



Refugee Week

God's Heart for Justice

(Captain Sandra Pawar)

As a believer in Jesus Christ and in validity of the Christian scriptures, I believe that seeking justice and loving others is part of my mandate and calling. Within the pages of these scriptures are God's heart for justice and love for the widow, orphan, immigrant, and the poor; for the marginalised, oppressed, and forgotten. The scriptures contain such verses as:

"Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow" (Isaiah. 1:17).

"He 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" (Micah. 6:8).

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18–19).

These and so many other verses show that God cares for his people and that his heart is for us to be people of justice.

In his book, *Overrated*, Eugene Cho notes that, "Justice is the act of restoring something to fullness after it has been harmed. Justice is making things right." Bethany Hoang offers something similar in her book, *The Justice Calling*: "In its most direct biblical formulation, justice can best be described as setting things right." I believe that setting things right is God's desire for his world — that his people would begin to set right those things that have been broken and harmed.

As a follower of Jesus Christ, I look to him and his teachings to understand what it means to seek justice on behalf of others. I care for the plight of refugees and asylum seekers because within the teachings of Jesus Christ, I learn of a heart that beats for the welfare of others and that desires justice for those who have been treated unjustly. I read of a man who deeply loved and continues to love all his created ones. I read of a man who is heartbroken by the unjust treatment of those he loves. As I examine the question of why we should care for refugees, I again look to Jesus and this idea of setting things right.



Throughout scripture we are shown how to love our neighbour and taught why we should love him. If we were to love the way Jesus instructs us to, it would mean that “the refugee — whether from Syria, Somalia, or Burma, whether living one mile or ten thousand miles from us, whether Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, or an atheist, and whatever else might distinguish them — is our neighbour. The command of Jesus is to love them”, write Stephen Bauman, Matthew Soerens and Dr Issam Smeir in their book, *Seeking Refuge: On the Shores of the Global Refugee Crisis*. Jesus’ love for the stranger, the foreigner, the orphan, and the widow need to be at the heart of our pursuit of justice for them.

The teachings of Jesus tell us that all people have value and worth and are made in the image of God. Bauman, Soerens and Smeir remind us that “each human being, regardless of ethnicity, gender, legal status, disability, or any other qualifier, is ‘fearfully and wonderfully made’ by the creator God (Psalm 139:14), and as such has inherent dignity. We value and protect human life because we believe it is precious to God.” I care and am compelled to act on behalf of refugees because they are people made in the image of God. They have worth and value and should be protected and cared for as if they are the most valuable treasure in the world.

Hoang eloquently shares the heart of Jesus: “For every image, story, and statistic that overwhelms us, for every victim and perpetrator whose name we learn or even meet in person, for each glimpse of injustice that we see as we open our eyes wider, God sees infinitely more, and Scripture invites us into this seeing with God. God hears every cry of every single person who suffers, every victim who is abused, and every perpetrator who banks on the lie that God does not see or hear or act. God invites us to hear the cries and to respond with him — fuelled by his words, empowered by his Spirit.”

For every refugee who has endured treacherous seas and been sexually exploited and abused, for every refugee who has seen death and experienced loss, for every refugee who has no bed to lay their head and no one to hear their cries, God hears, He sees, and He cares, and He asks us to do the same. In his book, *The Just Shall Live by Faith*, Curtiss Paul DeYoung challenges us to act upon injustice, to not deafen our ears to the cries of the oppressed. He reminds us plainly that “the cries of the oppressed cry out to us and we must act”. This is why we act; this is why we care.

Questions:

1. Why does it matter that Jesus Christ has set, is setting and will continue to set all things right?
2. What scripture verse most resonates with you when it comes to God's heart for justice and his heart for those he created?
3. What motivates you to seek justice on behalf of refugees?
4. How can you become a person whose life reflects God's heart for justice and refugees?
5. What is one thing you can do this week to seek justice on behalf of refugees?