

The Promised Land
July 6, 2008
Hebrews 6: 14-18
Deuteronomy 4:30,31, 35-40

I. Refugees from Egypt

Have you ever been a refugee? Our ancestors were. Our spiritual ancestors left slavery in Egypt because God provided we could have our own place, our own worship. The army chased us. Some of us wanted to go back. We got to the sea and thought we would be killed by the army or drowned. But God provided a way to escape and go on our journey. We were hungry and thirsty in a barren desert and thought we would starve. But God provided bread and water and we resumed our journey. We felt lost in unfamiliar territory, but God provided a pillar of cloud in the day and a pillar of fire at night and we continued our journey. We argued about religion and law until some of us wanted to give up and worship a calf. But God provided laws that organized our society.

We got to the river that was the border of Canaan, the promised land, but were afraid to cross because of the powerful, big people that already lived in that land. But God provide us a way to make our homes on the West Bank of the Jordan River, and live in a new country.

Our ancestors were once refugees and immigrants. God's people, the Hebrews, entered the promised land, even though the people there who didn't want them, made it hard for them. They had to fight the battle of Jericho, they had to keep free of the temptation to worship the idols in the land. It was a hard life. But God made a way.

II Refugees to America

My ancestors came from England and Germany and Scotland in the 1600's, 1700's and 1800's. They escaped poverty and being forced to fight in worthless wars.

Our German ancestors came to Ripon, refugees from poverty coming for a safe place to make a living and support their families.

They entered the promised land, even though the people here who didn't want them, made it hard for them. They fought battles with the Native Americans. Irish and Italians and Polish and Germans had to put up with people calling them names and refusing to hire them because of their nationality. Germans sometimes had to change their name or change their language or change their worship to prove to the others they were not spies for the Kaiser or the Fuhrer. Farms were rocky or full of trees. It was a hard life. But God made a way. They found this part of America to be a safe place to raise their families.

III. Immigrants want to come to America now to find a better life.

Vietnamese boat people and Cubans and Hmong who are still being killed in Thailand and South Americans and Mexicans and Haitians and Africans and Iraqis and Romanians. They'll take the jobs Americans are not taking. But some Americans don't want them here and give them a hard time.

A hard time. Some jobs are disappearing, like manufacturing jobs. Some jobs are growing, like computer technology. Computer companies can't find enough people for their software engineering jobs so they'd like to hire more Chinese and Indian people, but there are not enough visas given by the government for all who want to come.

IV. Immigrants are coming to Ripon now, refugees from poverty looking for a safe place to raise their families. There are barriers of language and mistrust to overcome. It's a hard life, but God will make a way.

We were once refugees from slavery. God made a place for our ancestors in the Promised Land of the Bible. We were once refugees from poverty and war. God made a place for our ancestors in America. God is making a place for others here now. A few generations ago our immigrant ancestors were making big families for their farm labor and social security. We are not doing that anymore. So God is using the United States to make a place for others who need a safe place to make a living and provide for their families.

We will not participate in making it hard for newcomers. One of the commandments in Exodus 23: 9 says "you must not oppress foreigners. You know what it's like to be a foreigner, for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt."

We heard from Hebrews 6 "We who have fled to him for refuge can take courage, for we can hold on to his promise with confidence".

We heard from Deuteronomy "You will enjoy a long life in the land the Lord your God is giving you for all time."