

ONE FATHER

Ever wondered why most of us recede to our ethnic cocoons when something as noble as marriage is proposed between different cultural entities? I have been a victim of such a fallacy. It was said that our tribe ate their first born-I was asked blatantly if it was true. Of course I knew it was not so bearing in mind that I was the holder of that position in my family- tall as I am, my bones would indeed make great chowder. Matters were made worse because the lady in question being of a different tribe believed her folks, throwing all her education out of the door and playing right into this false perception. What would have been never was in the end.

It did not stop there. I have been asked the same by friends I later met unabashed. This friends come from different region of the country. Which begs the question. Is it part of their upbringing? Or are they taught to believe the way they do to prevent forming meaningful associations with other communities?

All of us hold certain beliefs concerning other cultures. The stereo-typing was meant to make other cultures look inferior and of course the one propagating the lies-superior. It beats logic to contend with them- especially when we know the contrary is true. Most cultures have been socialized to believe the way they do. All we can do as representatives of Christ is educate those who have decided to breach the glass houses of tribe and laugh with understanding at those to whom reason alone cannot open their eyes and hearts to the beauty that is cultural differences.

Let's take a case study of our nation Kenya. Have you ever pondered why some regions produce great athletes: other regions engineers, other regions footballers and other great business people and so on? If we would look at it in this way we would rest in the knowledge that our diversity covers all facets that makes us a great nation. God himself did not create us to be the same. Even in families, siblings turn out to be different as oil and water. One becomes a musician: the other a doctor, the other a lawyer and yet another a writer. Why would God create us so different yet come from the same parents?

Our county has 42 tribes, yet each of this tribe is unique in ways they handle birth of a child, wedding ceremonies, death, conflict, food preferences et al. If the way they do their things is different from us, does it mean they are inferior or we are superior and vice versa. In God's eyes we are all the same with all our differences. God himself did not create us to be the same. Even identical twins have different preferences most times.

In the church, we all have different gifting necessitated by the Holy Spirit. And like Paul says some become teachers: others prophets, others speak in tongues, others interpreters, others show mercy, others preachers, others apostles and yet Paul continues to write that none is least among these because they all form part of one body- the body of Christ.

Isn't it amazing when we send athletic teams or have rugby playing on the international stage or Kenyan players in the premier league, that we shade our ethnic biases and cheer them on? But when it comes to elections, and marriage we cluster into our tribes for the purposes of scuttling the one thing that unites us as nation. It begs the question, if Kenya had one tribe would we still find something different about us? I bet the answer is yes. If siblings can be different, even the larger society can be irrespective of tribe.

In acts 6:1 the Grecian Jews complained against Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. This speaks volumes to us as Christians. It didn't matter that they were Jews, the fact that their tongue was different brought forward Hebraic Jews preference for 'their' own- but weren't they all Jews and from the same ancestry?

The call

As we go through the safari embrace 1 –*understanding and embracing cultural diversity*, let us know that our diversity doesn't have to separate us. Our differences in culture is an opportunity to learn something new about other communities. God himself sent Christ to die for all of us both Jews and Gentiles- so we may be partakers of eternal life. The notion that Jews had about the gentiles as unclean was expelled in Acts 11:5-9-peter was praying and in a trance and a voice told him to get up and kill animals that were considered unclean and eat. He protested saying they were impure and a voice spoke from heaven saying "do not call anything impure that God has made clean." This means there's no 'Jewish heaven' and 'Gentile heaven'.

In reference to this passage we are all children of the same father and no one has more right than the other to God's love. He loves us the same as long as we obey him and forsake our sinful ways-he hates sin, but he loves all of us. Our thoughts of how worthy or superior we are to others can only bring us into problems with him. Jesus taught that we should be careful not to exalt ourselves or think ourselves too highly because we will be humbled.

The action

If then presence or absence of other tribes and cultures doesn't shield us from seeing others as low-grade, wouldn't it make heaven-bound sense to live in harmony with one another and knowing that it makes less of a difference in preferring 'your own.' If we live as Christians in truth and in spirit then everyone around us will duplicate our actions and become our brothers and sisters.

Cane killed Abel; Jacob swindled Esau from his birthright and blessing, Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery because of jealousy. What is outside there can hurt us as much as what is inside. There will always be 'our own' in any setting. If not tribal biases there will be economic; academic, racial, caste and so on. By hating others and spreading lies about their cultures, you do not scuttle God's plan for them, you only break yourself against his law-because his law still stands. Though we love our cultural heritage which isn't a bad thing, we should love our neighbors as we love ourselves and embrace our unity in diversity.