

# Ordination Service 2016

**Bishop Ziphozihle | Siwa**

**Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa**

## **Charge to Ordinands and those received into Full Connexion**

In Tshwane on 25 September 2016

**READINGS:** Genesis 45: 1 - 15

Mark 2:1-17

2 Corinthians 5: 11 - 21

Theme: The vibrations of God's love uncover the human face.

## **Greetings and Congratulations:**

I greet all God's people here present in the name of the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit – AMEN. I further want to acknowledge presence of the church leadership and colleagues in the ministry, many of whom have guided the ordinands on their journey. Most important are the members of the families and close companions of our dear sisters and brothers, who have made huge sacrifices in the last five years or so. May God of life continue to anoint you for the journey ahead.

We give thanks to God who never tires of giving the church more labourers who respond to God's call on their lives for the work of a minister in the church of Christ. This is not a graduation ceremony, but the beginning of a life-long journey of learning and wrestling with the implications of the call of God in our lives as we encounter ever changing life circumstances. I welcome one of our fathers, the Rev Dr Stanley Mogoba who will participate in your ordination today. Many of us here were ordained during Tata Mogoba's tenure as Secretary of Conference and later as Presiding Bishop. Together, we will be passing on to you what we received. Guard it jealously. My dear sisters and brothers be assured of the prayers and support of the Methodist people. I repeat the words of 1 Thessalonians 5: 16 – 24:

“Rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus... Hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil. May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through! May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it... The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

**Text: Genesis 45: 4**

I want to reflect on the story of Joseph as a story where the human face gets obscured and then uncovered.

“... Come near to me, please... I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.”

2 Corinthians 5: 16

“From now on, we regard no one from a human point of view... see everything has become new.”

**Introduction:**

In Kansas City at the Jazz Museum are written these words by one of the renowned Jazz Musician; “***We are not the makers of music, but only vehicles through which God sends His vibrations to the world.***”

In Chapter 45 of Genesis we are told a story that reflects many of our own stories but above all is a picture of how God channels His vibrations to the world in ways that cannot be stopped by any situation. We meet in the story of Joseph a love that carries us through spaces and circumstances we never imagined. It is the kind of love that transcends limitations.

**First we observe privilege being rolled away in order to return purified for service:**

- As you listen to the story, be reminded that the Love of God that carried Joseph through changing circumstances of life will carry you.
- Joseph belongs to a family with 12 sons – but he is the favoured son and was loved more than the other children. His siblings hated him – the passage says because he was a favoured son. But when you read further you discover that he had bad dreams – dreaming that his brothers were going to bow down before him. Was it the position of privilege that made him dream these dreams? Grace Imathiu wrote that in a privileged position it is easy to see brothers and sisters as subjects whose role is to bow down. As ministers in the church of Christ you will be loved and sometimes given special care – remain humble so that the care of God’s people does not lead you into a compromising position. Stay close to the love of God that will not let you go. Pray unceasingly. When the special care is given, which is a good thing by the way – but when it attempts to lift you up above everybody else and put you on a pedestal – get down on your knees.
- What helps to keep us in check are regular moments of checkup. “***Check me O’ God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. 9Psalm 139:23-24.*** “*Ndinga ngakhe ndisithele kwimpazamo zonke, ndibe nemizuzu ekuthandandazeli, ndiphalaze le ntliziyo...* moments of check-up before God.” It is regularly asking God to protect your heart from theft by pride. That you must never mistake sisters and brothers as subjects to bow down before you and to cater to your whims and needs.
- When one day Joseph was sent by his father to check on his brothers well-being, they saw him at a distance and said; “here comes this dreamer”

- Refusing to recognize him as their brother and they conspired to kill him. But right there among them was one who was destined by God to protect him. Reuben says 'let us not kill him.' Plan B comes into place. God's grace kicks in and plans are changed. They threw him into the pit with Reuben planning to come and rescue him. Judah comes with plan C - let's sell him.
- The love of God is able to protect you when circumstances of life change and God can use any means because God is God.
- Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelite's, but not by the brothers but by some passersby who got there first. They lost a brother and they got nothing in return. To follow Dr Ketshabile's analogy with some paraphrasing – when you throw a small stone in a pool of water you see the ripples going out but you do not see the stone. He further spoke of a renowned Theologian who on retiring had not written any books. The students asked him how they would remember him when he had not left any books behind, to which the Theologian responded; ***“Don't remember me, remember Christ.”*** We are in the business of making people remember Christ. Rev Peter Witbooi would add that the photographer does not appear in the picture unless it's selfie of self-gratification.
- Someone wrote in the Osho Library; “love is a small wave in the ocean of death.”
- As you go my dear sisters and brothers, be assured of the accompanying presence of God who continues to throw small waves of love in the sea of difficulties. As you trust God and follow Him - go as a small wave bearing in mind that even a small wave is able to create a ripple effect.
- By the grace of God Joseph survived the consequences of those dreams of domination. Instead God's love channeled him to where God was to use him to send vibrations to the world. I don't know what channeled you to this special moment of affirmation by God through His people. Each one of us has a story and God wants to use us to send his vibrations throughout the world
- God is able to use each of our stories to lift any one of us to strategic spaces to channel His love
- When you ask who these Ishmaelite's who bought Joseph are, the story will take you back to the great grandparents, Abram and Sarah. They received the promise of God that they were going to be the parents of a great nation but they had no children. In a panic they made their own plans in order to fast track the promise. Ishmael was born out of scheming, but when Isaac was born later, they chased away the mother and the child of their own scheme. Ishmael and his mother Hagar were cast away because they were only stepping stones to other people's dreams.
- The child of people's schemes is thrown away – people's schemes have a short life span whilst God's plan endures forever.
- However, our gracious loving God still sends the offspring of the discarded Ishmael to come by and buy Joseph and take him to Egypt, the place where his ministry matured and flourished. ***Your ministry will not be immune to scheming, but hold on to the love of God who will lift you up from the sinking sand of the world's schemes.***
- Even in Egypt where he was sold, further schemes saw him thrown into prison – but even in the dark Egyptian prison – the love of God used that moment of loneliness and incarceration in a far- away country as a moment of finding a new name. The dreams at home saw him thrown

into a dark hole but the dreams in the Egyptian prison lifted him up into recognition as someone who could resolve even the toughest crises in the kingdom of Egypt. The chief cupbearer and the chief baker of the king were in prison with Joseph when they were troubled by bad dreams and Joseph offered ministry to them in the darkness of the Egyptian prison – himself being a prisoner. He journeyed with one to the hope of release from prison and to the other he told the truth of his coming death.

- I like the answer when Pharaoh asked Joseph to interpret his dream – Joseph pointed to God and said **“God will give Pharaoh the answer.”**
- My friends: Go and tell the people that there is one God who gives all answers. His service to Pharaoh placed him in a place of great privilege.

**BUT - The turning point is when later Joseph meets his brothers: love pulls them together:**

- You know the story, so let me spare you the details.
- The yeast of love in Joseph was rising up. The story says there came time when Joseph could not control himself – he wept loud that everyone heard. The moment came for Joseph to own his story; ‘I am your brother Joseph whom you sold to Egypt...
- **He owned his identity and his responsibility.** “I am Joseph, your brother, come near... go and tell my father... I will provide for all of you.”
- The brothers once again became brothers – not subjects to bow down. Joseph became the provider!!!
- Joseph must have had moments to think of the deep dark hole into which he was thrown by his own brothers. He must have thought of the dark moments of fear, anxiety and doubts when he was taken by the Ishmaelite’s to an unknown destination. All the time he was not aware that he is the taken to a place to be used as a channel of love to the people of Egypt – gift of interpretation – even in prison – and to be the one to bring the family together as their salvation from famine.
- It was love that carried Joseph through many misfortunes to touch Egypt and to touch his brothers. God’s Love carried him.
- Even the wounds of his journey were used as the magnet that pulled the family together:
- Joseph was re-united with his former name and reconciled with family. He rediscovered his name and identity; “I am Joseph, your brother” as if saying I’m not just a dreamer, but a brother with a name. Each one of us has a name and a story and God wants to use both.
- Joseph’s position of privilege finally became the source of healing for their relationships: ‘I am your brother... come near.’ **Relationships cannot be managed by remote control.** He invites them to **‘come near...’**
- Joseph reveals his identity that has been covered by the bruises of the journey. **His own pain is healed by the vibrations of love that go out through him.**

**God making the appeal through us:**

- The call of God on God’s people is for God to make his appeal – Paul writes “through us”

- New creation – the old is gone. The called can no longer see things in the old way.
- Ministry of reconciliation: with God, one another and resources
- READ FROM THE MESSAGE TRANSLATION: 2 Corinthians 5:16, 17 and 20.
- In the Gospel reading in Mark 2, God’s love finds the four friends of the paralyzed man – on its way to healing. **TODAY, remember that it is that Love of God that has found you on its way to heal the world. It is not you who found God, but the Love found you and will carry you in your ministry. The four men became the vessels of God’s love.**
- On the way barriers were broken – even **the roof was dismantled. Nothing can stand in the way when the love of God is on its way to touch the world.**
- **Mark records that it was some people – no names were necessary because it was not about them, but what is to be remembered is the impact of God’s love that break barriers in order to reach those that need it most. It is the action that is named – love that knows no barriers!**
- **Even the healed man is not named – just his condition - the overwhelming thing was the power of love touching the world.**
- Love on the way to touch the world knows no bounds and is not deterred by challenges and difficulties – even the crowd around Jesus did not deter them.

**May God’s love carry you to where you never planned to go but to where you are needed the most.**  
The grace, love and fellowship of the Triune God – will always go with you! Be ready for that accompaniment all the time.

AMEN!