

**Word Notes Sunday 16/11/14**  
**Tony Hodge – Joshua 20, Cities of Refuge**

**Summary** (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

**Key Text: Joshua 20, Matthew 5.**

In the Promised Land God tells Joshua to establish “Cities of Refuge” where anyone who causes the death of another by accident, negligence or unintentionally can flee and make their appeal. They are safe from death at the hands of the kinsman-redeemer of the dead person’s family until the priest dies at which point the debt of blood is deemed paid. The Law has not been set aside but through grace God provides another way for justice to be served.

We live in the fullness of the age of grace, where Jesus’ blood saves any who turn away from sin and seek refuge in him. Jesus himself is both kinsman redeemer, meeting all the requirements of the Law and our High Priest, who brings the atonement for our sins before God. If anyone sins against us we are to forgive, and if we sin ourselves we can turn to Him for forgiveness.

A time of grace in legal terms is a period of time allowed between a debt being due and it being paid during which the full benefits of an agreement can still be enjoyed. The time of grace paid for by Jesus blood gives opportunity for all to hear the good news and turn to him. When Jesus said on the cross “It is finished” we understand that his work is complete, even so we wait for the new order to be fulfilled when he returns. In the meantime there is this period during which all can run to him for refuge. What is the role of the church in that? Surely it is to both share the Good News but also to welcome people as they respond and come to a place of repentance and faith.

As we go out to share the Good News and as people respond we will meet some whose lives are a mess. They may be living lifestyles alien or uncomfortable for us – do we reject them and leave them to face the consequences alone or welcome them, get alongside them and look to the Holy Spirit to convict and draw near to Jesus? In short: is Newmarket Community Church a “City of Refuge” for those seeking life even though the Law requires their death? The Law has not been set aside, if anything the expectation of those “in Christ” is much higher (Matt 5:17-48) but when people are drawn near by Christ’s love will we judge and condemn or love, nurture and set free?

**Application** (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

Read Matt 5:17-48 then discuss the following:

Jesus seems to have raised the bar on keeping the Law from outward actions to inward attitudes. How does that impact your life and walk with him?

The Pharisees saw themselves as keepers and upholders of the Law, what does Jesus say about them and how is it possible to meet his standard?

What do Jesus words in Matt 5:17-19 say to you about our dealings with “sinners”? What about the church, how do we teach the Law when we know we too fall? How do we accept but not condone, teach but not judge?

**Witness** (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

Pray for this coming Christmas season –m for people you know and how they might come to know the true meaning and start on a journey of faith.