



40.DAY 2023

40.DAYS 40.VOICES 40.PRAYERS

DAY 34 | AUGUST 3

A City of Refuge to the Nations

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BIBLE READING

Joshua 20:1-4 | “Then the Lord said to Joshua, tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge as I instructed you through Moses, so that anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally may flee there and find protection from the avenger of blood.”

We are called to reach out to the foreigners in our midst. In the history of Israel, God already had the foreigners and the strangers in mind.

Before God’s people entered the Promised Land, the Lord commanded Joshua to designate cities of refuge. We can read that in Numbers 35 and Deuteronomy 4.

“Then the Lord said to Joshua, tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge as I instructed you through Moses, so that anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally may flee there and find protection from the avenger of blood.” (JOSHUA 20:1-4)

God instructed that these cities were to be set apart for all Israel. Now note the words “[as well as for] any foreigner residing among them” (JOSHUA 20:9). God instructed and designated cities to be safe spaces and places for these

foreigners. Likewise, we, as the Church of God, are also designated and called to be that city on the hill.

Through Covid, the clarion call of the Church to be that city of refuge was once again ushered in. Let me share with you an encounter just outside my church walls.

During the Covid Phase II in 2021, I saw a man seated on the floor, leaning against my church walls, getting ready to have his lunch. I walked over and started a conversation. He looked up and he looked nervous as he said: “Miss, I just need a place to eat and rest. We can’t eat at the hawker centre because I will be caught. But don’t worry, Miss, I will go off once I finish my lunch.”

After I attended to him with a place to eat, I had a personal conversation with the Lord. God impressed upon my heart and He said this: There are many people outside the walls looking for refuge, many are looking for that place to run to and the Church of God must be that city of refuge.

Recently, our Chinese national migrant ministry in my church had two new visitors. What surprised us was this: They were from another nationality. Though they could not understand Mandarin very well, they came.

We had two different people groups, two nations fellowshiping and worshipping together. I believe they came, though they may not know Mandarin very well, because they needed a safe place to belong to.

The biblical concept of the city of refuge is to provide that safe sanctuary for anyone who accidentally caused the death of someone, until the facts come to light. Otherwise, a relative of the victim, the avenger of blood, might

take justice into his own hands and kill the manslayer. If the elders of the city determine the manslayer innocent, the manslayer will remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priests.

What does that mean, friends? He or she will become part of the city, the community and part of the Body. Now though this addresses issues of manslaughter, the biblical principles still stand today.

People of God, we are designated to be that safe place. In Singapore we have many immigrants, friends, neighbours, many of whom are temporary dwellers and migrant workers around our neighbourhoods. The nations are at our doorstep. How can we be a blessing?

Three P's from Numbers 35

1. Protection. We as a Church can become a safe place for foreigners. We suspend our judgement, prejudices and condemnation. In fact, on their behalf, we seek justice and fair treatment for them.

2. Presence. We extend that physical fellowship, community and prayers to share the love of God. We host God's Presence and bring healing into their hearts, into the nations.

3. Providence. We reflect the providence of God. By providing resources, we extend physical blessings. We serve them with this powerful resource that is the ministry of time.

Just like the six cities with designated six specific locations, you and I, the Church, are specifically designated by God to step into our assignment to be the blessing for the nations standing at our doorstep.

Let us pray:

Lord, help us to step into our call to be the City of Refuge for those who are lost, helpless and those who are away from their communities and people.

May we rise up as a Church to be the city on the hill to reflect Your light.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

REFLECT

- 1 What does God's instruction in Joshua 20 reveal about His heart for the foreigners in the land?
- 2 Have there been times you have overlooked the foreigners in our land and even in your communities?
- 3 What is the one actionable 'P' that you and your community can begin, in order to be a city of refuge to the foreigners in our land?

PRAY

- 1 Pray that the Church would serve as a safe place for foreigners and strangers in our midst, just as the cities of refuge were in ancient Israel. Seek God's help in suspending our judgment, prejudice and condemnation, so we can create a welcoming environment that reflects His unconditional love and acceptance.
- 2 Pray for the Church to be without walls, that the Body of Christ might extend God's providence to those in need. Ask God to help us understand the power of giving time, care and comfort as a reflection of His love.
- 3 Pray to see others, especially those different from you, through Jesus' eyes of compassion. Ask that your words and actions might be an outflow of Jesus' gentleness, generosity and grace.