



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL

Justice, Peace and Freedom

**Mr. Obang Metho Speaks at St. Mark's Anglican Church, in Saskatoon,
Saskatchewan**

August 20, 2008

My Journey of Faith

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"I will read from Psalm 2 in the Bible—the passage that changed my life:

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand against the LORD and against his Anointed One. "Let us break their chains, they say, "and throw off their fetters."

The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill. I will proclaim the decree of the LORD:

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

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Can anyone think they can get away with evil without being accountable? Do the powerful really think they can commit crimes against the weak and overpower the rule of law set in place not by man, but by God—the creator of the entire universe, including them?

This scripture warns all, but especially the most powerful in the world, that God is in charge—human beings are not—no matter how hard they try to "break the chains" of God's law and justice, He will prevail and we best submit to His authority. This will be the topic of my talk today as it was the scripture that unexpectedly thrust me into the work of human rights as a "calling" rather than as a job.

I want to thank Pastor Karen Sandell, this congregation and my good friend, Clay and his wife Cheryl for inviting me to speak today. It is an honor and a privilege to be here. I am not a pastor, like my older brother, but yet it is not the first time I have been asked to speak in a church.

I could never have imagined it before a life-changing event in December of 2003 threw my quiet life in Saskatoon into a journey with deep valleys, deserts and mountains that I could never have anticipated. As I stand before you today, I am witness to the truth that God dramatically changes lives, like my own, when we least expect it!

I was asked to talk about my human rights work

Today, I was asked to talk about my human rights work, something that is closely connected, nurtured and sustained by my faith in Jesus Christ. I did not know that this work was part of God's plan and purpose for me, but now as I look back, I see that God's hand of preparation began many years ago when I was a young child in Africa. I am from Gambella, Ethiopia, from a tiny, marginalized ethnic group called Anuak. Gambella is in the southwestern region of Ethiopia and Anuakland extends over the border into southern Sudan.

I was nearly 18 years of age when I migrated to Canada where I attended high school after which I then went on to attend the University of Saskatchewan. Saskatoon is my home, even though I will always have one foot in Africa for I have never forgotten where I have come from. Much of Africa is a poor place with no access to clean water, education, health care and other opportunities we enjoy here in Canada. Much of the reason I wanted to come here was for something that is desired by most every African—an education.

I had a very happy childhood. We were in such a remote area, that we almost exclusively, were only around other Anuak. I never remember witnessing or experiencing discrimination or being told that I was less than someone else based on superficial distinctions. It was only at an older age when I was exposed to discrimination against darker-skinned people, like myself, in Sudan and in other parts of Ethiopia. However, it had little effect on my identity because I already had a strong foundation. I can thank my parents, my grandmother, my community and the teachings of my ethnic group who viewed everyone as equal.

The word “Nyuk” means sharing and the word “Anuak” means the people who share together, eat together and laugh together. This was lived out in our daily life. No one was supposed to go hungry or be ashamed for not having enough food to eat so the food would be in one container and all were welcome to eat. The women would sit together and the men would do the same.

We kids could eat at anyone's home. During supptime, this meant that we would eat a little bit at different homes, so we always carried our spoons with us. Many relatives lived close by—our cousins, aunts, grandmas and grandpas—all enriching our lives in different ways. When outsiders came, they were heartily welcomed. It was our culture and it was a treasure in my life to be raised in this way.

The Anuak are considered an endangered people group

Just a short aside—although the Anuak are considered an endangered people group, different Anuak families have migrated within Africa and still maintain the same language and similar cultural values.

These families are called the Lou people (also spelled Lwo/Luo). The Lou are a family of linguistically affiliated ethnic groups who live in an area that stretches from the Gambella region in south western Ethiopia, the southern Sudan, through northern Uganda and eastern Congo (DRC), into western Kenya, and ending in the upper tip of Tanzania. People who speak Luo languages include the Shilluk, Anuak, Acholi, Lango, Palwo, Alur, Padhola, Joluo (Kenyan Luo), Bor, and Kumam. Many of them have names that start with O—like Obang, Odenga, Omot, Obama, Oboya, Ochan, Okello, Ojulu and so forth.

Because of my protected background, when I grew up and went to the larger cities, I discovered a different world than the village of sharing. I found the world of the individual—of “me alone.” I also found the world of money, guns, power, greed, hatred and tribalism. I don't mean we had no conflicts in our village, but our elders would help deal with them peacefully. They would tell us that God created us and that we have a purpose. We were to share what we had because God shared it with each of us and because we did not get on our own.

However, when I finally got to Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, I saw that there were all sorts of distinctions between people that affected how one was treated, like dark-skinned vs light-skinned, having money vs not having money, having an education vs not having an education, having power vs not having power, holding a gun vs not holding a gun—all creating a new class structure that collided with my world as I had known it.

I saw people with money buying good things to eat, but not sharing it with anyone else. I could smell the good food, but never got to taste it. This is when I first heard about slavery, how even Africans, Westerners and Arabs in past years would sell other people as commodities rather than considering them human beings. It was in response to my disillusionment with this new and bigger world that caused me to start asking why God allowed these things to happen to people and I started to doubt God.

I already had seen the agony and suffering of the Sudanese refugees who came through Anuakland in huge numbers. I saw the displacement of many thousands of people into the Gambella area during the Ethiopian drought of 1984 and the death it brought with it. I witnessed the guns being used for power and intimidation. I saw the evil actions of men and the lack of action by others. It began my period of questioning.

It is worlds away from where I had been.

Suddenly, out of all of that, I was able to come to Canada. I landed in Saskatoon! It is worlds away from where I had been, but I adapted. Yet, in Saskatoon, I was one of the few black people around at that time. I could go for more than month without ever seeing another black. I remember going with my white friends to the Midtown Plaza Mall and seeing a black woman in the distance. She saw me too and as she did, she started walking faster and faster—almost running to me and I to her. We hugged each other in an emotional meeting, each saying to each other, “How are you?” My friends said, “Why didn’t you tell us your mom was in town?” I told them, “She’s not my mom!” The woman then told us she was from Granada. I then commented to my friends, “She’s not even from Africa!” We all laughed.

Things started going very well during this time in my life. I was active at the university and developed some good friendships. After graduation, I engaged some close friends my dream I had for helping my people in Gambella and they caught that vision. So began the Gambella Development Agency.

Things we take for granted here, did not exist where I came from and I intended to help change that. Different doctors and others from Saskatoon who wanted to help, went with me to Gambella on several trips. I was thrilled because we were hoping to received a large grant from CIDA to begin a large-scale medical project between Gambella and the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan. Then my world broke apart and we had to suspend the project.

I blamed everyone, including God

On December 13, 2003 a car was ambushed almost twenty kilometers west of Gambella town and nine people were killed. The ambush was quickly blamed on the Anuak despite testimony from a witness that an Anuak police officer who wanted to pursue the suspects had been stopped and then killed. Within a three-day orgy of violence, 424 Anuak leaders in the community had been brutally hacked with machetes before being shot by Ethiopian military in uniform.

I was emotionally overwhelmed and did not know how to cope with this. At the time, I was only a superficial “Sunday Christian,” and this massacre deeply traumatized me. It put me over what I could handle and my weak faith was challenged to the core. I was faced with the choice of either becoming a real believer or giving up the little faith I had.

Imagine getting an email that read, “Read this attachment for the names of those killed.” Think about how you would feel about reading a list of such people as those from your family, church, workplace, high school or community.

As I read the names, they were no longer just a list of names—they were the people I had laughed with, shook hands with, planned projects with as well as members of my family, classmates from school and my sister-in-law’s father, a beloved pastor in Gambella. The reality that they were gone was too much for me.

I blamed everyone, including God, asking why He did not protect them, especially the pastor who was such a good man. I could not sleep all night. Questions of why, haunted me and I began to think it was also a punishment to me. I asked myself, what was the point of all my work and efforts now?

These were the people I had planned to work with to bring water, health care, education and opportunity to the Gambellan people. I began to feel guilty that I was left behind. I realized that had I been in Gambella at the time of the massacre, I would have fit all of the qualifications of those who were targeted for death. I knew I would have been on that list.

I started blaming God and questioning Him for letting this happen. It was the darkest of hours in my life. Yet, although I did not put it all together, God showed loving kindness and patience with me. Little by little I began to wonder if God had left me behind to speak for those who could no longer speak. I wondered whether He maybe wanted me to do something to see that the perpetrators would be held accountable.

It seemed almost like an “order” from Him to do so or a “calling,” like more religious people than I was at the time, might define it. I held to this thought and it gave me a source of energy to carry on with more strength and determination as I read that list of the dead over again with this new perspective, accepting, albeit, with some reluctance this new purpose that God seemed to be placing before me. Curiously, at the same time, I openly asked others why someone else could not do it instead of me, definitely challenging what I thought God was telling me to do.

The crisis for the survival of the Anuak continued. I don’t have to go into detail about the genocide and how the Ethiopian military continued to kill, torture, rape and destroy in the rural areas of Gambella while the international community was mainly silent, if not even resistant, to acknowledging the massacre.

I became connected to other Anuak and people in their churches in the United States and two of us went to the United Nations in Geneva in April of 2004, meeting up with a former Anuak parliamentarian who was seeking refugee status in Switzerland, to present the Anuak case to the High Commission of Human Rights.

Despite half-accepting that God might have a reason for me to speak out for the Anuak, I was still not committed to God who seemed far away from me. I believed in God, but I was not emotionally connected; that is, until “my Geneva experience.”

My Geneva experience

One of the colleague’s with whom I went to the UN was a devout Christian, found the location of a church to attend in the old town section of Geneva for their Easter Sunday service. This colleague and I had had a number of conversations during the week about why I should be doing this instead of someone else and after each conversation she kept saying the same thing—that it might be God who was calling me to do it.

Before we went to the service, she had her Bible open to show a passage to me and before she could say anything, my eyes caught the word, “chains” in Psalm 2, which stood out to me like someone had highlighted it. Because I write poetry as a hobby, I said, “I ‘m going to write a poem about ‘chains’.”

The church was small, but very good and I was enjoying myself in my usual “Sunday Christian” way, but I was not connected to God. At the beginning of the service, they passed out cards for us to write down our names and I did not want to do it, but did so anyway. I was not the first or last to pass it in, but suddenly they startled me by calling out my name—Obang Metho—and asking me to stand up. I did. They then proceeded to call out the other visitor’s names in order to formally greet us. In and of itself, it would not have meant anything, but other things continued to happen during that service that changed my life.

The sermon seemed so directed to me that it almost seemed like they knew I would be coming and that it was a “set-up!” The pastor talked about people being called by God, but not responding to his call; instead, trying to push back and to run away from it. I knew I had been doing this since my first questioning period as a youth in the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, when I first began thinking that God had an obligation to correct things for people.

The man went on to say that God was calling “you” and that “you should surrender and give everything one has to God.” He said, if it was your money—to give it. If it was your work—give it, your words—give it, your song—give it, your life—give it and to stop rejecting the call, pretending that you did not hear it! He said instead, to “accept God’s call.” Then, he added even more conviction that this message was intended for me—he started talking about chains and the need to break the chains of injustice. This really got my attention.

I looked at my friend who was also amazed and I simply said, “What?”—meaning, what is happening?!!! The pastor went on to mention the word “chains” several more times as he also talked about how we were brought into this world for a purpose and that we should live for those purposes. We then sang a song with words about chains! I could not believe it and kept looking at my friend with incredulousness!

At the end, the pastor invited those needing prayer to be prayed for after the service, but again, I resisted and tried to avoid doing it. My friend encouraged me to come so we could have prayer for the large task ahead of us when we presented the case before the UN. I finally agreed, but with some reluctance, for I was wondering what I was getting myself into if I accepted such a call.

Afterwards my two friends and I talked about my experience that day, with similar wonder to what seemed to be “divinely-constructed coincidences.” As I pondered what happened, I decided I should start listening to God. I decided “to give Him a chance with my life.”

I took a deep breath and opened up my heart like a blanket. I started thinking that God had wanted me to live-- not to die with the others—and that I should no longer feel guilty for being alive, but that perhaps he did have a purpose for me in all of this. So began the beginning of my real relationship with Jesus as my Savior. I told God that I was surrendering myself to Him and asked Him to use me.

Each of us has been given this gift of life

From there, I started to read my Bible more and to pray instead of pushing God away and simply going through the superficial motions of a superficial belief system that could not sustain me anymore and never really had anyway. I knew I had a lot of debris in my head that I could not get rid of and realized that God wanted to help me get rid of it. He started becoming that source of guidance that I was lacking and the source of power that I needed to help me push that debris away from my life.

This was actually not a new concept for me as Anuak elders in my youth had told me that my life was not my own to use for myself—it was given to me. They said, it was not given to me by my mom or by my dad, but by God. Because of that, they told me that I had to give my life to God to use for better purposes than I could ever find alone. I realized then what they meant by this—that my life was a gift from God and if I allowed God to guide and direct me, that he could use it to help the Anuak or other humanity that he loved. Yes, each of us has been given this gift of life and we have choices as to how to use it.

In Psalm 10: 17 we read, “The LORD is King for ever and ever; the nations will perish from his land. You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them and you listen to their cry; defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more.”This verse reinforces the truth that God cares about the fatherless, the oppressed and those who cry out and that He will take action on their behalf against those who terrify.

Many, not just the Anuak, but people all over Ethiopia and throughout the continent of Africa are still losing their lives at the hands of evil perpetrators, but God knows about their suffering and has not forgotten or abandoned them. His action and judgment may take time, but God is in charge and is our only real hope; however, He often works through ordinary people like you and me.

We are to be an extension of the hands of Jesus Christ in the world. We are resources that God uses to make this imperfect world a better one until Jesus returns. God is using people committed to Him to fight against injustice. He is our leader, guide and the one who empowers us to fight the battle with him against the perpetrators of evil; the same perpetrators for whom Jesus calls us to pray when he tells us to pray for our enemies.

Our enemy is not the person, but the deception under which these human beings live—the foolish thinking that leads them to think that they can take on their Creator and win when this is His universe and the chains he established are His universal laws and principles that bring inescapable consequences when they are broken. As followers of Jesus, the only way to escape those consequences is to believe in Jesus and his atoning sacrifice he offers to us, when by grace, he pays the penalty for what we have done and then asks us to follow him and one of those things we are to do is to care for the oppressed and marginalized.

God hates injustice.

God hates injustice. There are countless Biblical references to how God cares about the weak, the vulnerable, the poor, the forgotten, the widow, the orphan, the homeless and the oppressed—all because he values his people. He calls people to love and protect one another.

In John 15:12-13, Jesus says, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” What we can see throughout the Bible is that human rights is grounded in the truth that God is the Creator and as Creator, he has established universal principles of justice and equality. One of those principles is the value of human beings. All of us are 100% human beings, created in the image of God and because of that, life is precious and the lives of others are precious.

Yet, we and others can become like mechanical beings with deadened emotions, having no idea of the depth of God's love for us and others, blaming God for actions caused by men and women. We can even regard ourselves that way, becoming self-alienated and self-hating, beating ourselves up for the debris in our lives, hardening ourselves to others, while never realizing that we need Jesus Christ to deliver us from all of it.

"Bear fruit" by "pruning" or "shaking" all "self"

Since my experience in Geneva, life has not been easy. **Hebrews 12:7 says, "Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons." In verses 10- 13 it is said, "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed."**

God does discipline us in order to conform us to his image, helping us to persevere under difficult circumstances while still trusting in him. This has been a tremendously difficult journey for my own personal life, but I have learned from it. It has brought me closer to God as he knows how to help us "bear fruit" by "pruning" or "shaking" all "self" out of us so he can lead us. However, this is not an easy task because "self" loves to be in charge and may often be quite resistant, just like the Scripture says.

The following verse speaks to this process: **In John 15:1-2, Jesus says, "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful."**

It hurts when you are pruned. Let me explain it more graphically. In Africa, a chicken will capture a frog in its beak and want to eat it, but find it impossible because of its size. Because of this, it will shake the frog back and forth, hit it on the ground, whip it against a tree or use any other tactic to break it apart.

When the other chickens see all of this activity, they will run after it to grab a piece of it, but the first frog will try to run away as fast as it can with the frog swinging from its mouth. I often have felt like that frog being shaken and pulled by other chickens by either leg and banged on the trees. However, through God's grace, I have learned to trust God more than I ever would have if I had not gone through this difficulty. Even when extreme tragedy occurs, we do not always understand the reasons why God permitted it to happen because his ways are higher than ours. However, when I now think about the reasons why the Anuak were massacred, I certainly don't have all the answers and maybe never will, but I have some ideas.

The tragedy of the Anuak has made me open my eyes to the tragedy of other fellow Ethiopians.

The tragedy of the Anuak has made me open my eyes to the tragedy of other fellow Ethiopians. Because the Anuak is such a small ethnic group, it is clearly evident that we will never see justice until justice comes to all people.

Because we the Anuak are so marginalized for so many years, it is evident that prosperity will never come to the Anuak until prosperity comes to other Ethiopians, not only a small minority.

Because division and ethnic hatred undergirded the slaughter of Anuak, it is clearly evident that unity and the appreciation of the diversity of human beings within Ethiopian society as well as into the Horn of Africa and all of Africa is essential if we are to live in peace, justice and harmony with each other.

The weakness of the Anuak is a foundational reason for building a society that supports the weak and the vulnerable along with those who are already strong. Through the tragedy of the Anuak, it is clear that responding with hatred and revenge will only lead to more death and destruction for our children and therefore, we must find ways to forgive and to reconcile. I learned that in a diverse society, our identity is God-given and we should resist imposed devaluation of that identity. Above all, I have learned that we must value humanity above ethnicity and fear God above self-interest.

My first exposure to the “larger world.”

For me, the way I was brought up, also helped me to become a stronger person, resisting the conforming my identity to what others thought of me. The devaluation of other human beings, based on skin-color, religion and other distinctive characteristics was something I first experienced in the early nineteen-eighties when I was only about eight or nine years old.

At that time, I visited two larger towns in Southern Sudan, Pochalla and Malakal leaving my small, protected village for my first exposure to the “larger world.” It was at the beginning of the stirrings of the Sudanese civil war between the south and the north. For the first time, I saw how the Arabs at that time looked down on the Southern Sudanese as people of less value in every way than those Arabs from the north. Worse yet, the people who were looking down at us dark-skinned Africans, were also part African—almost looking exactly like us. This was really confusing!

Someone with 25% Arab blood considered himself or herself “Arab” instead of “African!” The closer they looked to being European, the more superior they considered themselves. Their inferiority complex shocked me as I saw their efforts to deny who they were and to become something else—not for the right reasons, but for artificial reasons.

The extreme pressure to be Arab—to speak Arabic, to have Arabic blood, to know the Qur’an and to be Muslim—was a prerequisite “to belong” in this very African region of Sudan. It was hard to understand, especially at this early age. Why should Africans feel ashamed of their identity and their look when that is what we were? No words could express my confusion after coming from a village and region where this kind of class structure and the illusionary thinking supporting it, did not exist.

The attitudes were so bad that some African Christians felt they had to convert just to belong or to be accepted, instead of converting for more genuine reasons. I found this shocking that people had so little sense of their own self-worth that they would deny who they were just to be welcomed in this community.

God created all humanity in His image, but in this culture, that was not enough to be considered as a valuable human being. They were basically denying the principles of God by substituting them with artificial characteristics required for “belonging.”

The superficial ways humankind is valued or devalued are found all over the world.

There is nothing wrong with being African—it is exactly the way God intended us to be. Neither does being an Arab, White, a Sudanese, an Ethiopian, a Muslim, a Christian, an animist or an atheist make one more or less human. Neither does it make one less valuable as a human being when one practices one’s own culture or when one wears non-Arabic looking clothing—these are both artificial distinctions between people who share the same Creator.

A shared language is only desirable because it is shared and can be a means to help people better relate to each other. Yet, these principles were not understood in the “crazy-making” world that I entered which suddenly clashed against everything I had previously experienced in my life. These biases exist in Ethiopia as well, but are not about religious divisions, but instead are about class structure, ethnic background and skin color. Similar illusions about the superficial ways humankind are valued or devalued are found all over the world, but people do not address these issues and instead, sweep them under the carpet. These problems do not disappear, but go on to traumatize the people.

U.S. presidential candidate, Senator Barack Obama’s speech on race is not just needed in America. It is needed in Canada where we need to consider how we deal with our Native Peoples’ issues. This open discussion is needed in Ethiopia, Sudan and all over the world. As Barack stated, “America is an imperfect union” as he talked about his African-American wife’s background rooted in slavery. The new Prime Minister of Australia has opened the door to such open discussions by apologizing to the indigenous Aborigine population that was mistreated in the past.

We must transform our relationships by confronting things as they really are.

The world is ruled by a system that even has invaded the church. In order to transform human rights, we must transform our relationships by confronting things as they really are and by confronting illusionary thinking that sets up a false world, contrary to God’s, that eventually will collapse.

We consider ourselves as being the best of human beings, living in the best system of government with the best services towards others, but as Senator Obama indicated in his speech, we live in an imperfect world, which is infected with the attitude of looking down at other people simply because they are not the same as us. How we judge others and ourselves—as individuals, groups and as nations—tells us much about who we are. We too often marginalize, discriminate, neglect and abuse.

Politicians, human rights activists, churches and schools are not the only ones needed to solve these issues. If our world is to be reconstructed and transformed it will demand overwhelming participation by people at the grass roots level. It starts with a transformation of our thinking to God’s point of view about justice and the worth of human kind as He made them—not by artificial standards that demean them and leave so many people behind in this world—and not only in Third World countries.

In conclusion, the only way to such transformation is rooted in relationships—with God, with one’s own self and with others. It is a desire for individuality gone awry that leads us to believe that we can find meaning and happiness in life by meeting our own needs in our own way.

For many, it means a taste for class, power, wealth and other material accomplishments even if it means exploiting or marginalizing others. However, when we do this, instead of fulfilling our souls, we become more and more empty and have little or nothing to share with others—and in doing so, we are attempting to defy the “chains” of universal laws and principles that God has set up.

He wired us like a “wireless network”

We are all humans. When we were born, God did not give us a class, He wired us like a “wireless network”—to be connected to Him and to others. The first and foremost relationship is with him and he gave us a soul so we could be connected to the “Universal Net”—himself. But we had one problem, his perfect law and justice that none of us could live up to. Yet, the crux of our Christian faith is that God, in His love, satisfies the requirements of the law through sending Jesus to die for us—as a substitute for the penalty of our own guilt in breaking the laws and principles of God.

As the Scripture in Psalms 2:12 says, as we “**kiss the son**”—submitting to Him, we “**take refuge in Him.**” In other words, through this, our relationship is restored; filling our emptiness with His presence so it can overflow to others.

This world is ordered for relationship. Those relationships start from being strangers who then reach out to another. For instance, Clay and Cheryl are reaching out—not in Saskatoon, but to twin girls in Ethiopia who they have adopted. At first, they did not know each other, but soon they will become family just like children at birth who are born to us as strangers until we start to find out who they are. We should not stop with our own families, but reach out to others.

We are all strangers until we reach out to build a relationship. If we look at our neighbors as strangers, we remain strangers and alone. Let us break out of being “**elevator people.**” You surely all know how it is in an elevator. People get in the elevator and never look at each other. They stare at the numbers of the floors before getting off and going their way without a word or a glance.

We become emotionless and lack compassion for others.

The world of human rights, genocide, ethnic cleansing, child trafficking, corruption, loneliness, suffering and oppression is perpetuated by remaining strangers with others. We say someone else’s problem is not mine, but God calls us to appreciate the gift of life and relationship. However, if we are more concerned with the temporary concerns of this life, we will lose the opportunity to be in meaningful relationships.

We will seek happiness and satisfaction through empty channels. We will be like a glass that looks full from the outside, but is really empty. We become emotionless and lack compassion for others. We start to hate ourselves, others or both, blaming God for our own choices and our miserable life.

As people turn into mechanical beings, unable to find satisfaction, one can become self-focused and self-seeking; running after the resources and lives of others. We have sophisticated technology, tremendous advances in science, but the laws of fullness are ones that God set up and just like we need oxygen and water to survive, we need to follow God’s laws. Regardless of whether we flaunt or ignore them, they still exist. Loving God and our neighbors are God-given truths that work in any society. Yet, which country teaches us how to be truly human towards each other irrespective of any differences?

I am as dark-skinned as you can get, but not a single day in my life am I ashamed because God loves me and made me in his image, just the way he wanted me—just like he did for everyone else. Because of this and because of my foundation in childhood, I am able to resist those who demean me.

I have never thought that being dark-skinned was better than being light-skinned or the other way around for in God’s garden, we make greater beauty because you and I are both unique and wonderfully made by the One who is in charge of this entire universe!

As I close, let us look forward to that multi-colored celebration of God’s people at the end of the world as described in Revelations 5:9-10.

“You are worthy... because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

What a beautiful picture that will be!

Thank you.

For more information please contact me by email at: Obang@anuakjustice.org