Promises for All People – Outstretched Hands, Acts 4:30, 10/27/2019

*SermonTalk is an optional resource for Connect Group Leaders who desire to help their group underscore and apply key concepts from the sermon the previous week. The format and questions are just a menu from which you can choose or use as a foundation for further questions more specific to your group members.*

* Do you answer calls on your phone if you don’t recognize the number? Why? Why not?
* What opens a segment of society to be taken advantage of by others?

During October, UBC focused on ways God is at work in the community around us and ways we can be involved. Yet the very places where God is doing a mighty work are also the places where the need is evident. These can be places where people are exploited through force, fraud or coercion.

Morals may call us to do something. Yet as believers in a strong and mighty God, we are not just called to do something. We are empowered with the Holy Spirit to have a spiritual impact in the community around us. Because God is holy and cares for those who are taken advantage of, He works within us both to see the hurt and suffering and to sacrifice (time, talent, treasure) that God’s healing and hope will prevail. He allows us to be involved in His mighty work.

This is a portion of the heartbeat behind the 90/90 campaign that UBC has been focused on as we celebrate our 90th anniversary. With an attitude of joy, UBC is coming together to bless the community around us. Each person involved. Each person giving of what they have.

UBC identified three groups to gift.

* Seminary Hills Park Elementary School
* Gladney Center for Adoption
* Traffick 911

Last week we heard from George Lynch, CEO of Traffick 911. Trafficking, by definition, is the exploitation of the vulnerable. Traffick 911 steps into free youth from sex trafficking through prevention, identification and empowerment. Unfortunately, the need for their work is more than necessary. Last year, 204 minors (youth 18 years and younger) were taken out of trafficking and 54 of those were in Tarrant county when taken out.

* What emotions are evoked when the topic of sex trafficking comes up?
* When you consider Fort Worth – its malls, schools, neighborhoods - does 54 youth coming out of trafficking in seem high or low?

As George spoke, he focused on Psalm 12:5, “*Because the poor are plundered and the needy groan, I will now arise,” says the Lord.”* George emphasized that God is rising up to protect the hurting youth that are being exploited and God invites us to join his work. Force, fraud and coercion may be the weapons of the trafficker, but Traffick 911 uses awareness, recovery, and empowerment to counteract them. **Awareness** in the form of speaking with the community and with high risk children. **Recovery** in the form of working with local advocacy centers to build positive and healthy relationships with youth who are coming out of trafficking. And **Empowerment** which is intervention that helps these youth grow in greater self-worth.

Where can we step in? One option is to volunteer with the awareness aspect. The **prevention outreach** program trains **volunteers to speak in schools** or with high risk minors to help them know the ploys that will be used to trap them.

Second, **purchase gift cards** to fast food restaurants that can provide a safe space for volunteers to build friendships with those in recovery. These are long term conversations that build up these youth.

Finally, **pray for the spiritual warfare** that is taking place to keep these minors in trafficking situations and for the warfare that tries to keep the evil out of the sight of the community. As long as Satan is able to hide or disguise it, God’s mighty work is limited.

Let’s pray now for Traffick 911 and for those to whom they minister.

**Sermon Thoughts**

The current sermon series focuses on Promises For All God’s People. The focus is on Acts 4. Peter and John are seized for preaching and put into jail. As the persecution began, all the believers begin to pray. Jerimiah’s sermon centered on the final part of that prayer, Acts 4:29-30

*29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. 30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.*

The believers responded to hardship with worship and prayer. Instead of stretching out a personal hand of challenge, the prayer is for God to stretch out his powerful hand. And the believers were ready to stretch their hand out as well.

* When we take God’s promises to the community, we need to be bold.
  + Speak with God – pray boldly
  + Speak for others – advocate for the marginalized and the oppressed
  + Speak to the hurting – share the gospel and bring hope to those who need it
* Trust and know that God can move mountains

Application:

* In considering this passage of scripture, are there things that sidetrack you from praying boldly?
* What stops you from this boldness in his presence?
* In what way is God asking you to be bold in speaking up for others? What does that look like?
* What work do you see God doing in the community or in someone that he is calling you to step out of a safe zone and into a proactive stance of speaking up for something or speaking into the lives of someone hurting?
* When you dream the biggest, what mountain do you pray for God to move? Let’s share those and pray together for His mighty movement!