**Joshua 20:1-9 Cities of Refuge**

In our study of Joshua we have been looking each week at three questions:

1. **What? What is actually happening here?**
2. **So what? What difference does this make to how we seek to live for Jesus in 2022?**
3. **What now? How do we live in light of this passage as followers of Jesus?**

You may want to consider how we are similar/different to the cities of refuge.

The cities of refuge were:

**Accessible**

How are we sign-posting the good news to others? What are the things we are doing well, where people can easily access the good news? Are there things that we need to clear out of the road so that people can easily reach Jesus? Or are there any roadblocks that we need to take down? I tend to only think about clearing gutters and drains of leaves when there is a huge downpour of rain. And on a couple of occasions when I have tried to clear a bung of dead leaves I have ended up completely drenched. I’m blind to windblown leaves and tumbling moss, I never notice the individual leaves that fall and block my drains, slowly over time. Is that what happens in churches too or in our lives? Little things, unchallenged can get in the way of others getting to hear the good news, that salvation is for everyone.

The cities of refuge were

• **Visible**

Are we salt and light in our community? If we were to disappear tomorrow what would people miss?

The cities of refuge were

• **Welcoming**

Everyone is invited to accept the invitation to join God’s kingdom. Do we really want to welcome everyone? The cities of refuge were available to everyone, Jew and Gentile, that was radical. Who do we find it easy to welcome? Who do we find trickier? Can we welcome and accept people who have different views on things to ourselves? Can we welcome people who live different lives to us? Can we accept that all are welcome in God’s kingdom? Can we accept that it’s grace and mercy and not works or lifestyle that give people entry to God’s kingdom.

The cities of refuge were

• **Safe**

Does our church feel alive because we are revelling in God’s grace and mercy? Is it a place where other sinners like ourselves will feel welcomed, loved and offered kindness? We have so much to thank God for, how do we communicate the thrill of being forgiven, loved and accepted by God and show that grace and mercy to others? Is it a safe place to come, without fear of judgement or rejection? Do we give the same God-like welcome that the Prodigal Son found when he returned to the Father, one where we run towards others before any words have been said and without any judgement?

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.”

The cities of refuge were

• **Life-giving**

Is our church a place where people can find life in all it’s fullness, a place where a relationship with Jesus and his body the church brings life and healing? How do we communicate that more effectively? How do we tell the stories of the difference that finding our refuge in Jesus makes in our daily lives?

There’s a lot to think and pray about

There’s a challenge to be courageous if we take seriously the pattern of living in a community that shares the features of a city of refuge

And there’s a lot to be thank God for, that in Jesus we have a High Priest who enables us to live in the eternal city of refuge, in his presence daily.