

Cavy Bap - Prayer & Self Denial 2016 - 'Everybody in 1 canoe with no exception'

Week 4 - 3-7-16 - 'Sending Aliens (mission workers), Welcoming Aliens (refugees & migrants)'

Introduction

Welcome to the 4th (final) week of our NZ Baptist Mission 'Prayer and Self Denial'. This is our annual event to focus for a few weeks on physical and spiritual needs of the world beyond NZ. NZ Baptists have been working in overseas mission since about 1885. Currently we work in India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Macau and East Asia. The purpose of 'Prayer and Self Denial' is to raise support, prayer and funds for overseas mission.

Our theme this year is 'He waka eke noa' = 'Everybody in 1 canoe with no exception'... all working together for global mission. For the last 20 years, we've used a different container each year to collect funds. This year it's a 'cardboard waka'. May it remind you to keep paddling for mission.

(1) Sending Aliens (mission workers)

Most of you will be familiar with the last recorded words of Jesus to his disciples (in Matthew)...

Matthew 28:19-20 - The Great Commission

¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

We're told to 'go and make disciples of all nations'. It sounds easy. You hop on an aeroplane, arrive in another country, love people and share the good news, and people become disciples / followers of Jesus. Jesus is with you, so no problems... well... there's a bit more to it...

Our family's experience of arriving to live in Bangladesh in March 2002 was extremely challenging. Reading about culture shock / stress in books is one thing, experiencing it is another. Basically, your whole life is tipped upside down and spread on the floor. You don't know which way up is. There were so many things we didn't know and had to learn. At times we felt lost...

- Language - reduced to a baby from an articulate professional, humour - dry / obvious.

- Culture - behaviour, morals, ethics, law and punishment (on the street).

- Social status - hierarchical society, religion, family name, skin colour, wealth, education.

- Treatment of others - poor people, some foreigners, women, children, animals, beggars.

- Politics - public action, student action, street action, protests, violence, religion and politics.

- Religion - public sphere, azan call to prayer, Ramadan sirens.

- Group dynamics - exclusion, loneliness, personal space / intrusion, physical contact, hospitality.

- World view - beliefs, values, thought processes, truth telling, importance - personal / public.

- Physical things - poverty, filth, environment, pollution, crowds, driving, noise, food - spicy.

Culture shock / stress can be compared to sickness. If you've migrated to or lived in a very different culture for a long time, you'll know what I mean. They say foreigners who work in the majority world (poor and developing countries), are either 'missionaries, mercenaries or misfits'. I want to add another category - 'aliens'. The Bible refers to 'resident aliens / foreigners' in the land.

(2) God's special concern - Resident aliens / foreigners / migrants

God shows a special concern or bias for the welfare of 4 groups in the Old Testament: (i) widows, (ii) orphans, (iii) 'resident aliens / foreigners / migrants', and (iv) the poor.

Exodus 22:21-24

²¹ Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt. ²² Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. ²³ If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. ²⁴ My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless.

Deuteronomy 24:17-18

¹⁷ Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. ¹⁸ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.

12 Zechariah 7:9-10

⁹ This is what the Lord Almighty said: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. ¹⁰ Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.'

Psalms 146:7-9

⁷ He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, ⁸ the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. ⁹ The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

13 God is concerned about 'resident aliens / foreigners / migrants' - because they are vulnerable to social exclusion, neglect, prejudice, misunderstanding, injustice and poverty. God hates injustice and poverty.

Mission workers overseas also become 'resident aliens / foreigners / migrants' - who experience social exclusion, neglect, prejudice, misunderstanding, injustice... although not poverty.

➤ They need our love, prayer, support and understanding.

(3) Welcoming Aliens (refugees & migrants)

14 Our own communities in NZ include refugees and migrants from other countries, ethnicities and religions. Some are refugees from war, others escaping poverty and injustice. Many are Muslim, others are Hindu, a few are Buddhist, less are Christian, and very small number atheist. Either way, the Bible describes them as 'resident aliens / foreigners / migrants' - vulnerable to social exclusion, neglect, prejudice, misunderstanding, injustice and poverty. God hates injustice and poverty.

NZ is a settler country. Migrants and refugees have been arriving since around 1000 AD, beginning with Maori. Maori themselves, have been welcoming new arrivals for the last 200 years. It's our turn to welcome new arrivals. We're all refugees, we're all aliens, having come from somewhere. Certainly we are 'spiritual' refugees, having been welcomed by God, when we were so far away. Jesus was a refugee...

15 Matthew 2:13-16 - Jesus the refugee

¹³ ... an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. 'Get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.'

¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod... ¹⁶ When Herod realized that he had been outwitted... he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under...

A familiar story... Jealousy, murder, killing children, refugees etc. I wonder what it was like for Joseph, Mary and Jesus living in fear as refugees in Egypt? How were they treated as aliens?

When our family (Dooreys) returned from Bangladesh to NZ after 13 years, we noticed lots of South Asians, usually Indians... who look like Bangladeshi. I rush up to most South Asians and say

hello in Bangla. Mostly they look at me as though I'm the alien, as they don't speak Bangla, and aren't Bangladeshi. I'm always wanting to welcome them to my country, having lived in theirs.

The world now has the most refugees in history. Millions of displaced Syrians live in camps in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Egypt. Thousands have made it by boat from Turkey to Greece, hoping for Europe. We've also seen lots who didn't make it. The dead Syrian boy (Aylan) washed up on the beach shook the world. Key events and images are markers of history. This is one.

16

Dunedin recently volunteered and was selected as a refugee resettlement city by the NZ Govt. After considering whether to and how to get involved, I signed up as a Red Cross Refugee Support Volunteer for 6 months. This decision involved quite a bit of thought and talking to God. Usually I want to work with a Church or Christian organisation to help others. I was unsure whether to join a 'secular' Red Cross. However, I could see the best way for a Christian to become directly involved with the refugees, was to work with the Red Cross. My plan was / is to make connections between Cavy Baptist folk and the refugees for the long term.

17

The 1st Syrian refugees arrived in Dunedin to a wonderful airport welcome on Friday 22 April. There were 45 Syrians in 13 families beginning new lives. I'm part of a team of 3 volunteers working with one family (Mum, Dad and 2 daughters - aged 9 and 12) to help them settle in and move towards independence. The 1st week was exhausting, the 1st month very busy. Activities involved setting up their house, arranging whiteware and other stuff, driving them to various appointments (welcomes, doctor, hospital, WINZ, bank, school, shops and super markets, visiting other Syrian families), showing them how to use public transport (travelling with them), sorting out utilities (electricity, refuse and kerbside collection) and explaining all sorts of things (culture, living processes etc). We've been running hither and thither - a bit like having a new baby in the house. But the exciting thing, is that our Syrian family recently graduated to become more independent. Despite lots of struggles and heartache they're slowly adjusting to our alien culture.

The 2nd intake of Syrian refugees arrived in Dunedin, Friday 17 June. Olga Gilchrist is a Red Cross volunteer working with one family. >> [Interview Olga: \(i\) Tell us about the family, \(ii\) Tell us what you're doing, \(iii\) Why are you doing this work?](#) <don't use the text above as Olga will talk>

One huge need for the refugee families, is to keep warm over their first Dunedin winter. Cavy Baptist church bought / supplied / delivered dry split firewood (ready to burn) to the 11 (out of 13) families with fireplaces. This included: 18 people gave over \$2210; 3 people gave and delivered their own firewood; 6 people volunteered labour, vehicles, trailers; 2 people delivered 1 large bag of kindling and 1 large bag of pinecones plus firelighters to each of 11 houses; some folk helped stack firewood they had paid for. So... what was achieved by all this? I suggest the following:

18

- One group of human beings helped another group of human beings keep warm.
- Cavy Baptist Christians met Syrian Muslims as people, challenging TV stereotypes, learning their names, enabling an ongoing relationship - if they want to.
- The secular Red Cross appreciates what Cavy Baptist Christians did to help refugees.
- Syrian Muslims have experienced kindness from Cavy Baptist - the 'firewood church'.
- [Math 25, 'What you do for the least of these, you do it for me'](#). Love refugees = love Jesus.
- Syrian Muslims have shared their incredible hospitality - tea / coffee and food (2 way street).

19

There will be a new refugee intake every 2 months to Dunedin (not only Syrians). There are lots of opportunities and challenges ahead for the church, to be involved in local mission. Some ideas...

20

- Become a Red Cross volunteer for 6 months for a later refugee intake - it's life changing.
- Join a roster to drive the refugees home from their English classes - held next door at Carisbrook School 3 days per week. How close to our church could God bring these folk?

- Some of you are excellent gardeners. Some of the refugees want to be, but don't know about NZ plants and gardening. Form a gardening group to mentor the refugees to grow food.

I could say a lot more about these local mission opportunities, however, in summary...

21

Refuges and migrants in NZ are '**resident aliens / foreigners / migrants**' - vulnerable to social exclusion, neglect, prejudice, misunderstanding, injustice and poverty.

➤ They need our love, prayer, support and understanding.

(4) God's End Game - mission there, mission here

22

Whether we're Sending Aliens (mission workers) or Welcoming Aliens (refugees & migrants), what's God's 'end game' for our lives, communities and the world? Revelation presents a picture...

Revelation 7:9-17 - The Great Multitude in Heaven

⁹ After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb... ¹² Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen!'

23

¹⁵ ... 'he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. ¹⁶ Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'

God's 'end game' is to see...

- People from every nation, tribe, people-group and language, worshipping before Jesus.
- People sheltered by God's presence, with no more hunger, thirst, scorching heat, or tears. Jesus will be their shepherd leading them to springs of living water... Amen!

(5) Invitation to respond

I invite you to respond in 2 ways this morning...

24

(1) Commit to 'sending aliens' - sending mission workers overseas - sending waka

Our 'Prayer and Self Denial' theme has been 'He waka eke noa' = 'Everybody in 1 canoe with no exception'... all working together for global mission. Bring your PSD offering to the front, as an offering to God. If you have forgotten your PSD offering, then pledge it and bring it next week. Label it for mission. Include your 'giving number' and 50% will be eligible for tax rebate.

(2) Commit to 'welcoming aliens' - receiving refugees and migrants - receiving waka

People born or raised outside NZ, please come down to the front. Invite the rest of the church to come and welcome these aliens who have become NZers and Cavy Baptist family members.

<as you walk past the microphone, identify where you were born or raised>

Final song

Salvation belongs to our God, Who sits on the throne.

And to the Lamb. Praise and glory, wisdom and thanks, Honour and power and strength...

Be to our God forever and ever, Be to our God forever and ever, Be to our God forever and ever, amen.

And we, the redeemed shall be strong, In purpose and unity,

Declaring aloud, Praise and glory, wisdom and thanks, Honour and power and strength:

Be to our God forever and ever, Be to our God forever and ever, Be to our God forever and ever, amen. End.