

Sermon Seeds for Human Trafficking Awareness Sunday

by Greg Asimakoupoulos (Mercer Island Covenant Church)

* Contrary to popular opinion sex slavery and human trafficking is not the domain of third world countries. Below is the sad account of a five year old girl in North Carolina.

SANFORD, N.C. (Nov. 17) — When 5-year-old Shaniya Davis of North Carolina went missing, suspicion turned to a man described as her mother's boyfriend. As he was let go, police targeted another man spotted on hotel surveillance footage holding the child. Then, authorities arrested the girl's mother and accused her of offering her daughter for prostitution.

The arrests offered a glimmer of hope Shaniya would be found alive, but searchers discovered the girl's body Monday off a rural road, nearly a week after her mother reported her missing from a mobile home park.

Hundreds of volunteers who helped look for Shaniya left the search area dejected, unable to bring her home to her father, 7-year-old brother and the dolls she so loved. "I still feel kind of sick to my stomach," said Angela Jackson, 27, from nearby Sanford, who has a two-month-old daughter but searched for consecutive days.

Particularly disturbing were the accusations against Shaniya's mother, 25-year-old Antoinette Davis. Police charged Davis with human trafficking and felony child abuse, saying Shaniya was offered for sex.

Davis was calm and quiet during a court appearance. She provided one-word answers to the judge's questions. She requested a court-appointed attorney and did not enter a plea.

(story reported by Alysia Patterson, Associated Press)

* In the Isaiah passage we read of God's love for the nation of Israel. It is an account of a loving parent who is willing to pay a ransom for a child that is held captive. These are words of redemption. This is covenant language of love. We hear the pulsating heartbeat of a loving Father who calls the child by name. To the one who is victimized by sin, there is the promise of God's presence. Yes, God is aware of those who are victims of injustice and stands with them in their pain even while His plan for deliverance is being worked out.

* In the Psalm passage we are reminded of the power and might of the Creator. His voice can strip the forests bare of their bark. He is fully capable of bringing about justice and holding depraved captors accountable for their actions. And for those trapped in the web of evil who are unable to help themselves... *The LORD shall give strength to his people; the LORD shall give his people the blessing of peace.*

* In the Gospel lesson we are reminded of the resume of Messiah. The Holy One in human flesh is not a mamby-pamby prophet. He is the Righteousness of God who is filled with righteous indignation when innocent humanity is robbed of its value. When precious human life is traded as a commodity. *His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.*

The Gospel account of Jesus' baptism also includes the tender attribution. The Father speaks to his Son reminding him that is loved and a source of pleasure. Every child is entitled to the knowledge that they are beloved by their parents. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. Sadly, traffickers who take advantage of others have likely been denied a parent's affirmation and loving affection. This deficiency is at the heart of their heartless behavior. Similarly, those who are victims of human trafficking long to hear from someone that they are more than the means of momentary pleasure. They need to hear the voice of their Heavenly Father calling their name and speaking words of love, acceptance and hope.

* In the Acts account we find Peter and John going to "the untouchable" region of Samaria. Samaritans were labeled by orthodox Jews as those who had prostituted Biblical faith and compromised godly values. They were off-limits. All the same, God was at work in the lives of the Samaritans. They were responding to the message of salvation by grace through faith. Fortunately Peter and John did not give-in to peer pressure and play it safe. They were willing to obey the call of God and embrace the messiness of the Gospel. Getting involved in a cause such as standing up to human trafficking is similar to going to Samaria. We could think of many reasons why we should not get involved.