

This Sermon was preached @Good Shepherd Baptist Church  
By Rev. Stephen Guantai  
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Hello brothers & Sisters in Christ,

Number 27: 1-11

**Message: "What Does God say About Women's Rights"**

**Introduction: Last Sunday was** International Women's Day! And the theme this year is "I Am Generation Equality"

Today, I want to dedicate this sermon to all women around the world as they celebrate their 25th anniversary and recognize them as they struggle to forge a gender equal world, increase visibility and call for equality.

**Let us pray:** Gracious and Loving God, as we join our sisters in their 25th celebration of International Women's Day, help us as a church to diligently take action where necessary to help eliminate discrimination against women. As we join them in their struggle to gain full and equal participation in both domestic and global development, give your church courage and determination to faithfully stand with them. And may the word of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. **Amen.**

After wandering in the wilderness for about 39 years, the children of Israel were camping in the plains of Moab, by the Jordan and across Jericho (Num 26 :1-4).

Before entering the promised land, God instructed Moses and Eleazar, son of Aaron, to take a census of all men ages 20 and above; they were to be counted according to their families and by their tribes.

This is the second census. The first one was taken when they were leaving Mt. Sinai. Numbers 26:65 reminds us that all the people who were counted in the first census had died except Moses, Caleb and Joshua.

Note that even though the entire adult population had died, God's laws and spiritual character remained unchanged. So, the new generation must continue obeying these laws even in the promised land.

In order to make sure, Moses called the cartographers to create the map of the land the people were about to inherit and divide the land based on the names of their ancestral tribes.

At this time the Hebrew laws gave only the sons the right to inherit. And as you may have noticed, in the census, only men of 20 years of age and above were counted. The number of women and children under 20 years of age is unknown.

So, as the cartographers were creating the map of the land, five sisters-- the daughters of Zelophehad, who belonged to the tribe of Manasseh, stood up. Everyone turned their eyes to them, wondering what these young women were up to. No doubt, men who were ready to hear of their inheritance were now asking each other, "How dare these young girls disturb a moment like this?!"

But these five sisters did not listen to the crowd's murmurings. They gathered courage and walked straight to the entrance of the tent of the meeting to demand their rights. For they knew very well that since their father was died and had no sons, they were not going to inherit anything, and their father's name will be forgotten.

So, standing before Moses, Eleazar, the priest, and the community leader, they said to Moses, *"Our father died in the desert. He was not among Korah's followers, who banded against the Lord, but he died for his own sin and left no sons. Why should our father's name disappear from the clan because he had no son? Give us property among our father's relatives"* (v 3-4).

Wow! There was total silence. If it was among my tribe, men would be heard saying, "Aba-murata-o- nthaka! This is unheard-of!"

I can also see Moses and others taken aback by this kind of request. However, as a servant of God who consulted with God before doing anything, Moses took the daughters' case before the Lord, "and the Lord said to him, what Zelophehad's daughters are saying is right. You must certainly give them property as an inheritance among their father's relatives and turn their father's inheritance over to them" (6-8).

The Lord continued to say, *"Say to the Israelites, if a man dies and leaves no sons turn his inheritance over to his daughter. If he has no daughter, give his inheritance to his brothers."*

Brothers and sisters in Christ, "the God we worship does not show favoritism" (Rom 2:11). We are all created in God's own image! Genesis 1:27 reminds us that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

So, as I share this message with you today, I would like the whole world to know that I stand for women's rights. It pains me to hear that women, especially in patriarchal societies, have no say or right to inheritance from their parents.

Let me unequivocally say that parents who deny their daughters the right to inheritance do not deserve to inherit the kingdom of God either. I have personally and repeatedly told my dad that my sisters have the right to part of the family property.

I am not saying this to please or to hurt anyone, for I believe each member of this congregation does and will continue loving and treating our spouses and our daughters as equal co-heirs of not only God's kingdom, but also heirs to earthly possessions. So, this message may not be an issue to you, but let us not forget our sisters, women, and children who in most countries are treated like men's property.

I do believe that God is looking for men and women of good faith all over the world to take the responsibility of calling for justice and speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. And on that note, I would like to encourage both younger and older women to stand and continue making their voices heard! For God is saying "You have a right!" You have the right to be treated with respect and dignity.

You have a right to make decisions for your family when your spouse is not able to do so. Don't be afraid, you may be the one to save your family from disaster.

If you read through the pages of the Bible, you will notice that several women have been commended for their courage to do the right thing. In Exodus 1, we read of two midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, who saved Israelite babies when the king of Egypt wanted them to die. In 1 Samuel 25: 10-12,22, we read of Abigail, a woman who saved her family when her husband acted foolishly and put the whole family at risk. In John 4:4-26, we read of a Samaritan woman who came out as the first female evangelist during the time of Jesus. And in Matthew 9: 20-22, we read of the woman who bled for twelve years, pushed through the crowd, and touched the hem of Jesus' cloak in order to receive her healing.

In today's scripture (Num 27:3), we saw the five sisters demanding not only their inheritance in order to preserve the family name, but also defending their father's honor and dignity by clearing his name. They stated clearly that their father was not among the followers of Korah, who died for complaining against God, Moses, and his leadership.

Don't forget Rosa Park who defied the racist notion that black people should sit at the back of the bus, thus challenging the system that treated people of color as if they are created by a lesser God.

I believe we must all wrestle with this question, especially considering what I have shared with you this morning. Think about how we can make a difference in the lives of the homeless, immigrants, and stand for equal rights for all of God's people.

"May the Lord Bless you and keep you; May the Lord smile on you and bless you and be gracious to you" (Num 6:24-26). May the Lord show you favor and give you His peace as we struggle to not only say, but also practice things that will eliminate discrimination. This discrimination being not only against women, but all of God's people. Help us to confront injustice and change the world in the way God has intended for our lives since creation. **Amen.**

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