

September 24, 2016 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church
 Luke 4:16-21 Freedom Sabbath by Andy McDonald

It is so much easier to talk about Christianity than it is to live authentically as followers of Christ.

It is much more fun to huddle up in classes here on Sabbath or in someone's home during the week and discuss with like minded believers the spiritual truths we value than it is to do war with injustice in our world.

To join in the discussion about giving our lives away to others, to sit in a safe circle and argue and discuss the various angles of what it means to serve others can be a real kick compared to getting up out of our seats, leaving our living rooms, abandoning some of our agenda and actually serving people who are in need.

At the risk of sounding heretical I'm not sure Jesus cares so much about the accuracy of our theology if it doesn't change how we engage with our world.

Knowing and even believing 28 Fundamental Truths is only valuable if that knowledge moves us to pursue what Jesus pursues. Does our belief, does our Biblical familiarity make us change agents in our world or do we just allow ourselves to move without resistance as part of the flow of humanity, conformed to the world?

I just want us to do a reality check. Are we here today because we seek to be transformed into new people by letting God change the way we think, and motivate us to move beyond self care to care for others, or are we just here because its habit, or custom, or somebody made us come.

A few moments ago we participated in a prayer for Peace and justice. We prayed for discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships

We prayed for anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people

We prayed for tears to shed for those who suffer
 And we prayed for foolishness to think that we can make a difference in the world, and do things which others say cannot be done.

But when the amen is said to that prayer how much are we willing to risk, to suffer, to be misunderstood that we might bring freedom.

Today in this nation, in churches, and in our homes it just might be that our familiarity with freedom and the illusion of freedom may have made us neglect freedom itself. It seems that we have experienced some slippage as we've become less brave and shifted our value from freedom to safety. Freedom is a blessed gift.

But while our freedoms here in this land of the free and the home of the brave may be suffering some slippage what the vast majority of us experience day to day is freedom that is incomprehensible to many around the world.

Today is the grand opening of the New National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC. a new place to learn the history of how our infant nation gained an economic foothold that has transformed the world on the backs of slaves. We need to know our history. Injustice of human's owning humans denying rights and treating people as things isn't part of our national heritage we can hide.

But what may surprise you is the reality of today. Right now, according to the Walk Free Foundation's research, there are 45,000,000 humans in slavery today. That is more slaves in our world today than any other time in recorded history. Way more than total numbers any time during the gruesome 400 years of the transatlantic slave trade.

It is real it happens behind walls, and closed doors, and in fields, and sweat shops, and brothels and strip clubs, and factories. Here is Kumar's story.

(VIDEO of Kumar whose mother abandoned him and his dad died and he at age 7 ends up in forced labor in a brick factory in India. To watch copy and paste link below)

<https://ijm.app.box.com/s/w6teaiavpusl22xh8r6811i6kp5agi6u/1/9446480527/91982378206/1>

Nearly 20 years ago Gary Haugen began International Justice Mission to seek to bring justice to the world. Teams of social workers, and lawyers, and care givers and investigators, came together and determined to affect change.

And they have changed the lives for many who were enslaved, victims of human trafficking, coerced into the sex industry and they are changing places.

The entire nation of Cambodia has been affected. What was once ground zero for pedophiles to vacation and that nation has virtually eliminated the underage sex industry through the work of IJM.

IJM has brought freedom and restored justice. It happened for Kumar. Here's the rest of his story.

(Video of the rest of Kumar's story of rescue and prosecution of owners of the brick kiln.) Link

<https://ijm.app.box.com/s/w6teaiavpusl22xh8r6811i6kp5agi6u/1/9446480527/91997973674/1>

Today Kumar is also a follower of Christ! In physical freedom he could begin to hear the story of spiritual freedom.

What is God's call to us? I'm not sure in absolute specifics, but it has to do with being the hands and feet and voice of Jesus in the world today. It has to do with pursuing what Jesus pursues.

That Sabbath as he came into the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth, when it came time for scripture reading he stood up to read from the scroll of Isaiah. And Jesus unrolled it to the place where these words were written. Here is what he read:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, the downtrodden will be set free from their oppressors, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come."

Injustice in our world is when someone in a stronger position unlawfully takes from someone in weaker position. Injustice is bullying grown up.

Injustice may be taking freedom or innocence. It may be taking away childhood from a boy like Kumar or land that should be a widows but she has no power to fight and family land that could mean her survival is taken. The freedom to love and be truly loved can be stolen from young girls as they are trafficked to abusers.

While the vast majority of injustice of slavery occurs outside of this country it happens here too.

Estimates are that there are 60000 slaves of forced labor here in the US. From trafficked migrant workers forced to work in the fields and systems of debt created so they can never potentially be free. Orlando Florida, our peaceful safe home, is, because of our international hub of our tourist industry, one of the major centers of human trafficking, for the hospitality industry, for the sex industry.

How can we join Jesus in bringing freedom to the down trodden of our world?

Too often we've wanted to translate the call of Jesus as only bringing freedom from sin as sort of a personal spiritual emancipation. This is included in the good news that Jesus preaches. In Christ we are set free.

Paul writes to Titus that once we too were foolish and disobedient. We were misled by others and became slaves to many wicked desires and evil pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy. We hate others and they hated us. BUT then God our Savior showed us his kindness and love.

He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us because of what Jesus Christ our Savior did. He declared us not guilty because of his great kindness. And now we know that we will inherit eternal life.”

We are free in Jesus. But listen we are not just saved to be saved we are saved to serve.

It is so much easier to huddle up and talk about Christianity than it is to live authentically as followers of Jesus. It is more comfortable to sit by the light and warmth of the fire, to enjoy the warmth and light of the community of faith and shared truth, than it is to leave and move into the darkness of our world.

But we must move into the dark places that we might bring the light. God is light and in him is no darkness at all. Jesus is the light of the world and he dwells in us as believers by the indwelling Holy Spirit so when we go to set at liberty those who are captive, we don't go in our own power or on our own, we go in the name and the light of Jesus and we expose the reality that evil is a distortion of what God intended.

That is why this church exists. 90 years ago from its inception it was about extending the healing ministry of Christ. While those trained in caring for the sick to restore people to health were doing that aspect this church, started on the porch of the sanitarium, was fully aware that Jesus never healed physically as an end in itself but it was with the intention of bringing spiritual healing and freedom from sin. It isn't

one or the other. Early we recognize that a person suffering from disease can't hear the gospel.

And people suffering under the weight of injustice, living as modern day slaves they can't hear it either. But we can help.

James calls us to accountability when he writes in James 2:15&16

“Suppose you see a brother or sister who needs food or clothing and you say, ‘Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat well’—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?” We can't hear about the injustices of the world and say “Live free and strong,” and do nothing to make that reality.

IJM invites partners to join them and do three things. Pray. When was the last time your prayers went beyond you, your family, and your friends? IJM knows when they go into the darkness and face the evil thieves of freedom, that they are up against stupendous odds and they have no hope without covering all their work with prayer.

Today you can covenant for a week or month a quarter or a year to faithfully pray. Prayer matters in the battle with darkness.

You can give. \$24 or more a month it makes you a Faith Partner helping underwrite IJM's work for freedom

And you can advocate, speak up, sign petitions, lobby for laws that make evil harder to pull off.

Here's what an authentic follower of Christ won't do—Just talk. Just discuss. Just shake their head at the injustice. Just say “Well good bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat well, but then don't give that person any food or clothing.”

Jesus invites his follower into eternity by telling them I was hungry and you fed me, naked and you clothed me, a stranger and you hosted me, in prison and you visited me, for as much as you did it for one of the least of these you did it for me. May we move beyond talk to action.

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(This followed sermo)

Isaiah 58

A Scripture Reading in Reader's Theater Format
by Tami Cinquemani

1: Isaiah 58
 2: Shout it aloud, do not hold back
 3: Raise your voice like a trumpet
 4: Declare to my people their rebellion
 2: And to the house of Jacob their sins.
 1: They come before me every day
 3: They pretend to be delighted to learn about me
 4: They act like a righteous nation
 3: Heaven forbid they should break a law
 2: Wow! Sounds like God's really upset with these people.
 1: Well, do you blame Him?
 4: What do you mean?
 1: I mean these people are posers.
 4: Posers! I don't think you've read far enough. Look here (pointing at book). It says they fasted.
 2: They fasted? You mean like don't-eat-anything-and-starve-yourself kind of fasting?
 4: Yep.
 2: Wow!
 4: Wow is right. That tells me they were committed.
 3: No, all that tells you is that they knew the right things to do to make them "look" committed.
 2: How do you know that?
 1: Well, read on . . . "We have fasted before you," they say, "so why aren't you impressed?"
 4: Well . . .
 3: "We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don't even notice it!"
 2: Oh.
 1: "I'll tell you why," said God. "Even while you fast, you oppress your workers."
 4: Huh?
 3: Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife and in striking each other with wicked fists.
 2: Whoa! That doesn't sound very nice.
 3: It wasn't, and it certainly wasn't what God had intended his people to do.
 1: They missed the whole point.

3: They fooled themselves into thinking all they had to do maintain a pious image – you know, do the right things, say the right words
 2: While ignoring the injustice around them.
 1: And for that, they expected God to work some great miracles in their lives.
 2: So what *should* they have done?
 3: Well, let's go on . . . "This kind of fasting is pointless. Do you really think that's what I want?"
 1: No! I want you to free those who are wrongly imprisoned.
 4: Bring justice to those who are oppressed
 3: Share your food with the hungry
 4: Give shelter to the homeless
 2: And clothes to those who need them.
 1: And do not turn a blind eye to your world.
 4: Ohhhhh, I get it! They were spending all of their time consumed with themselves and what they were doing . . .
 2: When the whole purpose was to look *outside* of themselves, put their own needs aside, and help others.
 3: Now you've got it. God meant for his people to bring life to others.
 4: Then your light will shine out from the darkness.
 1: My righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.
 2: Then you will call, and the Lord will answer
 4: You will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.
 3: If you do away with the yoke of oppression
 1: And if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
 3: And help those in trouble,
 2: Then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday
 1: The Lord will guide you always
 4: It's about looking outside of yourself and your own needs.
 2: It's about that life-changing experience God wants us all to have with Him and to share with others.
 3: Then you will find your joy in the Lord
 1: And I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land
 4: And to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob
 2: The mouth of the Lord has spoken



In what ways have you personally experienced injustice?

How do we keep our faith from becoming stale or just rote?

In what ways does your faith impact your life? Impact other's lives because of you?

What are some signs of shifts from freedom being a top priority to valuing safety even over freedom?

How difficult is it for you to acknowledge the history of the United States building early wealth through slave labor?

What is your reaction to the staggering number of 45,000,000 slaves today?

What seems most daunting in reducing slavery?

How important do you think prayer is on that journey?

How can you do more than talk about it?

What are ways you can stand up against injustice this week?

If not International Justice Mission where will you invest to help end modern day slavery?



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