

DESCENDING TO ASCEND

Ps. Waweru Njenga - 17 April 2016

“True North” Series

Sermon Notes



Theme: The best preparation for success tomorrow is faithfulness today; refinement precedes assignment

Purpose: To show the place of service as a vital tool for shaping and refining your purpose...

MENTION: Worship Night,

- If you're headed in the wrong direction, driving faster won't get you there. You need to stop for direction!
- If you want to go fast, walk alone. If you want to go far, walk together

QOD: What's the lowliest job you can ever think of today?

A while back, I attended a church conference hosted by one of Nairobi's growing churches. It was a great conference and I learnt a lot from the sessions that was very useful and inspiring for me at the time. One of my most memorable lessons however, did not come from listening to the speakers but from going to the bathroom! When I got there, there was a guy whose job it was to make sure the toilets were clean. I was a bit taken aback because he wasn't the type of person you'd normally expect to find cleaning toilets. He was a middle aged gentleman with graying hair, who looked quite distinguished. It wasn't even his clothes; there was a certain way he carried himself that caught my attention. I was intrigued and wanted to find out who he was. When I did, I was amazed. It turned out he was an influential business leader. But when he heard that his church was going to host the conference and they needed people to serve, he took some leave from work and signed up to serve where the need was greatest, which was keeping the toilets clean for the conference attendees!

Now I don't know about you but I was blown away! I'm not saying am a bad guy... If I owned the company, I would also have signed up but then I would have paid some of my workers to keep those toilets clean! They're happy I paid them, I'm happy I contributed to a good cause; it's a win-win! You see the way the world works is when you're young (and broke), you serve and do menial jobs. But that's just a gateway to greater things! As you become more educated, you climb up the ladder. As you climb up the ladder, you gain esteem and prominence. You move from being 'one of the crowd' to being a 'somebody'. You have your own office, with your name on the door. People notice when you walk into a room and they treat you with deference! People apologize for interrupting you because they know your time is valuable. It's not to be wasted on trivial things. You do the important work, and leave the menial work for people below.

And yet God's word (our roadmap) tells us that the journey to our True North is along a completely different route. Turn with me to **Ex.2:11-15, 23-25**. Today we want to learn from Moses, arguably one of the greatest leaders in the bible. Talk about a person with a huge destiny! Moses was Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King rolled into one. God used him to liberate a whole nation of slaves and to relocate them across hostile territory to a new homeland. If you were God, how would you prepare a person for such a huge assignment? Let's read and find out.

READ:

11 One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. 12 Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. 13 The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?" 14 The man said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and thought, "What I did must have become known." 15 When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh

and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well. 23 During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. 24 God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. 25 So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

We know very little about how Moses grew up. Because he was the adopted grandson of a king however, we can guess that he went to the finest schools, wore the best clothes and generally grew up in luxury. But despite all that, there was something different about him. Maybe it was because he was born at a time of calamity and mourning. As a toddler, he had no age-mates – all of them were killed by the Egyptians. I suspect his birth-mother must have been very protective about him. Maybe it was the fact that he was a different race from all his class-mates. Children can be very cruel to others who look different. I wouldn't be surprised if that's why later in life, we find out he had a stammer. Whatever it was, it's clear that despite being brought up by the wealthy Egyptians, he identified more with the oppressed Israelites. He saw them as his own people and was concerned about their suffering. And deep down in his heart he knew his purpose; his True North. He knew it had something to do with helping these oppressed people.

Let me pause here and say this: **I believe that our background can give us some pointers that help us find our True North.** Some of us grew up in rich homes, some had a middle class upbringing and some grew up in poverty. Some of us had loving parents, some of us had fighting parents and some of us had only one or no parent. Some of us were academically gifted; some of us were good with people, while some of us believed there was little that was attractive about us. Some of us have suffered because of bad choices we've made while others because of bad choices others made. Whatever your background however, whether good or bad, nothing is wasted with God. God will use your situations to lay the sovereign foundations for His purpose. Some here have real messy lives. God will turn your mess into a message; he will turn your test into a testimony. God can turn whatever difficulty we've faced into benefit for us... **Rom.8:28** says '*and we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose*'

At Mavuno, we believe that God the reason God brought each and every single one of us is here because He has a divine purpose for you. You may have come because of different things. Some of you came because a friend invited you, others because you got a flyer or read the sign, others because you saw our worship team on TV. Some came because they heard there was 'talent' here. Yesterday I spoke to a guy who came because he heard about us on Facebook! You may have come for any number of reasons but your being here is part of God's ordained plan to help you discover your True North.

Back to our story: A now grown up Moses takes a walk to where the Israelites were hard at work. We don't know if this was his first visit or not. He saw an Egyptian hit one of his people. We don't know if he had seen this happen before or not. On this particular day however, he decided it was time for action. The fact that he looked around to make sure no one was looking suggests that this was no blind fit of rage; he weighed his chances and decided to engage in his purpose. He attacked the Egyptian, perhaps using fighting techniques he had learnt at the palace school. The man was no match for him and he soon killed him and buried him in the sand.

He was about to learn the lesson however that God's timetable is different from ours. You see, once we begin to discern our purpose, once we begin to understand our True North, it's easy to get so dissatisfied with life as it is that we want to jump in right away and do something about it. To want to quit your job and to start tomorrow... But the danger is that we can end up doing the right thing at the wrong time. We can sabotage our purpose because we acted prematurely. We need to ask God not just to show us 'the what' of

our lives but also 'the when'. When it comes to purpose, it's not just important that we do the right thing but that we do it in the right season. And this leads me to my main point. **Refinement precedes assignment.**

At the time of creation, God created each one of us in His image to rule, to reign and have dominion. That's our overall purpose. But within that overall purpose, each of us has a unique role. And for each of us, He works on a different schedule. For Moses, it would take another 40 years before he was ready. For Nehemiah, it took 4 months from his recognizing the vision to launching out. For Jesus, it took 40 days in the wilderness. God doesn't worry about how many days or months or years it takes to get you ready for your purpose. He takes His time to prepare you well. And when your season arrives, He launches you out. Sometimes we can be so worried about finding and accomplishing that final assignment that we miss out on the lessons that God wants us to learn along the way. Because **refinement precedes assignment.**

For Moses, acting prematurely had disastrous consequences. News of what he had done reached the king, who immediately sent men to kill him. Moses had to flee, leaving behind all he had known. He escaped to the wilderness of Midian. And for the next 40 years, the man who had grown up being waited on now had to serve his father-in-law. Trained as a prince, he had to do the work of a shepherd, which the bible tells us was detestable to the Egyptians. Having grown up in prominence and visibility, he now had to serve in obscurity where no one could see him.

What do you do to prepare yourself for God's assignment? How do you position yourself so that you're ready to accomplish God's purpose? You serve. Many people miss God's timing. Just because you get a call from God doesn't mean you jump into it immediately. You need to go through the season of refining, which is the season of serving. As Moses served his father-in-law by looking after his sheep in the desert, God was preparing him to look after a nation in the wilderness. As David served his father by killing lions and bears that wanted to destroy the sheep, God was preparing him to kill the giants who wanted to destroy God's people. As Joseph administrated Potiphar's household and later administrated his prison with excellence, God was preparing him to administrate the most powerful nation on earth. What I'm saying is that serving faithfully today prepares you for your destiny tomorrow. **Refinement precedes assignment.**

40 years is a long time! [If you had 40 years b4 you live out your purpose, how would you feel?] I wonder if Moses felt forgotten and abandoned by God. I wonder if he felt as if God didn't care. I wonder if he even forgot about his dream. But v.23 tells us that God had not forgotten. [God has not forgotten you! He has not abandoned you! He is determined to work out His purpose for your life] God was still concerned to deliver the Israelites. But first, he needed to deliver their deliverer! Because **refinement precedes assignment.**

Last week, I said that one of the ways to discover and accomplish your purpose is to join a Life Group so you can walk with others who are going in the same direction. Many of you signed up to join a Life Group [clap! Joined a community of purpose]. If you didn't get a chance to, please sign up after service. Once you join a Life Group we'll begin to prepare you for the next step in your journey, which is to serve. Serving in church through your spiritual gifts and abilities is an essential way that God uses to refine you for your assignment.

40 years must have felt like a long time to Moses. And yet God needed to develop his character. You see, God is not looking for celebrities but for servants. From a haughty young prince, he became a humble servant. The bible tells us that despite being one of the greatest leaders of all time, he was also the humblest man who ever lived. God also used that time to develop his competence. Moses definitely had leadership skills but they needed to be honed in the tough environment of the wilderness, which is where they would be put to use.

Too many Christians jump straight into impacting society without first learning the lessons of servant leadership. Like the prodigal son, they demand their inheritance before they are mature enough to handle it. As a result, when power comes, they become corrupted. I don't believe that politics is too dirty to be redeemed. I just think we don't prepare our people well. The job of the church is to prepare you for your kingdom impact.

Because it's not about how gifted you are, but about developing a servant heart so you can carry the responsibility God brings your way. Because **refinement precedes assignment**.

I believe even now as I continue to serve, He is refining me here at Mavuno to be the kind of leader that will impact our continent. God never wastes time nor the seasons in his peoples lives.

Here's what we've learnt about service. You don't just serve at Mavuno because Mavuno needs you; you serve at Mavuno because here is where God refines you to be the servant leader He wants you to be. Serving as an usher/parking attendant/setup crew member/Greenhouse teacher is not your final purpose, but you are laying the groundwork for its eventual fulfillment. You are learning how to submit to spiritual leadership, how to give without getting back, how to serve the kingdom faithfully, how to have a love and patience for difficult people. How many know that these are things that the corporate world will never teach you? And yet these lessons are vital if you are going to be a fearless influencer of society.

When you serve in church, you move from consumer to contributor, from participant to partner, from tourist to team member. [Most churches get members (people who've fulfilled certain requirements) to vote on major decisions. At Mavuno, we're working our structure so that those who serve are those who shape the future]. To stay on the sidelines is to sabotage your growth. Because **refinement precedes assignment**.

Moses was the humblest man who ever lived. The greater your destiny, the more God needs to refine you.

- Mention The Refresh Challenge
- Conclude by celebrating those who serve at Mavuno....
- End with Fearless Creed

FEARLESS CREED

I am a Fearless Influencer...

My past is forgiven, my future is secure

My present is not for me, but for the one who set me free

The die has been cast, I have stepped over the line

No more prayer-less living, cheap giving & selfish dreaming

I am part of the change; I will not hesitate to serve

I will gladly pay the cost, contagiously spreading His love,

Playing my role on the dream team, the Mavuno family

Until all Africa is changed, every sector of society

I align myself to God's purpose, I will be who He calls me to be

I agree to be shaped & molded, through His word and through His family

Until my will and His will fully agree

And I become fully the influencer that I was created to be

I am a Fearless Influencer...

PRAY

1. Bless those who are serving selflessly with love and zeal; help them see significance & your affirmation.
2. Retired Christians
3. Those who are not yet serving here