

Joshua 20:1-9

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[0:00] Then the Lord said to Joshua, Tell the Israelites to designate the city of refuge, As I instruct you through Moses, of the city gate and stay their case before the elders of that city.

Then the elders are to admit the fugitive into their city and provide place to live among them. If the avenger of blood comes in pursuit, the elders must not surrender the fugitive because the fugitive killed a neighbor unintentionally and without malice, a forethought.

They are to stay in the city until they have stood trial before the assembly and until the death of the high priest who is serving at that time.

Then they may go back to their own home in their town from which they fled. So they set apart Kadesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali, Sechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath Arba, that is Hebron, in the hill country of Judah, east of the Jordan, on the other side of Jericho.

They designate Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau in the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Galilee, in the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan in the tribe of Manasseh.

[2:00] Any of the Israelites or any foreign resident among them who killed someone accidentally could flee to this designated city and not to be killed by the avenger of blood, period of standing trial before the assembly.

Thank you. A bit of weird names on the passage. Can you agree with that?

Manasseh, Kiriath Arba, a lot of names. And you know the passage that the team have gave me, it's a wonderful passage that shows us how God's hurt for his people.

It has been through the whole Bible story. And the passage, it's especially this one, God spoke first with Moses.

We find them in Numbers 35. God tells Moses how he will divide the cities and how it's to establish the city of refuge for who kill a person unintentionally.

[3:19] And they're supposed to flee to their city to find refuge from the avenger of blood. And the passage shows us how God intentioned in protecting his people and saving his people and put these people in a safe place having through all the Bible.

So, in theology, hermeneutics, a lot of other weird names, we find something called typology.

And through the Old Bible, we can find typology of Christ, which means, in simple words, it's the way God showed the people in the Old Testament what will be on the future, on the New Testament.

And there is a lot of type of Christ. For example, Adam is one type of Christ. He is the first man. And the Bible mentions that he is the first Adam.

And Jesus is the last Adam. Another example, Noah's Ark. It's a type of Christ pointing to Jesus Christ.

[4:33] The Ark, the structure of wood, that the whole humanity who got in the Ark was saved, was sheltered there. And by the Ark, God preserved his people and it's a kind of a type.

And Joshua, now he is in charge of establishing the cities and really well located strategically for his people to flee there and find protection.

So in the ancient world, one of the greatest fears a person could have was to become a fugitive, like Adam just read.

A moment of anger, an accident, or an intended tragedy could change a person's entire life. So under the law of Israel, someone who accidentally caused the death of another person could flee from the avenger of blood to one of the cities.

And there find protection from the avenger of blood. And it could be a friend, a family member, seeking for justice. So God, on his wisdom and mercy, provides something extraordinary to protect those people from the avenger of blood.

[5:52] because it's described on Numbers 35, the reason was not to have people murdered each other, to not have murdered, you know, people being killed one after another.

So, cities of refuge. And we can see these cities and we can compare in what we call today a church.

If you see all the details, and that we're going to see in a moment, we can identify the church that we are gathering here today as a city of refuge.

So Joshua 20, it kind of reveals God's heart for us. And these pastors consider a type of Christ too. Before Israel settling in the promised land, God commanded Joshua to establish places where people could run, find safety, and receive a fair judgment.

[7:02] These cities were not just geographical cities, but they were locations where these people will go. and find a place, a safe place to live.

So they are picture of the character of God and powerful symbol of Jesus Christ. And that was the church represents.

And that's the church represents. The symbol of Jesus Christ is a place where we can run and find Jesus here. We can find mercy.

We can find protection. We can find hope in this place. Do you agree with that? Amen. So Joshua 20, verse 3, the verse mentions, so that anyone who kills a person accidentally or unintentionally may flee there and find protection from a vengeance of love.

So today we're going to look three quick, like really quick, four points, four truths from the cities of refuge. That we can say that today, on our days, the church represents the cities of refuge.

[8:16] And the first one, it's that we find in the passage, God provides a place of refuge for a guilty. Someone kills a person.

The first lesson they teach us that the city of refuge is a place where the guilty go. God is a God who makes a way for people to come to him.

And I remember the first, very first time when I came to the church and a church like this, I was invited for a friend and I was really excited, let's go to the church.

I have no idea what church was, like how church looked like. When I got inside the church, people received me, it was really welcome, hi, I thought, do you know me? Like, hug me, you're really welcome here, and then come here and find a seat.

And then, on the first time, like the very first moment, I felt loved. But at the same time, when I sat on the chair, I felt guilty.

[9:25] My heart went like, what are you doing here? You are a sinner. You are a sinner. And then I stayed quiet for a moment, thinking about my life.

My life came like in a second. And then through all my life, everything I have done, and that guilt took place in my heart. But, on his wisdom, and his mercy, God bring, or he prepared a place like this for the guilty run.

And that day, I run to the place where, yes, I found guilty when I enter, but at the same time, when someone started to preach the word of God, I felt loved by him.

The word of God came, and I felt loved inside. So, the person who fled to the city of refuge was not innocent, in the sense of nothing happened.

A life has been lost. There was a serious situation, but God made the provision so that judgment would not happen without dissemination. In the passage, you see, the people, the person who killed someone unintentionally, they went to the city, and they stayed there for a fair judgment.

[10:57] So, they came, they used to come to the church, to that place, to that city, and they stayed there and tell what happened. the city was open to those who run there.

Joshua 20, verse 4, says, when they flee to one of the cities, they are to stand in the entrance of the city gate, and stay their case before the elders of the city.

And I don't know with you, but that happened with me on that day. You know, you felt guilty, and then on the end of the meeting, you felt, I think I need to talk to someone.

And what happens? Call the elder, ask the pastor, someone who will come and talk to you, pray with you. It's not the same thing that you just read in the passage.

You need to stay, what's necessary to stay their case before the elders of the city. Explain to them what happened. then the elders are to admit the fugitive into their city and provide a place to live among them.

[12:12] The gate was a place of decision, so people used to fly, to flee to that city and stay there for a decision. The person had to come openly and declare what happened.

How many of us come openly to the church? Most of us normally come to the church feeling guilt, but we say, I'm not going to share my problem.

What are they going to think about if I tell them my story? What do you think about if they really know who I am? But we see a different thing here.

You need to come and openly tell them, the elders, what happened. And these teach us that God does not ignore sin, but he provides mercy.

Amen? God, he never ignores sin, but he will always provide mercy. He will always provide a way that we're going to find mercy.

[13:24] So, many people today are running. many people are running, running from guilt, running from shame, running from past mistakes, running from condemnation, but God always provides a refuge.

Hallelujah. You can be here today running maybe from your problems, running from the past, running from many things, things. But we have been teaching by God that he always find a way for the guilty.

Psalms 46, 1 says, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in the trouble. That is who he is.

So, the world offers hiding places, but only God offers true refuge. Amen? We can find many distractions in the world.

We can try to find things that will fit or fill the gaps or the holes that we have. But only God will provide that peace.

[14:45] Only him will provide that. So, we need to run to the right place. So, the church is not amazing, this place. I'm so happy.

You know, yesterday we have been to the commission conference for three days and it's amazing how you see friends. And, you know, the conversation always come up like, looks like we never left, you know, UK.

it's, for me, looks like we have been last Sunday in the meeting. And that is amazing because the church itself, it's a place where we need to find a comfort place, a safe place and not feel guilty. Because we are with other friends, brothers and sisters, but we are in the presence of our Father. We come to the presence of our Father.

second, the city of refuge points us to Jesus Christ. So, the passage, it's kind of type of Christ, will show that God is always pointing us, showing us the direction to Christ.

[15:56] The city of refuge are a beautiful picture of Christ. Just as the person in danger had to run to the city, sinners must to run to Jesus.

We need to recognize our sins, acknowledge our sins, but run to a place where we are going to find mercy. Run to our Father.

Jesus said in Matthew 11, 28, come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, burdened, and I will give you rest.

We find a place where we can rest in God's presence. We find a place, the church itself, it's a place where, or at least should be, a place where we find a rest.

I'm going to the church because, of course, I'm going to see friends, family, but also because I love to be in a gathering where people will worship my Father, and I found a rest.

[17:06] I found a rest to worship Him, I found a rest to praise His name, I found a rest to talk to one another, share my life with one another, encouraging one another.

That makes sense? Come to me, O you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. So note something important here.

The person who flee to that cities, they were not saved by trying harder. They were not saved to try harder.

The person was not saved by fighting the avenger of blood. it's not that the passage shows us they were not saved by fighting the avenger.

The person was saved by getting to the refuge. That was the goal. That was the focus where I need to go there because if I'm not finding this place, probably someone will come and kill me.

[18:10] The avenger of blood will pursue me and find me and I will be killed because that was the law. The case needs to be stated by the elders first to have a fair judgment.

The people or the person was saved to get to the refuge. In the same way, we are not saved by our own goodness, achievements, or religious works.

We are saved by coming to Christ. Christ. We are saved to come to Jesus Christ. And then you may think, okay, but I can find Christ in my own room.

I can find Christ reading the Bible in my home. I can find a Christ with someone preaching in the street. Yeah, absolutely, that's true. We can find Christ.

But the gathering of His holy people will make a difference. It's here where we are fed by the Word of God. It's here where people will talk to you, counsel you, and God will reveal His purpose for your life.

[19:30] Hebrews 6, 18 says, God did this so that by two unchangeable things, in which it's impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged.

Jesus is our great city of refuge. He is our greater city of refuge. So, in Christ, the guilt finds forgiveness.

It's a place where, as I just shared, a piece of my testimony, morning, I entered inside, from the gates, from the doors of the church, feeling guilty.

But when I left, I was completely changed by the Word of God. Can you imagine that? So, the church itself, the doors, people normally enter to that gate feeling guilt, depressed, oppressed, accused, but here, they find answer for their lives.

The guilty find forgiveness, the broken find healing, the lost find direction, the condemned find grace. Amen? Are you still with me? Yeah?

[21:01] Third one, the refuge was available to everyone who came. Everyone who came, the city was available.

Joshua 20, verse 9, says, any of the Israelites or any foreigner residing among them who killed someone accidentally could flee to these designated cities and not to be killed by the avenger of blood.

prior to standing trial before the assembly. God's refuge was not only for Israelite, it was also available for strangers.

It's kind of church. It's not the same thing as a church. Look how many different people and faces we have in the same room. And the church, it's for all of us.

The plan of God, it's for all the nations, all people, God's refuge was not for Israelites, it was also available for the exchange.

[22:11] And this reveals God's heart. His mercy is open to all who come. isn't this a picture of the church?

Revelation 5 said that we are purchased by his blood. And because we are purchased, he purchased people from all nations, all tribes, all of the world, people.

people. So in invitation, God is not limited. God doesn't limit his invitation. He is not limited by our past, our background, our failures, our reputation.

It's for everybody. Romans 10 13 says, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

This is the place. This is the church. So the door of refuge is open, wide open, for everybody. For everyone who feels they need to run to Christ, the church is open.

[23:29] The doors is open. We people can find refuge here. the question is not have you made mistakes?

So this is not the question. The question is have you run to the refuge? Have we run? Have I run to the refuge? Have you run once, twice?

Always to find protection, hope, mercy? number four, the refuge requires a decision.

The refuge requires a decision. A person could not simply admire the city from the distance. The pastor says that they need to get in the city.

So everything we need to do is take action. I need to do something, I need to go, I need to make a decision.

[24:43] And that's why we see on the passage. So the pastor cannot just admire from the distance. They had to enter. The city did not help the person who stayed outside.

And the same thing happened with the church. We preach the word of God and we pray for people outside. But our hope is that God will bring them.

But they need to decide to come in. They need to decide to get inside. They need to decide to run to Jesus and get their life transformed.

to God to know about Jesus is not the same as trusting Jesus. Isn't it? How many people know Jesus?

How many people say oh my God oh Jesus and they have no idea what they are talking about. Heard about Jesus is not the same thing that trust in him believe in him give your life to him rest in him is different it's completely different I knew Jesus for many years of my life but I never trust him before but one day I heard about him and my heart was tender to understand who is this man I want to know more about him and because of that I was attracted by his presence to this place of refuge that we can call church and from day on my life changed but we need to take action require a decision and spiritually is the same thing many people know about

[26 : 36] God but have never entered into his refuge and this is not an accusation this is something that we need to think about it how many people know about God but have never entered in refuge it's really hard to trust God with all our heart with all our souls it's really hard and I believe I believe most of the time that I have been forged forged is that word is correct forged by God was in a very difficult times it's when you really need to trust him there is no way to go there is nobody to talk it's when you go to the refuge it's like just me and you now God as a Moses I wanted to see you face to face but require a decision so

Jesus invites us get to the end of the message Revelation 3 20 says here I am NIV version I stand at the door and I stay at the door and I can hear that you are not knocking sorry you are not knocking the door I stay at the door and knock that's better much better and knock if anyone who hears my voice and opens the door I will come and I will come in and eat with that person and they with me if God stay in the door knock and nobody is open require a decision I need to open the door I need to open the door and let them in so friends God has called us to come in come in inside come inside of this city of refuge the church and we need to run to the refuge the cities of refuge reminds us that God is both just and merciful he does not deny that sins exist he does not pretend our failures do not matter but he always provides a refuge so there is a question for those who like questions if you have your notebook with you where are you running where are you running are you running to your own strength the opinions of people are you running to a temporary solutions or are you running to

Christ are you running to the refuge which is him that we can find only in him Jesus is our refuge when the enemy accuses Christ says come to me when the guilt overwhelms Christ says come to me when life feels hopeless Christ says come to me so the door of refuge is open for all of us all of us the only thing that we need to do what God requires for us it's run to him and not run from him so I'll divide the band to come up and

I'd like to take just a minute to respond wherever you are if you want to close your eyes if you want to pray out loud if you understand whatever you want to do but I believe there is no other place better than the church that we can raise our children here that you can find answer for your life that you can have been you can be forgiven from your sins you can find hope mercy purpose for your life there is no other place in this world the church it's an answer to this falling world and we are part of this and I would like to pray father we thank you we thank you because we found refuge in you you are our refuge our safe place and

[32 : 23] I thank you for this church harvest church the place where through the years decades have the door open for the guilty for the sinners and we know that lives have been transformed through the years on this place people have been have their life transformed by your power your word they found a family here as I found with my family a family harvest church and we are so great that this church exists here I also want to pray for those who may are running from you instead of running to you this morning may your holy spirit find them right now forgive them give them hope strength for another year another day another week reveal your face to them your love change their life completely

God we pray in the mighty name of Jesus that will be transformation testimonies from your power we trust you God and we believe in everything that is written in your Bible and that's why we are here for may you bless all these people this moment in the name of Jesus we pray amen for for for to for to