

Internationally Renowned Bishop: Demonstrable Evidence the Holy Spirit Is Moving Right Now

Editor's note: Bishop Joseph D'Souza is the moderating bishop of the Good Shepherd Church of India. But more than being a bishop, he's a social justice warrior. He has spent the past two decades advocating for India's dalits (or "untouchables"), who are perhaps the most oppressed people on Earth. To this day they are beaten, killed, denied basic services and exploited because of their birth.

As a Christian bishop, D'Souza understands the gospel to mean he has to care for those who are oppressed around him. His advocacy has led him before U.S. congressional subcommittees and hearings before other international human rights bodies, such as the U.N. and the U.K. Parliament. What's remarkable about his work is that Christians have little to no political power in India. In fact, in some states they're severely persecuted for their faith. D'Souza recently spoke with Charisma News about persecution locally and globally.

What are the most amazing miracles you are seeing right now?

There's demonstrable evidence that the Holy Spirit is moving in India. It's not uncommon to hear of testimonies of individuals seeing visions of Jesus, receiving miraculous healings, being delivered from addictions and having their marriages restored.

What's perhaps even more encouraging is that this outpouring of the Spirit is happening across the social spectrum. The rich and powerful are meeting Jesus as much as the poor, the marginalized and those consigned by birth to live outside the

caste system. This is not a man-made movement. The spirit, as Jesus said, is moving wherever he wants.

How is God moving in India?

The church in India has begun to take seriously her role in standing for righteousness and advocating for justice for those who are exploited. The endemic abuse of women in India has become a central issue in the church's social work, even as it confronts its own sins. As Pope Francis has taken a decisive stand against sexual abuse within the Catholic church, so must the church in India take a stand and hold its own clergy accountable. The church must practice justice within, if it's to speak for justice outside.

Who is being impacted by the gospel?

The gospel is reaching the masses, impacting people from every background and social status. But as in Jesus' day, the masses are like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:36). India is in need for shepherds who will care for all who are hearing the good news.

What persecution threats are Christians in India facing?

Sadly, Christians continue to be mischaracterized and demonized by radicalized religious groups who accuse them of engaging in forced and fraudulent conversions. Yet how is this possible if Christians in India have little to no political power, and the law enforcement agencies have been in the hands of non-Christians for decades? People somehow still end up believing these lies, and because of it local violence against Christians at the hand of radicalized group is increasing.

What does the Bible specifically say about social justice?

If there's one issue the Bible and gospel are very clear on, it's social justice. The message of the Bible is about love with justice, grace with truth. Simply put, Jesus came to put

all things right in creation, and this includes addressing injustice and oppression. And he calls to put all things right in our lives and in our societies. That's what we are asking for when we pray the Lord's Prayer: "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," or in other words, bring heaven to earth. This is what Christ will ultimately accomplish when he returns.

Because of the West's individualistic society, Western Christians have focused on individual salvation and repentance—which are an essential part of the gospel—but have largely overlooked the calling for redemption of whole families and communities. We talk about individual sin but not about social evil. Both are part of the problem of the human condition. The biblical authors saw sin as both a personal and social issue. Personal morality and social morality are equally important before God. Many of the stories Jesus told were about social morality, such as the story of the Good Samaritan or of the unforgiving ruler who wanted forgiveness for himself but was not willing to forgive his own lenders.

What can U.S. believers learn from the worldwide church?

One thing American Christians can learn from the worldwide church is what it's like to live as a minority, poor and persecuted group. When you decide to follow Jesus in a country where it could end up costing your life, your priorities in life quickly fall in place. The peril of living in a society where little is demanded from following Jesus is that we can get complacent in our faith. We end up going to Jesus for what we can get from him, not for what we can give to him.

The majority of Christians who live in the global south have to live in the midst of poverty and suffering, and therefore have to learn how to trust God for their protection and provision and how to find joy amid grueling circumstances. They also have to literally take on the exhortation from the Sermon of the Mount to be peacemakers in a volatile and

hostile place. They intercede on behalf of other minorities and work at building bridges with people who oppose them rather than inciting wars. And finally, they pray for their rulers even when they are persecuted, just as Paul commanded the church. In most countries in the global south, Christians have little to no political power, yet they are spiritually empowered to be salt and light wherever they are.

What role should faith play in local politics? What about international politics?

In America's current volatile political environment, it has become more and more difficult to discern what is the proper relationship between faith and politics. Unfortunately, many Christians have forgotten that the gospel of the kingdom of God—contrary to a gospel that functions merely as an insurance policy for heaven—covers all of life. Yes, the kingdom of God is not a political structure, government or party, yet the gospel was not meant to be hermetically sealed within our churches. This is why Christians and churches need to be proactive and address where things go wrong in our culture, and that sometimes means political involvement. For example, the #MeToo movement, which in its pure essence is a righteous call to defend the dignity of women, has broad social and political impact. Why is it that this movement did not originate in the church? Or why have many churches remained muted on the issue, when Scripture and Jesus have so much to say about the dignity of women?

Being a true Bible-believing Christian requires us integrating our faith with every part of life.

Anything else you'd like to add?

This is the day of the global church, and whether we are in India or America, we need to recognize it. Just as he did with Israel, God will hold the church accountable to be his vessel of salvation and righteousness. If cultures around the world

collapse due to rampant sexual immorality, corruption, violence and intolerance and the blatant exploitation of the poor and marginalized, Christians will have to provide an account of whether or not they remained true to their calling as the church of Jesus, especially when God is pouring out his Spirit. We must stop blaming the left or the liberals or even other religions for the breakdown of the family and society; as Jesus' church, we have a mandate to be the salt and light of the world.