

Lessons from Bethlehem: part 2 “Real Love”

Bethlehem:

It is a story of hope, love, joy and peace that is rooted in the everyday world we live in.

God has entered the world in the form of a man, Jesus, born in Bethlehem, to rescue the world. Why would God do something like this?

Because no one cares how much you know, or who you are, until they know how much you care.

Jesus is the perfect picture of what God is like. He is the thrill of hope that brings joy to a weary world, and to people like you and me. He is the One who opens to us a life worth living, **a life of hope realized in God**. And because of this, today, we worship him ... **the One who shows us God because he himself is God, who is good.**

“Hope is the anticipation of good.” - Dallas Willard

Christmas is about love...

O Holy Night

The stars are brightly shining..... Fall on your knees....

“Truly he taught us to love one another; His law his love and his Gospel is peace.”

- How well do you love others?
- Especially those who are different than you?
- What does Scripture say?

John 3:16-17

“Love your neighbor as yourself” – Matthew 22:39

Parable of the Good Samaritan

Matthew 2:12-15

A sojourner in the Bible was one residing in or traveling through a country not their own. This is why some translations use “immigrant” or “foreigner” for sojourner.

Our starting point as Christians must be scripture and seeking to be faithful to it. We begin with scriptural principles and move to practices and policies; not vice versa. And the Bible is not silent on how God’s people should view the sojourner, immigrant, foreigner or refugee.

Book: Christians at the Border by Daniel Carroll

Book: Generous Justice by Tim Keller

Our heart and treatment of immigrants and refugees must be rooted in and reflect God’s heart for the vulnerable.

Psalm 146:9

Zechariah 7:9-10

Deuteronomy 10:18-19

Jeremiah 7:4-6

“It is striking to see how often God is introduced as the defender of these vulnerable groups...This is one of the main things he does in the world. He identifies with the powerless, he takes up their cause...The God of the Bible stood out from the gods of all other religions as a God on the side of the powerless, and of justice for the poor.” --Tim Keller

God’s heart for the hurting and those in need of help is the starting point for how we view sojourners, immigrants, and refugees.

God roots his commands for how Israel is to treat the sojourner in this fact: Israel was herself a sojourner, a refugee.

Exodus 22:21

Leviticus 19:33-34

Deuteronomy 10:19

Christ models these same concerns, commanding us to welcome the sojourner like Jesus welcomed us.

Matt. 25:34-40

Hebrews 13:2

The NT reiterates this, first in how Jesus reveals the heart of the Father in his love for the vulnerable, and second, in commanding hospitality to sojourners. We reflect to others the grace, hospitality, and kindness we’ve received from God. We have empathy for physical sojourners as those who understand we are sojourners in this world. --Tim Keller

God knows the temptation to look out for ourselves, our family, and for those like us, and how tempted we are to distance ourselves and be unconcerned with those unlike us. This is especially true when it might cost us or when we have to sacrifice something—security, wealth or resources, comfort, time—for others. But God builds justice, protection, care, and many of the same privileges and responsibilities for sojourners into the laws of Israel.

Leviticus 19:33-34

God built in practical ways and even systems to care for the sojourner.

Leviticus 19:9-10

How someone treated a sojourner revealed their righteousness or unrighteousness.

Malachi 3:5

This Old Testament principle of connecting a person’s righteousness or unrighteousness based on their hospitality to sojourners continues in the New Testament’s hospitality commands.

In his incarnation, Jesus provides a model for us and reveals the same heart of God for the vulnerable, for we are all vulnerable, fragile, and broken...whether we realize it or not.

Jesus is not only a friend of sinners, he's also a friend of sojourners, as he was one...

As we seek to reflect God's heart for the sojourner, we should discuss how we best love, protect, and welcome the sojourner, and the place to begin is biblical teaching on the topic. Maybe it is as simple as loving and welcoming the sojourner as you have been welcomed and loved by God.