

REFUGEES: GOD'S LOVE FOR ALL PEOPLE 6th September 2015

Lk 4:14-30 p.843

SERMON

INTRO: ILLN Aylin Kurdi

On Wednesday a little boy was drowned as his family tried to get across the sea from Turkey to the island of Kos. His body was washed up on the shore and appeared in our newspapers, triggering an outcry about the plight of the refugees trying to find safety in Europe. His name was Aylin Kurdi and he was 3 years old. He was travelling with his brother Galip age 5, his mother Rehan and his father Abdullah. They were Syrian refugees fleeing the Kurdish town of Kobani which has been attacked by ISIS. He was one of 12 Syrian refugees who drowned when their small boat overturned. His brother and mother also died. His father Abdullah was rescued. The family were trying to get to Canada where Abdullah's sister Teema has lived in Vancouver for the past 20 years. They had applied for asylum and Teema and her neighbours were willing to sponsor them. But their application was turned down and so the desperate family paid people traffickers and took to the sea with tragic results.

We also heard this week that 71 lifeless bodies were found in an unventilated lorry in Austria – again people trying to escape the violence and persecution in their own countries.

- **HOW DO WE FEEL ABOUT REFUGEES?**
- **HOW DOES GOD FEEL?**
- **HOW CAN WE RESPOND POSITIVELY?**

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

Angry? – Why? We don't want them **OR** something must be done to help
Compassion? – What can I do?

HOW DOES GOD FEEL? OT & NT tells us

God loves everyone - especially the poor, outcast & oppressed
He showed his love in a practical way in the life of Jesus

LUKE 4:14-30

- Jesus manifesto - v.18
- Example of widow & leper - OT - God's love for Gentiles
Naaman - wealthy, powerful, a leper.
Widow and young son - no name, poor, destitute, outcast
They represent all needy people
- How the Jewish congregation reacted - liked the idea of God's love for them but not for Gentiles
- Why were the people so angry? - Jews / Gentiles - outsiders - did it touch a sore point? - the way they treated Gentiles in their midst? The way they treated widows and lepers.
- Jesus wanted to set them free from their racial and social prejudice
- Jesus wanted them to recognize God's love for all people & for them to work to set other people free

DEBATES ABOUT REFUGEES

Fear -> we don't want them here – minority opinions

Compassion -> we must do what we can to help – majority opinions

FACTS

HUMZA YOUSAF Scottish Government Minister for Europe and International Development
There are 4 million Syrian refugees outside of Syria, most of them in the surrounding Middle East countries – Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt and other parts of North Africa.
Over the past 5 years, since the conflict in Syria began Britain has only taken 216 Syrian refugees. This compared with Germany who are taking 800,000 this year alone

DAVID CAMERON

The long term solution is for there to be peace in the Middle East.

UK is already helping refugees in the Middle East with practical financial aid.

We will take 10,000 refugees from refugee camps with 1,000 to Scotland.

JOHN WILKES Chief Executive of the Scottish Refugee Council explained that in fact we normally accept 750 refugees/year into the UK from various countries. We have the experience of assimilating refugees into our society.

These people make a huge positive contribution to our country.

DEBATES: FEARS EXPRESSED

Jews in 1930's – same arguments – life harder then.

They became part of our society and have made a positive contribution.

- In **WWII** We took refugees from Germany, they did not take any from us. Because our country was not invaded or taken over by a cruel regime.

- **10,000 is just the thin end of the wedge.** Where will it end?

JOHN WILKES We are not opening the flood gates. There will be an orderly, managed approach, in proportion to our resources.

In 1992 we accepted thousands of Bosnian refugees. Most of them went back to their own country when peace resumed and many Syrians would do the same.

Lebanon has a population of 4 million and is about the same size as Scotland. They have 1 million Syrian refugees. Surely we can easily accept 1,000.

- **The Syrians are Muslims.** We don't want them here.

In fact many of the Syrian refugees are Christians who have been particularly targeted by ISIS. This caller was asked "What should be done?" His answer was "Round up all the ISIS people and exterminate them". Not practical and leads to more violence.

- **We will be letting in terrorists**

The refugees will be carefully vetted to make sure they are not terrorists.

The refugees are fleeing from ISIS. They will not want to plant bombs for them.

- **They are well dressed and have mobile phones.** They are not refugees but economic migrants looking for an easy trip into Europe.

The pictures I have seen they are not particularly well dressed.

If they are wearing good clothes it is because they put on their best clothes so that when they arrive they are seen as decent people, not vagrants.

Most people all around the world have mobile phones.

John Wilkes says that the Syrians are definitely refugees.

The United Nation has rules for determining Refugee Status and the status of people claiming to be refugees is checked.

- **Why don't they stay in a safe place in Syria?**

They would if they could. There are 8 million refugees within Syria.

They have left because there is not a safe place for them to go there.

- **We have poverty in our country** – homeless & food banks.

Yes but should help both – our own poor and refugees.

- **They will take our jobs**, create more unemployment and more crime.

Before the conflict, Syria was a sophisticated country with a well-educated population. Many refugees are skilled people.

Some may need training to find jobs, help in learning English.

We have an ageing population and need more young people to work and do the jobs that need doing – pay taxes.

My experience of immigrants in Coventry:

People who leave their home country have “get up and go”.

They are hard-working and have initiative. Many have skills and experience of their own small businesses – they create jobs and employment.

- **They will sponge off our society**

They are not lazy lay-abouts. They work hard to build a new life and make a contribution to society.

Coventry – Scottish, Irish, Polish, Estonian, Jews, West Indians, Asians. Many clubs and societies. Strong sense of wider family – they looked after their own.

- **Where will the money come** from to pay for the refugees?

The EU provides 6,000 euros per refugee to help them get started.

They will then be able to work and pay their own way including taxes to support others in our society.

- **There is a housing shortage**

Plenty of unoccupied holiday homes – eg. Aviemore – second homes

The problem is not housing generation, but housing allocation.

- **This is a global problem.** Other countries outside Europe must play their part.

Other countries are trying to help. Turkey cannot cope with the number of refugees arriving.

USA is taking more than any other country.

FEAR is based on “What if?” not on reality.

FEAR paralyzes

FAITH sees solutions and leads to ACTION

APPN: HOW CAN WE RESPOND POSITIVELY?

- Pray
- Consider what Jesus would do
- Recognize that we are here today through an accident of birth & circumstances - “there but for the grace of God go I”.
- Work for peace and global equality so that people can stay in their own country
- Accept refugee numbers that can be assimilated - this protects the incomers from exploitation & prejudice as well as ourselves from feeling overwhelmed.
- See them as people who want to make a positive contribution - not criminals & terrorists
- Welcome strangers - help them assimilate - befriend, learn English
- Share our faith and values.
- Widow + Elijah & Naaman + Elisha - they came to faith in the Lord
- See strangers as potential friends not enemies - individual people not statistics
- Reinforce Christian values - Care, compassion, community - important foundation of our society - church can reinforce so not eroded - otherwise society will disintegrate - we will all lose out

CONCLUSION

CHRISTIAN VALUES - care, compassion, community - foundation of our society. Important for a strong & stable society

Jesus worked out values such as care, compassion, community in his own life & through them set people free

Today may we remember that God loves us and that He loves everyone.

May we look for opportunities to reinforce the values of care, compassion & community.

May we make the most of opportunities to share God’s love with the stranger, the outcast and the refugee so that, like Jesus, we help to set them free.