**FORWARD2016: Nation-Building (Jeremiah 29:11,12)**

***Senior Pastor Dr Daniel Ho***

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. (Jeremiah 29:11,12)

**Introduction**

In the past, Malaysia has a strong foundation in its infrastructure system, civil and administrative services, good law and order and Federal Constitution. On the contrary, in this present day, Malaysia is experiencing challenges in great abuse of power and position, its law and order and educational standards are deteriorating, and in its rising costs of living.

As a result, the nation is facing a phenomenon called a confidence-deficit, as greatly exemplified in our nation’s currency downfall. Along the line, our society is getting more fragile and fractured over time.

What should we do? What should be our response towards nation-building?

# Commitment to the land (Jeremiah 29:4-7)

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” (Jeremiah 29:4-7)

Our first response in nation-building should be our commitment to this land, commitment for good to offer hope and a future for all, for God’s plan is to prosper us, and to give us a hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11). This is especially applicable to us Christians, as we are called to be the salt and the light of the world.

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. (Matthew 5:13)

**Salt**, is to prevent decay (of society) and **light** is to expose darkness. Wherever God has put us in, we should ask ourselves one question: “Has this place become a better place?” If our presence makes no difference in the environment, we must know that nothing is wrong with the people and the environment, but with us. It means that we are not ready to be salt of the earth and light of the world. It also indicates that we are good for nothing and to be trampled underfoot.

We shall not curse darkness but to introduce the light. Likewise, we should not blame the community but to work as a church, to accept and be responsible for the deteriorating community. As Christians, we must trust and believe that this nation CAN and WILL turn around. Believing that Malaysia will be a better place, for our hope is in Him. If this nation is going to transform, we should be involved. It is a process of collaborations between churches and believers.

# Collaboration with other bodies (2 Corinthians 8:1-4)

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people. (2 Corinthians 8:1-4)

Collaboration with other bodies is essential not only for Christians, but for the common good of all people. Such collaboration can involve other inter-religious bodies, such as Malaysian CARE, NECF, MCCBCHST (synonym for The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism), etc. The ultimate goals for this collaboration are:

* Forming a society where peace, harmony and mutual respect prevails across the board for everybody from all ethnic backgrounds;
* Formation of a community of love, kindness and care for one another; and
* Gearing towards a nation where people belong and feel secure.

# Compassion for the lost, the least and the last (Matthew 9:36-38; Matthew 25:34-40)

The Community Excel Service (CES), a ministry in DUMC has been reaching out to the lost and least fortunate. Throughout the years, many lives were touched and saved. Two testimonies were shared with regards to the following teachings from the Bible:

## Offering the Good News to the lost

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (Matthew 9:36-38)

*Testimony: A mother who is suffering from emotional and mental stress was wandering on the street for days with her 5-year-old son. A few passerby reached out to help and offer assistance, but the lady was reluctant to speak up. Subsequently, someone from DUMC was contacted and CES stepped in to help his lady and her young son. Finally, her friend came to pick them up to Bentong. Upon bidding farewell, the woman avoided the goodbye scene, was seen with tears in her eyes. The church knows that for whatever that had happened to her, and for whatever reason that she has to be at this state, God has helped her, God is there. People who took over from Bentong told the representatives from church, saying, “Why do you people from church have to do something like this? Why? I do not understand.” The only reason is because of the love of Jesus Christ.*

## Offering help and hope to the least and last

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ (Matthew 25:34-40)

*Testimony: A father to six beautiful children was diagnosed for having Tuberculosis. He lost his job in a restaurant and his savings were slowly gone. He, a Muslim, had approached many organizations and was turned away. Out of desperation, he came to Dream Centre and seeks for help. After an interview session and a site visitation, he was immediately offered relief. Over a journey of two years, his health improved and he finally found a job in Kuantan. When it was time to say goodbye, with tears in his eyes, he told Sophie from CES, “Thank you for not rejecting me, when my own people rejected me. Thank you for feeding my children when others choose to turn away.” God is good.*

That is what we are here for in Malaysia, to show love and compassion to others. That is what we seek to contribute. We shall never underestimate the results when we reach out to offer good news, help and hope for the lost, the least and the last.

Pastor Daniel shared the last example from the United States that reminds us of what we can contribute towards the life of people, even those who are seemingly the least and the last. The testimony comes from Dr Ravi Zacharias, recorded in one of his latest books when he visited the Angola prison in Louisiana.

*Some months ago, a friend of mine arranged for me to have the privilege of visiting and speaking to prisoners at the infamous Angola prison in Louisiana, once known as the most dangerous prison in America. There are about five thousand inmates in Angola, more than 85 percent of whom are serving life without parole and forty-five of whom are on death row. Not very many years ago when a prisoner was processed into Angola he was given a knife to protect himself. It was not uncommon to see bloodstains on the floors and walls. These are among the toughest and meanest criminals you could meet. Entering that prison for life without parole was to say good-bye to civility, with no possibility of freedom. Things have changed at Angola. I couldn’t help but wonder, as I met some of the prisoners and was able to talk with them one-on-one, what crimes they had committed and what had caused this apparently calm and mild-mannered person to do whatever he had done that landed him here. I spoke in the prison seminary, in which about ninety prisoners are enrolled at a time. Afterward, I was chatting with a handful of men and one of them told me a little bit about his past and how he ended up in Angola for life without parole. I asked him, “How do you handle the prospect that you will never get out of here, and that this is where your life will now be spent?” He looked to me to be a man no older than his mid-thirties. He answered, “You know, sir, if you knew the kind of person I was before I came here, and what I have now become because of the freedom Jesus Christ has brought to my soul, I can only say that if this is what it took to bring me to my senses, I am happy to spend the rest of my life here.” Then he paused and said, “Please pray for my parents. They think they are free, but they are in a prison of their own darkness without God.” That evening it was all I could do to fight back the tears as I watched this same man leading more than seven hundred prisoners in worship before I spoke. It was one of the most sobering experiences I have ever had. A hardcore criminal who has experienced redemption conveys a powerful story of how deep the human malady is, and that often one must be brought very low before acquiring the ability to understand what lies beneath evil.*

*(From “Why Suffering?: Finding Meaning and Comfort When Life Hurts” by Dr. Ravi Zacharias)*

The above story once again reminded us to never underestimate when we touch the lost, the least and the last.

**Conclusion**

As Christians, our response towards nation-building should be:

1) Commitment to the land;

2) Collaboration with other bodies; and

3) Compassion for the lost, the least and the last.

The result can be tremendous and ultimately it all contributes towards societal transformation and a better future for Malaysia.

Sermon summary contributed by Chrisandra Wong

Prayer points contributed by Michelle Wong





SERMON: Forward 2016:

WHY IS THE CHURCH THE **HOPE OF THE NATION?**

**Pray:**

* All the people of God will stand committed to our nation although there are challenges of abuse of power in high positions of authority.
* God will give boldness to His people to show kindness and compassion for the least and last in the nation, irrespective of race or religion.
* The Holy Spirit will enable us with all the wisdom to engage through collaboration with other bodies in society for the common good of all who are marginalised by the present system.
* We will be led by the Holy Spirit to engage with the lost by sharing the Gospel of love with them.
* People of God will seriously step up in prayer to seek God’s guidance to make them agents of transformation for the majority group.

***See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. (Isaiah 43:19)***

**MINISTRIES & EVENTS: NEXTGEN GATHERING**

 **DESTINATION 2016, 16 JANUARY 2016**

 **Pray:**

* God will convict the hearts of the NextGen to step up and avail themselves for God’s plan.
* God will speak to the church leadership to reach out to the NextGen CGs who have been wandering and direct their paths.
* God will instil the spirit of unity & raise up committed leaders to lead the Next Gen CGs.

***“….For I know the plans I have for you.” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you….” (Jeremiah 29: 11, 12)***

MALAYSIA MY NATION: THE RULERS OF EACH STATE

 ***The King, Council of Sultans & Governors of the states***

**Pray:**

* God will stir the hearts of the Council of the Head of States in standing for the justice of all Malaysians irrespective of socio - economic status.
* People of God will pray for His hand of righteousness to prevail and enable the Head of the States to speak up for a fair and just transformation of the nation.
* God’s Authority to be upon all Head of States to speak out about respect, compassion & peace for each other to be the focus of all Malaysians who belong to this nation.
* God’s Authority to be upon the King and the Council of the Head of States to speak up for socio-economic transformation for the nation.

***For unto us a Child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders, and He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.(Isaiah 9:6)***

* **A TRANSFORMED WORLD: Pacific Islands - Kiribati**

***Preservation of the Island from Global Warming***

**Pray:**

* For the people of the island who are 99% Christians to cry out to God for the preservation of their land from the rising sea level.
* For the government leaders to carry out reforms to help the people inflicted by AIDS and drug addiction.
* God will raise up leaders to lead and mobilise the church in the Pacific Islands.
* Breakthrough and revival among Christian congregations to rise up to engage in the mobilization efforts by the churches.

***I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. (1Corinthian 1:10)***