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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

October 8, 2017

Freedom Sunday 2017

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, I just again, I thank you that you are eminently trustworthy. I thank you that you are the God that we place our trust in. And Father, we just are amazed at the gifts and the bounty that we have at your hand. And this day, this particular Sunday we're going to be focusing on those who don't have that kind of bounty, who don't have that kind of freedom that we have. And so we pray today, Lord, as we open up your word as we seek the presence of your Holy Spirit, that you would guide us, open our eyes, our ears, our hearts and our minds and again enable this to be of permanent value, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

When Jesus was asked, "Who is my neighbor?" his answer basically said anyone who's need is presented to you becomes your neighbor by virtue of that need. And as we saw the good Samaritan, he demonstrated that. He had no proximity, he had no neighborly connection to the man who was beaten, half dead, I mean his only connection was that he was made aware that this person was in great need and it was that need itself that made that person his

neighbor. Well, to us in the 21st century, that presents a great problem. You see 2,000 years ago we had really no way of knowing whatsoever what needs were pressing, not only on the other side of the world but really in the very next town over. And unless we knew some travelers, we would know next to nothing about what was going on around us. Well now electronic communication is worldwide, news travels almost instantly almost everywhere and now my neighbor is not the person who was simply occupying the lot next to mine. Now he or she is virtually anyone in need anywhere. In just the last few weeks in Houston, Texas and much in Florida and Puerto Rico and the Caribbean islands we've seen thousands of people become, by virtue of Jesus's description, our neighbors. And God has given us a means of addressing this new responsibility that we have by raising up ministries that can address those needs whether it's around the block or around the world. And so I thank God for organizations like Samaritan's Purse which dealt directly with hurricane victims. I sent a contribution to them to help with their work. I hope you did as well. But what I want to address this morning is another organization that does not have the benefit of the world's attention when it comes to naturally occurring tragedies like hurricanes, earthquakes and the like. No, instead this organization focuses much more on human sin-driven tragedy and the tragedy is human slavery. September 24th was the national day set aside for Human Freedom Sunday that we had the Serranos coming

up from Honduras and they had a very tight schedule so we rescheduled our Human Freedom Sunday to today. So this is the day that we take to focus attention on something that easily goes unnoticed. It is a day given to attacking the vincible ignorance that surrounds and sometimes envelopes the world of slavery. It's a Sunday set aside for churches to recognize the plight of those who have no freedom, those who are enslaved politically, economically, judicially, and sexually.

So first of all some facts about slavery today, some jarring facts in fact. 45.8 million people are held in slavery today. That is more than at any time in the history of slavery itself. There are 2 million children who are enslaved for their labor and for their bodies. And we say, well, why is this so? And the answer is what it's always been: just follow the money. Slavery generates over \$150 billion a year. One of the primary reasons why slavery exists is because much of the world lives in ignorance of it but this is not an invincible ignorance, it is not an ignorance for which we have an excuse. In fact much of the solution to finding an end to slavery lies in more and more people recognizing the horror that most of us have been ignorant of and then using that knowledge to pray, send, or go to the places where slavery still exists.

Now I might never have heard of an organization such as

International Justice Mission or IJM if it wasn't the fact that my niece many years ago went to work for them. And so once again I want to reacquaint you with the organization and how it got started. God had raised up a man and a ministry who was telling the evangelical church that when it came to the idea of justice, they were very sadly uninformed, uninvolved and ignorant. The man's name was Gary Haugen. He was a Harvard trained evangelical Christian working as a lawyer in the Justice Department, and as he put it, he was a lot like us. He was living the comfortable suburban life-style with a Honda Civic, twin girls, and as a ministry with a Sunday school sixth grade Sunday school teacher. Gary was trying to integrate his faith life with his daily routine of comfortable suburban living when God suddenly started to re-work his paradigm. He pointed out that he knew like we all know that bad things do happen in this world. We may know that bad news is true but seldom is the bad news real. I mean there's a difference between knowing all about the Holocaust and being personally involved in a personal assault. Both situations are true, both situations are there, they're not -- one of them is not personally real and one is. And all through the spring and summer of 1994, Gary Haugen had heard the bad news about what was going on in the African country of Rwanda and many that heard, many that year heard for the very first time of the Hutus and the Tutsis and the genocide that was taking place there. And Gary was at that time

simply an employee of the Justice Department and he was lent by that department to the U.N. investigative team that was sent to identify the sites and the numbers of the 500,000 Tutsis, mostly women and children, who had been hacked to death by the Hutus. They had been herded into churches and stadiums and butchered with machetes and spears and clubs, and it was Haugen's job to verify the horror up close and personal. And so for Gary Haugen, this bad news was absolutely true and it was as real as the sight and the stench and the horror of thousands of bodies just stacked like cordwood directly in front of him. For Gary it was essentially an existential dichotomy, it was a split between two very, very different worlds. His mind knew and understood the world of suburban Washington, of Sunday school and Honda Civics. And yet his eyes, his nose, and his ears were now in Kibuye, Rwanda, taking in the smell of rotting flesh, seeing hacked bodies and hearing the buzz of a million flies. He could flash on the memories of his twin girls while standing there in the thick stench of murder. And after he came back, he would experience these split screens while standing in a safe suburban environment. He would see these scenes where that environment would be interposed with vivid images that looked as close as one can imagine to an image of hell. God put Gary Haugen into both of those worlds and he did it for a reason. And Gary's one of the first ones to say so. He did it because Gary Haugen is us. The closest most of us ever come to existential

horror is at the movies. But real horror is a real part of this fallen world that most of us choose to ignore.

In his book *Good News About Injustice*, Haugen talks about how easy it is to ignore all the bad news that's in this world and he spoke of this concept of "our fair garden" as a way that we order our own worlds. It's what you see when you look out your back window. And what he basically says is we look out our back windows and we extrapolate. Our backyard becomes the norm. It's what we like to pretend the real world is like. Our particular problem is that America is probably the fairest garden of all. Haugen quoted St. Cyprian in the third century who captured the concept of our fair garden when he wrote a friend, and this is what he said: "This seems a cheerful world when I view it from this fair garden under the shadow of these vines, but if I climbed some great mountain and looked out over the wide lands, you know very well what I would see. Brigands on the high roads, pirates on the seas, in the amphitheaters men murdered to please the applauding crowds, under all roofs, misery and selfishness. It really is a bad world Donatus, an incredibly bad world." How bad this world really is is still a shock to us, but understand it was never a surprise to God. God says in *Romans 8:22*: *For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And the groans of this fallen world often are the cries of the innocent*

and the powerless, and Gary Haugen found himself thrust into their world. Well, God gave Gary Haugen the ability to do something about it. First he left the Justice Department, then he began to contact mission groups from World Vision to Wycliffe Bible translators and then he asked them to become the eyes and the ears of the quote "no longer ignorant." He wanted to form a worldwide network to expose injustice. So he formed IJM to consist of a highly trained staff of cops and lawyers and detectives and judges and he wanted nothing but the very best. He wanted people who moved into this arena knowing it would be a step down economically and not a step up. They would begin evaluating cases of child prostitution in Cambodia, of child labor in India, the murder of street children in Brazil, and seek to bring God's justice to those who had been denied it. Haugen summed up his ministry in his book *Just Courage: God's Great Expectation for the Restless Christian*, and this is the way he put it, he said: "We are a collection of Christian lawyers, criminal investigators, social workers, and advocates. We rescue victims of violence, sexual exploitation, slavery, and oppression around the world. I started out as IJM's first employee in 1997 and now we have about 300 full-time staff around the world most of whom are nationals working in their own communities in the developing world." Gary speaks in his book of finding God in the worst places on earth. This is what he says. He says: "We have found God to be real and his hand to be true and

strong in a way we would never have experienced strapped into our own safety harnesses. The journey for me has been incredible but by far the most joyful, exhilarating, and life altering part has been the authentic experience of God's presence and power. I have experienced God. And that experience has come in my weakness. God has called us into a battle with violence and aggressive evil that, every day, my colleagues and I know we cannot win without the specific intervention of God. We are forced by our own weakness to beg him for it, and at times we work without a net, apart from his saving hand. And we have found him to be real. And his hand to be true and strong. In concrete terms what does this desperation look like? For me it means being confronted with a videotape of hundreds of young girls in Cambodia being put on open sale to be raped and abused by sex tourists and foreign pedophiles. It means going into a brothel in Cambodia as part of an undercover investigation and being presented with a dozen girls between the ages of five and 10 who were being forced to provide sex to strangers. It means being told by everyone who should know that there is nothing that can be done about it. It means facing death threats for my investigative colleagues, high level police corruption, desperately inadequate aftercare capacities for victims, and a hopelessly corrupt court system. It means going to God in honest argument and saying: 'Father, we cannot solve this' and hearing him say, 'Do what you know best to do, and watch me

with the rest.' In the end it means taking that risky bargain and seeing God do more than I could have hoped or imagined -- setting girls free, providing high quality aftercare, bringing the perpetrators to justice, shutting down the whole nasty operation, training the Cambodian authorities to do this work themselves, and seeing the U.S. Government willing to pay for it. That's what IJM is all about."

They acknowledge that our fair garden is really a huge exception to the rule of poverty, exploitation and injustice that the rest of this world lives with as completely normal. And what he says is all of us have an obligation to do something about it because we in America live in a fair garden that seems to be the greatest exception to that rule in the history of mankind. I mean if we were brutally honest, we would have to all admit that we really don't want to know how bad it is out there. And one reason is because we know that there's a sovereign God who is in charge of this world. And so I think that we fear finding out the full depth and breadth of the horrors that are part of it because it really challenges our notion of the goodness of God. You know, it's very easy for us to say God is love when our experience of life itself is safe and protected and stable. It's also very easy to develop a false sense of who God is and how his love works when all we have known is that kind of environment. Well, India changed that for

me. I mean I would describe my time in India as paradigm shattering because for the very first time I saw people who had neither safety, protection or stability, and yet I saw in them a far deeper and more profound sense of the love of God than I ever could have imagined as an outsider. I mean I looked at that, my sense of God's love seemed stilted and inadequate and it seemed to be propped up on all sides by the wealth and the comfort that I was so used to and surrounded with. And by the way, the wealth that I'm referring to here is the wealth that every one of us in this room enjoys by virtue of the fact that we live in one of the richest countries in the world, and that fully one-third of this world's population lives on less than \$2 a day. See, seeing people struggling with hunger and disease and homelessness and yet at the same time willing to offer praise and worship to God for his goodness was something I just -- I had a hard time fathoming. I think it was Doug Wilson who gave me a context to understand why God is so passionately worshiped by people who have absolutely nothing. It gave me a great insight to the way we see God working today in those countries. And what Wilson suggests, he suggests that everything that the world has to offer us, that is the material stuff, oh, I won the Powerball stuff, the stuff that only the world can give us, he says those are all just cans of peaches. He said some cans are big and some cans are little, some cans are beautiful, some cans are ugly, and folks spend all of their energy

acquiring as many cans as they can. They build their lives around showcasing all the different cans that they have collected. And when they begin to wonder why life is so frustrating, they think well, a new can, a different can, maybe a case of cans, that's really what I need. But they're wrong. See, the only thing they really need is something that God only gives to his children, and it is far more important than all of the cans of peaches you're ever going to collect. It's a can opener. It's the ability to open up and experience whatever it is that God has given us.

Listen to Solomon's words in *Ecclesiastes 2*. He says: *There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?*

Notice who can open those cans of peaches. He goes on to say: *For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.* Do you get what God is saying here? God alone is the only one who gives us the power to truly enjoy anything. What he says is it's the world that has the task of gathering and storing up all of these peach cans, but it is only the man who pleases God who gets the can opener. Charles Colson gave a practical application of that describing an encounter he had

in Peru many years ago. He said this: "A few years ago I took my two sons and my daughter to Peru to visit our ministry there. We met a man who lived in a hut atop a garbage dump. He had almost nothing in the way of material possessions. Yet his eyes sparkled as we visited his home. He had a quiet dignity. He was living in abject poverty, yet, his love for God was deep. Fewer obstacles stood between him and the Lord because he had no one and nothing to trust except God." You see actually this man had two things. Number one, he had this tiny little can of peaches but -- and this is an incredibly important "but" -- he also had a can opener and God was that can opener. Again verse 25: *For apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?* And I saw that time and time again when I was in India, I mean, these people lived in shacks of cardboard and tin, they all had tiny little cans of peaches but every one of those cans was opened and fully enjoyed. And what God is telling us is that he alone can give us the peaches and the can opener because he is the can opener. He is what makes this life make sense wherever you are. And he alone can fill a hut on top of a garbage dump with more joy than a penthouse on Park Avenue. And the reason why most men and women in this country lead lives of quiet desperation is that they've never been able to open a single can of peaches. They can only accumulate them. You see, in the midst of stunning poverty, sickness and want, God is still at work and his people are still overwhelmingly sensing his presence in

spite of their circumstances. And God works both sides of the equation. He comforts and encourages those who have little or nothing and he calls on those of us who have comfort and plenty to care for them who don't.

Now the problem we have with the concept of my fair garden is that the more we're willing to honestly examine the extent of this world's injustice and evil, the more we are inclined to blame it on God. Well, Gary Haugen points out that when it comes to the world, it's our notions that are off and not God's. And he points to the scriptures for proof. Let me just give you a sampling of some of the scriptures he spoke of that speak to the fact that God knows that this is a terrible world. This is *Job 24*. He says: *The wicked displace boundary markers. They steal a flock and provide pasture for it. They drive away the donkeys owned by the fatherless and take the widow's ox as collateral. They push the needy off the road; the poor of the land are forced into hiding.* In *Psalm 37* it says: *The wicked have drawn the sword and strung the bow to bring down the afflicted and needy and to slaughter those whose way is upright.* In *Isaiah 3* he says: *The LORD brings this charge against the elders and leaders of His people: "You have devastated the vineyard. The plunder from the poor is in your houses. Why do you crush My people and grind the faces of the poor?" This is the declaration of the Lord GOD of Hosts.*

Lamentations 5 says: *Women are raped in Zion, girls in the cities of Judah. Princes are hung up by their hands; elders are shown no respect. Young men labor at millstones; boys stumble under loads of wood. In Joel 3:3 it says: They cast lots for My people; they bartered a boy for a prostitute and sold a girl for wine to drink. In Amos 1:13 it says: The LORD says: I will not relent from punishing the Ammonites for three crimes, even four, because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to enlarge their territory. This is the world that God sees. That's what he looks down on. And Haugen says: "The last people who should get caught off guard by injustice in the world should be Bible-believing Christians. For even as we celebrate the coming of Christ into the world, in Scripture we are powerfully reminded of the kind of world into which he has come."*

See, Haugen suggests that our fair garden experiences shape our understanding of scripture rather than vice versa. And I just have to say personally from what I knew from scripture is that God hates all the injustice that he sees. I mean *Psalm 5* says: *You hate all workers of iniquity* but what I had lingering in the back of my mind was this thought, I don't know if you had it as well, and the thought is with all due respect, Father, for all of the evil that you see, if you hate it so, why don't you stop it? You know, we all go back to that ancient dilemma which says if God is all

powerful, well then he can't be all loving because there's just too much evil in the world. Or if God is all loving then he can't be all powerful again because the evil is everywhere. You know you can have God or love, you can have a God of power, a God of love but you can't have both because there's too much evil. But God insists that there's another way to view this. God says in *Proverbs 3:5: Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.* See, human understanding can only see horizontally and that's a very, very big problem. And we live in a world that is surrounded by mysteries that are unlockable, in science, in medicine, in astronomy, in physics and everything else. We know the farther we go in exploring these mysteries the more mysteries they present. And yet when it comes to the mystery of evil, we are not left with nothing but a loveless god of power or a powerless god of love. Instead we are left with an event and it's an event that God insists is the best explanation he can give. And the event is the cross. God became flesh and lived a perfect life and then he suffered the gravest injustice mankind was capable of exercising. We executed the only perfect person who's ever been born. God willingly took on our sin and exchanged his righteousness for our wickedness. And God insists that the best defense he can give for the accusation that he is indifferent to this world's evil is what he said in *Romans 5:8: But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for*

us. We know for a fact that God knows what evils this world is filled with and that he is still sovereignly guiding it, and we know that because we know what God endured from this very same world. I mean from the standpoint of justice, God knows exactly what evil entailed when it came to the cross. Think about it. His Son was falsely accused, he was tried in the kangaroo court, he was tortured by an occupying government and then executed even though his executioner declared he was innocent. I think our God knows a little bit about injustice. He hates it. And he wants us to hate it as well. *Isaiah 58* says: *"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?"*

So here's the \$64,000 question. Okay, how do we do that? How do we break that yoke? Well, first we identify injustice and acknowledge it as something that God hates. And IJM has been instrumental in identifying injustice and after many years in being on the front lines, they've come up with an assessment of what the core issue is, and this is an amazing discovery, this is something, you never would have thought of. I never would have thought of it for sure. It is not what most people including the experts ever thought that it was. And this is after years of years of experience in the field. According to IJM, the greatest need the

impoverished world begs for in terms of justice is not better medical care, it's not better economic investment, it's not even disease prevention. It is something far more basic and far more easy to overlook. It is law enforcement. See, for the vast majority of third world countries not only does law enforcement not work for them, it actively works against them. Listen to how Gary Haugen puts it. He says this: "I'm pretty sure you are not among the very poorest in our world -- the billions of people who are trying to live off a few dollars a day. As a result, I also know that you are probably not chronically hungry, you are not likely to die of a perfectly treatable disease, you have reasonable access to fresh water, you are literate, and you have reasonable shelter over your head. But there is something else I know about you. I bet you pass on your days in reasonable safety from violence. You are probably not regularly being threatened with being enslaved, imprisoned, beaten, raped, or robbed. But if you were among the world's poorest billions, you would be. That is what the world does not understand about the global poor." And then he goes on to explain just how this poverty destroys. He says this: "What happens if you are living in a community that is too poor (or unwilling) to pay for effective public law enforcement services? And what if you don't have enough money to pay for private security services? Then you are left vulnerable to forces of violence, and it is only a matter of time before you are victimized. Like germs

in the air, harsh weather, and invisible contaminants -- violence is endemic to the human social condition, and if you do not have the resources (public or private) to secure protection against forces of violence, you are not safe, and your well-being is not secure. In fact, your ill-being is quite assured. But most of us in affluent societies have grown so accustomed to the peace and security that is purchased through massive and expensive law enforcement systems (that are largely out of sight and out of mind) that we have forgotten about the germ of violence that is always in the air. We are no longer mindful of the forces of violence ever pressing at the borders of human nature, and so we do not enter into poor communities urgently asking: How are these people going to be protected from violence? We haven't been trained to ask the question, and so we are unlikely to probe beneath the surface. If we want to understand the violent reality in which the poor actually live, we will have to look very hard because, of all the conditions that afflict the poor, violence is simply the hardest to see."

Now we all know our country is caught up right now in a very polarizing debate over the unequal treatment that African Americans receive but you have to understand for the vast majority of the world's poor, unequal treatment is simply a given. That's just the way it is. And Gary Haugen's latest book *The Locust Effect*

describes what happens when you don't have any law enforcement, when you have nothing backing you up. And he goes back to an historic event that took place in the Midwest in 1875. It was back in the days of the homesteaders, when people literally had to dig holes in the ground to survive because there wasn't enough timber on the Great Plains to even build houses with. And the way this thing worked is if you could survive for five years, the government would give you the land and they could then use the land as collateral to buy seeds and lumber and actually build yourself a homestead. And so as he describes it in his book, he's talking about the year 1875, and it was a very good year in Missouri, things were looking up, many of the homesteaders who had survived had eked out this existence for five years and they were looking forward to actually sealing the deal and getting it finished. And the weather had been excellent and the gardens were abundant and it looked like there was going to be a very strong harvest that year when in a matter of hours, it was all gone for everyone. As Haugen says in his book: "As farm families crouched helplessly behind their shelters, the greatest plague of locusts in human history laid waste to all they had toiled so hard to build. Every spear of wheat, oats, flax, and corn were eaten close to the ground. Potatoes and all vegetables receive the same treatment, and on the line of their march, ruin stared the farmer in the face as starvation knocked loudly at his door." He describes this horde of

locusts. First of all they estimated it weighed some 27 million tons, and it swarmed over 200,000 square miles of the American Midwest. It was an area greater than the State of California. And the way he described it, he said the locusts ate the fence posts and the paint and siding from the houses. They ate the wool off the backs of live sheep and the clothes that were left outside on the lines. He said when families hurriedly threw blankets over their gardens, the locusts devoured the blankets and then they gorged themselves on the plants. This is what Haugen said about its effect. He said: "All the hard work, sacrifice and effort of these impoverished families didn't matter. All the government grants of free land didn't matter. The assistance of neighbors and well-wishers from the other side of the country didn't matter. Indeed, to those who saw 'the labor and loving of years gone within ten days' through the onslaught of the devouring locusts, talk of assistance from outsiders 'seemed but a mocking.'" Well Haugen goes on to say that all of our efforts to give folks tools and seeds and training seems like a mocking when they know darn well that the locusts can come at any moment and take it all away and that violence and lawlessness are precisely the locusts that steal any prospects of hope from the world's poor. This is how Haugen describes it. He says: "To provide Laura and Yuri with the promise of schools without addressing the forces of sexual violence that make it too dangerous to walk to or attend school seems like a

mocking. To give Caleb job training or Bruno a micro-loan for his belt business without protecting them from being arbitrarily thrown into prison where Caleb loses his job and Bruno loses his business seems like a mocking. To provide Laura and Mariamma with AIDS education and training on making safe sexual choices without addressing the violence in the slums and brick factories where women don't get to make choices seems like a mocking. To establish a rural medical clinic in the area where Gopinath is held as a slave without addressing the violent forces that refuse to allow him to leave the quarry and take his dying kid to a doctor seems like a mocking." He says, "Indeed, for the rural poor of the American Midwest in the 1870s, it just didn't matter what they did for themselves or what others contributed in terms of land, or seeds, or plows, or training, or education, or irrigation, or livestock, or capital. If the locusts were coming to swarm and lay waste to it all, then the impoverished and vulnerable farmers on those plains were not going to thrive -- ever. All the other efforts were important, life-giving, and vital, but the usefulness of those efforts just could not withstand the devastating impact of the devouring locusts -- and those other efforts could not stop the locusts. Likewise, it seems that we are approaching a pivotal moment in history where agreement is beginning to emerge that if we do not decisively address the plague of everyday violence that swarms over the common poor in the developing world, the poor will

not be able to thrive and achieve their dreams -- ever." He goes on to say, "Without the world noticing, the locusts of common, criminal violence are right now ravaging the lives and dreams of billions of our poorest neighbors. We have come to call the unique pestilence of violence and the punishing impact it has on efforts to lift the global poor out of poverty, the locust effect. This plague of predatory violence is different from other problems facing the poor; and so, the remedy to the locust effect must also be different."

So what is the remedy? Well, first we can step out of our fair gardens and look this world of evil full in the face. That is the first step toward stopping it. Secondly, we can identify those suffering this evil as our neighbors because of their needs. Gary Haugen cited three examples of appalling injustice where people stood up to identify and acknowledge evil for what it was and then to see those who were suffering that evil as their neighbors, as their neighbors in need. Let me just repeat to you those examples. Some of you have heard this before.

The first example was in a country that allowed child prostitution. Girls were kidnapped and kept by fist, boot and bulldog. Authorities were bribed, runaways were returned, one girl rebelled and she was murdered. Actually she was soaked in oil and burned

alive. And even though the authorities knew who did it, they were paid off and no charges were brought. The second example was in a country that allowed the appalling forced labor of children. Children 7 to 15 were forced to work in a mill up to 82 hours a week, and the work was loud, it was dirty, and it was dangerous and children were frequently maimed or killed. One seven-year-old had three fingers torn off by a machine and the boss said she was careless. Investigators said: "Doesn't a seven-year-old have the right to be careless?" Third example took place in a country that sanctioned summary execution by vigilante squads and disappearance by death squads. People were either lynched or burned alive at the stake and it was all done for the purpose of terrorizing a people group into keeping their place. Now the bad news is that such evil even existed, but the good news is the country that that evil once existed was this one. It was the United States. And it is no more. And here are the three people who actively stopped it. In the 1880s there were hundreds of girls forced into prostitution in the logging mills and mining communities of Wisconsin and Minnesota and at great risk to herself, Kate Bushnell put a stop to it. She infiltrated the brothels, rescued the girls, and took the leaders to court despite great threats of violence. In 1907 Edgar Murphy formed the National Child Labor Committee. He wrote nine pamphlets, he printed 280,000 copies and he succeeded in passing the first restrictions on child labor that eventually ended the

practice. In 1930 Jesse Daniel Ames founded the ASWPL, it was the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. Amazing. She worked tirelessly organizing women against the practice and by 1941, 1355 police officers had signed a pledge against it and by 1950 it had disappeared. Justice had triumphed over injustice in the United States and in each case, in each case it was law enforcement that had to change. And the three people who brought about that change all had a few things in common. Number one, they were all Americans; and number two, they all worshiped Jesus Christ; number three, they all prayed; and number four, they all knew their bibles. They all knew what our text this morning says about the character of God. This is *Ezekiel 22*, it says: *The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger. So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.* I've seen this text many, many times and I've heard it many, many times as a call for people to pray. I mean I never realized the context of this was actually much bigger and the primary context of this verse is God's heart for justice. It's verse 30: *So I sought for a man among them who would stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, but I found no one.* Well, those men and women that I just mentioned wouldn't let that happen. They became, at great personal

risk, someone who would stand in the gap for injustice and they changed this country. They did so because they refused to accept that their ignorance was invincible. They stepped out of their fair gardens and they did something about it and this is really the point of Freedom Sunday. It's to expose us all to a world that we are largely ignorant of. So now we know, but once again now we have no excuse.

And finally IJM points us to a response to the challenge of worldwide justice for the sake of the gospel. The one thing that IJM has discovered over the last few decades is how complex this situation is and that the solution to worldwide injustice is going to be extremely difficult and tied to the specifics of each country and area suffering from it. And what Haugen is suggesting is that these problems are so complex that you're only going to arrive at a solution by going to the individual countries, sitting down with the individual victims, hearing their stories and then devising ways of restoring unique and individualized systems of law enforcement that actually work for rather than against the poor. Well, the good news is that we as a country were once just as bad as some of the worst of these countries where injustice is still considered the norm. So there is always hope.

The response to injustice for us therefore is threefold. It's

either we go or we send, and either way we pray. We go, send, and pray. I mean if God is calling you to go, then think about it, think about turning your life around and doing something completely different. Be willing to go wherever God is going to send you. Be willing to be part of God's best effort. God is calling you to send, then you give, you give time and effort, and yes, you give money. And finally, what everyone should be expected to do at the very least is what we're going to do right now and that is pray. Let's do it.

Father, I just -- I thank you for Gary Haugen. I thank you for the love and the compassion that you have for the injustice that most of this world labors under and for the efforts that you have made through Gary Haugen, through IJM to expose us to what takes place in slavery around the world. I just pray that you would touch each of us individually, that we would understand the difference between going and sending and praying and that you would touch each of us individually so that we would know exactly what role you would have us to play in this as we go forward. May we bring honor and glory to you, Lord, as you seek this help for the world's poor who labor under the worst forms of injustice. Give us your grace, your peace, your power and wisdom, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.