

The church as a Refuge

**Psalm 46:1; Matthew 11:28;
Luke 15:1-7**

Introduction

God's plan for the church

to be a **Refuge**, a place where the weary find rest, the lost find direction, and the broken find healing

Cities of Refuge in the OT

Numbers 35:6, 9-15; Joshua 20:1-9



Cities of Refuge : West of the Jordan River (Canaan Proper):

1. **Kedesh:** Located in the northern highlands of Naphtali (Galilee)
2. **Shechem:** Situated centrally in the hill country of Ephraim.
3. **Hebron:** Located in the southern hill country of Judah (approx. 20 miles south of Jerusalem).

East of the Jordan River (Transjordan):

4. **Golan:** Situated in Bashan, designated for the tribe of Manasseh.
5. **Ramoth:** Located in Gilead, designated for the tribe of Gad.
6. **Bezer:** Situated on the high desert plateau, designated for the tribe of Reuben

Joshua 20:1-6

Then the Lord said to Joshua: “Tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge, as I instructed you through Moses, so that anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally may flee there and find protection from the avenger of blood. When they flee to one of these cities, they are to stand in the entrance of the city gate and state their case before the elders of that city. Then the elders are to admit the fugitive into their city and provide a place to live among them.

If the avenger of blood comes in pursuit, the elders must not surrender the fugitive, because the fugitive killed their neighbor unintentionally and without malice aforethought. They are to stay in that city until they have stood trial before the assembly and until the death of the high priest who is serving at that time. Then they may go back to their own home in the town from which they fled.”

1. The Church is a Refuge because God is our Refuge

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”

Illustration

Application

- ❖ Are people encountering God when they come into the church?
- ❖ Is the atmosphere filled with grace, truth, and love?

2. As a refuge, the Church welcomes the weary and burdened

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matt 11:28)

Illustration

Application

- Are sincere and friendly?
- Do people feel safe to be honest about your struggles?
- Do we show compassion before correction?

3. As a refuge, the church seeks the lost

“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?

(Luke 15:4)

Illustration

Application

- Are we intentional about reaching the lost?
- Do we go beyond our comfort zone?
- Do we have the heart of the Good Shepherd?

4. As a refuge. the Church restores and heals

“And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, “Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.” (Luke 15:5-6)

Illustration

Application

- Are we patient with people's growth?
- Do we walk with people through their struggles?
- Do we celebrate restoration?

5. As a refuge, the church reflects the heart of Jesus

“Now the tax collectors and ‘sinners’ were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, ‘This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.’” (Luke 15:1-2)

Conclusion

The church is not meant to be a museum for saints
but a **refuge for sinners**,
not a place of judgment but **a place of grace**,
not a closed community but **an open home**.

Response Time:

For believers

For those who feel lost or weary



Closing Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, make Praise EFC a refuge for the weary, the broken and the lost. Fill us with your heart - compassionate, patient, and full of grace. Use us to bring others into your presence, where true healing is found. In Jesus name. Amen.”

Discussion Questions

1. How much is Praise EFC a refuge for people in need?
2. How do Praise EFC reach out to the lost? What other ways can the church do to reach out to people?
3. What can you do to reach out to people in need, and bring them into the church so they can experience God's love through the people?