

**Title: Nowhere are Warm Welcomes More Important than God's House**

**Speaker:** Reverend Keith Draper, Regional Director of Church Relations, World Relief Chicagoland

Bible Texts:

- Matthew 21:1-13
- Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11
- Acts 2:1-11 and Revelation 7:9-17

**Introduction:**

- Today is Palm Sunday (April 2023) and we remember the warm welcome that Jesus received as He entered Jerusalem.
- God's people gave up their coats and waved palm branches to welcome Him.
- We also remember the many people who still need warm welcomes.
  
- Across the world, 100 million people have left their homes because of an immediate threat to their lives.
- They have left home, putting themselves and their families at risk, hoping for a better life.
- In the past 18 months, I have seen so many people arriving in Chicagoland. More than at any time in my 35 years here.
- Some of the key events that have produced many of the people we are seeing include:
  - The evacuation of Afghanistan in August 2021
  - The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2023
  - The arrival of buses from the Southern Border carrying people from Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba
  - The massive earthquake on the border between Syria and Turkey
- World Relief has been helping people in all of these situations and many others through partnerships with local churches.
- Two big questions I want us to think about are these:
  - Does God see all of these people who are forced to leave their homes?
  - What does He think about it?

**Main Points:**

- God does see all of these people, and He cares deeply about them.
- The Bible is full of stories of God helping people who have been forced to leave their homes.
- Some of these stories include:
  - Abraham, who was forced to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldeans
  - Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his brothers
  - Moses, who was forced to flee Egypt after killing an Egyptian
  - David, who was forced to flee from King Saul
  - Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, who were forced to flee to Egypt to escape Herod's massacre of the infants
- These stories show us that God is a God of compassion and mercy, and He is always willing to help those who are in need. Nowhere are warm welcomes more important than in God's house.
- This is evident in three key moments in the Bible where strangers were welcomed into worship with God's people:
  - When Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday
  - When the Holy Spirit came to the early church on Pentecost
  - When God is worshiped in heaven at the end of time

**Conclusion:**

- What is God telling His church today in light of what we are seeing in the Bible?
- Here are a few things to consider:
  - We should do as Jesus did and welcome strangers with open arms.
  - We should bless the nations with our faith.
  - We should cross barriers and show the world that Christ is Lord for all people.
- Let us pray that God will help us to be a church that welcomes all people, no matter where they come from or what their circumstances are.

**Prayer:**

*Lord, we pray that you would help us to be a church that welcomes all people. We pray that you would give us the compassion and mercy to see the needs of others and to meet those needs. We pray that you would help us to cross barriers and to show the world that Christ is Lord for all people. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*

**Closing:**

Thank you for listening. I hope that this teaching has challenged you to think about the importance of welcoming strangers.

If you would like to learn more about how you can help refugees and immigrants, please visit the World Relief website. Thank you, and God bless you.