

We must all join hands and speak truth to power.

Danie Mouton

The loss of our beloved Archbishop Tutu, a devastating fire in parliament, followed by the first Zondo report. These harrowing events dominated news headlines at the beginning of 2022.

All rather depressing, as the burning of parliament and Zondo Commission findings symbolise the state of government in our beloved country.

We lost an internationally acclaimed prophetic voice, fearlessly speaking truth to power. At parliament, the illusion of constitutional oversight burned to ashes.

Zondo unmasking factions in the corridors of power as crime syndicates. Lawlessness abounds.

We all pay a dear price, from the premium taxpayer to the poorest of the poor.

Where the Church and citizenry allow this to continue, we become complicit.

The danger is that we become shell-shocked and punch-drunk by all the losses and reports of incompetence and criminality. We feel overwhelmed.

Apathy becomes a strategy just to survive emotionally.

Where will we find the necessary energy, focus, commitment, inspiration, resilience, and perseverance for the task at hand?

Let us remind ourselves about God and God's calling for us.

In this massive mess we firstly need to ask what is real?

Who is in control?

Who will end victorious?

Which is the right horse, figuratively, to mount?

Christian action builds on reality, on facts, on the solid rock bed of the final justice and truth.

God is truth. God demands justice and God's truth will prevail.

For this reason we cannot join those who steal and accumulate only for themselves.

Apathy and disengagement are not an option. We will have to join God in transforming our society.

Jesus calls us to be salt, light and yeast in society. We are God's response team to keep government accountable and steer the country away from anarchy.

Let us also remind ourselves of the way in which God uses humble human beings, like us.

Christian churches are currently celebrating what is called "Epiphany", a Greek word meaning "appearance".

It is the season in the church year which focuses on the appearance of God's grace and transformative power in Jesus Christ.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is one of the main characters in the biblical narrative of the appearance of God's grace in this world.

Much about Mary has been romanticised and sugar coated.

The real facts about Mary tell a different story.

In a recent article published on The Conversation by prof Dion Forster of Stellenbosch points out that Mary was a young girl – probably only 12 or 13 – when she is pregnant with Jesus.

Her predicament is even more complicated because she is not married, Forster points out.

Girls and women were disempowered and had very few rights of their own. They were completely dependent upon men for their social, financial and cultural well-being.

The story of Jesus' birth also took place in territory occupied by Rome.

There was not much a pregnant young woman in an occupied territory could do to change circumstances, it seems.

The Gospel of Luke, however, extensively quotes Mary's song of celebration after she visited another woman, the older Elizabeth.

Elizabeth reminded Mary of God's promises and God's preferred and promised future.

According to Luke's account, this 13-year-old unmarried girl, living in an occupied territory, became a participant in God's action to change the world.

She said yes to God and gave birth to the Saviour of the world.

How did Mary understand God's purposes in redeeming the world?

She said in her song of celebration that God was about to turn the ordinary systems of power and wealth upside down.

She prophesied God was about to lift up the lowly and bring down the powerful. He would feed the hungry and send away the rich.

These are not the words of some timid, silent, young girl. They are quite revolutionary.

Jesus was born to this young woman, in a stable.

His first visitors were shepherds, quite ordinary people.

This is a radical challenge to the rampant corruption, sense of entitlement and self-enrichment which dominates the news headings today.

In Mary's testimony to God's truth and justice, the hungry will be fed, not robbed.

The lowly will be raised up, not oppressed and abused.

The corrupt, the powerful, the liars, the fake news propagandists who ploy reality to hide their shenanigans and escape accountability will not prevail.

God justice and the activism of God's people will not allow that.

Mary's story inspires us in the face of adversity and the struggle for justice, accountability and equality.

The challenge to us is to become participants in God's story of justice and care.

God and God's actions will prevail. We, who join God as faithful disciples like Mary, will prevail. Our cause will prevail.

It will take concerted action. We will have to join hands across all divisions and speak truth to power.

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