

2. Gender Injustice

GENDER INJUSTICE

Sermon Text: John 20:11-18

Introduction

Amongst all the developments achieved in Botswana society since independence – namely development of economics and infrastructure -the one slow development is that of gender justice. This is not unique to Botswana, as gender injustice is common all over the world. In Botswana, however, some advancement has been made to address the inequalities experienced by women. Women's groups have mainly spearheaded these efforts.

In spite of the on going attempts, there are still a lot of inequalities experienced by women. Even though women make up 51% of the population of Botswana, their full legal capacity is being denied under both Common and Customary law in Botswana. Evidence suggests that certain provisions discriminate against women under these laws. This has led women to have fewer advantages culturally, socially, economically and sexually than their male counterparts. Men are believed to make decisions and determine the livelihood of everybody. This is true in all spheres of Botswana society: politics, the workplace, the home, and institutions like the Church. This has a direct impact and implication on the spread of HIV/AIDS and the role of caregivers, etc. Women have no control over their bodies. They can hardly say no to unprotected sex from their partners or husbands, even when they know that their partners are unfaithful. Women are also exposed to violence and rape. This makes them vulnerable to HIV / AIDS infection.

We Listen to the Word of God

DETAILS OF THE TEXT

I see the resurrection of Jesus as a symbol of freedom. Jesus' followers were relieved when they discovered that the body of Jesus was not there. Their sadness turned to joy, as they knew that death was not the ultimate for Jesus. Jesus' freedom inspired the disciples to feel the very freedom that he experienced; freedom from condemnation, and freedom from the pain of the crucifixion --ultimate freedom. Jesus' freedom meant freedom for his followers. They had no reason to be frightened, hurt or depressed because Jesus was alive. He came to free all.

It is ironic that Mary being a woman is the bearer of this message of freedom, and experienced that ultimate freedom first. In fact, the other gospels mention Mary as being amongst other women. They were the ones that passed on this message of freedom to the rest of the male followers. This is ironic because women are the very ones bound by law, traditions and culture. They are the ones bound in relationships of violence and hurt and are the ones that are often too scared to spread this message of freedom to the rest of the society. Research indicates that gender injustice is one of the main contributors towards

the spread of HIV / AIDS, and that if education is provided in this regard, the issue of gender inequality needs to be addressed as well. I believe this passage has a very important message for women as liberators of their own oppression.

We Apply the Word of God to Ourselves

WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

- That women ought to be the bearers of the message of freedom and gender justice and take responsibility not to get infected with HIV / AIDS;
- That women need to spearhead activities to liberate women;
- That Jesus Christ revealed himself to women and commissions them to tell the good news of his resurrection.

WHAT DO WE HAVE TO CONFESS?

- That we as women often fail to speak out and just accept the status quo;
- That women are sometimes guilty of oppressing themselves and other women further with their attitudes, infidelity and dishonesty;
- That as men, in families, church and society we have denied women the freedom God gives to them.

WHAT CAN WE BE THANKFUL FOR?

- For the many advancements made towards gender justice;
- That we worship a God of justice;
- For Jesus who went beyond traditions and cultures to achieve gender justice.

WHAT CAN WE PRAY FOR?

- For the elimination of the spread of HIV/AIDS that is fuelled by gender injustice;
- For women and men to become aware of gender injustice;
- For the Church which is guilty of perpetuating gender injustice;
- For the human rights as women's rights.

We Apply the Word of God to our Church/Society

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- We need deliberate educational strategies to educate people about gender injustice from a biblical perspective;
- To be prophetic and address issues around language, attitudes, culture and traditions when they come up in forums;
- Become strong advocates as men and women on gender justice.

Song

The leader may choose the appropriate song

Prayer

God our creator, your image is so beautiful. It may vary from child, to mother, from grandfather to lover, but it is your image.

We pray that we might see the same beautiful images in each other.
Help us to grow beyond our own prejudices of gender injustice, hatred and abuse.
Help us to appreciate our differences, so that we might affirm each other.
Mould us into your image, we pray. Amen

By Cheryl Dibeela

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