

**Christian Churches Together
Afternoon Worship
January 31, 2013
Austin, Texas**

**Welcoming the Stranger and The Lamb's
Agenda**

Sermon by Rev. Samuel Rodriguez

Permit me to express my gratitude to God, Rev. Carlos Malavé, CCT and each and every one of you for the honor, privilege and blessing bestowed upon me today.

Today I come to you as a child of God, a child of immigrants and a child of a Christian community committed to doing justice in the name of Jesus. For that matter, I am often asked, "What is a Hispanic Born Again Christian? How will you define your community?" The answer lies embedded in a simple recipe. A Hispanic Christian is what you get when you take Billy Graham and Martin Luther King Jr., put them in a blender, and place salsa sauce on top.

My friends, there's a fine line between the prophetic and the pathetic. In the midst of a pathetic reality, we find the quintessential metric for prophetic Christianity.

Matthew 25:34: “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’”

37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’”

40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly, I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

How do we welcome the stranger. How do we redeem the narrative of immigration and apply Christ centered optics to an issue dividing our nation? How do we advance the cause of justice in a very unjust world? How do we build a firewall against intolerance, abuse, inequality, apathy and xenophobia?

Permit me to title the word the Lord has deposited in my heart for you today, *Welcoming the Stranger via the Lamb's Agenda*.

Welcoming the Stranger, with the Purpose of a Movement.

Friends, we live in difficult times; times of great uncertainty, angst, consternation and flux. The obituary of Christian justice in the 21st century already permeates both church and society.

Scholars and leaders from within and outside the Church have arrived to the inevitable conclusion that Christianity in America will not survive the 21st century in any viable or sustainable manner.

I beg to differ. For even though housing markets crumble, the stock market plummets and banks are failing there is one institution that is still committed to justice, the Church of Jesus Christ is alive and well.

For that matter, I believe the 21st Century stands poised to experience the greatest transformative Christian justice movement in our history. This movement will affirm biblical truth, reform the culture, transform our political discourse and usher in a New Awakening. I am convinced that the best is yet to come.

For at the end of the day, this will not be a political movement driven by expediency and agendas of man but a prophetic movement driven by the impetus of the Cross. What is the agenda for this new movement; how can we truly live out the righteous mandate of Matthew 25? It is not the agenda of the donkey or the agenda of the elephant. This movement stands driven by nothing other than the agenda of the Lamb. Behold the Lamb.

We Welcome the Stranger with the Power of the Spirit.

Conceived on the Cross, contracted in the empty tomb and delivered in the upper room, the Lamb's Church is a Spirit empowered church.

Forget Harry Potter and Hogwarts, via the conduit of biblical allusions and metaphors there are real spirits in the world today. The Spirit of Pharaoh is alive, holding people captive in the Egypt of bondage and fear.

The spirit of Goliath still lives mocking and intimidating the children of God.

The Spirit of Jezebel still makes men and women hide in caves with perversion and manipulation. The Spirit of Absalom lives dividing homes, churches, communities and

relationships while the Spirit of Herod continues to target the young in and out of the womb, through poverty, sex trafficking, and mindless violence murdering infant dreams and vision.

Yet, I have news for you. There is a Spirit that's more powerful than all these spirits combined. Friends, we need to tell the world shaken by violence and suffocating in fear, that the most powerful spirit alive today is not the spirit of Pharaoh, Saul, Absalom, Goliath, Jezebel or Herod. The most powerful Spirit on the Planet is none other than the Spirit of Almighty God, the Spirit of Justice, the Spirit of the Lamb. "For it is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord." Zechariah 4:6

It is that Spirit that gives us the power to do justice and invite the foreigner. "For ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you." Acts 1:8 Not just power to get the shakes, quakes and bakes. Not just power to build sanctuaries and engage in quantitative metrics of affirmation. Not just power for television and radio ministries; but POWER to feed the hungry, POWER to quench the thirsty, POWER to welcome the stranger, POWER to clothe the needy; POWER to do justice, POWER to love mercy and POWER to walk humbly before God. Micah 6:8

We Welcome the Stranger with the Promise of Freedom.

Isaiah 58:6: “To loose the chains of injustice, and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke.” “For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” 2 Corinthians 3:17

We live in a world where people find themselves bound; bound by sin, immorality, addiction, alcoholism, depression, loneliness, dismay, anxiety, fear, confusion, poverty, violence, illiteracy, the past, failure, defeat and unexplainable addiction to Caramel Macchiato! Do you know why there's so much bondage?

Do you know why we people live in fear of the alien and the foreigner?

Because the enemy understands that the most powerful human on the planet is not the one with riches or the one with guns or the one with armies or the one with fame. The most powerful human on the planet is a person set free by the blood of the Lamb.

Why? Because it was a free man who approached Pharaoh in Egypt and said let my people GO.

It was a free man who stepped into the promise land and declared, “As for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord.”

It was a free man who starred down a Giant called Goliath and said, “You come against me with a sword, a spear and a javelin but I come against you in the Name of the Lord God Almighty.”

It was free young people who refused to bow and subsequently exhibited freedom even in the midst of a fiery furnace.

It was a free man who prayed down fire from heaven and then shouted “Get ready, here comes the Rain.”

In more recent history, it was a free man who man who confronted the evil of slavery and then declared WITH MALICE TOWARDS NONE AND CHARITY TOWARDS ALL.

It was a free man who had a dream, that one day we will live in a nation where we will be judged not by the color of our skin but rather by the content of our character.

But the greatest expression of a freedom came 2,000 years ago when hanging on a tree by his sacrifice, Christ, a free man, Freedom incarnate personified what he declared in John 8:36, “For

He who the Son sets free is Free INDEED!!!!”
Are there any free people in the house?

CCT, you know very well that true freedom is found in the person of Christ.

Our Freedom stems not from the political preferences of ideologues in Washington DC.

Our freedom does not come from the donkey or the elephant. Our Freedom comes from the Lamb that’s on the Throne to whom Angels Cry Holy, Holy, Holy. Our freedom comes from John 8:32, “And you shall know the truth and truth shall set you free.”

We will live out Matthew 25 when we rise up and tell the world that “in Christ, you can be Free from Sin.” Rev.1:6 “In Christ you can be Free from fear.” 2 Timothy 1:7; and, “In Christ, you can be Free from condemnation.” Romans 8:1
Therefore NOW!

We Welcome the Stranger with the Passion of the Cross.

No other symbol incorporates passion and promise like the Cross. A simple symbol depicting two pieces of wood, one vertical and the other horizontal, successfully branded the eternal hope of Glory to all mankind.

Madison Avenue and multi-million dollar campaigns have not been able to reproduce the loyalty, commitment and even multi-generational allegiance to a message conveyed via the humble conduit of a brand, not written on the wood but incarnated in the spirit of what it represents, Grace and eternal life.

That universal Christian symbol vociferously and with unbridled persuasion not only conveys a message of what is to come, but also, what Life truly is; a cross. Jesus said, "Carry your cross daily and follow me."

The Cross is both vertical and horizontal. Life is both vertical and horizontal. Vertically, we stand connected to God, His Kingdom, Eternal Life, spiritual truths, divine principles, and Glory.

Horizontally, to our left and to our right, we exist surrounded and revealed through community, relationships, family, culture and society.

Simply stated, the Cross is both vertical and horizontal, redemption and relationship, holiness and humility, covenant and community, Kingdom and society, righteousness and justice, salvation and transformation, ethos and pathos, John 3:16 and Matthew 25, orthodoxy and orthopraxy, faith and public policy, prayers and activism,

sanctification and service, the imago dei and habitus christus, Billy Graham and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the New Jerusalem and Austin, Texas.

For too long in America, people of faith, particularly Christians, have lived either vertically or horizontally but few have succeeded in living, speaking, equipping, leading and ministering from where the vertical and horizontal planes of the Cross intersect, the nexus of Christianity, the heart of biblical justice.

This is the place where conviction marries compassion, the fishes intersect with the bread and truth joins hands with mercy.

This is the place where we reconcile the optics of redemption with the metrics of reconciliation, the imago dei with habitus christus, the prophetic with the practical, and faith with action.

Welcoming the stranger is both a vertical and horizontal issue. Vertically, the heart of God stands moved by the plight of the immigrant and the suffering. Horizontally, prophetic advocacy will serve as a reconciliatory prescription for a nation divided by partisan politics.

Accordingly, it is the Cross that prompts us to lift hands towards heaven and stretch our hands

towards our fellow man. It is the Cross that enables us to see the image of God in citizen and immigrant. It is the Cross that compels us to declare that a human being cannot be illegal. It is the Cross that drives us to reconcile the rule of law, Romans 13, with treating the immigrant, Leviticus 19, as one of our own.

Matthew 25 stands as a clarion call to reconcile righteousness with justice. For that matter it's important to ask, "What is justice?" Justice stands not as a copyrighted nomenclature for the expedient efforts of operatives in the political sphere. Justice does not belong to the left or to the right. Justice flows from high for the purpose of lifting up the low.

What is justice? Justice is not the purpose of big government. Justice is the passion of a big God. Justice is not a political term to be exploited but a prophetic term to be lived out.

What is justice? Justice does not result in pathetic attempts of expediency but in prophetic postures of activism. For justice will at times march, at times it will protest, at times it will sing but justice will always speak on behalf of those that cannot speak for themselves.

This is the generation of Matthew 25. This is the generation committed to advancing the Lamb's

agenda. This generation seeks a holistic gospel that looks up and looks around; with holy hands lifted high with conviction and helping hands stretched out in compassion.

Psalm 89:14: "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne. Unfailing love and truth walk before you as attendants."

Now is the time to marrying the evangelistic message of Billy Graham with the prophetic activism of Dr. King. Now is the time to reconcile the message with the march, the Way with the Dream, the call for salvation with a call for justice, and the song of redemption with the song of deliverance. By living out Matthew 25, this generation that will sing both "There is Room at the Cross" and "We Shall Overcome One Day."

We Welcome the Stranger with the Precision of Kingdom Culture Optics.

The antidote to cultural, geographical and spiritual myopia is the application of corrective lenses stemming from Revelation 5; all races and creeds worshipping the lamb.

Corresponding application of a kingdom culture lens will enable us to view the world not primarily via the optics of my earthly cultural context but

more importantly, I can view the world via the compassionate lens of my Kingdom citizenship.

In other words, when I wake up in the morning what I see first is not that I am Hispanic, Black, White or Asian, charismatic or automatic, but rather I am, first and foremost, a child of the Lamb. My vertical identity empowers my horizontal reality.

In that respect, much has been said lately about my community. Why are you here? 50 million Hispanics in America, what does this mean for our culture, values and future?

I stand convinced that the Hispanic community and our prophetic role lies defined in the very construct of the term Hispanic. First, it begins with His, capital H. Second, it continues with panic. HIS-Panic. Amigos, we are not here to teach America the Macarena, salsa or the chachacha. We are not here to increase the dividend portfolios of those that have diversified by investing wisely or unwisely in Taco Bell. We are not here to make you press 1 for English or 2 for Spanish. We are His-Panic. We are here to bring panic to the kingdom of darkness in the Name of Jesus.

We Welcome the Stranger with a Prophetic Call for Action

For the difference between the sheep and the goat is how we treat those around us. Silence is not an option.

It was Dr. King who said, "Our lives begin to end when we become silent about things that matter."

Silence is not an option when 11 million undocumented individuals continue to live in the shadows. Silence is not an option when states like Alabama and Arizona pass laws that separate families, punish innocent children and divide communities more and more each day.

Silence is not option when in 2013 America, men abandon their roles as fathers, our children are slaughtered, pornography marries technology, God is mocked, pushers are more admired than preachers, school grounds look like battlegrounds and our neighbors sit paralyzed by the gate called beautiful begging for change. The doers of Matthew 25 will sing the new song of Revelation 5. It's time to sing a new song.

We Welcome the Stranger with the Purpose of His Kingdom

Matthew 25:34:“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’”

In 1917, Russian leaders declared that by the 21st Century the entire world would embrace Communism and there would not be one Christian alive on planet earth. In 1939, Nuremberg Germany, Nazi officials declared that the Third Reich would out last the Christian faith. In the 1960's, the Beatles declared in light of their Yankee Stadium concert that, by the 21st century, they would receive more praise and adoration than the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Well guess what? I have news for you. It's 2013. Lenin is entombed, Hitler is dead, the Beatles are gone but here we are today in declaring that the Jesus is Alive and Well.

So let this be the generation, not known as the generation of Facebook, YouTube, iPads and Twitter, but the generation that fed the hungry, gave water to the thirsty and welcomed the stranger.

In Jesus Name, Rise up and heal in his name, Rise up and deliver with his power, Rise up as the Good Samaritan, Rise up and live out true religion, Rise up and clothe the naked, Rise up and give shelter to the homeless, Rise up and defend life, Rise up and eradicate poverty, Rise up and pass immigration reform, Rise up and defend religious liberty, Rise up and end human trafficking, Rise up and welcome the stranger and above all, Rise up and preach the Word in and out of season, make disciples, fulfil the great commission and worship God in Spirit and in Truth.

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