

7th Day Pentecostal Assemblies (Esreso)

2016 End-of Year Camp Meeting

Sermon

By

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The Hour of His Favour Has Struck

Be Ready for your Blessing

At this time of the year when we are on the cusp between an outgoing year and an incoming year, it's only natural that our hearts bubble over with gratitude and a sense of a new beginning. On one level, we are grateful to God for His guidance and protection over the past year. On another level, we are filled with renewed hope for the New Year. We aspire to reach greater heights, expand our frontiers and break new barriers.

By all means, let's work extra hard during the New Year, showing greater commitment and a clearer vision. But let those positive vibes and attitudes spring from faith. Let faith be the catalyst. Let's not rely on ourselves to reach the goals we have set for ourselves. Otherwise, it won't be long before we fall by the way side panting – all our finite strength used up! (Isa. 40:30)

Instead, let us trust in the LORD with whom all things are possible. And if you believe in Him as I do, all our years of waiting, prayers, supplications and show of love and faith toward Him have positioned us for His favour this New Year. Like Prophet Elijah of old, I hear the sound of the abundance of rain in the realm of the spirit. Be ready lest it overtakes you. Keep your faith up! You have sowed in tears of fasting and prayer; tears of faith and perseverance (Ps. 102:1-12), and you shall reap in joy (Ps 126:5-6)

“The Set Time Has Come”

It is not happening by chance. It is God moving at a specific time of His own choosing to bestow favour:

“Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come” (Ps. 102:13).

It’s a comforting word, “the set time has come”; the waiting is over! Not a minute will pass!

The appointed time has come says the One who sets a date and guarantees the promise and blessing of it:

“He said, I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son. And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind Him.

“Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age, Sarah was past childbearing. “Sarah laughed to herself, saying, after I have become old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

“And the LORD said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh saying, ‘shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?

“Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time, next year and Sarah will have a son” (Gen. 18:10-14 NASU).

“Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised.

“So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him.

“Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, who Sarah bore to him, Isaac” (Gen. 21:1-3 NASU).

Biologically and physiologically, all the odds were against the promise of God set for fulfillment within the space of a year. And Sarah knew it. But when the set time arrived nothing could hold back the promise of God. The promise became a reality.

Now, is there anything too hard for the LORD to do in your own situation? Is your case utterly beyond hope? Worse than Abraham and Sarah’s had seemed?

The Prophet Jeremiah shakes his head in disagreement and disbelief:

“Ah Lord God! Behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee” (Jer. 32:17; also 27)

The comparison is with the creation of heaven and earth *out of nothing*, and you sit here at this meeting entertaining fears that your problem is too difficult for the Lord to solve!

Beloved, believe and remain expectant, and you will name your blessing ('This is my child'; this is my shop'; 'this is my husband'; this is my business'). God will make you laugh. Your "Isaac" will come; your promise will be born at the appointed time.

The favour is upon Zion. The glory of the Lord has "risen upon you. For, behold, the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee" (Isa 60:1-2).

Zion is the darling of the Most High; the apple of His eye (Zech. 2:7-8). It is where His word is proclaimed and His law obeyed (Isa. 2:2-3). Zion is His dwelling-place in heaven (Heb. 12:22-23) and on earth where all His joy – over the vast face of the earth – is found.

"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King" (Ps. 48:2).

The "joy" of Yahweh cannot be left in a joyless state. Favour must return to Zion in the company of divine mercy.

But neither will Zion herself accept to be joyless. Zion will continue to delight in being Zion – an obedient, faithful child of God – regardless of her present physical circumstances.

Zion is incurably in Love with her Spiritual Status

"For Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof" (Ps. 102:14).

Zion has great godly passion. It reveals the heart of Zion, and the Lord is most impressed:

"Thus saith the LORD, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:
"But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jer. 9:23-24).

It's something deeper, something spiritual in contrast to the pride of the flesh – worldly wisdom, strength and riches (which are all perishable). This is where the true worth of Zion lies and what every true child of Zion recognizes and takes pride in. He is not ashamed or put off by her deplorable physical conditions but takes pleasure in her stones.

As an inhabited place, Zion obviously abounds in stones. But these are not stones standing up; they are *a heap of stones*. Still, the children of Zion take pleasure in them. Zion is in ruins physically, but the love of God beats in their heart. This love has nothing to do with the grandeur of her buildings; it has everything to do with her spiritual treasure of righteousness and the divine presence.

The glory of Zion is the inner beauty of God's presence – the Spirit of glory upon us and in our hearts (1Pet. 4:14). This is what has kept us going as a church. There was a time when we were hounded out of our main church building – and we still are living in tents in the wilderness – but we did not lose hope. We did not give up faith. We resolved to remain true to God no matter what the enemy did. We couldn't afford to lose the treasure of the Word; we loved and valued it more than anything else. And now the glory of the Most High has risen upon us; the glory of the truth of Jesus, which we cherished so much to let go, is shining and shining ever more!

On a personal level, although your business might be floundering or your family might be going through a difficult time, that is no indication that you are no longer a child of Zion or that God has abandoned you. If only you have remained a faithful child of Zion who continually takes delight in His word and instructions, you can rest assured that He will return to you in His mercy and in the countenance of His favour. And the time is now.

So long as Zion lives in the world she will not be free from trouble (John 16:33), but neither is she destructible. "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6).

Zion lives the paradoxical life of Jesus:

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair.

"Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Cor. 4:8-10).

The death of the Lord Jesus ended in His glorious resurrection in power! And it produced life for us and put us on the same path of tribulation and persecution *towards glory*. We bear in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus but in our spirits lives His indestructible Life. The troubles, the bouts of confusion, persecution, and falls are merely bodily hurts and scars. Our spirits are not broken, our inner man is not shaken – strengthened with might [as it were] by His Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16).

We prevail by the Spirit of Jesus living in our frail human bodies "that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:7).

This is the Zion of God. We are bound up with the life and glory of God. You live the indestructible life of God. So take heart and rejoice in the Lord, your King, irrespective of your present difficulties. A new dawn of glory is about to break upon you. Don't plunge yourself into the pit of despair and self-pity:

“But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and My Lord hath forgotten me.
“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me” (Isa. 49:14-16).

God cannot possibly forget you; He cannot bring Himself to do that. His love for you is much more tender and stronger than a mother's love. He who made a woman to be tender and loving is speaking here!

Moreover, you are now a part of Him – and not in an obscure place. You are indelibly inscribed on His palms – and not just your name. But your whole being, including your plight and complaints, is imprinted on His person. But He acknowledges not your plight, for “your walls are continually before Him”. It's a picture of the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem from the perspective of God when, in fact, they are still in ruins as far as the physical eye is concerned. It's a picture of your victory and success which only God sees as He gazes upon you in the palms of His hands! It may surely seem so, but *your walls are not in ruins; your life is not in a mess*. On the contrary, you are “a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of Thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah [My Delight is in Her] and thy land Beulah [Married] for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married” (Isa. 62:3-4)

Yahweh Himself will be your husband (Isa. 54:5). Don't ever dare say, ‘Yahweh has forsaken me’.

It can't be, for the time has come for Him to show you all His favour!

Our Restoration Is Guaranteed

But Zion is indeed a heap of rubble – the handiwork of powerful enemy forces. But God allowed that to silence them:

“So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the Kings of the earth Thy glory” (Ps. 102:15)

Those who persecuted or hurt you will see you again and exclaim, ‘Are you the same person I knew?’ and then just as spontaneously praise the name of the living God for His wonderful

work in you. Or most likely, they will wonder silently in their heads for the shame of uttering their surprise and admiration for God.

It's not the enemy that is stronger; it's the glory of God that needs to appear greater in the sight of men. This is the point of all the waiting:

“When the LORD shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory” (Ps 102:16).

He will vindicate our faith in Him, and He will vindicate the glory of His name. Day by day ‘all of us with faces unveiled, see as in a mirror the glory of the Lord; and we are being changed into His very image, from one degree of glory to the next, by ADONAI the Spirit’ (2 Cor. 3:18 CJB).

As we grow in His grace and knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18), this is the natural result. The glory does not grow dim but rather brings to light the glorious purposes of God in our lives. And so will it continue to be, until the day “when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” (2 Thess. 1:10).

That is the destiny of Zion; she is bound to reflect the glory of God even when she has been reduced to a rubble. The Word of Yahweh will come to her: “Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.² Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.³ For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money” (Isa 52:1-3). The enemy gloats in vain. We will surely have our day of glory.

It's a time appointed by the Most High. It's a time of favour and a time of restoration. *That's why there's hope for our dear country, Ghana.*

We only recently went to the polls while crying out to the Lord in heaven for continued peace, political stability and national cohesion. Many churches organized special prayers for the nation. We on our part held a press conference (in addition to continual intercession for the nation) on the divine principles of good governance enshrined in the scriptures for the righteous administration of the nation in which the rule of law, justice, and law and order prevail for the good of all citizens.

Truly, the Lord listened to the prayers of Ghanaians and the election was successfully conducted without major disturbances. After a brief post-election tension, a clear winner was duly declared.

Admittedly, Ghanaians have shown a grateful heart and have been unstinting in their praise. But is this where we part ways with God as a nation?

If there was one thing our press conference sought to put across, it was not that we needed God only during national elections but that we needed to bring His ideas and principles to bear on the running of the state and the political culture of the people.

And that's what we need to do—involve God in the life and affairs of the state. After all, the winning slogan was, "The battle is the Lord's". Also scripture states, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

The Almighty attributes national greatness to righteousness, but sin degrades, or lowers, any people. That's not a popular view in our secularized world of today. But that is the Word of the all-knowing, all-powerful God whose every word stands!

National development and /or renewal is not all about good planning and good policies by experts or technocrats. There's a spiritual dimension to it rarely recognized but which can't be accomplished any other way except by the Spirit of the Living God. We read in Isaiah 32:13-18:

¹³ "Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city:

¹⁴ "Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks;

¹⁵ "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

¹⁶ "Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

¹⁷ "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

¹⁸ "And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places".

It's a futuristic prophecy anticipating the Millennium in which Christ will bring complete restoration to His people (Acts 3:21; Isa. 11). But there's no denying that "where the spirit of the Lord is, there's liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17); there are "times of refreshing" (Accts 3:19); and there's a release of the blessings of God and great things happen. Moreover, the outpouring is happening now in these "last days" (Act 2:17-18). And so as it did apply on a limited scale in the days of King Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:29-31, 2 Chron. 32:22-23), so will it happen in our day if we allow the Spirit of God to play His proper role in our national life.

Things will go from good to better, and from better to best. That is to say, "the wilderness [will] be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest". Even the lowest of the low ("dwelling in the wilderness" or on the fringes of society) will enjoy the benefits of a just and prosperous society. None will be left out! Everyone will live in peace and security.

Divine favour will attend the nation. Rain will fall in its season (Deut. 11:14-15; cp. Amos 4:7-9). Business will flourish, and there will be blessing in the city and blessing in the field and in all our endeavours (Deut. 28:3-6). There will be an unleashing of the creative potential of the people for wealth creation and enterprise. Prosperity will no longer be for the privileged few, but all will live in prosperity, “eating and drinking, and making merry” as in the days of King Solomon (I Kings 4:20).

The unseen hand of God will be working behind the scenes to ensure that things worked out for the country. He who changes the times and the seasons will create the right conditions for restoration and growth. The LORD will direct the heart of the King (the President) (Prov. 21:1) to chart credible policies and steer the ship of state into stable waters.

Ghana will be transformed by the Spirit and guidance of the Almighty. He will build the state Himself and watch over it by His own mighty power of grace (Ps. 127:1-2). In our return to Him in humility, prayer and repentance, He will heal the land (2 Chron. 7:14).

The set time has come!

All heaven is Poised to Hear You!

The time of His favour is a time of salvation, a time of redemption. It’s a moment to seize with fervent prayers. For:

“He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer” (Ps. 107:17).

There’s no way your prayer will go unanswered if you meet the condition. The divinely appointed time of favour is for the restoration of *a Zion which is in ruins*. Therefore, do assume a similar spiritual posture. Shed your pride and self-confidence. Be “poor in spirit” (Matt 5:3)—someone who is too poor to help himself and therefore wholly trusts and depends on God for His salvation (Ps. 70:5). (He who has “no confidence in the flesh”, Php. 3:3).

And the glory of the redeemed which will be made manifest will be talked about – because of the sheer magnitude of it – for generations to come, even in the age to come:

“¹⁸This shall be written for the generations to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.

“¹⁹For He hath looked down from the height of the sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth;

“²⁰To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death;

“²¹To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem” (Ps. 102:18-21).

The set time of the LORD, the year of Yahweh's favour, has come to cancel the sentence of death passed against you. The great God of heaven has condescended to hear your prayer, you the destitute in heart, the meek of the earth, from the height of His throne of grace in the throne room of heaven, the locus of the holy of holies. And the groans of your soul, conveying your deepest needs and anxieties, have been heard – picked up and transported to the Father by the Holy Spirit which “makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom. 8:23-27).

So fear not what the devil has planned against you this New Year. You will “not die but live, and declare the works of the LORD” (Ps. 118:17), “When the people are gathered together, and the Kingdoms, to serve the LORD” (Ps. 102:22).

And that's what the business of Zion is really about –PRAISE! Yah will never sacrifice His praise or give His glory to another (Isa. 42:8). Let His praise be in your mouth all day, all year. Our God reigns, and the time of His favour has come!

It just feels good and proper to praise the blessed name of YHWH:

“I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

“My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof and be glad.

“O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together” (Ps. 34:1-3).
Amen!