

**EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
OF SOUTH SUDAN AND SUDAN  
DIOCESE OF WAU**



كنيسة الاسقفية  
جنوب السودان والسودان  
ابرشبية و او

## An Easter Message

From the Rt Rev Moses Deng Bol  
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South Sudanese people are good at celebrating, given half a chance people will sing and dance and it does not take long for more people to join in. I take a lot of joy in this, I think it is beautiful and precious. At times of national celebration you can really feel a sense of joy, it is for me this sense of joy that reminds me what life is really about. It is true, we cannot be happy all day every day but if you lose this sense of joy then really something is missing from your life and you are not whole.

When I have been to other places which are more developed countries you often hear people say that they are too busy. They think only of work that must be done and ignore things that should bring them joy. As an African I must ask how can you be too busy to be happy ? It makes no sense. Jesus was a person who always took joy in others and spent much time healing people so that they could once again be happy also.

There are many accounts of Jesus healing, why not read some of these:

Mathew Chapter 8 Verses 14 – 18 : Jesus heals a woman with a fever and a man with demons

John Chapter 9 Verses 9 – 12 : Jesus heals a blind man

Mark Chapter 2 Verses 1-12 : Jesus heals a paralysed man

Mark Chapter 3 Verses 3 – 6 : Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath

Luke Chapter 13 Verses 10 – 17: Jesus heals a crippled woman

There are many more examples, when you read through the Gospel and see the life that Jesus led you can see for yourself that he healed many people. How do you imagine they felt after being healed?

As a Bishop I am aware that there are good theological reasons why Jesus healed people and not least to show people the power of God but I also think that there was a strong feeling of joy from healing others that Jesus felt. On one occasion a leper came to Jesus and said, "Jesus if you want to you can make me clean" This is a most humble plea, the man

was kneeling and knew that Jesus did not have to heal him. But Jesus answered "I do want to" and then he did heal him straight away. You can read about this in Luke Chapter 5 Verses 12 -14.

Jesus healed people and made them whole, he took away whatever it was that made them outcasts in their society. They were free to mix with others again and enjoy life like everyone else. But Jesus was not just a doctor he had a much more important healing to perform.

You might notice that Jesus did things that often went against the ways that people thought were normal. In the readings from Luke Chapter 13 and Mark Chapter 3 Jesus heals on the Sabbath, which many people thought was very wrong according to the law of Moses. But Jesus thought that the healing was more important than the Sabbath rules. In Mark Chapter 2 Jesus forgives a man his sins to give him healing. At that time it was thought that only God could forgive sins, so Jesus was saying he was God. This was also highly unusual and considered to be very bad. Many people did not understand that Jesus was the Son of God.

Truly none of this healing work was done without risk. The important people of the Jewish faith at the time were very upset with Jesus and in the reading from Mathew 8 we can see a prediction from Isaiah that says "He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases." So this was a very personal thing that Jesus did. He was not doing what was normal, or just acceptable according to the law of Moses, but he was doing what was right and what needed to be done.

When we look around our new country of South Sudan it is obvious that there is a thing which needs to be done. Since just before Christmas we have been a fearful and divided nation. We did not celebrate Christmas as we should. There has been a lot of bloodshed and violence, much destruction and pain. As a country we are not well, we are not happy and we are not whole. It is obvious that we need healing. People all over the world know this.

Just like the poor suffering people in the Gospel stories it seems that a miracle will be needed to heal us. But I am a man of faith and I believe in miracles and I believe that God can bring South Sudan the healing which really it needs. People in other countries are willing to offer us help and already President Salva Kiir and and former Vice President Dr Riek Machar have began to negotiate peace. This is not an easy process, it requires forgiveness.

I want to give advice to both President Salva Kiir and and former Vice President now Rebel Leader Dr Riek Machar Teny to negotiate in good faith and reach a peace agreement before Easter. This would be a great gift to South Sudan during this Easter time. At Christmas the country could not celebrate but this would give people the opportunity to celebrate Easter and Christmas together and allow the thousands of IDPs who remain in UN and other camps to go back to their homes before the heavy rains come in June and July. The healing could begin.

I also want to give some advice to IGAD to ensure that any peace agreement is signed through the formation of a National Coalition Government which includes Salva Kiir, Rebel Leader Riek Machar and the political detainees. I believe it needs to be ensured that free, fair and peaceful elections are conducted in 2015, as already scheduled. I want to urge the international community to support the peace process, this is vitally important. Only last Saturday (April 5<sup>th</sup>) a National Platform for Peace and Reconciliation was launched that

includes three bodies, the National Committee on Healing Peace and Reconciliation (which is led by Archbishop Daniel Deng Bul), the South Sudan Peace Commission and the Specialised Parliamentary Committee on Peace and Reconciliation. This platform is tasked with peace and reconciliation in our country. It seems to me that this platform shows how important this process is and offers the best chance for South Sudan to get the peace and healing that is so obviously and badly needs.

If you read the Gospels to their end you will see, no matter which one you read, that Jesus did not just preach and heal people. He gave up his life like as a sacrifice to pay for the sins of everyone so that everyone could be healed by God. All our sins could be forgiven and we could start again as new, healed people. No longer like a leper, or like a person with a withered hand or like a person with a fever or a blind person. A new beginning, in happiness and with peace.

Jesus knew the risk he was taking and was even scared of his own fate. You can read in Luke Chapter 22 verse 42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." This is Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane in the evening not long before he is arrested and taken away. These words are a plea, just like the leper in Luke Chapter 5. But also Jesus trusts God even in his fear and is willing to do what God wants, willing to do what is right.

For me Luke's Gospel tells the story of the Crucifixion best, it starts in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus is arrested and tried before the Sanhedrin ( the religious rulers ) then tried before the Roman Governor Pilate. He is abused, beaten and flogged. Then Jesus is picked for crucifixion which is a humiliating and painful death. He did not have to do this but just as with the leper he wanted to.

So the Son of God who healed so many is nailed to a large wooden cross, wearing a crown of thorns and left to die, which in agony and torment he eventually did.

Something that should have destroyed Jesus made him stronger than ever, his trust and faith in God led to him to be resurrected from the dead and he himself being made whole. This marvellous and wonderful act affects us all, we are all redeemed by the love of God and there are no barriers between God and any one of us. By praying we can talk directly to the God that loves us, who takes joy in us. So Jesus in this way also healed the relationship that we have with God. This was truly a powerful deed. If you do not know this story then I urge you to read the Gospels it is in all of them.

Easter is a time to remember above all things that nothing is impossible for God, nothing is too much and no detail is too small. We can really celebrate this because it reaches out to all of us and should affect all of us. Please embrace this truth and see your brothers and sisters around you as people, not as other tribes or enemies but people as you are people, as we all are people, before God.

By forgiving as Jesus forgave, by doing things beyond what is normally done, by doing what is right and what is needed regardless of what people think. We can live as God wants, we can have peace and development and we can live as God truly intended, in joy. Then I think South Sudan could lead the world in celebrations and show everyone how things are done.

I pray for peace this Easter.

*Every blessing + Moses.*