

THE DANGER OF LIVING IN DICHOTOMY

STAND UP AGAINST THE CURRENT

David Oginde - Valley Road – 13 August 2017

Introduction

What a time to be a preacher!

I can only imagine what each one of you is expecting me to say! I know so because many of you sent me text messages and emails:

- Bishop, these people have stolen our votes again...what is God saying?
- Bishop, the Lord has finally confirmed prophecy...its Uhuru again!
- Bishop, I am hurting...my heart is bleeding! Please pray with me.
- Bishop, God is soooo good!
- Etc...

In such circumstances, you can see the challenge I faced as I prepared to speak to us today. But then, God dropped an idea in my spirit from an incident in Joshua 5:13,

¹³ Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, “Are you for us or for our enemies?”

From this text I want to share with you a message I have entitled: *The Danger of Living in Dichotomy*.

The Danger of Dichotomy

The dictionary defines *Dichotomy* as a classification of ideas or things into two opposed parts or subclasses. It is also called: *duality*.

But, how does this relate to our text?

The Bible says in Joshua 5:13,

¹³ Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, “Are you for us or for our enemies?”

This story is set at a time when Joshua was getting ready to attack the city of Jericho. Being a warrior, Joshua was very alert to ensure that their attack on Jericho was not foiled by any internal or external forces. Therefore, in Joshua’s mind, any stranger he came across fell into either of two categories: *For Us* or *Against Us*.

Being in a state of war, one can see why it was natural for Joshua to think this way. His mind processed things only in two dimensions. His worldview was therefore reduced to a dichotomy – a world of *For Us* or *Against Us*.

In the world of dichotomy, life is two dimensional – a mere duality:

- Love or Hate
- Black or White
- Right or Wrong
- Alive or Dead
- Male or Female
- Rich or Poor
- God or Satan
- Cause and Effect

The challenge with this perspective to life is that it is flat and narrow minded. It is dogmatic in its arguments and never allows for alternatives. Every cause must have an effect.

When applied to human beings, *dichotomy* places us in two dimensions – the body and the soul. The body is all about me and myself, and the soul is all about my world or my society. Life is therefore lived in the tension between pursuing *personal desires* – what I want, verses relating with *my world* – *what people expect*. The sum total of life is about Me, I, and Myself on the one hand, and My People and My Society on the other.

Sadly, the dichotomist mindset seems to also rule in the Church. It is a mindset that separates the spiritual from the secular. Who I am or what I do in Church is very different from who I am and what I do in society. This mindset rules our lives and directs our actions. It is the reason we live in contradiction. It is therefore the spirit through which we categorise ourselves into:

- Jubilee or NASA
- Winners or Losers
- Us or They

For a fact, as long as you think in dichotomy, you will be blinded to reality. Have you wondered why Christians – born again Christians – are perfectly at peace identifying themselves with their tribes...and see no contradiction?

How is it that in just concluded elections, the Luo, Luhya, and Kamba Christians all believe that NASA votes were stolen, while all GEMA Christians are thanking God for free and fair elections? Are there two Gods – one for Jubilee Christians and another for NASA Christians?

If this is how we think, Jesus would ask, how different are we? Don't even pagans think that way? And Paul would add: Oh foolish Kenyans,

who bewitched you? You claim to be Christians and yet you act in the flesh!

Brothers and sisters, if we are going to be the salt and the light that Jesus called us to be, we must be transformed in our minds. We must move from this dichotomous view of life to a higher dimension. I therefore want to propose a different mindset – a *Trichotomy*.

The Blessing of Trichotomy

Let me introduce us to the blessing of *trichotomy*.

When Joshua encountered the man with the sword, Joshua asked him a dichotomous question. The Bible says in Joshua 5:13,

Joshua went up to him and asked, “Are you for us or for our enemies?”

Obviously Joshua expected a dichotomous answer. But, what was the man’s response? The Bible says in Joshua 5:14,

¹⁴ “Neither,” he replied, “but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.”

Amazing! Contrary to what Joshua thought, this man was neither for nor against Joshua. No, he was there *as commander of the army of the Lord!* In other words, the man introduced a third dimension to the whole affair – the spiritual dimension.

This is absolutely profound! The man introduced a God dimension to the fact and reality of life. Indicating therefore that things are not always dichotomous. There is a third dimension that makes life a trichotomy!

In this dimension, it is not a matter of *For Us* or *Against Us*, but it is *With Us* pursuing God’s divine purposes. When God enters man’s world He is not for us – so that we can use Him for our own selfish ends, nor is He against us – so as to oppose our plans. God enters our world as *Immanuel – God with us!* And when He comes, it is about establishing

His Kingdom and demonstrating His power among us...not fulfilling our preferences!

This was the same kind of truth that Jesus confronted His disciples with when they came across a man born blind. The Bible says in John 9:1-2,

¹ As he [Jesus] went along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

In other words, as far as the disciples were concerned, the blindness of the man could only be attributed to a dichotomous reasoning – a *cause and effect*. Hence, it was either the man or his parents who must have sinned for the man to be born blind. So, just like Joshua the disciples put the question to Jesus: “*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, so that he was born blind?*”

Of course they expected a dichotomous answer. But listen to the trichotomy in Jesus answer in John 9:3,

³ “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.”

Just like the man with Joshua, Jesus brings a third dimension to this whole equation! In essence He says that as much as blindness is a terrible thing; as much as being born blind may be considered a curse in some quarters; yet viewed from a spiritual perspective, it can yield a totally different result: *God’s will and a mighty purpose*.

For God, disability is not the end of life. Being jobless is not an issue. Singleness, or childlessness may all be part of His divine plan. Similarly, for God, winning or losing an election is no big deal! He may have a much bigger plan than what we are seeing!

And so, what becomes clear is that the man standing before Joshua, was neither *For Us* nor *Against Us*. He was a man on a divine mission. His fight was not against flesh and blood. His battle was not for territory – in any case, the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof. He was not there to fight against Joshua or to fight for him. This a man was there – *as a man sent from God*.

Brothers and sisters, herein is a profound truth. When Jesus went to the cross, He did not die to raise up an army of Christian voters for Jubilee or for NASA. Jesus did not shed His blood so that we can become better Luos, Kikuyus, or Kalenjins! The Son of God did not hang on Golgotha tree so that you can stand with your people to rule this country for fifty years, or to fight for your man to one day enter State House. No way! Our God is not here *for* Jubilee and *against* NASA, or *verse versa*.

When we behave like that, we bring a serious dichotomy to our faith. In the process, the Bible says in Hebrews 6:6 that we *crucify the Son of God again, and put Him to an open shame*.

To escape this trap, we must operate in the third dimension – in trichotomy. We must move from seeing things from two dimensions to three dimensions – from 2D to 3D. From 2D to HD. You get a clearer picture of what God might be doing.

Living in trichotomy

How then can we live in trichotomy?

Trichotomy recognises that we have a body, a soul, and a spirit.

Therefore we live for ourselves, for society, and for God.

In this perspective, we bring the Kingdom of God to bear on everything we say or do. We look at everything from a heavenly perspective.

This is what we see happening to Joshua. Once Joshua realised who the man before him was, his perspective changed. His enquiry changed. We read in Joshua 5:14,

Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, “What message does my Lord have for his servant?”

Once Joshua recognised who this man was, Joshua bowed down in prayer and asked him what God had to say about the Jericho attack.

The truth is that when we move from a two dimensional worldview to three dimensional view, our perspective on everything changes. We immediately recognise that we are men and women on a divine mission.

That means that whether you are a doctor, or a secretary; whether you are politician or pastor; whether you work in an executive office or in a Jua kali shed; you will recognise that you are there as a man or woman on a mission – God’s ambassador to extend His Kingdom. Your question will be: What message does my Lord have for me in this situation?

And for a fact, we are God’s ambassadors – men and women on a mission. The Bible says in 2 Cor. 5:19-20,

¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

This means that even in the current scenario, we must move from viewing politics from the narrow prisms of Jubilee or NASA. Instead, as we look at the political arena, we must ask what agenda God has for Kenya. We must bring God’s mind to bear on every situation – because we are not for or against anybody or any party!

In our interactions, we must move from provocative celebrations against losers, or insulting and cynical complaining against winners. Instead we must take the higher way of weeping with *those who weep* and rejoicing

with *those who rejoice*.

Cf: When Jesus went for a wedding at Cana in Galilee, even though His heart must have been burdened with the sinful state of the world, He did not disrupt the party. Instead He sat down to rejoice with those who rejoice. In fact He even provided them with the best wine they had ever tasted! Therefore, you may be hurting from the elections, but should you find a people who are rejoicing, don't spoil their party...join in and rejoice with those who rejoice!

Likewise, when Jesus went to the home of Martha and Mary and found them mourning the loss of the brother Lazarus, He did not rebuke them for their lack of faith. Instead Jesus wept! Similarly, if you are rejoicing and you find a people mourning the loss of their election, don't rebuke them. Join in and listen to their lament, even if you have nothing to say – just join in the ministry of presence – if not, just go your way.

But, our heavenly mission also demands that we must speak against evil and stand up for righteousness. For example, it is unfortunate that those who were mourning the loss of their election, are the same ones that have suffered police brutality and killing of their loved ones. This is evil and must be condemned. Police must exercise restraint in dealing with any forms of protest without killing anybody.

Conclusion

The man who met Joshua had a sword in his hand. We too, as men sent from God, we must have the Sword of the Spirit – the word of God – in our hands. Our every response must be by the Sword. Every Twitter message, every Facebook Post, every conversation, must carry the heavenly agenda.

Accordingly, as Commanders of the Lord's army let us be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Each one of us must put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the

rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

That's what it means to stand up and be counted. This is what it means to *Hesabika*.

Amen