met them in Jerusalem, in fact they were afraid of getting out, did you hear John saying, "On that day in the evening the doors were shut where we were because we were afraid of the Jews. We were victims of fear."

Cleophas, another disciple, and his wife said, "You are the

To simplify
Christianity
an embarrassment

stranger, we hoped that Jesus of Nazareth would indeed redeem Israel and bring back God's people. Now we are completely shattered, there is no more hope." That was the early christian church on the day of resurrection.

Now let me tell you, did you catch the words as the master came? First of all, those who are going to Emmaus, how do you answer their problems? He opened the scriptures, but that did not fix it until they sat at the table, and then he took the bread and as he was breaking it, so St. Paul says, they recognized him. How? May I suggest that they might have seen the wounds which were still very fresh in his blessed hands. Those who spoke, there they could see very clearly that it is him who was crucified, and as soon as they saw that Scripture came clear. Things written by Moses, things in the Psalms, things of the priests, things of the sacrifice, all the Old Testament scriptures became very clear. The cross was the light which enlightened every scripture. The cross was that wonderful light which threw the shining illumination to things which they had not understood at all before. This time something else happened. The cross, therefore, is that which liberates scripture and makes the words of the scripture live in the hearts of the people.

If you want to understand the words of the Old Testament you begin at the cross and it will begin to speak. If you want to understand Bethlehem don't begin at Bethlehem, start at Calvary and then Bethlehem becomes absolutely meaningful. Then you no longer see a baby in the hands of Mary, you see the saviour of the world in the

*Start at Calvary
to understand
Bethlehem*

hands of Mary. Work from the cross then things will be meaningful. So you see, these people needed the cross and Jesus did it, they saw his hands and they recognized him. Then he moved and he went with them, they didn't see his physical body now, but the disciples who had gone to Emmaus dragging their feet, half-dead with misery, thoroughly confused, now you know they saw his hands and everything has changed. Why? What happened? Their eyes have been opened. They saw. Have your eyes been opened?

Two, their cold hearts received a completely new temperature. They were excited in their personality, their emotion began to move. Three, their confused minds were completely enlightened, they understood the scriptures. Four, they had messages to give, their lips were no longer frozen, they were now full of news that they wanted to give. Finally, what happened? Their paralysed feet received acceleration, they run back to Jerusalem. So now let us see what the cross does.

First, the eyes of your spirit, the eyes of the spirit will never see until you are confronted with the love of God in Jesus Christ. It is as Paul is on the road to Damascus and in the shining light of the spirit of heaven he sees Jesus, the one who was crucified, and Jesus says, "Why are you persecuting me?" And then says Paul, his eyes now open and he sees that the christians he was hunting and trying to eliminate were not just christians, it was Jesus in them. The eyes were open. He is no longer a bigot, he is no longer a segregating Jew, his heart is open wide by the love of Christ. His eyes see clearly, they see God, and they see the world of men and women. Paul, from that moment, becomes a liberated man whose heart was on fire with the love of Christ, whose motive is changes because

No longer frozen

Paul on Damascus Road

his sins are forgiven, a new direction has come. He is a liberated man, you can't stop that man. He runs across Europe speaking about the message of the love of Christ again and again. If you reach him he calls it an advantage, a privilege. If you persecute him he takes it with warm arms and the persecutors were converted many times. The Phillipian church. He is a man who is absolutely liberated to live for Jesus, the cross opens the eyes. The cross warms all cold hearts.

liberated to live for Jesus

Do you know that the church is suffering from coldness? Cold, freezing temperatures among Christians. They can't move, that's why I said freezing, it is as if we are burying dead people because the hearts are frozen. No wonder broken relationships are rampant in the church among people who call themselves Christians, broken relationships. You know, when the heart is cold, it can't relate. At least not properly. You know, when the heart is cold it can't warm another person, it becomes a victim of hatred, resentment, segregation, selfishness, exploitation. All these words are simply symptom of the actions of a cold selfish heart of stone. The disciples were disappointed because they said, "We hoped that Christ would bring back our political kingdom." Self-centeredness. Now, they have changed. Watch them as they change, their hearts are burning, because their hearts are burning they feel as if God is writing a message in.

Cold Heart?

Are your hearts beginning to warm up? Because this is what the spirit does. The Holy Spirit takes hearts to the cross. The Holy Spirit of God is the agent of life, he takes the love of Christ and

pours it into the hearts, sins are forgiven, walls are broken down and you are amazed. Let me tell you those of you who read some of my books, you find there these stories. One of them is when Jesus penetrated this man's heart. I was a practicing agnostic. Very tough, young teacher in my country, politically minded, but completely self-centered. I needed someone to release me. Yet, I was too proud even to admit that I needed to be released. I believed that I was my own redeemer. My own liberator. And yet, I was the same until Jesus came into the affairs of my heart, and he came by way of the cross. He came when I didn't expect him and when I didn't like him. I was not in a church because I no longer went to church. I was cycling on the road when a man who had been a christian three hours before he met me, met me on the road, a friend, and simply opened his blessed heart and shared with a bubbling excitement what God had done in him through Christ. On the road, and the spirit of God took his simple words and applied them upon my needy heart, opened the heart and I presented myself to Jesus Christ and he liberated that man.

FR liberated

He cut the chains and he set the heart free. He lifted the burdens, touched the wounds I had incurred, oh my, what a change. What a new life. I have never been the same again, thank God. So you see, tonight what I am saying, at the cross the disciples received acceleration. Do you find it easy to move for Jesus? Do you find your feet are quick to go and whisper a little bit of excitement to your friend? What Does Jesus mean to you today? I don't mean what he meant to you when you accepted him initially at the beginning, but

I mean today? Is Jesus your excitement? Is your heart being softened or are you one of those people who is suffering from ^ahardened heart? Hatred is a terrible experience. When you hate another person your heart becomes stony and feeling heavy, critical and it can't understand. When the love of God from the cross penetrates then immediately a new atmosphere comes into your life and you begin to see things differently, and you even see people differently.

So, their eyes were opened their hearts were warmed up, and then what happened? Their minds begun to understand and finally their feet begun running because their lips had a message. Do you have these things? The cross is there, it opens your eyes so that you can see the love of God, then it opens your eyes so that you can see your brother. I told you that when God liberated me he opened my eyes and the missionary whom I had hated for six years, an English man, I told him I had good reason to hate him because we were under the British in those days. However, when Jesus touched me he told me there was no grounds whatsoever for hating him, I was hating my brother. And I said, "What shall I do? I have never done it before." And the Lord Jesus said, "You go and be reconciled to that brother even if he is white and you are black." And I said, "But he lives sixty miles away." The spirit of God said, "Sixty miles is not bad I came all the way from heaven." The only means I had was a bicycle, so I took my bicycle under the compelling love of God, on Saturday when I was not teaching at school and I cycled sixty miles through the mountains of Western Uganda to go to the missionary. At times I was embarrassed, at times I was scared. Somehow there was the love of God pushing me

FK
Hated a mission
man
reconciliation

forward until I came to his house. I knocked at the door reluctantly with fear. The door opened and there was my missionary. Now here is the thing I want to tell you. When I saw the missionary I did not see the man I had hated, I thought he looked completely different and beautiful. I jumped ~~into the~~ house and put my arms around him. He didn't know what to say. I didn't give him any notice, Being English he was almost dead because English people do not embrace that way, it is not their tradition. This was ~~not~~ African tradition this was an experience of a liberated man.

As I put my arms around him I said, "You are my brother, I have come to ask you for forgiveness for having hated you all these six years. I must have made your life a misery. Forgive me. Jesus has taken away the mountains of my hatred." We wept together and then we prayed together and we sang a song of praise together the two of us. Then I shook his hand, in fact, when we stood up he forgot he was English and he embraced me, and then I took my bicycle and cycled back home a liberated man. In fact, I felt as if my bicycle had an angel, it was easier, it was quick because my heart was no longer heavy and depressed with hatred. The cross had done a beautiful thing. I went back to tell the story that that was my dear brother, and he is still my dear brother today English and all. As you can see I haven't changed at all I am still a full-blooded African. The love of Christ did not change my colour, it changed my inner person because my colour has no problem. The problem was deeper than the colour, deeper than tribe, deeper than the race, and that is where the cross is wonderful.

In the world today, in your homes, American citizens what do you

see? I have been in your country many times preaching and it shakes me. Sometimes when I read papers and I meet people I get a feeling that you get married in order to go and get a divorce. There are so many broken relationships. What medicine are you going to use to fix this situation? You can't tell me that you are not enlightened, you are enlightened. You have psychiatrists, you have marriage counselors you have got psychologists, you have got everything, you are the most enlightened generation and yet relationships are going bad all the time. People are hating one another, others are hating themselves. Suicides are on the increase. Misery and emptiness. What medicine? The cross.

The self-sacrificing love of Jesus Christ is what Uganda needs today. Otherwise Africans are going to go and kill Africans, white people are going to go on killing each other, black people are going to go on killing one another and hating one another because our colour, our races, our tribes are no remedy. God who gave you the human being, who sent his beloved son, the son who sacrificed himself because he loved you so much, he can open your eyes tonight. He can warm your cold heart tonight so much so that you can even be warm to the man or woman you hated before. He can also open your lips, some of you have problems in that you can't speak. When Jesus enters and liberates you you can't stop speaking, there is so much to say that you want to go on. Your pastor or priest will have the problem of keeping you quiet, not of encouraging you to speak because you have got too much to say, didn't you hear that?

When the disciples returned from Emmaus and they entered into the house in Jerusalem everybody was speaking, and on the day of Pente-

Pentecost

cost everybody was speaking again. South Africa. What is the medicine that we can apply to the apartheid where the whites and the blacks are really engulfed with deep seated hatred. No. It is not so much hatred. The blacks in South Africa don't hate the whites, they are just bitter they resent being sat on. The white South Africans don't hate the blacks they fear them, they think they are going to take away every privilege they keep building. How are you going to bring together those two communities without finishing each other. Politically? Can politics speak? They have been speaking all the time. United Nations? United Nations has been speaking all the time, where is the remedy which is going to make another man look at another man and say, "Colour or no colour he is my brother. Race or no race, she is my sister because she, you, Jesus loved."

The cross of Jesus Christ is what the world desperately needs, and the present world is you and me. It is you and I who are neighbours of this suffering community. Whether it is Africa where thousands are being eliminated for nothing in order that dictators and power hounds and politicians make life a nightmare. And the from ladder upon which they climb are the dead bodies of their brothers and sisters. Or in your country America where materialism is eating and eating through you so that in the end people are valued according to material things. Or Northern Ireland where little children are shot in the streets of a city like Belfast. Where are we going to find that which can heal? We have got it. We have got Him. He died on the cross of Calvary, and because he was wounded he alone can heal your wounded heart. Because he was burdened he can

*South Africa
apartheid*

*Neighbours
of suffering
community*

*Ireland -
children*

lift the burdens which are crushing your personality. Because he died in shame some of you feel ashamed he can lift the shame and cover you with glory. This is why Jesus is good news for bad people because when he comes things are changed.

Open your hearts, warm your hearts, open your minds enlightening you so that you can understand. Then to give a message to your lips and set your feet running to give the story to those who are suffering, to those who are lonely, to those who are tired, those who are shattered, that God loves them so much that he died for them.