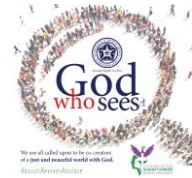




EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA



GOD WHO SEES ELROI

HUMAN TRAFFICKING ¹

What is human trafficking? I have found two definitions, one from the oxford dictionary and another from the US Department of Justice. According to the oxford dictionary human tracking is the unlawful act of transporting or coercing people in order to benefit from their work or service, typically in the form of forced labour or sexual exploitation. The US Department of justice defines it as "Human trafficking also known trafficking in person, is a crime that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labour or services, or to engage in commercial sex acts. The coercion can be subtle or overt, physical or psychological.

Human trafficking is as old as the old testament times. What quickly comes into my mind is the story of Joseph in the Old Testament Gen 45. The narrative of human trafficking began with the story of Joseph recorded in the book of Genesis when his brothers sold him into slavery. The bible also records in national scale where the whole nation of Israel were enslaved by the Egyptians for 400 years.

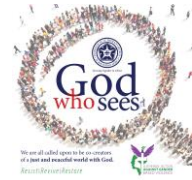
In the new testament Paul is recorded dealing with issues of slavery. A good example is his plea with Onesimus the slave be received back by his master now as an equal servant in the Lord (philemon¹). Research shows that traffickers around the world frequently prey on individuals whose vulnerability including poverty, with no or limited education, lack of lawful immigration status, lack of safe housing and many other disadvantages people find themselves in. trafficking victims are deceived by false promises of love, good job, or a stable life and are lured or forced into situations where they are made to work under deplorable conditions with little or no pay. Research shows that victims can be exploited for commercial sex or variety contexts, including on the streets, brothels or through escort services and online advertising. Traffickers can be foreign nationals or citizens.

News of scores of young people both females and males who are forced into servitude or sex slavery is reported all over the world. Africa is the worst affected due to numerous challenges which include poverty, conflicts, drought, bad governance, effects of climate change. The decline of economy in many African countries caused

¹ Prepared by Bishop Kenneth Sibanda, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) and the President of LUCSA.



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high unemployment and forced a lot of young people to move to other places seeking for greener pastures. By so doing many have fallen prey to human trafficking.

Survivors of human trafficking struggle when rescued to find normal lives. They are often impoverished and in poor health. According to Angela Romeo of Deseret News "when someone has been exploited and they do not have resources to empower themselves they turn to an environment that is unhealthy". Human trafficking is immoral and inhuman. It is against the gospel of Jesus Christ which makes all human beings sinners and in need of a Saviour. Jesus Christ died in order to save humanity from all forms of exploitation. The key message in John 10:10 "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" give all human beings freedom from all forms exploitations and dehumanisation.

There is hope to victims of human trafficking. God who sees is calling the church to denounce human trafficking and lobby government to intensify the fight on human trafficking and bring perpetrators to book. The church should welcome victims of human trafficking and rehabilitate them. The remarkable thing about Joseph is that as a trafficking survivor, he does not lose his faith and eventually speaks forgiveness to his brothers Gen 45:5-7, Gen 50:19-21

Further reflections

1. What example of human trafficking can be sighted in our communities?
2. What is the role of governments in fighting human trafficking?
3. How can church assist the survivors of human trafficking?
4. What is the role of the church in fighting human trafficking?

LEADERSHIP ACTION
AGAINST GENDER
BASED VIOLENCE

Resist | Revive | Restore