

Miktav Mem (Letter 13)

Dear Reader,

We seldom realize where our focus in life is. Do we live in the past, the present or the future? Most of us are probably living in the future due to our deadlines, ambitions and dreams and hopes. But what about the present? It is just a steppingstone that must be moved over to reach our goal or do we need to value the moment in time? Is the present just fuel to reach our future destination? We all know that fuel can go so much further if we slow down, so maybe we should.

This newsletter tries to focus on our predicament of living in the future and the related securing the future by ourselves. Take a while to savor these few moments as you read and maybe save some more to think about your reality.

Blessed is the one who takes the time to read this newsletter.

1. Walking in the light

Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.

A man's mind plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps. (Prov. 16:3, 9)

Living in the future

Mother's Day 2010 came with a slight warning to me (my wife) in the form of an SMS on my phone: *Many people never learn to enjoy today, because they are living in the future.* This can be so true as we are forever planning for tomorrow, whilst today slip by without us realizing that something precious was depleted. The heart is always longing for the future- the time when I will see my loved one again; when I will be able to see and hug my grandchildren; when I will go on that dream vacation; when I have made my markfortune

and of course in the South African setting, when I can take my seat at the World Cup game with my favorite team in attendance.

There is nothing wrong with these, but the problem comes when the days are void of creativity and interaction and so much is neglected, shelved, avoided in the present at the expense of striving for tomorrow. I am afraid that as we do not control the future, that we can be so disappointed by the plans and direction of God for our lives. We can even lose Him in the process when we cannot accept His doings in our lives and that of the loved ones we cherish.

When our plans are paramount in our minds, we do not leave room for Him in His sovereign way to act in our best interest and even contrary to our expectations.

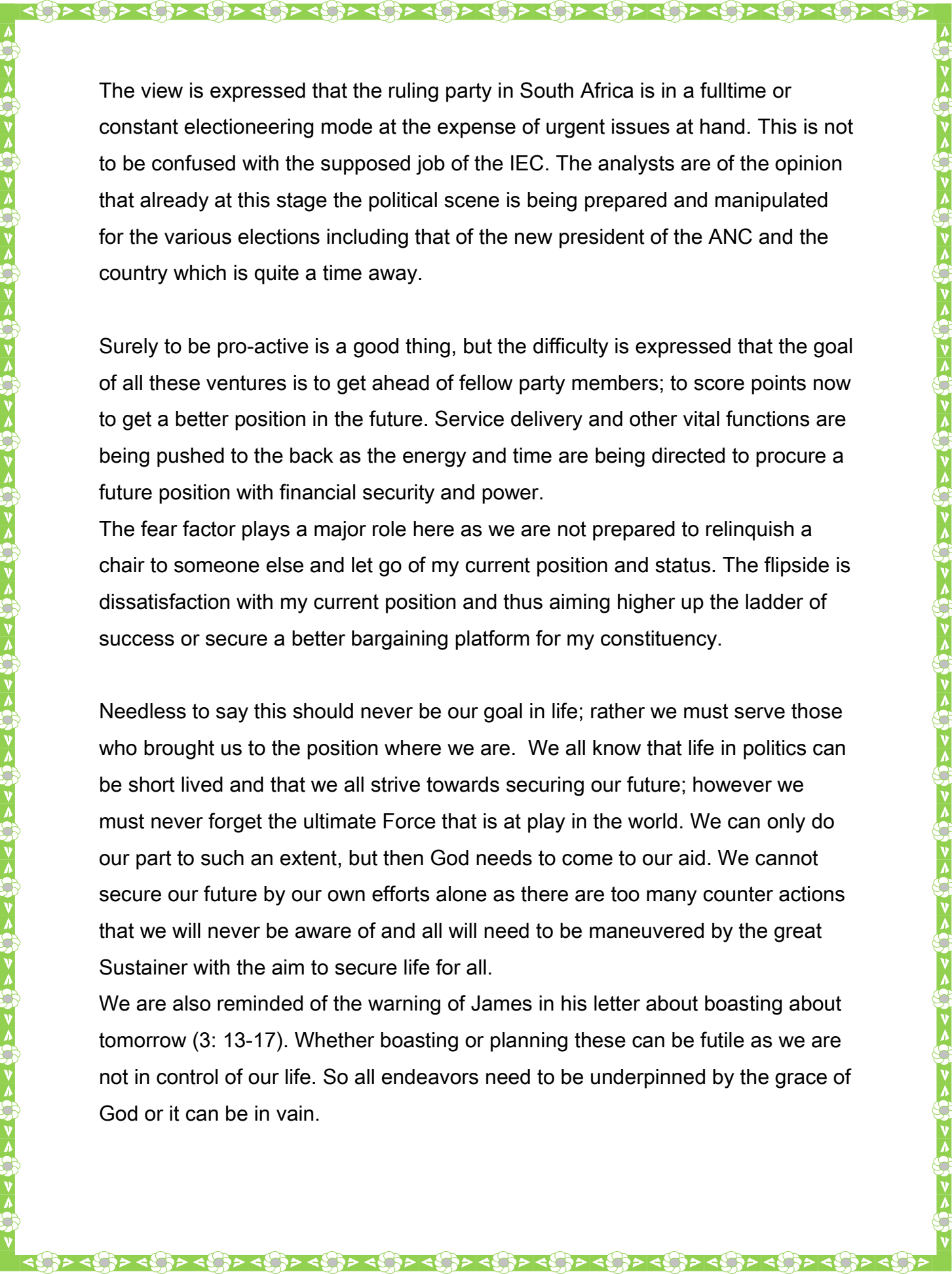
Let us remember again who is in charge. Let us make the most of each day and be faithful in our daily routines. May we reach out to those who cross our paths and always try to be faithful witnesses of our Saviour.

Tomorrow might never come, so let us do good to those within our reach, today, whilst we still have the opportunity. Then at least we can have memories to cherish when our dreams are changed.

2. What shall we say about all these?

{Reflections on the current national and international news events will be mirrored by/in the Word of God to console, direct and challenge (where needed).}

In my quest to keep up with the news and developments in South Africa and abroad in the last few weeks, I became aware of a new phrase and deduction from our political analysts.



The view is expressed that the ruling party in South Africa is in a fulltime or constant electioneering mode at the expense of urgent issues at hand. This is not to be confused with the supposed job of the IEC. The analysts are of the opinion that already at this stage the political scene is being prepared and manipulated for the various elections including that of the new president of the ANC and the country which is quite a time away.

Surely to be pro-active is a good thing, but the difficulty is expressed that the goal of all these ventures is to get ahead of fellow party members; to score points now to get a better position in the future. Service delivery and other vital functions are being pushed to the back as the energy and time are being directed to procure a future position with financial security and power.

The fear factor plays a major role here as we are not prepared to relinquish a chair to someone else and let go of my current position and status. The flipside is dissatisfaction with my current position and thus aiming higher up the ladder of success or secure a better bargaining platform for my constituency.

Needless to say this should never be our goal in life; rather we must serve those who brought us to the position where we are. We all know that life in politics can be short lived and that we all strive towards securing our future; however we must never forget the ultimate Force that is at play in the world. We can only do our part to such an extent, but then God needs to come to our aid. We cannot secure our future by our own efforts alone as there are too many counter actions that we will never be aware of and all will need to be maneuvered by the great Sustainer with the aim to secure life for all.

We are also reminded of the warning of James in his letter about boasting about tomorrow (3: 13-17). Whether boasting or planning these can be futile as we are not in control of our life. So all endeavors need to be underpinned by the grace of God or it can be in vain.

May we all learn from this and entrust our lives to God who promised to take care of us. We are also reminded to cast our bread on the water, that is, to live for others, to support others and after some days we will harvest a good reward. Compassion and love ultimately follow the one who shares and cares for the poor, the harvest of the selfish on the contrary is short lived and the person is shunned and scorned. All the material wealth can then not satisfy the longing for relationships.

3. Joy with the sorrow.

We are reminded at this time of the link between Ascension and Pentecost. Jesus reminds His disciples it is better for them that He is going away. They could not comprehend this as they wanted Him physically with them and nothing less. They selfishly wanted to keep Him back and for themselves, thinking that in that they will secure their joy and eradicate sorrow. They failed to realize that His plans for them involved a far better presence, security, power and guidance in the gift of the Holy Spirit if they set Him free. Let us likewise open our hands to be filled with new content, instead of clutching, holding on for dear life to something or someone that will ultimately dies in our grip.

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To those whose heart mourn today

How precious also are your thoughts unto me, o God (Ps. 139:17)

I opened the old, old Bible, and looked at a page of Psalms; Till the wintry sea of my troubles, was soothed as by summer calms; For the words that have helped so many, and that ages have made more dear; Seemed new in their power to comfort, as they brought me their word of cheer. (Cowman C.E. Consolations)

4. Chess (nee CHURCH) moves: Bishop

{All the movements of the Bishop (and deans), where they sow, plant, water will be made known so you can pray to God for these ventures at your Prayer groups and during Worship services}

An all important meeting takes place every two years in all the dioceses of ELCSA, which is the Synod. Here, deliberations and decisions that are taken having major bearings on the parishes and congregations. This need not always be negative, in fact, decisions can be very beneficial and supportive and can enhance the situation in the parishes. This year 7-10 August, the Synod will meet in Bloemfontein under the theme: *Towards a new morality*.

Please pray that God will bless this gathering and enlighten all the plans and preparations that are on the way. May God guide the hearts and minds of the bible study leaders, facilitators and speakers that will be in attendance and may the Holy Spirit create prepared hearts so that the seed can germinate in good soil. May God's kingdom be further built by these sessions.

5. What about... Investigating the current state of our morality

I would suggest that we have discussions on the current state of our morality in South Africa and beyond before the Synod. Analyze the situation and come up with conclusions where we are at and why. The Synod likewise will try to come up with solutions, but hereto your delegate needs to make informed contributions. Proper planning and mandates are thus crucial. What does a new morality mean? Do we move away from our Source the Bible? Do we need to adjust our values to accept persons with different understandings and views than ours? Let us not vehemently answer in the negative or positive, but honestly wrestle with all the consequences in the light of the love of Christ.

One disadvantage towards the timing of the synod is that the World Cup will be a hump that we need to cross over and thus preparatory time might not always be freely available to all. I hope that in the midst of the hype of the soccer spectacle, that we will set aside time to discuss the future paths and that these in turn will lead us to a better future for all.

6. Spotlight on... Pentecost

I missed the mark to say something again about Ascension Day, but I hope that your celebrations on 13 May were beneficial to your spiritual life. Ascension has a close correlation with Pentecost. Pentecost could only happen after Jesus assumed His ultimate position at the right hand of the Father. The voluntary humiliation that started with His incarnation and birth was replaced by His exaltation and return to His former glory. We need to be constantly aware of this grave sacrifice and the blessings of the substitution Christ undertook on our behalf.

Then started the establishment of the kingdom of God, the turnover of the world where ordinary human beings are empowered from on High to become His witnesses and to bring everybody under the sovereignty of Christ. Pentecost secure a peace for the disciples instead of the fear for the authorities.

They were given a divine purpose in life to make disciples instead of hiding in their houses. Jesus' promised Holy Spirit resulted in His continuous presence in their lives, contrary to His limitations whilst in earthly form. All of a sudden they had power from on high that astounded the ordinary human beings and themselves when they could perform miracles and healing.

The Holy Spirit is still in and with us. May we co-operate with God to become His witnesses as the first disciples did. To Jesus and God be the glory when the Spirit come over us and use us. We are mere instruments contributing nothing, but what a privilege this can be. I wish this for you and those you will touch.

7. What's in it for me?

Tell us about your understanding of the Synod. How did it affect your congregation and your parish in the past? Are you happy with the decisions of the Synod? How can we empower the delegates to have meaningful input? What would you like the Synod to discuss? Share your stories and suggestions. The **Message Board** is waiting to capture your views and discussions (and on anything else!) Handy spiritual books are up for grabs for the ones posting the most creative views! Your efforts here can just stimulate others (even internationally to embark on your suggestions and enhance the lives of many!)

Wishful thinking ...

Encouragement is the oxygen of the soul. Please encourage others to subscribe to our newsletter which aims to inform, stimulate, to involve and to grow the visitors to our site. It is still my wish to hear from you. Please volunteer to contribute to any of these regular features. You also need to tell us your needs and whether these regulars are sufficient and cater for your expectations. Any other brilliant ideas will be gladly accommodated. Eagerly waiting to hear from you.

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