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Strangers No More: Welcoming the Migrants and Refugees

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READINGS
OT Lev. 19:9-10, 33-37; Psalm 146; Epistle Eph. 2:11-22; Gospel Luke 10:25-37

Key Verse –

“Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”(Luke 10:36–37)

We live in a world where millions of people are on the move. Some migrate in search of employment, education, or a better future. Others are forced to flee because of war, persecution, natural disasters, poverty, or political instability. Some leave their homes voluntarily; many leave with no choice at all. Behind every migrant or refugee is a human story – a family separated, a child searching for safety, a parent hoping for dignity, or an elderly person longing simply to belong.Migration is not merely a political or economic issue; it is a deeply biblical concern. Throughout Scripture, God repeatedly commands His people to care for the stranger, welcome the foreigner, protect the vulnerable, and remember that they themselves were once strangers. The Bible reminds us that God’s people have often been migrants. Abraham left his homeland. Joseph lived as a foreigner in Egypt. Moses fled into Midian. Ruth crossed borders in search of hope. Israel wandered in the wilderness. Even our Lord Jesus Christ became a refugee in His infancy when Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt to escape the violence of King Herod.Therefore, the Church cannot remain indifferent to the struggles of migrants and refugees. Hospitality is not merely a cultural virtue; it is a Christian calling. The theme for this Sunday, “Strangers No More: Welcoming the Migrants and Refugees,” invites us to reflect on God’s inclusive love and our responsibility to become communities of welcome, compassion, and justice.Today’s readings beautifully develop this message. Leviticus commands Israel to love the stranger. Psalm 146 reveals God’s care for the foreigner and the oppressed. Paul proclaims that Christ has broken down every dividing wall and made us one family. Finally, Jesus teaches through the Parable of the Good Samaritan that true neighbourliness is measured not by proximity but by compassion.

1. God Commands Us to Welcome the Stranger

The book of Leviticus is often associated with laws and rituals, yet it contains one of the most compassionate commands in the Old Testament.God declares:“When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.”This command was revolutionary in the ancient world. Foreigners were often viewed with suspicion, denied protection, and excluded from society. Yet God instructed Israel not merely to tolerate strangers but to love them as themselves.The reason is deeply theological. Israel had once been strangers in Egypt. They knew what it meant to be vulnerable, powerless, and dependent upon

the mercy of others. Their own experience of God’s deliverance was to shape their treatment of foreigners.The same principle applies to Christians today. Spiritually speaking, every believer was once far from God. We were strangers to His covenant, separated by sin, and unable to save ourselves. God’s grace welcomed us before we ever deserved it.Therefore, Christian hospitality is not optional. It reflects the very character of God.Welcoming migrants and refugees does not simply mean opening our buildings. It means opening our hearts. It means seeing people not as statistics but as neighbours created in God’s image. It means respecting their dignity, listening to their stories, and helping them find hope in unfamiliar surroundings.The Church should become a place where no one feels invisible and where every stranger is treated as a guest of Christ.

2. God Defends the Vulnerable and Calls Us to Compassion

Psalm 146 describes the character of God in beautiful language.“The Lord watches over the strangers; He upholds the orphan and the widow.”This verse reveals God’s special concern for those who are vulnerable. Throughout Scripture, three groups frequently appear together: widows, orphans, and foreigners. They represent those with little social protection or economic security.God does not ignore them.He watches over them.He sustains them.He defends them.The Church is called to reflect this same compassion.Migrants and refugees often face enormous challenges. They may struggle with language barriers, unemployment, loneliness, discrimination, uncertainty, trauma, or separation from loved ones. Many have lost homes, possessions, and livelihoods. Some have witnessed violence or endured dangerous journeys.Compassion requires more than sympathy.It requires action.We are called to feed the hungry, assist the vulnerable, support children in education, accompany families in their struggles, and advocate for justice where people are exploited or neglected.Christian compassion does not ask first, “Where are you from?” It asks, “How can I help you?”The Church has always been at its best when it has stood beside those whom society overlooks. Throughout history, Christians have established shelters, hospitals, schools, relief programmes, and community ministries because they believed every human being bears the image of God.Whenever we welcome the stranger, we reveal something of God’s own heart.

3. Christ Has Broken Down Every Wall That Divides Humanity

Paul’s words in Ephesians provide the theological foundation for today’s theme.“You who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”He continues by declaring that Christ Himself is our peace, breaking down the dividing wall of hostility and creating one new humanity.In the first century, the wall between Jews and Gentiles represented centuries of division, prejudice, and exclusion. Through His death on the Cross, Jesus destroyed those barriers.The Gospel does not merely reconcile people to God.It also reconciles people to one another.The Church therefore becomes a new community where former strangers become brothers and sisters.Paul reminds believers that they are:“No longer strangers and aliens, but citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”This is one of the most beautiful descriptions of the Church in the New Testament.Our primary identity is no longer determined by nationality, ethnicity, language, culture, or social status.Our deepest identity is that we belong to Christ.This truth challenges every form of prejudice and discrimination.There is no place in the Church for superiority based on race, caste, tribe, nationality, wealth, or social position.Around the Lord’s Table, all believers stand equally in need of grace.In Christ, strangers become family.The Church should therefore become a visible sign of God’s reconciling Kingdom, where diversity is celebrated and unity is preserved through love.

4. Our Neighbour Is Anyone in Need of Mercy

The lawyer asked Jesus,“Who is my neighbour?”Instead of giving a definition, Jesus told the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan.A man travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho was attacked by robbers, stripped, beaten, and left half dead.A priest passed by.A Levite passed by.Both saw the wounded man but continued on their way.Then came a Samaritan – a person whom many Jews would have despised.He stopped.He cared.He bandaged the wounds.He placed the injured man on his own animal.He took him to an inn.He paid for his care.Jesus then reversed the original question.The issue is not, “Who qualifies to be my neighbour?”The real question is, “Will I become a neighbour to someone in need?”Migrants and refugees often lie wounded – not always physically, but emotionally, economically, socially, and spiritually.Like the Samaritan, we are called to cross barriers of race, religion, language, nationality, and culture in order to show mercy.Compassion often requires inconvenience.It costs time.It costs resources.It demands sacrifice.Yet this is precisely how Christ loved us.The Church cannot walk past wounded humanity.Every congregation should ask:How can we welcome newcomers into our fellowship?How can we support migrant workers, displaced families, international students, refugees, and those who feel alone?How can our churches become places of belonging rather than exclusion?Jesus concludes with the command:“Go and do likewise.”This remains the Church’s mission today.

Conclusion

The Scriptures for today speak with one clear voice.Leviticus commands us to love the stranger because we ourselves have known what it means to be strangers.Psalm 146 reminds us that God watches over the foreigner and defends the vulnerable.Paul proclaims that Christ has removed every dividing wall and made us members of one household.Jesus teaches that true neighbourliness is demonstrated through practical mercy rather than religious identity.The Gospel transforms strangers into neighbours and neighbours into family.As followers of Christ, we are called to build communities where every person is welcomed with dignity, every culture is respected, every life is valued, and every act of kindness reflects the love of God.In a world increasingly divided by fear, suspicion, and hostility, the Church has the opportunity to become a living witness to God’s inclusive grace.May our homes become places of hospitality.May our congregations become communities of belonging.May our hearts remain open to those whom God brings into our lives.And may we never forget that we too were once strangers – separated from God – but through the saving work of Jesus Christ, we have been welcomed into His eternal family.Therefore, let us go into the world as ambassadors of Christ’s love, extending mercy without prejudice, offering hope without discrimination, and proclaiming through both word and deed that, in Christ, we are strangers no more.

Amen.