

HEARTBEATS- Staying Connected 8/13/2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

We are an immigrant nation. Certainly, except for indigenous people, all of us can count our lineage back to another place. That is part of our history as immigrants, initially from Europe, who came here to settle, but it is also our present. I was particularly struck by that as I watched the recent 2020 Tokyo Olympics. I want to share with you a bit about three of this year's Olympians from the USA.

- Athing Mu – Mu is a middle-distance runner from Trenton, NJ. She is first generation American after her parents came here from South Sudan.
- Sunisa Lee – Lee is a gymnast from St. Paul, MN. She is of Hmong descent and her mother immigrated to the US from Laos as a child. (The Hmong are an ethnic group living mainly in southern China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar. Minnesota is the home of the largest Hmong population outside of southeast Asia.) Lee is the first Hmong ever to win a medal in the Olympics.
- Jordan Windle – Windle is Cambodian-born diver and was abandoned at age one. He was adopted by a single gay man from Fort Lauderdale, FL. He is the first diver of Cambodian-descent to compete in the Olympics.

Here are some other names from the US 2020 Olympic Team:

Sally Kipyeso

Dalilah Muhammed

David Kendziera

Yared Nuguse

Paul Kipkemoi Chelimo

Andrew Capobianco

Chiaka Ogbogu

Stephania Haralabidis

Anastasija Zolotic

We like our teams and our athletes, especially when they win medals for our country. In fact, even those who are critical of immigrants and migrants and refugees are a bit softer in their words when these previous outcasts come to represent their new-found home. Fortunately, those I've named above and many others were given both the opportunity and the time that allowed them to share their gifts.

Rather than getting political about those from outside our borders who come here—some for the opportunities we offer, some to escape the atrocities and risks of their homeland, and some by force—let me get, well, biblical. There are some passages from Scripture that can help to inform us as God's people when we seek to make our decisions about the issues of immigration and refugee resettlement in our country.

1. GOD'S PEOPLE ARE TOLD NOT TO OPPRESS IMMIGRANTS.

Exodus 22:21- *“Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt.”*

Exodus 23:9 - *“Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt.”*

2. GOD’S PEOPLE ARE TO TREAT IMMIGRANTS JUST LIKE CITIZENS.

Leviticus 19:33-34 - *“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. 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.”*

Deuteronomy 23:16 – *“Let them live among you wherever they like and in whatever town they choose. Do not oppress them.”*

Ezekiel 47:22-23 – *“You are to allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the foreigners residing among you and who have children. You are to consider them as native-born Israelites; along with you they are to be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In whatever tribe a foreigner resides, there you are to give them their inheritance,” declares the Sovereign Lord.*

3. GOD’S PEOPLE ARE TO LOVE AND HELP FOREIGNERS AS THEY WOULD THEIR OWN POOR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

Leviticus 25:35-36 - *“If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you. Do not take interest or any profit from them, but fear your God, so that they may continue to live among you.”*

Deuteronomy 10:18-19 – *“He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and he loves the foreigners residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.”*

4. GOD’S PEOPLE ARE TO SHOW JUSTICE TO FOREIGNERS.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15, 17 – *“Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it. Otherwise they may cry to the Lord against you, and you will be guilty of sin. Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge.”*

Zechariah 7:10 – *‘Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.’*

We are an immigrant nation. Whether we, or our parents, or other ancestors, were the first to come, they found here a home where they could live and, in many cases, thrive. How we treat those who desire to live in this land is a witness to what we believe about our own history and about God.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey