Our MIGRANT SAVIOR

What does Scripture say about Migrants?
Few details of Jesus’ early life are known, but Matthew’s gospel tells us this: violent, state-sanctioned persecution forced Jesus’ family to flee Israel and go to Egypt, where they lived as refugees. The experience of Jesus and his parents is mirrored in the challenges faced by 70 million displaced people in our world today. The story of our own migrant savior inspires and compels us to embrace our displaced brothers and sisters with love, solidarity, and generosity. Will we prepare room in our hearts for our displaced brothers and sisters?

THE GLOBAL MIGRATION CRISIS IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST HUMANITARIAN ISSUES OF OUR TIME. THE NUMBERS ARE STAGGERING:

<table>
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<th>37,000</th>
<th>70 MILLION</th>
<th>85%</th>
<th>15 MILLION</th>
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<td>PEOPLE EVERYDAY ARE UPROOTED BECAUSE OF VIOLENCE AND PERSECUTION</td>
<td>PEOPLE ARE ON THE MOVE AFTER BEING FORCED TO FLEE THEIR HOMES</td>
<td>OF DISPLACED PEOPLE ARE LIVING IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH</td>
<td>REFUGEES ARE CHILDREN</td>
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People are displaced by war, violence, persecution, climate change, disasters, and so much more. Displaced people are some of the most vulnerable people in our world.

Christ is in solidarity with migrants. So much so that in Matthew 25 he says what we do to the “least of these” we do to him. These five Bible studies will help you engage with Scripture and the teachings of Jesus that have inspired Christians for generations to practice solidarity with the poor.
OUR MIGRANT SAVIOR

REFLECTION

Many are familiar with the Christmas Story: Mary and Joseph looking for shelter, the innkeeper refusing them a place to stay, Jesus’ humble birth in a manger, the wise men coming, bearing wonderful gifts and worshiping the child king.

Oftentimes, however, the story is left there. Rarely do our holiday remembrances include the next phase of Jesus’ life, but it is worth examining.

JESUS ON THE MOVE

The Gospel of Matthew gives the account of Joseph and Mary fleeing the threat of violence after being warned by an angel. It was a dark time for their people. The Jewish king, Herod, had issued a brutal mandate: murder all infant boys in and around Bethlehem. The young family fled in the night and took refuge in Egypt, waiting there until Herod died.

By definition, they were migrants; Jesus began the formative years of his life as a refugee.

QUESTIONS

1. Consider what it must have been like for the new parents and their infant son to be uprooted from their home and flee to an unfamiliar land - what were the challenges they might have faced?

2. What context does that bring to Jesus’ words: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me”?

3. We often gloss over this detail of Jesus’ life, why do you think that is?
GOD LOVES “THE STRANGER”

REFLECTION
We live in a day where millions of people wander the earth in search of hope and a better livelihood. The Bible speaks of similar situations. It contains stories of war and desolation, displacement and pain, frustration and longing. Through it all, we can see that God cares for migrants and refugees.

MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN THE BIBLE
The story of God’s chosen people, Israel, is a story of wandering in many places. Joseph is sold into slavery in a strange land. Moses fled to Midian and found shelter in the house of a priest; years later, he was again on the move with the people who escaped slavery in Egypt. Ruth accompanied Naomi to a foreign land and found favor in the eyes of Boaz. At various times, God’s people in Israel were taken into exile as captives to Assyria and Babylon, experiences God used to teach them about justice.

GOD’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS DISPLACED PEOPLE
In the Bible, we find God’s concern for the well-being of refugees and migrants. Repeatedly, the people of Israel are instructed to remember the strangers among them and treat them with love, compassion, and justice. God commands the Israelites not to ill-treat them and not to take advantage of them, because they themselves had been strangers in foreign lands. They were to feel solidarity with the migrants among them. God is concerned and cares for powerless and vulnerable people. Strangers are to be cared for, they are to be treated as fellow citizens and given a share from the tithe. In the New Testament, Jesus gives a new command to “love your neighbor as yourself.” This message is at the heart of what it means to be a Christ-follower.

QUESTIONS
1. Do you think the Western church’s attitude towards displaced people matches that of God’s?
2. How does Jesus intend for us to live out his call to love our neighbors?
3. What are ways you’ve seen the Church show their concern for displaced people in our world?
JESUS FIRST SERMON

READING
Isaiah 58: 6-12
Luke 18:9-14
Revelation 7:9-10

REFLECTION

In the Gospel of Luke, we see Jesus introducing why he came: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Jesus was quoting the ancient prophet Isaiah, whose words would have been hope and solace for the Jews when they were forcibly removed from their homeland and sent into exile in Assyria and Babylon.

These words were still part of the hope of the Jews in Jesus’ time, as they lived in a land ruled by an occupying army. Jesus was telling them that their ancient and current hopes were going to be gathered up and fulfilled by his ministry. His work was, and is, good news for the poor, the displaced, the persecuted, the refugee. By reflecting on Jesus’ message, we can understand what it means to follow Jesus’ example.

Jesus showed us how to mix with all kinds of people, from different races, areas, and even of different faiths, no matter what others thought of them. Likewise, Scripture challenges us; we see this in Isaiah 58.7: is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

In Revelation 7:9-10, we read about the gathering of nations and how different ethnic identities form part of God’s purposes. This shows God’s willingness to accept all people as having equal status. God has created us all to be unique; this includes individual characteristics (e.g. race, gender, disability, age etc), and different values, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, and behaviors.

Jesus modeled for us how we can challenge a culture that is fearful, prejudiced and exclusive with relentless love for those different to ourselves. In following him, we should love each other, in particular, those who are least like us.

QUESTIONS

1. In what ways might God be inviting you to partner with him in bringing solutions to the challenges and needs of those suffering around the world?

2. Where is the Church “good news to the poor” and where have we failed at this?

3. Who is the “other” in your community? In our nation? In our world? How can we be “good news” to them?
THE GOOD SAMARITAN

REFLECTION

Today we look at the story of the good Samaritan. The parable includes many different characters, all of which mirror our world and ourselves as God’s people.

The traveler represents all those who, for whatever reason, find themselves crushed or threatened by particular situations and powerless to help themselves. Looking around the world, this might cause us to think of those who are living in refugee camps, people who’ve been affected by climate shocks, victims of violent regimes in their home countries. Without the intervention of others, they have no hope of things improving for them.

The robbers represent those forces in our society that threaten, impoverish, and keep people from achieving their God-ordained potential. And the religious people (the priest and the Levite), rather too uncomfortably, resemble the Church. Recall the story of the lawyer in Luke 10:25-29; he asks Jesus what God might expect of him in terms of serving others, essentially wanting to hear that he had already done all the right things. He is something of a “holier than thou” person, assuming that spiritual depth consists of knowing a great deal about God and His ways, as opposed to loving the least and the lost.

The Samaritan models for us what it truly means to obey God by showing compassion, by putting himself out for someone unlike him. He takes time to attend to the wounded man and was willing to use his own resources to meet the other man’s needs. Likewise, the Church is called to build a relationship with those suffering, discern their needs, and deploy our resources towards meeting those needs. Moreover, Jesus turns the tables on the lawyer’s prejudices. He makes the hero of the story a Samaritan, one who is himself persecuted and despised for his ethnicity by people like the lawyer. The one who might be expected to ignore or gloat over the traveler’s misfortunes, or to take further advantage of him, is instead the one who rescues him.

QUESTIONS

1. Which character do you most identify with?

2. If you were in deep need, who would you least suspect to help you? What would you learn from being helped by someone you dislike or look down on?

3. What is one way we could be more like the Samaritan rather than the “religious leaders”?
IT’S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE THIS WAY

REFLECTION

The Creator God is not content with the brokenness of this world. It pains Him to see his people suffering. He has a bias for those who hunger, who are sick, who are without a home. He longs to see his children flourish.

In the 21st century, there are more displaced people than ever before. Every day, 37,000 people are uprooted because of violence and persecution. How devastating that 15 million refugees are children. God desires change. He has equipped the Church to act as his hands and feet, to bring about that change on the earth.

We've heard of the Great Commission, and yesterday we thought about the Great Commandment. But do we honor the Great Requirement of Micah 6:8?

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

To live out God's call on our lives, we should challenge ourselves to be servant-hearted, truthful, courageous, compassionate and Christ-centric. This means regarding and treating others as equal in worth, dignity and potential; and allowing the Spirit to reveal Christ through us. If we can pursue these qualities, then we are beginning to reveal the kingdom of God in the world around us.

QUESTIONS

1. Think of three ways you can reveal God’s heart to those who are displaced. Is there anything preventing you from doing this?

2. What can you do today to make a difference in the life of a migrant or refugee?

3. How can you pray “your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” in relation to the global migration crisis?
THANK YOU FOR TAKING THIS JOURNEY WITH US AND HOPE YOU WERE INSPIRED BY SCRIPTURE AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.

WE INVITE YOU TO TAKE ACTION WITH US TO BRING LOVE, COMPASSION AND HOPE TO THOSE IN THE MOST DESPERATE NEED.

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