



FREEDOM | SUNDAY

SERMON RESOURCE KIT

SEPTEMBER 25, 2016



**UNTIL
ALL
ARE** FREE

HELLO! THANK YOU FOR KINDLY AND COURAGEOUSLY HOSTING AN IJM FREEDOM SUNDAY.

What this means, not only to the staff of IJM but also the individuals we serve, can't be overstated. Truly, thank you. Your hard work will change lives!

To that end, we want to do all that we can to lighten the load of preparing a sermon. We know that delivering a message that focuses on the desperate realities of slavery, the hope found in God's truth, and the work of IJM, is inspiring—and challenging. We hope the resources provided in this packet help with your preparation. You will find a companion sample sermon written by members of our Church Mobilization team at the end of this document.





In addition, we took the liberty of surveying some of the resident IJM pastors about their perspective on what preaching a “slavery sermon” is like. We asked them what an IJM Freedom Sunday should cover, what we should be mindful of when talking about slavery, and what has been helpful for them in sharing such a difficult and simultaneously hopeful sermon.

FROM A HIGH-LEVEL PERSPECTIVE, WHAT IS THE “WIN” OF A FREEDOM SUNDAY SERMON?

- Expose people to the reality of slavery in our world
- Connect them to God’s passion, and the speaker’s passion on the issue
- Invite them to join the fight in specific ways both individually and as a church

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED WHEN PREACHING A SERMON FOCUSED ON ENDING SLAVERY?

- The use of story is really important! Always include your own personal connection to the issue of justice/slavery, and to God’s passion for the issue.

- Sometimes it's easy to forget that the word justice (or injustice) means a lot of things to a lot of people. And while their ideas may be valid, on this Sunday we want to make sure that we're all on the same page about what "injustice" means as it pertains to the work of IJM. The film on Kumar (as well as the companion example sermon) really helps explain what we're talking about when we say "justice."
- The beginning and end of the justice conversation is found in God's heart. If you teach clearly about God's passion for justice from the scriptures—you can't go wrong!
- **Give people very clear next steps.** Hearing about the reality of modern slavery raises strong emotions for people. Taking real action regarding what they have just heard is always helpful. Alternatively, not offering clear action steps can cause people to pack their emotions away and even shut down. The Freedom Partner ask is the perfect initial outlet for that pent up energy.

WHAT SHOULD WE BE MINDFUL OF WHEN PREACHING A SERMON FOCUSED ON ENDING SLAVERY?

- **There is no need to exaggerate the reality of the problem of slavery.** It is grave enough. And while we must do our due diligence in explaining the pandemic problem of slavery, we must also remember that people can only take so much. It's a hard balance, for sure. What we've found that relying on hope motivates people to take next steps more than anything else.

And with that, we leave you to write your sermon. Our aim is that the example sermon, as well as the resources in this packet, will lighten the load a bit. Please know that we will be praying for you as you lead your church in this conversation. What you are embarking on matters more than you know!

Sincerely,

Mike Hogan

National Director of Church Mobilization



PHOTOS AND VIDEOS

KUMAR

You will find hi-res photos of Kumar to use while you are speaking about Kumar during your sermon.

Link <http://www.ijm.org/freedom-sunday/kumar-photos>

KUMAR VIDEO, PART 1*

A video that tells the stark story of slavery through the experience of a young boy named Kumar. The story is told in two parts. Part 1 tells the “before” story of Kumar’s experience with slavery. DO NOT show Part 1 without also showing Part 2.

Link <https://ijm.box.com/s/34yybcfs0pkudn49dcc8gh82l31ip4ca>

KUMAR VIDEO, PART 2*

This video is the resolution of Kumar's story. It tells of Kumar's rescue and his restoration. This is the "after" story of Kumar's experience with slavery. DO NOT show Part 2 without showing Part 1 beforehand.

Link <https://ijm.box.com/s/34yybcfs0pkudn49dcc8gh82l31ip4ca>

KUMAR FULL VIDEO

If you prefer not to break up the Kumar video into two parts, you will be able to show the whole story of Kumar in one video.

Link <https://ijm.box.com/s/34yybcfs0pkudn49dcc8gh82l31ip4ca>

FREEDOM PARTNER VIDEO

This video will serve as a tool to use at the end of the sermon as you ask your congregation to partner with IJM as Freedom Partners.

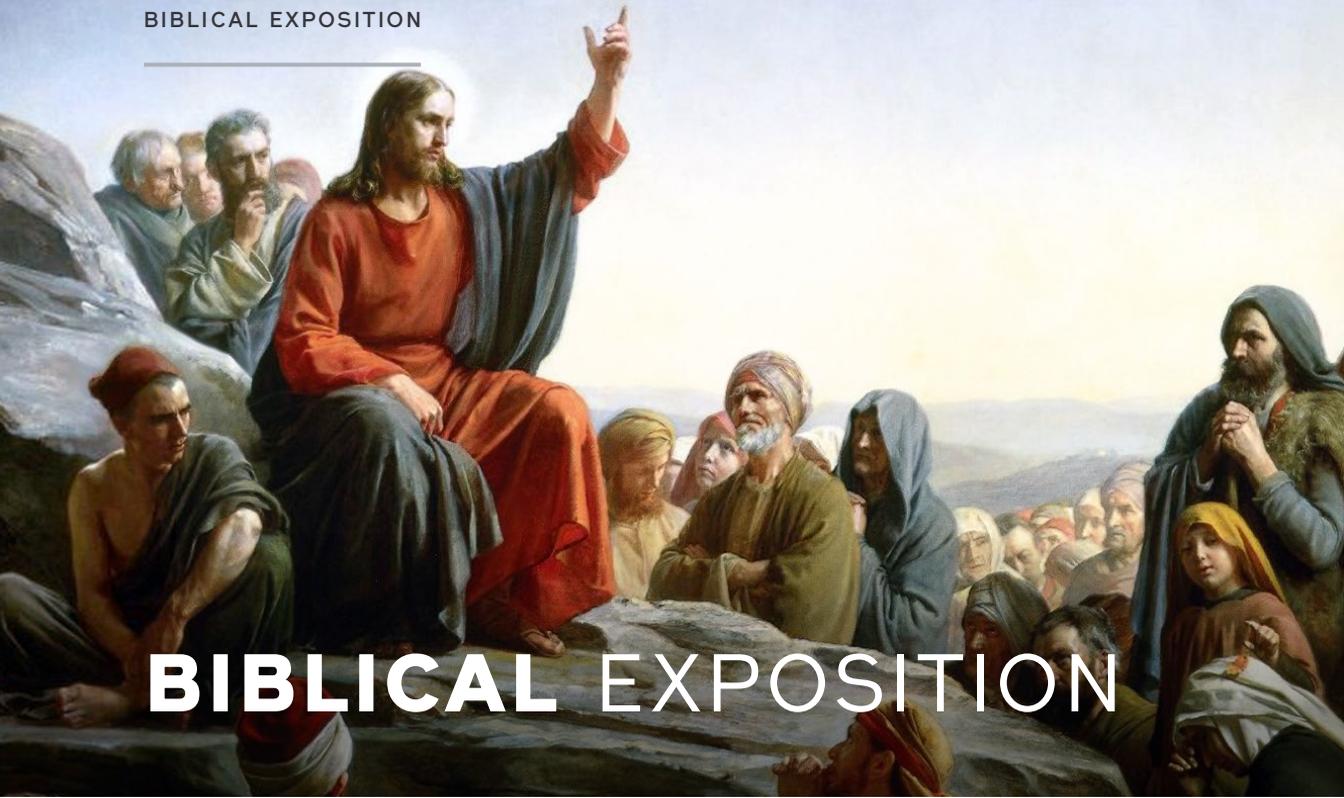
Link <https://ijm.box.com/s/34yybcfs0pkudn49dcc8gh82l31ip4ca>

UNTIL ALL ARE FREE VIDEO

A general intro video that explains the vision and passion behind the work of rescuing slaves. This video would be a good intro video on Freedom Sunday or as a promo video in an announcement in the weeks leading up to Freedom Sunday.

Link <https://ijm.box.com/s/34yybcfs0pkudn49dcc8gh82l31ip4ca>

**Telling Kumar's story in two parts allows the speaker to talk about the evil and darkness of slavery without so quickly resolving the situation with rescue and restoration. It allows the speaker to present God's view of justice between the two videos.*



LUKE 4

Jesus, in Luke 4:18-21, is announcing publicly the reason for his ministry. He is grabbing the microphone and stating, “This is who I am and what I am about!” Jesus declares himself the fulfillment of the OT promise found in Isaiah 61. The “Good News” that Jesus is here to proclaim includes:

- Freedom for prisoners
- Sight to the blind
- Set the oppressed free

Jesus’ ministry of good news was not simply to tell people of the good news of salvation. But it encompassed justice and freedom for the oppressed. The fulfillment of the promise found in Luke 4 is one that includes God’s deliverance of the oppressed. That’s what Jesus’ ministry was about!

Jesus is announcing the good news to the poor, which is usually understood to be the spiritually poor. However, throughout the book of Luke, we see Jesus

drawing near to those who are actually economically poor (as well as spiritually and socially poor). Jesus' ministry was to the marginalized in society, those left most vulnerable to oppression and injustice. Today, poverty leaves billions of people without basic protection from the law. Slavery and violence would not be so widespread if it were not for the poverty that plagues so many areas of the world.

Jesus' declaration was that he had arrived. And his arrival ushered in a ministry that was focused to the marginalized and poor of society. And that any ministry to the poor must include addressing the issues of justice and freedom.

ISAIAH 58:1-14

Isaiah 58 is a deeply convicting and deeply challenging passage in Scripture. It starts out by calling out the Israelites for their frustration and complaints. They are engaging in spiritual practices but without the desired effect. However, God turns the tables on them to tell them what they are missing. They have been engaged with rituals of worship, but have neglected some of the practices that are near to God's heart.

God redefines the fasting that the Israelites were doing. He challenges them to see that justice and mercy are essential for their spiritual devotion. In other words, one cannot simply focus on their own spiritual lives while neglecting the needs of others.

And the promise that he has for those that pay attention to justice and mercy in their devotion is that God will answer their calls and he will answer their cries. They will flourish in the land and find joy and triumph in their spiritual lives.

In other words, the very aspect of their spiritual devotions that left the Israelites feeling empty was the lack of devotion to justice and mercy for the oppressed. Once they pay attention to that type of fasting, they will enjoy the very thing that they sought after in the first place.

GOOD SAMARITAN – LUKE 10:25-37

This parable highlights the commitment that a “neighbor” must have to help those in need. As the Samaritan encountered the man in need, he took pity on him, took care of his wounds, gave up his own donkey for him and set him up for long term care, even at his own expense.

The man who was a victim of violence was noticed by all 3 men (Priest, Levite & Samaritan). However, only one of them was willing to intervene in the situation to bring about his full restoration. Perhaps that’s why the others were unwilling to stop. But the clear message is that in order to be a neighbor to those that we encounter who are victims of violence, we must be willing to emotionally engage with their situation (“took pity on him”), physically care for their needs (“bandaged his wounds”) and carry their care to the point of completion (“when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have”).

Jesus is challenging our understanding of mercy and justice for the oppressed. It is not simply awareness that matters, it must be a level of engagement that ultimately costs us something.

LECTIONARY

Freedom Sunday: September 25, 2016

Reflections on Lectionary passages for the 19th Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 21 / Year C / RCL

Track 1

Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15

Psalms 91:1-6, 14-16

1 Timothy 6:6-19

Luke 16:19-31

or

Track 2

Amos 6:1a, 4-7

Psalms 146

1 Timothy 6:6-19

Luke 16:19-31

- **SUGGESTED COLLECT** 21. *For Social Justice* — Almighty God, who created us in your own image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom,

help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

- **GOSPEL READING** Like many, or all, of Jesus' parables, there are many ways scholars and preachers have used this parable. Clearly, Jesus is foreshadowing his own resurrection, and validating the truth we learn from Moses and the prophets. An interesting and important point could also be made about the significance of the characters, and extremely poor and ill man (named as Lazarus) in contrast to a well-to-do, wealthy Jew (unnamed). There is implication in this parable that the rich man failed to care for Lazarus in a manner instructed by the OT texts. For Freedom Sunday, a powerful parallel could be made about our connection to and treatment of the poor, oppressed, and enslaved in the world today.
- **EPISTLE READING** This is a classic warning from Paul of the "love of money" and its link as "a root of all kinds of evil." This is a strong word to free and financially stable people in light of over 45 million slaves in our world today. Further, Paul contrasts those who fall into temptation pursuing riches as one who would "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness." The Greek word for "righteousness" in this text is *dikaioσύνη*. This word has the meaning of both righteousness and justice. Pursuing justice, fighting to make the broken things of this world the way they ought to be by God's design, is a part of the description of a "man of God."
- **PSALM 146** This psalm has very direct and clear words to say to the church about joining the fight to end slavery for good. Focus on verses 6 and 7 as a reflection on the character of the God we worship, who made us, and who gives justice to the oppressed!

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

MICAH 6:8 (NIV)

*⁸He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.*

ISAIAH 1:17 (NIV)

*¹⁷Learn to do right; seek justice.
Defend the oppressed.
Take up the cause of the fatherless;
plead the case of the widow.*

MATTHEW 23:23 (NIV)

²³“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

ECCLESIASTES 4:1 (NIV)

*¹Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun
I saw the tears of the oppressed—
and they have no comforter;
power was on the side of their oppressors—
and they have no comforter.*

HABAKKUK 1:3-4 (NIV)

³Why do you make me look at injustice?
Why do you tolerate wrongdoing?
Destruction and violence are before me;
there is strife, and conflict abounds.
⁴Therefore the law is paralyzed,
and justice never prevails.
The wicked hem in the righteous,
so that justice is perverted.

PSALM 10:17-18 (NIV)

¹⁷You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted;
you encourage them, and you listen to their cry,
¹⁸defending the fatherless and the oppressed,
so that mere earthly mortals
will never again strike terror.

PSALM 35:10 (NIV)

¹⁰My whole being will exclaim,
“Who is like you, Lord?
You rescue the poor from those too strong for them,
the poor and needy from those who rob them.”

PROVERBS 14:31 (NIV)

³¹Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker,
but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

STATISTICS

SLAVERY

Over 45 million people are held in slavery today.

(Global Slavery Index)

1 in 4 slaves are children.

(International Labour Organization)

SEX TRAFFICKING

Credible and conservative estimates of global sex trafficking indicate that there are between 4.2 million and 11.6 million people held in forced commercial sexual exploitation.

(The Locust Effect)

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking generates about \$150 billion a year—two-thirds from commercial sexual exploitation.

(International Labour Organization)

A child goes missing in India every 8 minutes. And nearly ½ are never found.

(National Crime Records Bureau)

INJUSTICE

Globally, 4 billion people live outside the protection of the law.

(United Nations)

IJM FACTS

ANTI-SLAVERY

IJM is the largest international anti-slavery organization in the world.

VISION

Rescue thousands. Protect millions. Prove that justice for the poor is possible.

RESCUE

More than 28,000 people rescued from oppression

PROTECTION

Today, we are helping to protect more than 21 million people from violence around the world.

WHERE WE WORK

Seeking justice in nearly 20 communities around the world.

TRAINING

Over 37,000 officers and officials trained since 2012.

CONVICTIONS

Over 1,100 convictions against slave owners, rapists and other criminals.

STORIES

BACKGROUND ON KUMAR'S STORY

[Click here for the background on the story of Kumar.](#)

CEBU, PHILIPPINES

IJM did a project in the city of Cebu in the Philippines to combat sex trafficking of minors. After five years of comprehensively working with all stakeholders in the public justice system, independent auditors confirmed a 79% reduction in the number of minors in the sex industry! This is massive. The Filipino government then decided to scale this strategy to several other major metropolitan areas. By the grace of God, in the span of just a decade or two, we may see the near eradication of sex trafficking of minors in the Philippines. [Click here for more info on the story of transformation in Cebu.](#)

CAMBODIA

In Cambodia, a country that used to be considered “ground zero” for pedophiles and sex tourists, 14 years of collaboration between Cambodian leaders, police, courts, social services and the NGO community has made a dramatic change for Cambodia’s children. A 2015 prevalence study conducted by IJM found that the prevalence of young minors in the largest commercial sex markets in the country—once estimated to be as high as 15-30%—has been virtually eradicated... to less than 1 tenth of 1 percent. [Click here for more information on the story of transformation in Cambodia.](#)

There are certainly other challenges to face in Cambodia and the Philippines. But let’s pause for a moment and acknowledge that there are thousands of girls and women who will now never be abused in the first place. And let’s let this miraculous truth sink in: It is more and more possible every day that we could see the end of slavery in our lifetime.

QUOTES

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Letter from Birmingham, Alabama jail, 1963

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

“Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves; and, under a just God, cannot long retain it.”

The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln edited by Roy P. Basler, Volume III, “Letter To Henry L. Pierce and Others”, 1859

BRYAN STEVENSON

“...the opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is justice.”

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption, 2015

NELSON MANDELA

“As long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality persist in our world, none of us can truly rest.”

Live 8 Concert, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2005

CALL TO ACTION

We want to see the church step up as leaders in the fight against slavery. This movement starts when people in the church are willing to become Freedom Partners.

EACH PERSON WHO JOINS US BRINGS US CLOSER TO SLAVERY'S END.

- **Freedom Partners give \$24** or more monthly to provide rescue and restoration.
- **Freedom Partners pray** and walk with us as close friends, hearing and praying for our most urgent needs.
- **Freedom Partners advocate** for key legislation that seeks to end slavery.

Lead by example. It is a powerful and sincere message if you become a Freedom Partner as well. And it is inspiring to other churches when your church helps lead the movement.

When inviting the church into this journey, clearly explain it as a monthly commitment that will take sustained effort. **But focus on the fact that this effort clearly leads to rescue and lasting restoration for children and families trapped in slavery.**

Direct people to sign up right then and there on their phone. [They can do so at www.ijm.org/fp](http://www.ijm.org/fp). We are also including Freedom Partner packets and sign-up forms for the IJM Info Table. Everyone who signs up on their phone will also receive an official Freedom Partner welcome packet in the mail.

Below are three ways to end the sermon all calling your church to join the community of Freedom Partners seeking slavery's end.

ELMINA CASTLE

I want to invite each and every one of us to join a global community of believers seeking to end slavery by becoming Freedom Partners. Freedom Partners **give** \$24 or more monthly to provide rescue and restoration. They **pray** and walk with IJM as close friends, hearing and praying for the most urgent needs. And Freedom Partners **advocate** key legislation that seeks to end slavery. Watch this video.

PLAY VIDEO: FREEDOM PARTNER

I want to invite everyone to take out their phone and go to www.ijm.org/fp and sign up right now. You can also sign up at the IJM Info Table. And all who sign up can pick up their Freedom Partner packet at the IJM Info Table as well.

As you are signing up, I want to tell you about Elmina Castle.

Elmina Castle is a popular tourist stop in the African country of Ghana. But it actually has a dark history. Elmina Castle was one of the biggest trading posts for slaves in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade centuries ago. It is estimated that over 30,000 slaves were held underneath Elmina Castle in a dungeon.

And the thing about this dungeon was that there was only one air vent for all of the people underneath. And, as you can imagine, many died of suffocation and disease ran rampant in the compressed quarters. But this vent was directly in front of the door to the church in the castle.

And so, every Sunday, church goers would literally have to step over the vent to go to church as the cries of those begging for their freedom would fill the air around them. In fact, it is said that the congregation was often asked to sing more loudly as to drown out the cries from underneath. So, Sunday after Sunday, these people could no longer choose ignorance of the problem. They had to make a willful decision not to help.

This Sunday, we have heard the cries of boys like Kumar. We've heard the cries of over 45 million children, men and women worldwide. And I'm afraid that we can no longer choose ignorance of the problem anymore.

We believe in a God who tenaciously seeks all who are lost. Kumar was lost, living in the grip of slavery. God sent his people to find him. God is calling us to use our freedom to find those who are lost. We do live in freedom. And now we know more about the problem than even Kumar did.

Will you use your freedom; will you use your influence; will you use your prayers; will you use your resources to bring freedom to all? Because none of us are free **until all are free.**

GRANDCHILDREN TRIBUNAL

I want to invite each and every one of us to join a global community of believers seeking to end slavery by becoming Freedom Partners. Freedom Partners **give \$24** or more monthly to provide rescue and restoration. They **pray** and walk with IJM as close friends, hearing and praying for the most urgent needs. And Freedom Partners **advocate** key legislation that seeks to end slavery. Watch this video.

PLAY VIDEO: FREEDOM PARTNER

I want to invite everyone to take out their phone and go to www.ijm.org/fp and **sign up right now**. You can also sign up at the IJM Info Table. And all who sign up can pick up their Freedom Partner packet at the IJM Info Table as well.

As you are signing up, I want to tell you that someday I hope to have some grandchildren. (Not tomorrow... but someday.) And I often wonder what it will be like as they begin to ask me questions about what the world was like at the turn of the millennium. I wonder if someday I will sit before a tribunal of these

grandchildren as they ask me some difficult questions. Questions like: “Grandpa, where were you? Where were you when there was an epidemic of violence that was devastating the world’s poor? Where were you when there were more slaves than at any time in human history? Where were you when children were being trafficked into brick kilns and brothels?” I want to be able to say that I linked arms with courageous friends at my church, and that along with IJM, along with a global movement of Christ-followers, I want to be able to say that I was in the middle of the fight. And that we didn’t stop until all were free.

DARE TO HOPE

I want to invite each and every one of us to join a global community of believers seeking to end slavery by becoming Freedom Partners. Freedom Partners **give** \$24 or more monthly to provide rescue and restoration. They **pray** and walk with IJM as close friends, hearing and praying for the most urgent needs. And Freedom Partners **advocate** key legislation that seeks to end slavery. Watch this video.

PLAY VIDEO: FREEDOM PARTNER

I want to invite everyone to take out their phone and go to www.ijm.org/fp and sign up right now. You can also sign up at the IJM Info Table. And all who sign up can pick up their Freedom Partner packet at the IJM Info Table as well.

As you are signing up, I want to tell you that the story of Kumar is the story of one person. There are still over 45 million people who are just like him, but they are still enslaved. Many of them, like Kumar, are young children and they too want to study, want their parents, and just want to play. But they can’t. They can’t because they are owned by another human being. And, like Kumar, when they are sick they don’t find the compassionate hands of their mother offering comfort, but rather the harsh hands of their master offering cruelty. They live without hope. They live in despair.

What they don't know, though, is that today is the day that someone on the other side of the world will do something that will ultimately be part of bringing rescue to them.

You see, if you are a slave and you have never imagined a life beyond the life you've known, you cannot imagine that there is another side of the world, and that on that other side of the world there are people who live in freedom, and not only do they live in freedom, but they have power and resources that are beyond anything that a slave could even dream are possible. And if they knew that such a person existed, and that such power and resources were in that person's possession, and that that person was a disciple of Jesus—the one who used all of his power and resources to set others free—then for the first time in their life, they might have a reason to hope.

If Kumar, while he was still a slave, heard that a person like you existed—he might dare to hope.

Jesus has called us to be like him. To be people of love and compassion. To be people who use our power and resources to set others free.

This morning you have a chance to do just that. This is the moment. This is the moment for another Kumar. This is the moment for you to respond and be that person that he can only dream exists.

SERMON SCRIPT

Here is a companion sermon written by members of our Church Mobilization team. This sermon is written as an example of what a Freedom Sunday sermon could sound like. Feel free to use it as much (or as little) as you'd like.

UNTIL ALL ARE FREE

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2016

Last week I was driving on the beltway in DC. And (as usual) there was road construction and (as usual) I was frustrated. I was trying to get home and all of a sudden there's this long line of traffic preventing me.

About a mile ahead I can see the point at which the road opens back up. It looks so beautiful! The sun is shining, the birds are singing. If you were a less pastoral person than me, a situation like this might make you frustrated—angry even. But not me. I'm sitting patiently in my car practicing prayer, and deep breathing. And I'm waiting. Because there are rules about these things and I take the rules of the road seriously.

So I wait my turn.

And what happens when I finally get up to the choke point where the road opens up? A car—a RED sports car—comes whizzing by in the breakdown lane and steals my right of way! I got so angry I wanted to get out of the car and settle the score! It felt like such an injustice after all that waiting!

When the Bible talks about injustice, this is not what it's talking about. You see, when the Bible talks about injustice, it is referencing a very specific kind of sin. Injustice is the abuse of power to take from others the good things that God intends for them—their life, their dignity, and the fruits of their love and their labor.

The book of Ecclesiastes gives a simple and painful picture of injustice.

*Again I looked and saw all the oppression
that was taking place under the sun:
I saw the tears of the oppressed—
and they have no comforter;
power was on the side of their oppressors—
and they have no comforter.
—Ecclesiastes 4:1 (NIV)*

This is the biblical picture of injustice. This is the picture of someone who has power oppressing someone who does not. This is someone who has, taking from another who has not.

We see this in the story of King David, the beloved poet-king of Israel. He wakes up one spring morning and sees a woman a couple of rooftops over from his palace. He decides he wants her for his wife. So he abuses his kingly authority to take Bathsheba for himself. Then he tries to cover up this abuse by getting rid of her husband—having him purposefully murdered in war. When the prophet Nathan confronts David (in 2 Samuel 12), he confronts the King primarily on his abuse of power.

We could say that these are ancient texts and stories. We might like to imagine that our world today is different, less brutal and more just. But my connection with an organization called International Justice Mission has helped me understand that this is simply not true. Ecclesiastes and David's story are just as current in our world today as they were thousands of years ago. Let me offer you just a couple of statistics:

- According to the Walk Free foundation, there are over 45 million people in the world who live as slaves.
- To put that into perspective, 45 million is a greater population than 158 countries in the world.
- 45 million is more slaves than were trafficked during the 400 years of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.
- 45 million people enslaved today is more than at any other time in history.

How is this possible? How is it possible that 45 million people could be living in the yoke of slavery and we don't know it? There are many people out there that say, "Hasn't slavery ended? Isn't slavery something from our history books?"

I can assure slavery still exists. Although this is not my world or your world, this is their world...this is Kumar's world.

PLAY FILM: KUMAR'S STORY

Imagine being just 7 years old, orphaned and alone. The only family you know has sold you off to a brick kiln owner, a harsh man who yells at you or ignores you. Who forces you to wake up before the sun and join dozens of adults twice your size in a long day's labor of molding, hauling and stacking heavy clay bricks. You are confused and terrified. You do not know you are a slave, because you are only a child. This is Kumar's life—and the story shared by millions of other children and families across India and the developing world today.

Month after month of forced labor left Kumar's tiny hands scarred and raw. Kumar wanted desperately to be in school, to make friends, to play, to feel love, to be a boy. He said he was literally afraid to think about his future, so he never did. There was only the work, and the harsh fists of his owners to keep him moving.

I wish I could say that Kumar is just one story. But he is not. The reality is that



Pictured: Kumar (on left)

slavery is pervasive and violent across India. Enslaved women fear being gang raped by their owner's henchmen. Brutal violence is used to create fear and prevent escape. One victim's arm was doused with kerosene and lit on fire for escaping. A mother's stomach was stomped when she tried to stop one henchmen from beating her two-year-old daughter. Entire villages are often promised a job several states away, but when they arrive, they are enslaved in a community with no connections and where they do not even speak the local language. They tell us they've been beaten, shocked with electrical wires, tied up in cow sheds, treated as less than human.

Kumar is just one of what is estimated to be nearly 12 million slaves in India alone. Just to be clear—1/3 of the world's slaves are estimated to live in India. 12 million people who are made in God's image, but have been reduced to a thing, a non-person, a slave.

[Pause here—give a quiet moment to acknowledge the weight of it all]

What do we do with this information? How do we respond to Kumar's reality, and the reality of millions of others? How are we to respond to such injustice?

The very best place to start would be to ask the question, "How does God feel about all this?" And as it turns out the answer to the question is pretty straight forward.

One place we could go to find the answer is Luke chapter 4 verses 14 through 20. This is the very point at which Jesus transitions from private life to public ministry. It's a crucial moment where Jesus decides to signal what his ministry, what the Kingdom of God on earth will be about. And it reads almost like a scene from a movie script.

¹⁴ Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me

to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

and recovery of sight to the blind,

to let the oppressed go free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

Luke 4:14-20 (NRSV)

In this synagogue, Jesus does what history counts as one of the most rockstar moves of all time. He announces who he is NOT by sending out a press release or starting a mass email to all of his friends. But rather by standing up and reading from the scroll of Isaiah. And not just any passage, he chooses a reading that foretells who he is. This was Jesus announcing, via the sacred words of Isaiah's prophecy, that the Messiah was standing in front of them all, that these words of promise were realized in Him.

Bring good news to the poor...

Proclaim release to the captives...

Recovery of sight to the blind...

Let the oppressed go free.

One way this passage has been understood is that Jesus' mission was about freeing us from sin. He brings good news to those of us who are poor in spirit. He proclaims freedom to us who are held captive to sin. He heals us who are blinded by our sin. He sets us free from the oppression sin causes in our lives. Freedom from shame, from alcohol, or eating disorders, or low self esteem, freedom from past trauma. This is true! And it's good news for all of us.

But if we stop there, we miss out on the deeper truth that Jesus is proclaiming. Jesus is declaring himself the Prophet/Priest/King, the Messiah, whose mission is not just to rescue people from spiritual bondage, not just to offer spiritual freedom. But Jesus is declaring the very, very good news that He's offering freedom from all that seek to imprison those he loves. And this proclamation of Jesus extends to people like Kumar—those physically imprisoned by other people.

This, in fact, is how my friends at International Justice Mission have come to understand the mission of Jesus. IJM was founded almost 20 years ago to embody this very call of Jesus for actual people like Kumar. That's why I can tell you today that Kumar is no longer suffering at the hands of a brutal brick kiln owner.

PLAY FILM: KUMAR'S RESCUE

Kumar remembers his day of rescue as a quick, life-changing turn of events—but really it had taken months of careful planning as IJM staff and local police investigated the atrocities happening within the kiln. Together, IJM and local authorities infiltrated the kiln, documented legal evidence and brought Kumar and the other slaves to freedom.

A boy once terrified to think about his future suddenly had his chance. IJM counselors stayed by his side and promised him over and over that he was finally safe, that this was real. As the good news sunk in, Kumar was overjoyed. He told us, “When I heard that somebody is going to release me from here, I felt very happy. I was happy I no longer needed to suffer, that my life was about to change.”

Since that turning point, everything has changed for Kumar. Today Kumar is thriving in his freedom. He’s a deep thinker, a fantastic dancer and a college student. In fact, he even joined our team in Bangalore, fighting to bring freedom to people enslaved just like he was. And Kumar is now a Christian. You see, the first link in the redemptive chain of salvation for Kumar was his REAL freedom from captivity. Now he has experienced REAL freedom and spiritual freedom in Christ.

This is good news! There is freedom from oppression because of the work of God’s people following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Kumar’s story of rescue is great, but it seems like just a drop in the bucket. I assure you it isn’t. Because the scope of what we and IJM are doing together grows every day.

IJM consists of a little over 700 Christian lawyers, criminal investigators, trauma social workers, pastors, graphic designers, every job you can think of. They work in nearly 20 communities throughout Africa, Latin America, South and Southeast

Asia. We are not just seeing real freedom for *individuals* caught in slavery, we are seeing real freedom for *whole cities* and in fact, *whole countries*.

IJM did a project in the city of Cebu in the Philippines to combat sex trafficking of minors. After five years of comprehensively working with all stakeholders in the public justice system, independent auditors confirmed a 79% reduction in the number of minors in the sex industry! This is massive. The Filipino government then decided to scale this strategy to several other major metropolitan areas. By the grace of God, in the span of just a decade or two, we may see the near eradication of sex trafficking of minors in the Philippines.

And in Cambodia, a country that used to be considered “ground zero” for pedophiles and sex tourists, 15 years of collaboration between Cambodian leaders, police, courts, social services and the NGO community has made a dramatic change for Cambodia’s children. A 2015 prevalence study conducted by IJM found that the prevalence of young minors in the largest commercial sex markets in the country—once estimated to be as high as 15-30%—has been virtually eradicated... to less than 1 tenth of 1 percent.

There are certainly other challenges to face in Cambodia and the Philippines. But let’s pause for a moment and acknowledge that there are thousands of girls and women who will now never be abused in the first place. And let’s let this miraculous truth sink in: Every day, we move closer to seeing the end of slavery in our lifetime. From the perspective of the Mission of Jesus, this is precisely what happens when the Church stands up to the call that Jesus issued in Luke 4. It’s a call go after the lost sheep, the wounded lambs who have been kicked to the curb, forgotten. This is a central part of the biblical narrative and of Christian history! For example...

- In Exodus Chapter 3, God hears the cry of the Israelites and sends Moses to confront the most powerful empire in the known world until finally the Israelites are set free.

SERMON SCRIPT

- In the late 1700s, God hears the cry of those enslaved in the British empire, and he calls William Wilberforce. Wilberforce tenaciously introduces a bill 16 years in a row in parliament to end slavery. Finally, the bill is passed and slavery comes to an end in the British empire.
- Again in the 1800s, God hears the cry of those enslaved in the U.S. and he calls Harriet Tubman to mobilize a vast network of churches and safe houses to create safe passage to freedom. And God inspired Abe Lincoln, despite tremendous political challenge, to use his position and influence to bring an end to slavery in the United States.
- And even now, God is using our friends at IJM to bring freedom for Kumar and boys in the fishing industry in Ghana and girls in a brothel in Mumbai... for thousands of people every year!

I want to issue a very specific challenge this morning. I want to challenge us as a church to join Jesus on the bold mission—and specifically to join with IJM in the fight against injustice—until all are free. We can be a part of the solution, we can be a part of this miraculous transformation, we can be witnesses to the Kingdom of God as it shatters the darkness! I want to invite each and every one of us to join a global community of believers seeking to end slavery by becoming Freedom Partners. Freedom Partners **give \$24** or more monthly to provide rescue and restoration. They **pray** and walk with IJM as close friends, hearing and praying for the most urgent needs. And Freedom Partners **advocate** key legislation that seeks to end slavery. Watch this video.

PLAY VIDEO: FREEDOM PARTNER

I want to invite everyone to take out their phone and go to www.ijm.org/fp and sign up right now. You can also sign up at the IJM Info Table. And all who sign up can pick up their Freedom Partner packet at the IJM Info Table as well.

As you are signing up, I want to tell you that the story of Kumar is the story of one person. There are still over 45 million people who are just like him, but they are still enslaved. Many of them, like Kumar, are young children and they too want to



study, want their parents, and just want to play. But they can't. They can't because they are owned by another human being. And, like Kumar, when they are sick they don't find the compassionate hands of their mother offering comfort, but rather the harsh hands of their master offering cruelty. They live without hope.

What they don't know, though, is that today is the day that someone on the other side of the world will do something that will ultimately be part of bringing rescue to them.

You see, if you are a slave and you have never imagined a life beyond the life you've known, you cannot imagine that there is another side of the world, and that on that other side of the world there are people who live in freedom, and not only do they live in freedom, but they have power and resources that are beyond anything that a slave could even dream are possible. And if they knew that such a person existed, and that such power and resources were in that person's possession, and that that person was a disciple of Jesus—the one who used all of his power and resources to set others free—then for the first time in their life, they might have a reason to hope.

If Kumar, while he was still a slave, heard that a person like you existed—he might

dare to hope.

Jesus has called us to be like him. To be people of love and compassion. To be people who use our power and resources to set others free.

This morning you have a chance to do just that. This is the moment. This is the moment for another Kumar. This is the moment for you to respond and be that person that he can only dream exists. 🌍



INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

PO Box 58147
Washington, DC 20037

T 703.465.5495
F 703.465.5499

IJM.org



INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION is a global organization that protects the poor from violence throughout the developing world. IJM partners with local authorities to rescue victims of violence, bring criminals to justice, restore survivors, and strengthen justice systems.

Highlighted as one of 10 non-profits “making a difference” by *U.S. News and World Report*, IJM’s effective model has been recognized by the U.S. State Department, the World Economic Forum and leaders around the globe, as well as featured by *Foreign Affairs*, *Forbes*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *The Times of India*, *The Phnom Penh Post*, National Public Radio, and CNN, among many other outlets.

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