

Sermon Title: Why Pray For North Korea, March 26, 2010 (Scripture is from ESV)

Introduction

Good evening everyone. Tonight I'll be sharing about a subject that is near and dear to my heart: North Korea. The title of this message is, "Why Pray for North Korea?" Amidst this message I will also be showing you all a few different video clips of North Korea. My prayer tonight is that what you hear and see tonight will release a spirit of justice in your hearts to no longer tolerate or ignore what is happening in this dark nation. Before I start, I want us to read two different Scripture. Please open your Bibles to Psalm 88. Even if you don't know anything about North Korea yet, please imagine a persecuted and forlorn people.

Psalm 88

Now please turn to Matthew 25...

Matthew 25:37-40 – Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

****Pray**** (Ask for justice)

History of Korea

The peninsula of Korea has an extensive history. Over centuries and millenniums it has faced invasions and oppression from Japan, Mongolia, and China. In the late 1800's Christianity was brought into the nation but it was not until between 1903 – 1910 that there was great breakthrough. During that time period, particularly 1907, revival broke out throughout Korea and many turned to Christ. In 1910 Japan took control over the people and began to oppress the Christians cruelly. Christianity continued to grow despite the oppression. Many of them were martyred and had to worship in secret. The oppression continued to get worse and worse until after World War 2 when Korea was liberated from Japan. At this time it was decided that the peninsula would be split and the Soviet Union would set up a government in the north while the United States would set up a government in the south.

North Korea became Communist and Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union chose to set up freedom fighter Kim Il Sung as the Prime Minister over the nation. As the Communist party took more and more power in the nation, they began to heavily oppress the Christians in the nation. Many Christians fled to South Korea while others hid their faith, denied their faith, or were imprisoned and executed.

Kim Il Sung, the prime minister, was raised in the Christian church with his grandfather having been a pastor and his father having been an elder in a church. His father died when he was 14 and shortly after that he became deeply interested in Communist ideologies. When he came to power he began to develop a personality cult where he began to claim that he was the father of the nation, his son Kim Jong Il is the son of the nation, and the people are the spirit of the nation. Through extensive propaganda and closing off the nation to the rest of the world, the people of North Korea have become brainwashed into believing that everything good comes from Kim Il Sung. The nation is Communist so almost all food and goods come from the government. When the goods are delivered to the people they are told that it is all from their father, Kim Il Sung. The children were taught in school songs of worship towards

Kim Il Sung and a false history of Kim Il Sung's amazing exploits. When Kim Il Sung eventually passed away in 1994, the nation was so shocked that their "god" could die that a number of people died from mourning and despair. To this day the people continue to bow before pictures or statues of him and worship him. **Idolatry is one of the chief demons (strong men) of North Korea.**

The people of North Korea were not just indoctrinated with lies about their leader, but they were also brainwashed to believe that both America and Christians are extremely evil people. Propaganda throughout the nation shows Americans and missionaries as demonic and immoral and the children are taught to hate them.

But propaganda was not the only way for Kim Il Sung to enforce his power. Prison camps, also known as concentration camps, were set up throughout the nation for anyone who might rebel or speak out against the government. The camps have grown in number and in size over the past twenty five years as conditions in the nation have worsened. **The government runs the nation through fear. Fear is another one of the chief demons of North Korea.** The government sets up informers all throughout the land who will rat on anyone who speaks badly about the government. All the people know that with one slip of the tongue or one false move, they and their family together can be taken away for life. Also, if any of the people are caught with anything from the outside world they also risk prison camp or even public execution.

The nation breeds fear. I have met different workers and missionaries who serve along the border of North Korea. Through bribery and connections they are able to enter North Korea for short amounts of time. One Korean-American worker shared with me that he crossed the border with the son of a well known Christian evangelist, who happens to be a white American. While in North Korea the man wanted to give candy to the street kids they happened upon and soon a crowd of small boys was around the white American. The Korean-American worker then asked the boys if they knew where the man was from. They shook their heads no and seemed focused mainly on the candy. The Korean-American then flatly said, "This man is American. He is from America." He then watched as one of the boys froze, began shaking in fear, and literally wet himself before running off.

Because the people are so brainwashed, when North Korea eventually opens up there will have to be a lot of reconciliation and healing among the Americans, particularly Caucasian Americans, with the North Korean people. I have met different refugees who fled North Korea for their lives in North China. There they met Christians and were at first terrified, especially with the white Christian missionaries, but as they realized everything else they had been taught in their lives was a lie they were eventually able to trust the missionaries and not fear them.

Worship after eye surgery

The first video clip I am going to show you all is from a National Geographic documentary. The reporter is Lisa Ling and she follows a Nepalese eye doctor into North Korea. Over 10 days this Nepalese eye doctor performed 1000 surgeries for blind North Koreans, healing them of their cataracts and restoring their sight. What you are about to see is the last day of their trip inside. For many of the blind people this will be their first time seeing in years, or even over life.

As you watch this you must understand that behind every idol and every false thing that people worship is a demon...

Deuteronomy 32:17a – They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EoHsicn7duU&NR=1>
2:54 to 8:27...

What you just saw is basically the biggest cult in the entire world. Two of North Korea's greatest spiritual strongholds are idolatry and fear. Watching the video it's hard to tell who was being sincere in their worship and who of them were worshipping out of fear because if they didn't they would be judged and even face punishment. The only joy I could see in the video was when the first girl first saw her father. But once her father said that they must thank their great leader everything seemed to become strange and off. You may have noticed that no one thanked the Nepalese doctor.

North Korea vs. South Korea

If you study the histories of North Korea and South Korea you will actually see that their populations were about the same after the Korean War. The North Korean economy actually did better than the South Korean economy. But as Kim Il Sung's personality cult grew in influence, so did the curses that are over the nation. Deuteronomy 28 is filled with warnings of the curses that God will bring to those who are idolatrous and forsake God. With all the innocent blood of not just Christian martyrs in North Korea but also many other innocent people, including children, North Korea gradually fell into the consequences listed in Deuteronomy 28. Its population is now less than half of South Korea.

Fear also breeds fear. Like the Communist leaders of the Soviet Union, most of the leaders of North Korea became more and more paranoid. The prison camp system picked up more in the 80's and this coincided with the economy gradually failing. In the 90's North Korea was hit by a famine. Corruption in the government hindered the food distribution and approximately 3 million people died with many others near starvation.

Just as fear breeds fear, sin breeds sin. The prison camps were originally set up to punish dissidents and control the people, but the government soon discovered that the prisoners were free labor. Receiving only a small handful of cornmeal each day, the prisoners are forced to work 16 to 20 hours a day in grueling conditions. Many of the prisoners die because of malnutrition, overwork, and despair. Some refugees believe that the government actually instructs the prison guards to work the prisoners to death and then they falsely accuse more people and send them into the prison to replace the dead prisoners. This is a way for the government to make money. There is no respect for life.

Prison camp testimony...

The conditions in these prison camps are horrid. The treatment of the prisoners is unbelievable. Rather than me share, I'm going to show a video of a former prisoner who escaped his prison camp. He is apparently the only refugee to survive escaping the camp and make it outside of North Korea. His story is that he was actually born in the prison camp. His mom and his dad were apparently rewarded for good behavior and, without having met each other before, were married in the camp. They had five days together in a cell before being separated for good. Despite him being an infant, his mom had to continue to work while taking care of him. Some of this is a little rough...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FZMwoY7DyM>

2:13 to 7:06

This refugee's story is very similar to the stories of other refugees who were able to survive the prison camps and of former prison guards who also fled the country. There are actually much more morbid stories and pictures.

You can see clearly from the video how the lies and mistrust destroy the people. **Even sons and mothers were forced to inform on one another.** Many refugees share that if they do not have something to inform about that they will be punished, so many of them will simply falsely accuse others to avoid punishment. This is true of the society outside of the prisons as well.

You could also see from the video that the man, despite his horrible stories, showed very little emotion as he spoke. People who endure severe trauma tend to become numb to it. When I was in Cambodia I met a man who survived the killing fields in the 1970's. He saw many family members killed and endured unspeakable hardship after hardship. Yet as he shared with us, he would laugh. Everyone listening was in tears from his terrible stories, yet he would awkwardly laugh, simply not knowing how to show emotion. I believe part of this is God's grace. For many people who endure such trauma their mind goes into survival mode. By God's grace they are able to compartmentalize the trauma and lock it away. Otherwise they would lose their sanity.

But we also know that we aren't meant to lock away the trauma and bury it all our life. North Korea needs serious healing. Everyone in the nation needs serious healing. It will only be by the power Jesus' love and the Holy Spirit that they will be healed and delivered.

A friend of mine worked with an organization that helped North Korean refugees escape across the border of North China and make their way all the way to Thailand where they would appeal to the UN or South Korea for refugee status. My friend was shocked to find that the North Korean people that he endangered himself to serve were actually unappreciative and extremely difficult to work with. He has shared with me that it is nearly impossible to have two North Korean men together without them fighting to the point of trading blows with each other. They will yell and scuffle in public despite facing deportation if the authorities find them. Many other people who work with refugees have said they are almost never told "Thank you" by the people that they risk their lives for.

Part of this is a result of the Communist ideology. Everyone receives the same, so there is little reason to be grateful. But a bigger reason is simply because there is just no love in North Korea. They live gripped by fear. They are simply in survival mode. These refugees have been taught to trust no one and that if someone is kind to them its likely a bribe or a set up.

Starvation

Many people believe the reason the government has remained in power over the past two difficult decades isn't so much because of the propaganda and brain washing, **but because the people are starving to death.** When you are in starvation your only thoughts tend to be about food. Because of this most of the people are unable to think about the government or organize a rebellion. They are too pre-occupied thinking of food.

Many people want to send in food aid believing it will help the North Koreans not only survive, but perhaps rise up in rebellion and put an end to the oppressive government. But

sadly the food aid rarely reaches the people who truly need it. The corruption in the government causes most of the food to go straight to the army and to other higher ups. Acquaintances of mine who give food aid tell me they hope that at least 30% of all the food they give goes to the people they intend it for. That means for every 100 tons of food they give for the people of North Korea, the army and the government likely receive 70 tons of it. Now many familiar with North Korea believe the only humane way to act is to cut off all food aid and force the government to collapse. It's a catch 22 because either way the people suffer.

One North Korean refugee said this, **“Humanitarian aid is sent to North Korea, but humanity doesn't exist in North Korea.”**

I'm now going to show a few short clips of the reality in North Korea...

Starving children and bad medical equipment

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiE1omXhewg&NR=1>

0:44 to 2:34...

More undercover footage... poor children and dead people in the streets...

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-5385077659281273870&ei=-0r4SszvC5HKqwKXnuznDg&q=inside+north+korea#>

16:03 to 17:37

And

31:38 to 32:48

Why Pray for North Korea?

So what is the hope? You see a people so desperate, so oppressed. But I want to tell you all that one of the purest churches in the world is the body of Christ hidden in North Korea. Despite the fears of torture and death, the number of believers is increasing in the nation.

Pastor Chae at my children's home here in Seoul does an early morning radio broadcast that goes into North Korea and China. Over the past decades he has received contact from those inside North Korea that they listen to his broadcast and are blessed from it. For a time in his life, he would go to the North China border once a year to teach new Christians and train them in evangelism. These hungry new Christians would risk their lives to cross the river along the border of China. They would receive their spiritual food and return with joy into North Korea to stealthily spread the good news. Pastor Chae said that each year when he would return only a handful of those from the year before would make it back. A lot of them would be crippled or their faces beaten in from torture. Many of the others were killed or put into prison camps. But along with the crippled believers would be a large group of new believers. All of them eager to learn more about Jesus and return to their country with the good news.

They are the pure church. They are a people who are not living for this life, but they are living for heaven. They have their peace. They aren't attached to the things of this world. They who once knew no love have now found the truest source of it, so there is nothing else they need.

Along with the pure church, the potential is endless for the youth of North Korea. Prophet upon prophet share about God's plans for the youth of North Korea, especially for the street orphans. God has special plans for these kids, and the enemy is doing all he can to starve and

kill these beautiful children. I'm going to show one more clip before closing and leading us into prayer.

Girl with plastic bag wanting water...

http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=1875007335054132657&ei=kcqoS_KHB6H-qAPKlfmrCA&q=children+of+the+secret+state&view=3#

11:30 to 13:20

Satan wants to convince us that the children have no value. Satan wants us to ignore them. He wants us to feel powerless to help them and to remain focused on our own lives. He doesn't want us to think about that little girl, so thirsty for water that she can barely speak. He doesn't want us to think about all the children wasting away, or of all the prisoners receiving torture that no human should ever have to bear, no matter the crime.

So you now have a choice. All authority in heaven and in earth has been given. Christ lives in you and is the hope of glory. You have weapons of righteousness in your right and in your left. You have every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. Now, will you pray and exercise the authority given to you, or will you choose to look away and move on? Will you choose to say, "This is not going to happen on my shift. I am not going to allow this any longer."

Let's pray...

Prayer topics

- The children and their need... for God's covering over the youth, REBUKE THE ENEMY, claim the kids by Jesus' blood, pray for provision of both physical and spiritual food

- Those in prison camps... Christians in prison are not allow to look up because they are deemed unworthy for choosing to not worship Kim Il Sung... pray for angelic visitations, strengthening by the Spirit, for the people to hold on to hope and to be delivered, for all prison camps to be closed and redeemed into hospitals, schools, and even churches

- The underground church... power of the Spirit, favor with authorities, the pure Gospel and the pure love of God

- Danger of China... it is understood that if no one does anything that China will likely take over North Korea, which is basically "evil driving out evil" and will do no good... claim the nation in prayer, rebuke and disallow the enemy's advance against Korea, pray for more prayer warriors to rise up!

Our battle is not against flesh and blood. Our battle is not against Kim Jong Il or anyone on this earth. Our battle is in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12).

Some good videos to watch on North Korea...

Children of the Secret State:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=1875007335054132657&ei=Z0v4Ss7XDofCrQLOodgd&q=children+of+the+secret+state#>

National Geographic Inside - Undercover in North Korea (Part 1 of 5):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQXfMMHV8FM>

Inside North Korea:

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-5385077659281273870&ei=-0r4SszvC5HKqwKXnuznDg&q=inside+north+korea#>

Movie - The Crossing (Part 1 of 10... this is a South Korea made movie based on the stories of different refugees who escaped North Korea, it is very realistic and well made):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhahvxABPGQ&feature=related>

Some good books to read (there are others)...

Chol-Hwan Kang - Aquariums of Pyongyang (a good introductory book to North Korea, the autobiography of a North Korean who survived the prison camps and escaped the country)

Soon Ok Lee - Eyes of the Tailless Animals (the most vivid book about the prison camps in North Korea... this book will break your heart and is a must read for anyone desiring to pray for North Korea)

Mike Kim - Escaping North Korea (the most up to date book I've found and covers a lot)