

Sermon Outline **Property, Roots and Identity**

'We'd also love it if we could go somewhere where we could settle down for a while and put down some roots. It takes at least six months in a place before we feel we know our way around. It takes much longer before you really get to know it and form solid relationships'.
A Missionary in Asia

'The starting point for the Israelites' view of land and property was that the earth was not a neutral, homogeneous space ... The people were not to ignore the social, psychological and religious value of land and treat it merely as an object to be used and discarded'.
Jubilee Manifesto, p 166

'Later on, Jesus' 'jubilee manifesto' will be seen to address the basic alienation that comes with sin and death by the promise of God's forgiveness and resurrection from the dead. Unlike Lev 25, the quote 'return home' is not simply the return to land and family but a return to Israel's original vocation; which is the freedom of sonship and of intimacy with the ancestral God'.
Jonathan Burnside, 'God, Justice and Society: An Introduction to Biblical Law'

1. Introduction

- decline of Capitalism (and the end of Marxism?)
- an ideological vacuum: danger and opportunity
- biblical law as a paradigm for all societies
- the big idea of biblical law
- the Jubilee legislation as a case study

2. The Jubilee legislation: how it worked (see Lev 25:8-28)

- initial allocation of land between tribes and families in Israel
- the importance of family for personal identity
- sabbaticals and Jubilee family gatherings
- universal ownership: only leasehold land sales

3. What was the Jubilee trying to achieve?

- freedom and hope for slaves and the dispossessed
- continuing fairness/justice in land distribution (homes and the means of production)
- family solidarity through roots in a place

4. The Jubilee theme in the teachings of Jesus (see Luke 4:14-30)

- freedom and hope – a greater freedom and a bigger hope
- justice for the oppressed
- not just for Israel, but for all nations

5. Property, Roots and Identity in the NT

- our personal 'roots' to be 'in Christ' (e.g. Col 2:7, Eph 3:17)
- Christians to be willing to leave home and family for the sake of the Kingdom (Matt 8:21-22, Matt 19:29)
- as Christians the new family is the church (Matt 10: 37-38, Matt 12: 46-50, Mark 10:29-30) but we still have obligations to our blood family (Mark 7:9-13, 1 Tim 5:3-8)

6. Personal and Church application

- are we committed to building our relationship with Christ? (cf Phil 3:10)
- as a church are we investing time in our Christian family as well as fulfilling our duties to our blood family?
- are we willing to leave home and close relatives for the sake of the Kingdom?
- in daily life do we value rootedness and community for long-term relationships?

7. Public policy application

- an alternative 'relational' model of economic growth based on universal property ownership and minimising mobility of labour
- encourage/facilitate colocation of relatives (e.g. Singapore legislation, JLP personnel policy)
- promote extended family solidarity so families are enabled to fulfil welfare roles

For further exploration

Visit these websites: www.jubilee-centre.org; www.relationshipsfoundation.org
Subscribe to quarterly Cambridge Papers and Engage – see www.jubilee-centre.org
Read Jubilee Manifesto, The R Factor, The R Option