

**Memorial Service on the occasion of the repatriation of the Human
Skulls of Namibian origin from the Period of German Colonial Rule in
Namibia**

**Sermon delivered by Bishop Dr. Z. Kameeta in the St. Matthew Church
in Berlin on 24 September 2011**

Text Joshua 5:13-15

May the peace of the Lord be with all of you.

I do not know whether we comprehend the enormity of this solemn and divine occasion and the privilege and honour accorded our generation. In His mercy and wisdom, God has chosen this generation to come here to Germany and to take back the remains of our ancestors who were brutally killed by the German Colonial forces and in an undignified manner removed from Namibia to Germany.

After crossing the Jordan River and camping at Gilgal, east of Jericho, the first city they encountered, Joshua went near Jericho, and saw a man standing in front of him and holding a sword. As an experienced soldier, Joshua should have known better that this was a very dangerous moment. Instead of retreating, Joshua walked up to the soldier and asked him: "Are you one of our soldiers or an enemy?" Despite the danger Joshua was facing, he was attracted to this man by something greater than himself. The man replied: "Neither I am here as the commander of the Lord's army." He is incomparably above "we" and "them". He is the God who feel the pain, hear the cries and see the tears of his people.

Today, He is removing the filthy cloth of shame and condemnation which our ancestors, together with us today and the coming generations, were forced to wear, and give us new and clean clothes of righteousness and dignity (Zechariah 3:1-5)

When Joshua heard who the man was, he threw himself on the ground in worship. This is why we are here this afternoon; to humble ourselves before God and worship Him with thanksgiving and praise. I feel personally that I am part of this historic and divine occasion. This is for me the greatest privilege and gift of my life. Together with the psalm writer I praise the Lord with these words:

Praise the Lord my soul,
all my being,
praise His holy name!
Praise the Lord my soul,
and do not forget how kind He is.
(Psalm 103.1 and 2)

At the feet of the Lord, Joshua re-dedicated himself for the service and asked: "I am your servant Sir, what do you want me to do?" This is a life-changing event. It cannot be business in our lives as usual after these day's experiences. Therefore, following the example of Joshua, we must personally ask this question: "Lord, what do you want me to do?"

What happened at the beginning of the Exodus when God called Moses is happening again here at the end of the Exodus:

"Take your sandals off; you are standing on holy ground." (Joshua 5 V.15)

Dear sisters and brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ, we must take off our sandals of tribal, clan and political divisions and animosity, for the sake of honour and memory of our ancestors and a better today and tomorrow for ourselves and our children. We must regard this as utmost necessary that we must speak with one voice, act together in unity, and join hands in harmony for the sake of peace and progress in our beloved country. The greatest appreciation we can give for being part of this once in a lifetime opportunity IS OUR UNITY.

For those especially, tasked with taking decisions in this country, the message of today is the same: Take off your sandals of indifference and denial, for you are standing on holy ground! For a better, honest, trustful and respectful relationship between Namibia and Germany, take moral and ethical responsibility for what happened more than 100 years ago and speak unambiguously about that. This will be liberating and healing also for the people here in Germany. This will also create a very much healthy environment of mutual trust, respect and cooperation today and for our children tomorrow in OUR ONE WORLD.

Joshua obeyed the command and did as he was told. That is why he is remembered thousands of years after his death. Those who refuse to do good, disappear from the scene within decades and if they are mentioned, it is done in connection and as an example of what is bad. In the last chapter of the Book Joshua, we are told that as long as Joshua lived, the people served the Lord and after his death they continued to do so, because they remembered the great deeds of Lord which He performed through his servant Joshua.

I thank all the people of goodwill gathered here in this remarkable building - which is closely associated with one of the outstanding prophet of our times and martyr of the confessing Church of Jesus Christ, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, – and there outside in Germany and in the whole world who are following with keen interest what is taking place here. As the angels sung on the fields of Bethlehem more than 2 thousand years ago, the Lord is pleased with you.

Therefore, with tears in our eyes, we repeat this song:

Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom He is pleased.

AMEN

Prayer:

Happy is the nation which does not forget Him in its suffering.
Happy are the people for whom he is their God in the hour of darkness.

Their strength and victory
Are gifts out of His hands,
For without God, our power will not liberate
and our victory will be vain.

We put our hope in the Lord;
He is our protector and our help.
We sing a song of victory to Him;
For with Him in front of us,
Victory will be ours.

May your love fill our hearts,
As we walk through the desert of hate and violence.
Under your guidance we shall overcome.