

FROM THE BISHOP DESK: The Rt Rev. Dr Jwan Zhumbes

A NEW YEAR MESSAGE FOR 2017

Text Proverbs 30:25; 6:6-11

TOPIC:

LIFE IS NOT A CHANCE, IT TAKES YOU TO PREPARE FOR IT

Outlines

1. YOUR TOMORROW IS IN YOUR STORE UP OF TODAY-30:25

2. THE UNIMPORTANT MAY HAVE A LESSON FOR YOU-6:6-8

3. TO REAP POVERTY TOMORROW, SOW SLEEP TODAY-6:9-11

"Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer" (Proverbs 30:25)

"Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the arm to rest-and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an arm robber" (Proverbs 6:6-11)

PREAMBLE

The book of Proverbs is a package on wisdom. In these passages, the wise man having carefully studied the characteristic of creatures, discovered a complete variance between man created in the image and likeness of God and an ant which is totally differently shaped. He took time to watch the attitude and activity of humankind large in size against that of creatures of different nature-little size, creatures who enjoy no guidance, oversight, commander or ruler, against humankind that has an array of these to benefit from. The focus here is on ants. These the wise man has magnified and drawn the attention of humankind to as great teachers on preparation. They are alert and sensitive to the times and seasons, a model of diligence, ever willing to work hard, making the most of the times and the season. They know the summer and what it represents and the winter and what it portends. Taking advantage of the summer, they sock themselves up in hard-work. This teaches that these creatures are wise for reading the seasons, and that taking advantage of these seasons through hard and productive labour is evident of wise living.

1. Your Tomorrow is in Your Store up of Today-Prov 30:25; 6:7-8

Summer is a blessed season. It terminates the hunger of spring and ushers in the plenty of its season. It turns in a lot in goodies. It precedes the winter. The wise wise longs for it and takes advantage of it to prepare for the winter sure to follow and certain to succeed it. They then sensitively and consciously read and mark the seasons less they miss it. When they sense it they maximise its turn to glean as much as they can, not just for the enjoyment of the moment but mindful of the winter that is close at its heel. The summer of your life could be so deceitful and so tempting that you may be so absorbed in the

euphoria of it to the point of being fooled and having it squandered without you warned by the transient reality of it. From the study of the Ant, summer is principally a season of in-gathering. For the young people who are yet students, it is a time of gathering knowledge both in theory and practical form. It is a time of gathering skills. For the farmer, it is time to gather in the crops and store up plenty food. For the person in public service, it is the time to be a prudent manager of wages and income, a wise saver-saving as much as you can for the rainy days-the winter that hangs in the wings-the winter of retirement. For the businessman, it is investing wisely in ventures that will not pack up, but defile seasons of recession and economic winters that come nations like bandits.

Dear child of God, note that today may be your summer. How are you handling it? Refuse to be consumed in it, knowing pretty well that tomorrow undoubtedly, shall be your winter. Are you hopeful of a tomorrow? As you live on and are focusing on that tomorrow then, the only adequate preparation you must be engaged with is the wise use of today. Do you, today, like the Ant, know what season you are in? Could it be your summer? Are you taking advantage of it to prepare for your tomorrow? Should your winter set in will you survive it? Are you wisely using your today so that you are not beaten foolish by tomorrow. Remember that after the summer of Christmas will come the harsh demands of the winter of January. Guard then against wastefully spending this summer rather try to save more than you spend that you may save yourself the embarrassment of the guaranteed winter of January.

2. The Unimportant May Have Lessons For You-Prov 6:7-8

The lessons of life are God ordered. He makes them available to us through any means He chooses to use. In nature the seeker finds lessons, from our own experiences are found lessons, from humans are lessons and with creatures are lessons for the seeker. That is how richly diverse our God is in His providential stride to equip us for transformation, purposeful and robust living. Here, it has pleased him to teach us lessons through the Ant. For practical living, God drew the attention of King Solomon to the Ant.

As young village children, we could sit and be entertained, watching the Ant busy itself, severally going back and forth from some location with some tiny piece of grain in its mouth into its hole without us really figuring out what it was doing. This to us then, was seen as the way ants play. The writer of Proverbs however, has opened our eyes to seeing what the Ant does. He has revealed to us that it is not fun they are having, but that they are sensitively consciously and timely in what they do. That there is a season when they do this. And that every time they do, they are actively and meaningfully engaged with productive living.

Ants are small creatures. They may be too tiny for a reckoning with. Humankind may even squeeze them underfoot. Yet they are smart: they store up food all summer long. This, they do without a commander. They embark on in-gathering without an overseer. They response to taking advantage of the summer for abundant and surplus stockpiling without a ruler. Yet we, as big as we are even with commanders, overseers and rulers, remain non-challant, insensitive and irresponsible sluggards. With our big heads and big brains, big eyes, big ears, big legs and to matched toes, big hands with large fingers attached and huge body size, are lazy bigots and colossal summer squanderers, wasters of times and seasons. The lesson from the Ant is indicting, incriminating, and disgracefully humbling. With all the wisdom we claim to have, we are careless, senseless and insensitive. The summers of our lives come and go with us treating them with levity and sluggardly wasting them away. We irresponsibly squander them without a hope for recovery. How long have you been squandering your summer now? Have you gone to the great teacher? Have you taken time to watch the Ant in summer? Have you observed how diligent it is? Have

you taken the lesson from it? Would you use these lessons should God give you another summer in this life? Or will you once again squander it?

3. To Reap Poverty Tomorrow, Sow Sleep Today-Prov 6:9-11

We all are made of God and in His image and likeness, but given to different choices in life. Different people then, bring different attitudinal dispositions to different situations, seasons and times. Some due to adequate preparation, take charge every time, season and every situation, while others given to negligence, let the times dictate to them. While there are those who take the work season very seriously and diligently put their life to it, conversely however, are those who would rather go to sleep than work when they should be working. Sleep is a thief. It steals away the best part of you-the productive stage of your life. Sleep in the context of work takes different forms. It may be being on your farm and only procrastinating rather than cultivating or in your office, workshop, and business premises and not doing what you should be doing, thus wasting your productive hours. It could be literal sleep, laziness, aimless wandering or pleasure seeking sprees. For young people, sleep may be the refusal to maximise the opportunities of studies, education, training and skills acquisition when it is the season. For older people it may be unfaithful and lack of commitment to duty. Note that just any venture you embark on that eats up your work and productive time and life is sleep.

In life, the different attitudinal dispositions show very clearly in the fact that while some are working others are are playing. This is as true of the farmer as it is of the civil servant; true of the teacher as it is of the student; true of the doctor as it is of the nurse; true of the priest as it is of the parishioner.

To illustrate the two attitudinal dispositions of work and play at defining seasons, the story is told of the Ant and the Grasshopper. This story has it that while it was summer, the Ant was busy working and gathering food, while the Grasshopper busied itself with play. The winter then set in and the Ant retired to his home enjoying life. While summer lasted, the Ant paid the price in hard work and can now enjoy the reward in life's abundant provision and comfort. The Grasshopper who has played all along on the front end, now has to pay on the back end. As a result, he starved in the cold and discomfort of winter as he refused to understand that the only adequate preparation for tomorrow, is the wise use of today.

Dear reader, would you recall what the experience was when you were in school. At exams times, did you not walk into the hall with an unusual air of confidence when you were fully prepared? A life that today goes to sleep when it should be working and preparing for tomorrow, is a life that will be hungry, starving and crying tomorrow when others are satisfied, enjoying and rejoicing. A life that stays awake to its summer today, is a life that has conquered its winter of tomorrow. Your today is a gift from God and it is meant to be handled well, to have you leading your tomorrow and not your tomorrow leading you. Sadly however, many of us do not lead our lives, others and other things lead them for us. Friends who are destiny destroyers lead them; pleasure and flesh gratification choices lead them, drugs and alcohol detail them. And without thinking, we yield to their leadership. They take advantage of our submission and help us squander our summer and a summer we may never have again. God however made the individual life without spare. You have only one life. Once it is spent it is spent. Someone has said "Life is not a dress rehearsal." You can not try it on today and come to try it again tomorrow. You do not have a second chance to live in this life again, once it is gone, it is gone. One Benjamin Disraeli said, "The secret to success in life is to be ready when the time comes." May we then live everyday in the consciousness that nothing good in this life happens by chance, that nothing great is created suddenly. Let us live in the reality that neither success nor failure occur overnight. Each is a process and they all are a product of a deliberate build up. The gospel truth is that everyday, we live from the fauna of the

ever flowing generosity of a gift-giving God. And the reality of life is that everyday we live, is a preparation for the next. Do we not everyday think of what we will do the next day? If that is it, then what are you preparing for, and how are you preparing? Are you building and growing yourself for success or failure? Have you come to terms with the reality that in life, there is summer and there is winter? And that every summer is symbolic of God's grace given to us to prepare for the winter that is sure to follow. Do you know that no matter how warm and comfortable your summer may be, it will surely pass away and expire and must be succeeded by a winter? Therefore that we must face the harsh reality of a winter, is unquestionable. If a youth, what you are right now doing in and with your youthful summer, has an implication for your tomorrow. For the summer of youthfulness will pass away and the winter of old age will assuredly set in. How you store up in your summer, will tell in how you live through your winter. The winter of old age for all who will live long, is inevitable. Therefore you better watch it. Much more is the stark reality that the whole of life on Earth is a winter. To all who ever lived here then, the temporary winter of this earthly sojourn will soon be over and an endless summer with Christ Jesus and the saints triumphant, we will be ushered into. Will you belong there by reason of taking advantage of your spiritual summer here and now, or be failed by your insensitive and irresponsible attitude to every godly summer? Will your storage practice here and now land you into a worse eternal winter with Satan and his cohorts or lift you up into a summer eternal with Christ Jesus?

With a quality thought of, and plan for tomorrow in your heart:

ENJOY A NEW YEAR WITH JESUS CHRIST IN HIS EARTH TO AN ENDLESS HEAVENLY SUMMER WITH HIM.