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Her Voice, Her Future

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KEY VERSE

Mark 5:34 "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

READINGS

Numbers 27:1-7; Psalm 8; Acts 16:13-15; Mark 5:21-43

Sunday for the Girl Child

Today, as we observe Sunday for the Girl Child, we reflect on a theme that speaks powerfully to the heart of the Gospel: "Her Voice, Her Future." Every girl is created in the image of God, loved by God, gifted by God, and called to fulfil a purpose in His kingdom. A girl is not merely a daughter in a family; she is a person with dignity, potential, dreams, gifts, and a future that matters to God and to the Church. Yet, in many parts of the world, girls continue to face discrimination, unequal opportunities, violence, child marriage, and restrictions on education and leadership. Sometimes their voices are ignored, their abilities underestimated, and their dreams limited by social expectations. Even within Christian communities, we may speak about the love of God while failing to recognise the gifts and contributions of girls and women. The Church must be a place where every girl is welcomed, protected, encouraged, educated, and empowered to become all that God has called her to be. We must not merely speak on behalf of girls; we must also listen to them, recognise their gifts, and create opportunities for them to participate fully in the life and mission of the Church. Today's Scripture readings present us with remarkable examples of God's concern for human dignity, the courage of women who raise their voices, and the transforming power of faith. Through these passages, let us reflect on three important truths: every girl has God-given dignity, every girl deserves to be heard, and every girl should be empowered to fulfil her God-given future.

1. Every Girl Has God-Given Dignity and Worth

Psalm 8 begins with a wonderful declaration: "Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" The psalmist then reflects on God's creation and asks, "What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?" Although human beings appear small in comparison with the vastness of creation, God has given them dignity and entrusted them with responsibility. This truth is fundamental to our understanding of the girl child. A girl's value does not depend on her family's financial status, her educational achievements, her physical appearance, or her ability to meet society's expectations. Her worth comes from God, who created her and loves her. Every girl deserves respect because she is a precious part of God's creation. In societies where preference is sometimes given to boys, the Church must affirm the equal dignity of girls. A daughter is not less valuable than a son. Her birth should be celebrated, her education prioritised, her health protected, and her dreams encouraged. Parents must understand that investing in a girl's future is not a burden but a blessing for the family, the community, and the nation. The story in Numbers 27:1–7 gives us a powerful example. The daughters of Zelophehad - Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah - approached Moses and the leaders of Israel with a concern about their father's inheritance. Their father had died without a son, and under the existing arrangements, his daughters faced the

possibility of losing their family's inheritance.

These women did not remain silent. They came forward and clearly presented their case. They asked why their father's name should disappear from his family simply because he had no son. Their request challenged an established practice and raised an important question about justice and the rights of daughters. Moses brought their case before the Lord, and God's answer was clear: “What Zelophehad’s daughters are saying is right” (Numbers 27:7). God instructed that they should indeed receive their father's inheritance. This is a remarkable moment in the biblical narrative. The daughters were heard, their claim was recognised, and the law was clarified to protect their rights. Their story reminds us that God is concerned about justice and that the voices of women and girls matter. The Church today must learn from this example. We must challenge attitudes that treat girls as inferior or deny them opportunities simply because they are girls. We must protect them from abuse, provide safe environments, and ensure that they have access to education and spiritual formation. We must also encourage families to raise daughters with confidence, faith, and a sense of purpose. When the Church affirms the dignity of the girl child, it reflects the character of the God who created her. Every girl must grow up knowing that she is loved by God, respected by the Church, and valuable to society.

2. Every Girl Deserves to Be Heard and Taken Seriously

Our second point is that every girl deserves to have her voice heard. In Mark 5:21–43, we encounter two remarkable stories of suffering, faith, and restoration. One concerns a woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years; the other concerns Jairus's twelve-year-old daughter, who was seriously ill and eventually died. The woman had endured years of physical suffering and had spent all she had seeking a cure. In addition to her illness, she may have experienced social and religious exclusion because of her condition. Yet she did not surrender to despair. Having heard about Jesus, she came through the crowd and touched His garment, believing that she would be healed.

Jesus stopped and asked who had touched Him. The woman came forward in fear and trembling and told Him the whole truth. Jesus did not dismiss her or treat her as an inconvenience. He addressed her with tenderness: “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering” (Mark 5:34). Notice the word Jesus used: “Daughter.” In a moment when the woman could have remained anonymous in the crowd, Jesus recognised her personally. He acknowledged her faith, addressed her with dignity, and sent her away in peace. He restored not only her physical well-being but also her place in the community. The passage then returns to Jairus's daughter. When the people reported that the girl had died, Jesus encouraged Jairus not to be afraid but to believe. Jesus entered the house, took the girl by the hand, and said, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!” The girl arose and began to walk.

These two accounts reveal the compassion of Jesus towards women and girls. He saw those whom others might overlook. He responded to suffering that others could not resolve. He brought hope where there appeared to be none. The girl in this story was not able to speak for herself at that moment, but Jesus acted to restore her life. This reminds us that the Church must be especially attentive to girls who cannot safely express their needs - those experiencing abuse, neglect, discrimination, poverty, or exploitation. We must create communities where girls can speak without fear and where their concerns are taken seriously. Sometimes, the most important ministry we can offer is to listen. We must listen when girls speak about their dreams, their struggles, their fears, and their questions. We must listen when they report injustice. We must never silence them simply

because they are young or because their opinions challenge established expectations. The Church must also teach girls that their voices matter in prayer, worship, Bible study, fellowship, and mission. Girls can pray with faith, study Scripture with understanding, share the Gospel with courage, and offer valuable insights into the needs of their communities. Jesus reminds us that no girl is invisible to God. Therefore, no girl should be invisible in our churches. When we listen to girls with respect and compassion, we reflect the heart of Christ.

3. Every Girl Deserves an Opportunity to Shape Her Future

Our third point is that every girl deserves opportunities to develop her gifts and fulfil her God- given calling. In Acts 16:13–15, we meet Lydia, a woman from Thyatira who was a dealer in purple cloth. Paul and his companions encountered her at a place of prayer near the river in Philippi. As she listened to Paul's message, the Lord opened her heart to respond to the Gospel. She and her household were baptised, and she welcomed the missionaries into her home. Lydia's story reminds us that women were active participants in the growth of the early Church. She was a businesswoman, a listener to God's Word, a believer, and a woman of hospitality. Her home became a place of welcome for those engaged in Christian mission. Although this passage does not tell us about Lydia's childhood, it demonstrates what can happen when a woman is able to exercise her gifts and respond to God's calling. Her faith and generosity became a blessing to the emerging Christian community.

The girl child of today may become tomorrow's teacher, doctor, scientist, pastor, missionary, community leader, entrepreneur, or social worker. She may serve God through professional work, family life, education, evangelism, or care for vulnerable people. We must not decide her future for her on the basis of limiting stereotypes. Instead, we should help her discover and develop the gifts God has entrusted to her. The Church has a special responsibility in this regard. Sunday Schools, youth fellowships, Bible study groups, camps, mentoring programmes, and Christian educational institutions can nurture girls spiritually and intellectually. We must encourage them to read Scripture, ask questions, think critically, develop leadership skills, and participate meaningfully in ministry. Our congregations should also provide opportunities for girls and women to serve according to their gifts and the Church's convictions and practices. We should recognise their contributions in teaching, music, prayer, evangelism, social service, administration, and leadership. Their participation should not be merely symbolic; it should be meaningful and supported.

Parents, too, have a vital role. Let us encourage our daughters to study, dream, serve, and grow in faith. Let us teach our sons to respect girls as equals in dignity. Let us reject child marriage, gender-based violence, and any practice that deprives girls of safety, education, or the opportunity to develop their potential. Most importantly, let us teach every girl that her future is not defined by the limitations others place upon her. Her future is an opportunity to discover how God can use her life for His glory and the good of others. A Church that nurtures girls is investing in the future of its families, communities, and mission. When girls are educated, spiritually grounded, and empowered to serve, the whole Church becomes stronger.

Conclusion

Dearly beloved in Christ, the theme “Her Voice, Her Future” is not merely a slogan for one Sunday. It is a call to action for the entire Church. Numbers 27 teaches us that the voices of daughters deserve to be heard and that justice must not exclude them. Psalm 8 reminds us of the dignity God

has given to human beings. Acts 16 presents Lydia as a woman whose faith and generosity contributed to the growth of the early Church. Mark 5 reveals the compassion of Jesus, who restored a suffering woman and raised a young girl to life. These passages call us to recognise the dignity of every girl, listen to her voice, and provide opportunities for her future. Let every church become a safe place for girls. Let every Sunday School teacher encourage them. Let every parent celebrate and nurture them. Let every church leader recognise their gifts. Let every congregation stand against discrimination, violence, and injustice. Above all, let us follow the example of Jesus, who saw those others overlooked, listened to those who suffered, and restored hope to those in need. When we value her dignity, listen to her voice, and invest in her future, we honour the God who created her and strengthen the mission of His Church. May every girl in our churches grow up knowing that she is loved by God, valued by the Church, and called to make a difference in the world. May the Lord grant us the grace and courage to become a Church where every girl can flourish in faith, dignity, and service. Her voice matters. Her future matters. And she matters to God. Amen.