

September 22, 2019 – Freedom Sunday
“Justice in the Chaos”
Isaiah 1:10-17, Isaiah 51:1-6
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***Play Claire Tumushabe’s video before sermon.** (<https://vimeo.com/171981257>)

Justice in the chaos

It is such a pleasure for my wife and I to share this Sunday morning with you.

What a remarkable family you have here!

Let us pray.

You may have heard a little about our story, the summary of which is that Sandra and I met a six years ago, at my home church in the parking lot one Saturday morning. That morning, I was so tired from working on the morning program that I hosted from 6am. I decided to take a short break by taking a walk, went to the parking lot, and there she was. A beautiful lady pacing back and forth in some frustration of sorts. A voice spoke to me, “walk over and say hi” while another warned, “mind your business.” Long story short, I am really glad I listened to the former and now, here we are married for almost 3years.

(Give brief background of who I am and what I do) Until recently, I was serving as communications manager at IJM, at the Kampala field office. I left three months ago to get my Master of Laws at the University of Illinois College of Law. I am still very much involved with IJM’s mobilization efforts.

The last few weeks have been a rather difficult time for my wife and I because, about 10 weeks ago, we found out that we were going to be first time parents but weeks ago we unfortunately, lost our baby. It is G.K Chesterton that said, “the way to love anything is to realize that it may be lost.” Finding comfort, strengths and meaning in such times is truly difficult.

Words from a song by red rock worship have spoken to me more profoundly than anything.

I am weary from the waves
Crashing over every day
God of mercy, please come rescue me
I am longing for your voice
Gentle whisper in the noise
Father tell me everything is all right.

The bible teaches us that in the beginning, God created everything, and it was good. Until sin came into the world. The Fall unleashed a horrible sin into the world – the sin of violence. It begins with Cain killing Abel and gets so bad that, by the time of Noah, God says he’s going to end the whole human story with a flood because humans have “filled the earth with violence.” Gen. 3:16

Ultimately God decides not to end the human race. Instead, He begins working His long-term plan to redeem all of creation through the reign of His Son King Jesus who will personally establish a new heaven and a new earth where every tear is wiped away and there is no more death or mourning or crying or pain. Rev. 21:4

This is how we know the story will end.

But in the meantime, this violence constantly threatens to get out of control. Injustice happens each day. Today,

- The United Nations estimates that 25,000 children die each day of hunger or hunger-related causes.
- UNICEF—Nearly 2 million children are exploited in the global sex trade.
- National Geographic—27 million slaves in the world today
- 1 billion children globally experience violence and abuse.

As seen in our scripture passage this morning, Prophet Isaiah is warning the leaders of Jerusalem of their rebellion, idolatry and injustice. In Isaiah 1:4 he called them a “sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity (with sin, with injustice, with wrongdoing). He then urges them in Isaiah 1:17 learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

Jesus was asked by a lawyer in Luke 10:25, “And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested him, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” A discussion followed, in which the two “great commandments” were affirmed: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus then proceeds to tell the parable of the good Samaritan.

Unfortunately, history testifies of the glaring failure for Christians to love our neighbors.

Consider what happened during the holocaust, a were systematically murder of approximately 6,000,000 Jews, and the Rwanda genocide. Most do not connect with the reality that victims were people just like us—moms, dads, sisters, brothers, and grandparents. Most do not realize that 1 in 4 of those killed in the Holocaust were infants and children. These numbers easily evade us; we simply do not remember the horrific stories associated with each individual victim.

Alice was just a little girl when she first witnessed violence. She could hear her father’s anger as he yelled at her mother. And young Alice watched him violently beat her mother at her slightest mistakes.

These were the roles Alice and many of her friends in Northern Uganda watched men and women play in their lives as young children. Most of the women around them have been beaten by the ones they loved, forced to accept it as the norm while their justice system left them unprotected.

When she was older, domestic violence became a part of her reality too

Ivan* wore baggy clothes and braided hair when he introduced himself to her at the market where she sold charcoal. She didn't think he was her type; he looked young and irresponsible. But eventually, he won Alice over in his obsessive pursuit.

“When we just started together, Ivan was really good,” Alice said.

He took care of her when she became pregnant soon after they started their relationship. He told her to stop working when her pregnancy made her sick, taking on the role as sole provider for their growing family. Alice never considered leaving him. Not even when he started beating her.

He hit her, cheated on her with multiple women, and—a decade and three children later—left her to marry someone else.

The bills and unpaid school fees for their children began piling up along with the hungry nights. With little education, no job, and no source of income, Alice's only means for support was Ivan. Her family grew hungrier and sicker, leaving Alice exposed and vulnerable to Ivan's most violent attack yet.

Alice went back to Ivan one last time to beg for the help her family needed.

The begging grew into a heated argument. And the heated argument grew into something far worse. He kicked her to the ground, grabbed her by the neck as her 7-year-old daughter struggled to pull him off, and boxed at her head when she attempted to escape. All the while, her three children watched in horror.

At the hospital, Alice learned about an organization that takes on cases of violence against the poor. An organization called International Justice Mission. Her skepticism of whether they could actually help kept her from reaching out. But thankfully, she didn't need to. Because you did.

Because of you, when we heard Alice's story, we could reach out to her directly and offer to protect her, fight for her, and bring her justice.

You helped start a pilot project in Northern Uganda protecting women from violence within the home and treating it as the crime that it is. As a result, IJM called Alice after learning about her case, met with her, and ensured her case was heard in court. Ivan admitted to his abuse charges and—as part of his sentence—pays his family monthly for the support they need.

There's a long road ahead before these perceptions about domestic violence change in Uganda. But because of supporters like you, the road exists. You are helping show women like Alice that they're not alone, that husbands and fathers don't beat people they love, and that they can disrupt the perceptions that this is normal by seeking justice.

Today, Alice has a different role, thanks to supporters like you.

She's now an empowered woman. Your gifts helped Alice get a job making yogurt where she's earning her own money and no longer needs to depend on Ivan for financial assistance. She's also teaching her children what she now believes a relationship between a man and woman should look like.

“There will be a time when men will stop beating up their wives,” she said. “I see a future for women where if men are spoken to and advised, they’ll come to learn that even women have rights.”

Our God is the God of Justice. His love culminated in sending Jesus Christ on behalf of the world. Christ sends us his followers just as the Father sent him, to love our neighbors, to step out into the dark places and empty ourselves for the sake of God's work in the world.

To bring an end to injustice, oppression, slavery, poverty and violence. James 1:27 says, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

Deut 16:20 “Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”

Isaiah 51:4 “Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples.

Is the problem too big and difficult? Yes, is it but as Edmond Burke put it, “all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

The Anthropologist Margaret Mead put it this way, “never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

In the Philippines, IJM saw an incredible 79% drop in numbers of minors available in the commercial sex in Cebu. With efficient public justice system and great after care services. It possible to turn these stories around one at a time.

You can express this love for your neighbors today by first by becoming a freedom partner and supporting IJM work. Your contribution will go a long way in rescuing millions from slavery.