

Many might say the contentious issue of immigration
Should never be brought up in the pulpit.

They say, leave the pulpit to the preaching of the Bible!

But to be sure,
The Bible HAS something to say about immigration!

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The issue has become so polarized and so political.

There is this ongoing debate in the US

On policies relating to

- Undocumented immigrants and their children
- Stricter border control
- Abolishment of chain migration
- Travel bans placed on people
From countries predominately Muslim

We might not agree on how to solve these issues.

We might not agree on how to achieve

A just and compassionate immigration policy.

But we should all agree as followers of Jesus Christ

That our point of view or perspective

Is to be prayerfully formed and biblically based.

For the church, then, this isn't a political issue.

It's a faith issue.

Russell Moore,

President of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

The public-policy arm

Of the Southern Baptist Convention

And one of my favorite conservative voices today confirms:

This is a gospel issue. First of all, our Lord Jesus himself was a so-called “illegal immigrant.” Fleeing, like many of those in our country right now, a brutal political situation, our Lord’s parents sojourned with him in Egypt. . . .

In so doing, our Lord Jesus was reliving the life of Israel, our ancestors in the faith, who were also immigrants and sojourners in Egypt.

This is the foundational to our Christian faith.

Our adopted religious history has repeated instances
Of our ancestors living as strangers in foreign lands.

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In the beginning of Genesis 12
God calls Abram out of his homeland of Ur
To emigrate to the land of Canaan.

There God promises he will be the father of a great nation.
Through Abram all nations shall be blessed.

Shortly after, in Genesis 12:10 due to a famine in the land
Abram and Sarai emigrate to Egypt
Living there for a time as refugees.

Later on in Genesis
After Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery
And after he became the Pharaoh’s right-hand man

In Genesis 46, we read where Joseph’s father Jacob
Moved his whole family to Egypt
Because of a severe famine in the land.

This might be the first recorded example of chain migration.

Centuries later, the Israelites, forced from their homes
Lived as foreigners during the Babylonian exile.

And as Russel Moore describes . . .

Mary and Joseph,

The parents of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
Fled a horrific political policy

When King Herod began his reign of terror
The church has since called
The “Slaughter of the Innocents.”

Peter, in 1 Peter 2:11, describes all Christians
As aliens and strangers in the world.

In our own denominational history
Our Brethren ancestors immigrated to the US
On an invitation by William Penn in the early 1700s
To escape religious persecution in Germany.

This is our biblical heritage and world-view.
In our OT passage God instructs people . . .

***Deuteronomy 10:19 . . . love those who are foreigners, for
you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.***

And really, how true is it
That most of us here today
Who are not Native American
Were also once immigrants?

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In our OT reading
Depending on which translation you read from . . .

The Hebrew word *gare* translates into English as
Alien, foreigner, sojourner or stranger.

However, Tim Keller,
Retired pastor of Redeemer Church in NYC

Argues that in today's vernacular
It translates best as *immigrant*.

Throughout the OT

God consistently reminds people to treat immigrants fairly
They deserve special care and provision.

Leviticus 19:33-34 (NIV)

³³ **“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. ³⁴ The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.**

Matthew Soerens of the Gospel Coalition writes:

God commands his people to love immigrants both because [God] loves them and because, given their unique history in Egypt, they ought to know better than to mistreat foreigners living in their midst.

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The Matthew 25 passage we read today
Is the parable on Judgement Day.

According to the parable, God will judge us
By how we treat the underprivileged . . .

The hungry, thirsty, sick, naked, prisoner and the stranger.

The Greek word for stranger here is *xenos*
And means the same thing
As the Hebrew *gare*

Alien, foreigner, sojourner, stranger, or immigrant.

In the parable
Those who did not welcome the immigrant
Were cast into the eternal fire.

Now mind you, these are the words of Jesus!

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Now some would argue that according to Romans 13
Where Paul speaks of submitting to the government
Illegal immigrants are “law-breakers.”

They need to be penalized and deported.
However, Russell Moore writes, the majority are here:
To provide a future for their families in flight from awful situations back home. Many of them are children (as our Lord Jesus was at the time of his immigration).

Paul then contradicts himself in the preceding chapter
By writing:

Romans 12:13 (NLT)

**¹³ When God’s people are in need, be ready to help them.
Always be eager to practice hospitality.**

Ok, some would say,
Paul is specifically referring to Christians
And indeed he may be doing just that.

But the author of Hebrews certainly is not when he said:

Hebrews 13:2 (NLT)

² Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!

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The bottom line is that we have to remember
That when we talk about immigration

We’re not talking about issues . . . we’re talking about people
Like you and me . . . made in the image of God.

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From Russell Moore

The voice of the SBC denomination:

Immigration isn't just an issue. It's an opportunity to see that, as important as the United States of America is, there will be a day when the United States of America will no longer exist.

And on that day, the sons and daughters of God will stand before the throne of a former undocumented immigrant.

Some of them are migrant workers and hotel maids. They will be kings and queens then. They are our brothers and sisters forever.

In closing, he writes:

We might be natural-born Americans, but we're all immigrants to the kingdom of God. Whatever our disagreements on immigration as policy, we must not disagree on immigrants as persons.

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In Scripture

God instructs his people to love the immigrant.

Love them as if they were native-born.

Love them, as you wish others to love you
If you were an immigrant . . .

Which in fact, the scriptures remind us, you were!

And remember, in Christ's parable on the Day of Judgment
We are not the ones representing Christ.

Where is Christ in the story?

Just as you have done to the least of these my brethren you have done unto me.

8.12.18

Deuteronomy 10:12-22, Matthew 25:35-40
Love the Sojourner

Christ is there in the underprivileged;
The hungry, thirsty, naked, imprisoned
And the immigrant.

What we do . . .
Or don't do to them . . .

We do . . .
Or don't do to Christ . . .

Can it be any clearer?