

Canberra Baptist Church

9.00 & 10.30am, Sun 18 June 2017

With Courage Let Us All Combine

Scripture

Leviticus 19:1,2,9,10,17,33,34 and Luke 10:31-34

Introduction

This coming Tuesday is World Refugee Day, a day which takes on special significance this year in view of the current worldwide refugee crisis. To coincide with that, The Refugee Council of Australia has declared this week, starting with today, as Refugee Week. And it has invited churches and other community groups to participate and contribute to the week. That's why, along with many other churches, we have a focus on refugees in our services today. I'll only be sharing briefly this morning and then handing over to 2 others, Roz and Rohallah, who will share some relevant parts of their stories.

The theme of Refugee Week this year is *"With courage let us all combine"*. Does that sound familiar? It comes from the second verse of our national anthem.

<i>Beneath our radiant Southern Cross, To make this Commonwealth of ours For those who've come across the seas, With courage let us all combine</i>	<i>We'll toil with hearts and hands; Renowned of all the lands; We've boundless plains to share; To Advance Australia Fair.</i>
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It's not a verse we sing very often, but perhaps we should.

"For those who've come across the seas, We've boundless plains to share."

I certainly like that better than the strident chorusing of *"Send them back"* and *"Stop the boats"*.

It seems to me to be much more in line with the words of Jesus:

"Love one another as I have loved you" and *"Love your neighbour as yourself"*.

But, as I said, the theme this year is actually in the next line – *"With courage let us all combine"*.

So I want to make a few comments about courage this morning. And to do that with reference to Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

It's a story that's well-known to us. We're often challenged, quite rightly, with Jesus' words at the end: *"Go and do likewise."* In other words, go and do what the Good Samaritan did – show compassion and mercy to the one in need, who is neighbour, even when different from us, even when other.

The Good Samaritan is a good model. But let's look for a moment at the 2 anti-models in the section of the parable read to us earlier. The Priest and the Levite both saw the man but passed by on the other side.

Why did they do that? It's often put down to their lack of compassion. Let me suggest a slightly different reason. Because they had more fear than compassion.

* They no doubt feared that they too could be robbed by the bandits if they lingered in that place.

* And they would have feared being attacked and physically hurt like the other man.

* They probably feared becoming unclean. Not just getting blood and dirt on their clothes or hands, but breaking the holiness laws and becoming ritually unclean if the robbed man was actually dead.

* They may well have feared the reactions of their peers, the fellow-religious leaders.

* I think they also feared opening their minds to a new way of seeing the Law and new teaching about what God really required. Along with that was a fear of loss of authority and certainty.

I say all that about the Priest and Levite, from just a couple of verses, because Jesus clearly included them in the story to represent the Jewish religious leaders who were opposing him and his teachings. And those are the sorts of fears those religious leaders had. So in the parable, as in the reality of the time, the fears of the religious leaders outweighed their compassion. What they needed was courage. And what is needed today is courage.

It takes courage to be a refugee.

- * The courage not to deny identity or beliefs in the face of opposition or persecution.
- * The courage to leave all that is familiar and step into the unknown in search of peace.
- * The courage to keep going in the face of devastating loss, difficulty and despair.
- * The courage to begin again, to work hard and to maintain hope in an unfamiliar land.

All of us need courage too.

- * To draw attention to violations of human rights.
- * To challenge callous indifference to the suffering of others.
- * To support refugees in their times of need.
- * To advocate for them with those who exercise power over them.

“With courage let us all combine.”

Poster Identities – Ravi Prasad and Hani Abdile

Let me tell you about the 2 people on this year’s Refugee Week poster. (It will be up on the screen again at the end of the service.) The man is Ravi Prasad. Disheartened by Australia’s treatment of asylum seekers and refugees, Ravi and his wife turned the loungeroom of their home into a café where asylum seekers and refugees can train to gain employment in the hospitality industry. The café has recently expanded into providing catering for functions and events with cuisines of the countries of the refugees and asylum seekers who have been trained and now work in the kitchen.



The woman is Hani Abdile, a 22-year-old performance poet and author from Somalia who works at the café on the weekends.

Just 2 of many who are making a positive difference through their commitment, compassion and courage.

Conclusion

In different ways, many of you have also been active in support of refugees and asylum seekers and in advocating for them. I commend you for your commitment, compassion and courage and for being Good Samaritans and not walking by on the other side.

“With courage let us all combine... To Advance Australia Fair.”

Surely that must mean to advance a fair Australia, where all are given a fair go. May it be so.

Helpful Links

- <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/>
- <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/refugee-week/>
- <https://ajustcause.com.au/>