

# Human Dignity versus Human Trafficking

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NB: This material is offered for use in developing sermons on the topic.

## Suggested Old Testament Scripture Reading

The story of Tamar: she prostituted herself to her father-in-law, Judah, when he did not give her in marriage to his third son as custom required (Genesis 38:1-30) and Judah later responded: “you are more righteous than I.” She is included in the genealogy of David and of Jesus.

## *INTRODUCTION*

If we drive through certain areas of town we might be confronted by brazen and provocatively dressed people – children, women and men – seeking customers. It is all too easy to have disdain for many of these people. Our first thought might be to think of them as hookers and whores – and it may be difficult for us to see them as people of great dignity. Who are they? Might they specially be sought out by the love and grace of God?

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at minimum, the exploitation of prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (From the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, 2000 – i.e., the Palermo Protocol)

Human sexual trafficking is a form of slavery. It happens when human beings are sold and bought for the purposes of sexual exploitation. It includes people (mostly women and girls) being recruited, transported, transferred, harbored or received. These actions are accomplished by means of force, the threat of force, or other forms of coercion. It is always involuntary because even when consent is achieved, it is through some form of fraud, deception, abduction/kidnapping or abuse of power/vulnerability.

**Defining Dignity** is a bit tricky. The Oxford Dictionary provides 5 meanings. The first almost seems contrary to real dignity: “a composed and serious manner or style.” This sounds like a façade or pretentiousness or wielding and holding onto power. It’s not at all appropriate. Each of the other definitions, however, point to the heart of the matter. The defining terms include:

“worthy of honor or respect,” excellence, honorable position, and high regard. How do we know we have dignity? Do we decide that for ourselves? Do others determine how much dignity I have? Is it inherent or earned or inherited or purchased or stolen or learned or acquired through work or fortune? The point that I will make is that it’s none of these but it is given to us by God and we strive toward it in grace. We cooperate actively with the grace that is at work in us.

While I’m defining things, it will be useful to look at the word **glory** – that’s because I’ll sometimes use glory and dignity almost interchangeably – because our dignity is glorious. The Oxford Dictionary defines glory with ideas such as “high renown,” fame, honor, “resplendent majesty,” magnificence, exaltation, “great beauty,” and heavenly splendor and bliss.

And one more definition will prove helpful. The International Court defines **Crimes Against Humanity** in such a way as to include human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation. The nomenclature of “crimes against humanity” inherently makes the point that these crimes are so heinous in nature and so large in scope that they threaten all humanity. This is highly significant. *Who we are and understand ourselves to be is threatened by these crimes of trafficking in persons.* (Also see the UN Protocol against organized crime and Palermo Protocol)

## *BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DIGNITY*

### 1) Dignity: The Gift of Faith

The creation account in Genesis 1 accords a special place and glory to human creatures: they are the regents of God; as regents Adam and Eve were appointed by God to represent the life-giving and sustaining rule and power of the Creator, Sustainer and Lover of creation. In the midst of the creation, humans are creatures with the special dignity of representing to all creatures and to the entire creation, the presence of the life-giving rule of the Eternal Father and Creator.

God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground.” Then God said, “I now give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the entire earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the animals of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to all the creatures that move on the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.” It was so. God saw all that he had made – and it was very good! (Gen 1:27-31 NetBible)

As regents they represent the life-giving presence of God in and for creation. As regents, humans also are called to represent the whole creation to God. Humans are to bring to fullness, completion and perfection the obedience and praises of the entire creation for our Creator. However, the Bible also immediately tells us that we humans fell from this high call and dignity. As a result, the entire creation is subjected to futility:

cursed is the ground thanks to you.... you are dust, and to dust you will return.... So the Lord God expelled him from the orchard in Eden to cultivate the ground from which he had been taken. (Gen 3:17, 19, 23)

We perverted our place. Sin, guilt, shame and death have replaced the glory of our dignity in God. By the pen of the Apostle Paul we have an amazing summary of this:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness, because what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, because they are understood through what has been made. So people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an image resembling mortal human beings or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. (Rm 1:18-23)

And Paul again:

as it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one, there is no one who understands, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, not even one. Their throats are open graves, they deceive with their tongues, the poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood, ruin and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. (Rm 3:10-26)

From this we can surmise that the ultimate dignity of humans is not a possession over which we have disposal. It was fully ours in Adam and Eve at creation's dawn. But it was radically compromised. Once we became disobedient our relationship with God was broken and, hence, our regency also was broken.

However, we – who live in the era of Jesus the Christ – most fully know our glory and dignity by faith in and through our glorified Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ and by foretaste through His Spirit. The Kingdom or Rule of God in our lives and in the entire creation is present and real and is also a promise, not a possession. The hope of salvation is that we are being made perfect in the image of Christ Jesus; that is, we will attain to the fullness of the children of God. Our full dignity is the promise and end of the dignity of which a foretaste is given to us now.

In short, we have no righteousness or dignity or glory or honor on our own. From another perspective, we all die. The glory we have is a fading glory, like the flowers of the field which wither and die. We don't have the power to sustain our lives beyond what we are given. Nor do we have the power to overcome our own wickedness. Yet, both righteousness and life are the goal that is inherent within us. Think of a seed: "unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies...." (John 12:24) The promise of the seed – which science describes in the language of genetics – is the plant and fruit that spring forth. So it is with human life: it contains a call to love

and life and the call is accompanied by a promise: God rewards those who seek Him. (Heb 11:6) Our dignity is in the form of the free gift and blessing of God: “Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered...” (Rm 4:6-8; see Titus 3:5)

The foundational element of our faith is the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, who embodied and perfectly lived out the dignity of humans. He accomplished what Adam and Eve and all the rest of us have failed to do. He realized and revealed the dignity and glory of the children of God through taking on our human form and in that form he was obedient to death and was resurrected from the grave before being glorified and exalted to the right hand of our Everlasting Father, God Almighty. He did what we failed to do. He was the perfect representative both of God to creation and of creation before God. He perfectly fulfilled the life and destiny for which every human being is called into existence by God. And thus he has “become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people.” (Heb. 2:16 – see all of chapters 1-2 & 4:14-16)

God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.... For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life? Not only this, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.... For if, by the transgression of the one man, death reigned through the one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ! ... but where sin increased, grace multiplied all the more, so that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rm 5:8, 10-11, 17, 20-21)

And Paul writes to the Corinthians:

as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.... [I]t is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living person”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.... The first man is from the earth, made of dust; the second man is from heaven. Like the one made of dust, so too are those made of dust, and like the one from heaven, so too those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, let us also bear the image of the man of heaven. (1 Cor 15:22, 45, 47-49)

There is a new eschatological and spiritual reality that has come into the world through Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. This ultimate reality has become the goal and hope of human existence and through humans the goal and hope of the whole creation. (Rm 8:18-25)

To be made perfect in the image of Jesus Christ is the goal and destiny given us by God, who as Creator also is Lord of history and nature, and, importantly in this context, is the Redeemer of all who have lost their way. Therefore, we exult with the Psalmist:

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord as long as I live! I will sing praises to my God as long as I exist! Do not trust in princes, or in human beings, who cannot deliver! Their life's breath departs, they return to the ground; on that day their plans

die. How blessed is the one whose helper is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, the one who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who remains forever faithful, vindicates the oppressed, and gives food to the hungry. The Lord releases the imprisoned. The Lord gives sight to the blind. The Lord lifts up all who are bent over. The Lord loves the godly. The Lord protects those residing outside their native land; he lifts up the fatherless and the widow, but he opposes the wicked. The Lord rules forever, your God, O Zion, throughout the generations to come! Praise the Lord! (Ps 146).

Human trafficking is a crushing global issue that threatens all dignity. If we refuse to look to the margins, to rescue the enslaved, oppressed, brutalized and tormented people, then our dignity is a futile hope. This sermon, with its focus on the dignity of persons who are horribly oppressed, finds an answer in singular focus on this Cornerstone of the Christian faith. Our victory, in other words, is by faith in Jesus Christ: “to all who received Him, who believed in his Name, He gave power to become children of God.” (Jn 1:12) I am confident that God has called, even commanded, his children to go with the Gospel, the Good News, of Jesus Christ to all peoples – and especially to the unjustly imprisoned and oppressed. The victims of human trafficking are unjustly enslaved and made booty. I can barely begin to imagine the glorious joy and celebrations as well as poured out love in heaven for each one of these who will be saved. So let’s get out on the highways and byways – first on our knees with intercession on behalf of these people – listening for where the Lord would have us to intervene.

Moreover, it is clear that although there are real human beings and human systems and organizations that perpetrate, facilitate or collude with these atrocities, the real enemy is spiritual. Our struggle, when we seek to overcome and abolish these atrocities through help and intercession on behalf of people; our struggle is against the spiritual forces of wickedness that have enslaved men in their lusts, greed and rage. (Eph. 6) Our victory against these enemies is assured! Christ Jesus has already triumphed over them. In the victory of Jesus we see the true dignity and glory of humanity – along with the true victory over depravity, sin, guilt, shame and death. We come under God with the blood of Jesus our Savior and the Savior of the world with salvation for all – and particularly for the oppressed: “to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Lk 4:18)

Think of Rm. 4:22 “faith was reckoned to him [Abraham] as righteousness” – righteousness is received as a blessing and gift from God. If we consider, Abraham received promises by faith and hung onto hope, and these grew strong as he gave glory to God Rm 4:20-21. The path toward receiving the blessing was faith and worship and hope. The high and honorable position which Abraham achieved was by the gift of God which was bestowed because of his faith. So also for us: “It will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification” Rm 4:24-25)

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our

hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (Rm 5:1-6)

By faith we claim victory for God over the lies and destruction of the Devil, who has been a liar and murderer from the beginning. Victory in this battle is ours. Let's claim it through our deeds. Let us show our faith by our deeds.

## 2) Dignity: Love Working with Faith

The path to full participation in and perfect realization of our divine dignity is the way of self-giving love; given freely, wholly and joyfully. It is the destiny of every person to fulfill the two great commandments that are woven into our very existence: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength ... and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:29-31) We have been destined beforehand – predestined – to live forever in relationships of love – love for God and love for all of God's creations.

Every person exists within the scope of God's love and is the object of the desire of God for their salvation, eternal life, joy and wellbeing. The Bible describes the goal in the image of an eternal spring welling up from the depths of our being and flowing out to God and others. (Jn. 4:14; cf. Ezek. 47:1-6) God is the source of this fountain of life and designates humans as its objects and welcomes us to become participants in pouring out to all the life-giving, empowering, affirming and freeing love of God. It is an amazing gift to us; that God invites us to participate in bringing the message and character of His love to all people. We are called to preach the Gospel and make disciples. (Mt. 28:19-20) We also are empowered to participate in this mission via the character of our lives – by our life choices. Jesus provides examples such as the parable of the Good Samaritan. The choice is costly – in time and resources – to care for the hurting stranger. Taking time and giving resources for hospitality, for visiting the sick and the prisoners. Giving of ourselves for the poor and oppressed are all part of our bringing the Kingdom of God to bear in the lives of people. The parable of the last judgment, or the sheep and the goats, clarifies some things: the basis of judgment is simply on how we treated the prisoners, the hungry, the homeless and the naked. (Mt. 25:31-46) All this activity is not empty, but filled with love (1 Cor 13) and power: "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

The Scriptures bring everything back to reality and practicalities. As the Apostle James puts it: "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can this kind of faith save him? ... Show me your faith without works and I will show you faith by my works." (James 2:14, 18) When we are born again, we are born into a new family – the household of God and all the saints in Christ Jesus. This is a household of love – and to support and flesh this out, we all could recite a pile of Scriptures here. Perhaps this is expressed most powerfully by Jesus in his farewell discourse as recorded in the Gospel of John and as lived out by the first Christians. (Acts 4:32-34) The people of God are a family that is evangelistic – they reach out and invite others to come on in. It is a community of character – one in which the members build each other up, encourage one another, are gentle and kind with

each other, and so forth. Again, many, many Biblical passages could be cited here. And it's no surprise that social and anthropological research and experience should prove that such communities of character are the best contexts within which families and children can thrive.

The family nestled within a caring community of families provides the best circumstances for children to grow into this kind of love. Humans are social beings who thrive in communities that empower, nurture, encourage and equip each one of its members in spiritual development, play, education, gifts, joy, creativity, mutual respect and responsibility, worship, work and security. It is utterly criminal to deceitfully or forcibly remove women and children from their families and communities, even when these communities are less than ideal. Some communities and families have become extremely detrimental to their members. This might be through corruption, deception, oppression, poverty, or violence. It is especially such weakened and dysfunctional communities and families that are targeted by criminal elements. We all must address these factors in positive and renewing ways. Perhaps this is not the first time in this sermon that you will have thought of Isaiah 61. Verse 4 states: "they will rebuild the ancient ruins." Broken and hurting communities must be rebuilt and revitalized, so that families and children will not be so vulnerable to attack from organized crime.

The Psalmist writes: "Your eyes saw me when I was inside the womb. All the days ordained for me were recorded in your scroll before one of them came into existence." (Ps. 139:16) The verses that follow express hatred for evil and active opposition to those who oppose the will of God. To actively oppose evil is an inherent aspect of participating in the love of God. It is right to participate in divine hatred of the evil that seeks to destroy and nullify God's work in the world. Thus, when we focus on prayer, we pray also for the defeat of the enemy – including the ultimate prayer: Maranatha! Come quickly, Lord." (1 Cor 16:22) The enemy to be defeated is a spiritual enemy. Hopefully, the perpetrators and all who participate in these crimes will renounce their wickedness and work instead toward the freedom and dignity of all. Part of defeating the aims of evil is to build up weak and devastated communities.

Until the return of the Lord and the final defeat of every enemy, it remains the time of salvation. Our love for others is an evangelistic and salvific love – for it is God's love at work in us. This is not a heavy burden. In fact, we can say that being filled with the Spirit and love of God is a kind of self-forgetful overflowing and bursting forth with the joy, life and love of God – which is directed back toward God and out toward all God's creatures.

### 3) Human Trafficking: The Application

1) People who trafficker in humans most effectively remove themselves from the human destiny and dignity to love – as do all who wickedly oppress others. "Certainly you are not a God who approves of evil; evil people cannot dwell with you. Arrogant people cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who behave wickedly. You destroy liars; the Lord despises violent and deceitful people." (Ps 5:4-6) The people who are the victims of such forms of violence and oppression, even when horribly abused, disfigured and dehumanized, remain human. No amount of inhumanity exercised against them can deny their right to be treated with respect and life-giving love.

People who are victimized by sexual trafficking are subjected to a drawn out torment that in some instances seems worse than death and always is a satanic mockery of love. These enslaved people are oppressed and suffer horribly while the oppressors benefit from that very suffering. But, God, who loves and cares for the poor and the oppressed, is holy, righteous and will judge.

Do not fret when wicked men seem to succeed! Do not envy evildoers! ... Evil men will soon disappear; you will stare at the spot where they once were, but they will be gone. But the oppressed will possess the land and enjoy great prosperity. Evil men plot against the godly and viciously attack them. The Lord laughs in disgust at them, for he knows that their day is coming. Evil men draw their swords and prepare their bows, to bring down the oppressed and needy, and to slaughter those who are godly. Their swords will pierce their own hearts, and their bows will be broken. The little bit that a godly man owns is better than the wealth of many evil men, for evil men will lose their power, but the Lord sustains the godly. The Lord watches over the innocent day by day and they possess a permanent inheritance.... But evil men will die; the Lord's enemies will be incinerated – they will go up in smoke. (Ps 37:1, 10-18, 20)

Therefore, it is those who violate and victimize others who forfeit their own human dignity. What they cannot destroy in others they destroy in themselves. Of all people, they are most in danger of permanent separation from life, love and all joy. “Certainly the Lord guards the way of the godly, but the way of the wicked ends in destruction.” (Ps 1:6) Unless somehow they manage to repent, to turn away from oppression and evil, they consign themselves to hell.

Whether we're willing or unwilling, we ought to look more closely at the hatred of God against evil and, for example, the words spoken by Jesus about these matters. We all have the hottest reasons – if I may joke about such a final matter – for a bit of self-examination. I certainly don't want to dwell on this, but its seriousness demands our attention. Biblical images such as the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18) or any number of apocalyptic images taken from Revelation as well as some of the parables of Jesus, are just a few that tell us clearly that the fate of the wicked is unimaginably and eternally horrible. It is the worst case absolutely. The parable of the sheep and the goats (Mt 25) and that of the rich man and poor Lazarus (Lk 16) – as well as others – serve to challenge us truly to put to death the lusts and desires of this worldly life and to be filled instead with the zeal, love and power of the Holy Spirit. We need in our time and in our part of the world, more of the attitude of Paul the Apostle, who considered that after preaching to others he might himself fall short of the goal of our call in Christ Jesus.

Trafficking of humans is an utterly despicable crime, on par with and at times worse than murder. It is a crime against humanity and must be censured universally. If the world community does not act decisively all human dignity is at risk. In not reaching out to help those in distress we fail to love selflessly and thus fall short of the way of love demonstrated by Jesus Christ. In what we've considered here there are plenty of reasons and loads of motivation for action. We could add the pragmatic observation, in addition, that criminal organizations are allowed to flourish by inaction or ineffective action. For the good of us all, we need to act while we have the opportunity. Silence and inaction serve to strengthen the forces of wickedness. These words of Catherine Booth are fitting: “I felt as though I must go and walk the streets and besiege the dens

where these hellish iniquities are going on. To keep quiet seemed like being a traitor to humanity.” (*Catherine Booth, A Biography of the Cofounder of The Salvation Army*. Roger J. Green. Pg. 258)

Even worse is participation and complicity of some – even if only a few – police officers, peace keepers, military personnel, and government officials in these crimes against humanity. This adds further offense to the abhorrent acts of traffickers and victimizers. This needs to be treated with equal determination. Those police, government and military officials and politicians who participate in or cover up these crimes are guilty of the crimes themselves and additionally guilty of betraying a sacred public trust which further weakens communities while facilitating criminal activities. Ignoring these crimes only serves the interests of the perpetrators. It further stacks the odds against the people who are enslaved or vulnerable to enslavement. The perversion of justice destroys communities. (Ex. 23:2; Lev 19:15; Det 16:19; Pr 17:23)

If this is true, how much more ought all Christians to place themselves fully on the side of the oppressed! Yet, Christians are involved in these forms of sexual exploitation and oppression. Those who view and purchase pornography or go to strip clubs or go to prostitutes further the oppression of the people caught within that system of wickedness and perversion. People – almost exclusively men – who purchase and view pornography, watch strippers and use prostitutes, these people are the ones who fund this entire system of abuse. Without them, little of this oppression would ever take place. The fact is that the devil has trapped Christians in sin and slavery to sensual lusts and desires. Perhaps, in this we have an opportunity to see ourselves in Judah, the son of Israel, and to see Tamar in the women who are victimized. Are they more righteous than we? Do they enter the Kingdom of Heaven ahead of us?

Freedom is available in Christ, but it requires repentance and full and total submission of our lives to God, in Christ Jesus and by the Holy Spirit. It also requires confessing to someone and making ourselves accountable, on a daily basis or even more, if necessary. Victory is possible. This is the day of renewing our salvation, of taking the next step toward perfect joy in Christ. Start now. There are programs available to help us to freedom from participation in this global system of evil. The Apostle Peter writes: “For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God: And ‘if the righteous man is scarcely saved, where will the impious and sinner appear?’” (1 Pet 4:17-18) But, be encouraged, the Lord is near and He is faithful and merciful to save.

## *CONCLUSION*

### 1) Wrapping It Up

It is important to note that under the most cruel, dreadful and horrifying circumstances some people find the courage and spirit to express profoundly beautiful acts of love and service. In them the destiny of humans is gloriously realized. The seemingly weak and apparently powerless victims of the most horrific oppression and torment at times achieve a royal splendor of character that is well beyond the imaginations and reach of their oppressors. Jesus’ suffering and death is

the ultimate expression of this perfect service to us all. Many disciples and children of God have followed Jesus in this way of suffering.

The powerful and wealthy oppressors, the self-dignified victimizers, as well as, ruthless and self-serving criminals, on the other hand, realize the worst of human depravity. These self-focused, self-important, arrogant, greedy, lust-driven and pompous people are gluttons who devour others. (See Amos 2:6-7; 4:1; 8:6) In the process they themselves become utterly undignified, for of all people they are most removed from the path of love that leads to true human dignity. They are in grave danger of forever losing the dignity for which they were brought into being. This deprived end includes those who for bribes and favors are willing to pervert justice. Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus for a bit of money, is one very good biblical example of this depravity.

In our day our primary and major focus is on saving and helping people who are victimized by human trafficking. This includes changing whatever we can in order to bring an end to this nightmare. Although it may seem unlikely, it remains possible that victimizers may be saved from the final and utter loss of their humanity if they are enabled to repent for their crimes. The Apostle Paul is a great example of totally giving his own life after his dramatic transformation.

## 2) Prayer Foci

This war against human trafficking ultimately is against spiritual forces of wickedness. Both traffickers and the victimizers of women and children may be subject to evil forces. They serve a demonic destructiveness of humanity. If we acknowledge this, we ought also to raise questions about global culture (now dominated by the west) and about the injustices and inequalities which contribute to contexts that promote such evils. In what ways does western culture contribute to these realities? What ought Christian communities, churches and organizations to do? The following are some beginning steps:

- Pray for victimized people and discern how to help them;
- Discern the evils of global culture and our own participation in it;
- Repent and as necessary do acts of regeneration and transformation;
- Address sexual perversion including pornography;
- Love God and love our neighbors so that our families and communities are healthy;
- Discern who else is fighting this global perversion and with whom we might partner;
- Strengthen those who are waging war against this evil,
- Advocate on behalf of the victimized for improvements in laws and policies,
- Advocate for international law to recognize these as crimes against humanity,
- Develop long term programs for rehabilitation of those who have been victimized,
- Advocate for funding for such programs,
- Confront those who are silent or even aiding the global criminal organizations

These realities are deeply troubling. The perpetrators as well as those who turn a blind eye to these crimes (e.g., including, at times, police, government and military officials) are guilty of extremely serious offenses. Lord in your mercy fill us with the love of God so that our actions and words will be life-giving and redemptive. Teach us a righteous hatred – the compliment and counterpoint of love – of these wicked actions. (Ps. 139:22; Rom. 12:9; Rev. 2:6).

A final word: Jesus said to the religious types: “prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God ahead of you.” (Mt 21:31) It is the default position, I think, for most of us to think we are better than prostitutes. What we don’t often consider is how many of these people are there against their will. We might mistakenly think very highly of ourselves. The Bible says, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rm 3:23) Today you can let go of your pride, sin or shame – whatever it is you need salvation from – and be born new, glorious and eternal. And immediately on telling us of our sin, the Apostle Paul adds: “they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (Rm 3:24) Praise God!

Now we will take time to pray. Some of you are moved now with new or renewed compassion and zeal to intercede and maybe to intervene on behalf of these lost. Some of you have been tempted – maybe your “flesh” is weak in this way and certainly sexual immorality and perversion are globally predominant ways in which the spiritual forces of wickedness enslave, corrupt and destroy people. Therefore, some will want time for confession and to seek the power of God for release and salvation from this. Perhaps some of you are or have been addicted to pornography or sex. Right now, in Christ, you can receive freedom! Some of you are moved to do spiritual warfare against this. And there are other ways in which the Spirit of God is moving in your hearts. The first step is to pray it through alone or together with one or two others and perhaps corporately. Confession is also a first step. For all these and other reasons let’s pray now. We will pray all over the Sanctuary and in the prayer chapel as well as in the pastors’ offices. The worship team will pray through music, softly. Come now, those who want to gather at the front and on the platform. Others, form little groups of 3 to 5 or so where you are. Some may want to find a place in the Sunday School rooms. Those who need to and are ready to deal with significant personal issues can find a pastor and move to a private place. Prayer guides are available from the ushers and will remain up on the screen. After a time of prayer the worship team will play a final song more loudly. That song will be our benediction, also.

Sample resources for overcoming sexual (including pornographic) temptations and additions:

Promise Keepers – [www.promisekeepers.org](http://www.promisekeepers.org)

Triple X Church – [xxxchurch.com](http://xxxchurch.com)

Living Waters – [www.livingwaterscanada.org](http://www.livingwaterscanada.org)

Desert Stream – [www.desertstream.org](http://www.desertstream.org)

Sample places to start the fight against human trafficking (many more organizations are involved and these are a sampling of places to begin):

Initiative Against Sexual Trafficking – [www.iast.net](http://www.iast.net)

International Justice Mission – [www.ijm.org](http://www.ijm.org)

[humantrafficking.com](http://humantrafficking.com) – [www.humantrafficking.com](http://www.humantrafficking.com)

[humantrafficking.org](http://humantrafficking.org) – [www.humantrafficking.org](http://www.humantrafficking.org)

United Nations – [www.unodc.org/unodc/trafficking\\_human\\_beings.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/trafficking_human_beings.html)