sumud
for Justice in Palestine and Israel

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Week 3: Displacement

Rev. Rodny Said, ELCJHL

Bible Verse: Isaiah 40: 3-10

A voice cries out “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low. The uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” A voice says, “Cry out!” And I said,[a] “What shall I cry?” All flesh is grass; their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers; the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength,O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!” See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him, his reward is with him and his recompense before him.

Devotion

The identity of Palestinians is rooted in the land of Palestine. Identity isn't made quickly but is shaped from mother to child, grandfather to granddaughter, over many generations. The land becomes a family member too.

Because of our people's history of living, worshiping, learning and dying on this land, the land is no longer something that we just live on, plant on or eat from. It is something in which we root our very being. The land sustains us.

The occupation has taken a lot of our land away. We are holding on very tight to what we still have. Most of our grandparents were refugees and displaced people. People of my generation have lived their entire lives not knowing any existence other than the displaced one.

Today displacement eats away at our Palestinian identity. People are tired from keeping sumud ("steadfastness"). We have been through a lot. I am afraid that eventually we might just give up and leave. Over 200 Christian families have left the Holy Land since 2023.

The occupation has a clear plan to push our people out of the Holy Land. I fear waking up one day, while the world is watching, to find the Holy Land empty of its Indigenous Christians. This is a Kairos moment. We see occupation and war eroding our Palestinian identity. This hurts. We mourn this — and find small pieces of hope in our Christian identity. We know that we are made in the image of God and that no person, nation-state or occupation can take away our identity as beloved children of God.

When I read the story of Jesus escaping to Egypt and becoming a refugee, I feel that God wanted to connect with the suffering of all displaced people. This story is a clear message to us: Jesus knows us and our suffering.

Jesus and his family were refugees in a strange land. Mary and Joseph lived in a time when safety for their baby boy was not guaranteed because of tyrants and empires and military occupation. They lived in fear. Jesus came down to lift up the marginalized. This part of the Christmas story is so powerful. To

us Palestinians, it reminds us that we are not alone — God is with us. Even when there is great suffering, we are strengthened, because God is greater.

Despite everything we endure, despite the suffering, despite the pain, despite the lack of freedom, despite the circumstances, we are called to act. We are called to prepare the way of the Lord, to be active members in God's kingdom on this earth. To act justly and walk humbly with each other. To lift up the marginalized around us. We are reminded that this is temporary but that faith in Christ is everlasting.

Prayer from an ELCJHL Young Adult

Dear Lord,

We come to you today with our worries, fears, and struggles to you, seeking the comfort and peace only you can give.

We pray for your Church, Lord. Protect it, guide its people, and lead us to reflect Your light. Bless the young with wisdom, courage, and hearts full of compassion so they may follow you—the way, the truth, and the life—and share your love with others.

Lord Jesus, be our guide, our strength, and our hope. May we grow in faith, serve with joy, and reflect Your grace in all we do.

Amen.

Joelle Said

Discussion Questions

1. **What other identities do you hold besides “Christian”? Have you ever felt any part of your identity threatened?**
2. **What do you think about when you hear the word “displaced”?**
3. **How does Rev. Rodny’s testimony change how you think about Palestinian Christians?**
4. **Has displacement touched your family/community? Were there emotional or spiritual aspects of displacement Rev. Rodny named in his testimony that resonate with you?**
5. **What parallels do you see between the way Isaiah talks about land in the scripture and how Rev. Rodny talks about land in his testimony?**
6. **What earthly things “wither” and “fade”? What is one way God has shown up consistently for you?**