

July 2023 Prayer

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

—Luke 12:6-7

Haiti—The country of Haiti is already plagued by poverty and political turmoil. Recently, torrential rainfall has flooded and ruined homes and businesses in Port-au-Prince and Jan Jan, killing 51 people. Please pray for the churches there to recover quickly and be a source of light, encouragement, and practical help to those in their communities that are suffering. Pray that God would meet their financial and physical needs as he also encourages them with his comfort. Pray for the global community to rally behind Haiti, and bring them aid in a way that would benefit the poorest of the poor. (*Source: Global Fingerprints*)

India—Poor, landless day workers came to the city of Osmanabad in search of work, but instead they were sold to contractors for about \$24 to \$60 each, making them bonded laborers. The men were forced to dig wells for 12 to 14 hours a day, chained into the wells, subjected to physical and mental torture, and beatings. They were allowed no toilet facilities, so they had to use the actual wells they were working in to relieve themselves, and then clean them up at the end of the day. The workers had been promised 500 rupees (about \$6) and three meals a day for digging the wells. However, they were separated from each other, often drugged, and their phones and official documents were confiscated. They labored under these conditions for two to three months until one night one of the workers, Bhagwan Ghukse, managed to escape. He was able to inform the police, who at first did not believe him. However, all the workers have been rescued, and seven individuals, including two women and a minor, have been charged with human trafficking, kidnapping, abuse and wrongful confinement. Pray for the healing both physically and mentally for these abused men. Pray for their captors who are now facing criminal charges, that they would both face justice for their acts and personally repent of their crimes. Pray for greater equity among the people of India, for fairer labor practices, and for the disparity between the very poor and the wealthy in India to be addressed. Pray that the Father of widows and orphans and the poor and oppressed would comfort these suffering individuals, miraculously provide for them, and lead them to glorify Him. (*Source: BBC*)

Nigeria—In the village of Mangu, fifteen Christians were put to death by Fulani militants. Killings and the destruction of farms and property have become an almost daily occurrence despite government-imposed curfews to curb violence. Governor Mutfwang has visited the village to encourage the community as many are confused at the sudden violence in this previously peaceful area. Please pray that the family members and friends of these 15 believers would experience the comfort and help they need from God. Pray for safety in this area and throughout all of Nigeria. Pray for the believers there to be united under Christ, to love and encourage one another, and to not lose heart. Pray that they keep their eyes fixed on Jesus. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Mexico/United States/International—The popularity of avocados around the world has created a lucrative \$3 billion business for farmers primarily in Mexico, resulting in a cash crop that beats out Mexico's beer and tequila industries. This has meant that poor farmers now have the ability perhaps to send their kids to college or to buy a pickup truck for their farming. However, the avocado's high water requirements and other factors have led to significant environmental consequences. But worse, it has resulted in the targeting of farmers by cartels and other criminals. They can demand "protection" fees or even take over a farmer's operation. When activists or farmers have tried to stand up to the cartels, they have met brutal consequences. In one case, 19 people were murdered in 2019 around the city of

Urupan, several of their bodies displayed on bridges to warn others against opposing the Jalisco new generation cartel. In Kenya, the Kakuzi avocado farm—owned by a British agricultural company Camellia—has been linked to violence, beatings, rapes, and murder. One man was beaten to death by Kakuzi security just for stealing an avocado. In Chile, avocado plantations have illegally installed pipes deep into the ground to divert water from rivers and aquifers, drying up local water supplies for local villagers in drought regions, who are now forced to use often contaminated water delivered by trucks. As a result of these actions, more than 40,000 residents in one province alone lack running water and must rely on tanker trucks. The people who pick and pack avocados similarly face difficult working conditions. For their 12-hour days, they do not receive a living wage or health care or benefits. While human rights groups that monitor these situations are not calling for a boycott at this point because of the repercussions it could have for those who rely on this work just to live, they have made recommendations to buy organic avocados, those grown in the United States, or those imported by Equal Exchange. Pray for those who are vulnerable and live a subsistence existence as farm laborers. Pray for the cartels that violently attack and exploit farmers and indigenous people for an additional profit. Pray for police and officials in Mexico to effectively prosecute cartels and protect their populations, instead of succumbing to corruption and bribery. Pray that those of us who enjoy full refrigerators and easy access to healthy food and water would be ever mindful of where our food comes from, who works to produce it, and for us to be ethical and prayerful in our purchasing practices. (Source: *Food Empowerment Project; Washington Post; LA times; The Guardian; Business Insider*)

Kenya—Somalian Islamic militants recently attacked two villages, burning houses and killing five people. These villages are near the Somalian border, and this terrorist group often attacks Kenya in an effort to force them to withdraw troops that are in Somalia in a peacekeeping effort with the government. The militants are linked to Al-Qaeda and are seeking to establish a strict Islamic rule based on sharia law. Please pray for those along the border in Kenya who must be terrified of further attacks which seem so random. Pray for the families of those five who were killed as their homes were also burnt to the ground. Pray for them as they mourn their loss of family and property, and pray that the Lord would provide what they need right now. Pray that the church in Kenya would be dedicated to sharing the gospel and following Christ despite their suffering. (Source: *Reuters*)

North Korea—Authorities recently passed the Pyongyang Cultural Language Protection Act which establishes the North Korean dialect as the standard language and punishes North Koreans for speaking any South Korean dialect. South Korean words such as “wife” and “honey” (instead of “comrade”) are considered capitalist and are punishable by imprisonment. This year, 20 young athletes were sentenced to three to five years in labor camp for using South Korean words in a word game they were playing at winter training. Their game had been recorded on one of the athlete’s phones, and during an inspection raid of her home (routinely done to search for contraband), police found the video while checking her phone. The twenty athletes were sent to prison camp and their families were all deported to the rural countryside and lost their jobs. Please pray for a swift end to the brutal dictatorship in North Korea, where even innocent words used in a fun word game can result in such harsh punishment. Pray that this dark, dark country would be flooded with the light of Christ, and that they would be set free both from spiritual darkness and cultural darkness. (Source: *Radio Free Asia; The Times*)

Uganda—On June 23, nearly 40 students at a school in Western Uganda were killed when militants raided their dormitories, first with machetes, then set the buildings on fire. The Allied Democratic Forces, which operate out of the Democratic Republic of Congo, have ties to the Islamic State group and are believed to be responsible for the attack. Pray for the families and friends of those killed in the attacks that they would be comforted. Pray for the attackers that they might turn from their violence and evil ways. Pray for the school and the other students who survived the attack that they might find

peace and restoration after this incredible trauma. Pray that the Ugandan government and the government of the DRC might be effective in tracking down extremists, bringing them to justice, and thwarting further attacks. *(Source: BBC)*

Yemen—While all Yemeni people have suffered extremely due to the long civil war and resulting humanitarian crisis, Christians in Yemen are even more vulnerable. Relief is distributed primarily through Muslim agencies and mosques, which allegedly discriminate against those they do not consider to be devout Muslims. Christian converts are at risk of even being killed by their own family or tribe. Even wearing or displaying a Christian symbol can lead to imprisonment or even execution, and Christian detainees suffer physical abuse and torture in prison. Gathering together with other Christians is almost impossible as neighbors will report them to the authorities. Pray for believers like Mohammad, who for a very long time thought he was the only believer in Yemen, because he didn't know any other Yemeni Christians. Pray for secret believers in Yemen to have courage despite the dangers, and to find ways to connect and have fellowship. Pray for humanitarian aid to reach all those in need, even those on the margins of society. Pray that God would change the atmosphere in Yemen to one where all Yemenis can live safely, trusting each other, and with freedom. Pray for the end to the violent conflict that has ravaged this country for years. *(Source: Open Doors)*

Vietnam—In April 2018 Pastor Nguyen Trung Ton was sentenced to 12 years in prison because of his advocacy work calling for religious freedom and for speaking out against social injustices in Vietnam. During his imprisonment, he has suffered terribly under harsh conditions, including a lack of clean water and failure to treat a leg injury resulting from attacks by state agents. Now Pastor Ton is being denied medical treatment for long-term effects of COVID and for an eye disease that has caused near blindness. The prison is even denying his family the ability to send medicine or pay for the medical care themselves. This inhumane treatment and denial of medical care in Vietnam's prisons are believed to be responsible for the deaths of several political prisoners in recent years, including Dihn Diem, a Lutheran pastor, and Buddhist religious leaders, Phan Van Thu and Doan Dihn Nam, among others. Pray that prison officials would have compassion on those suffering inmates, including Pastor Ton, and provide the care they need. Pray for Pastor Ton's healing and sustenance during this ordeal. Pray that he might be released before the end of his 12-year sentence. Pray for the government of Vietnam to stop governing from a position of fear and oppression, but to rule justly and with integrity. Pray for believers in Vietnam to remain faithful, courageous, and to persevere despite persecution. Pray that the church would grow and that they would be bold witnesses to many around them. *(Source: CSW)*

India—Manipur is a northeast Indian state that borders Myanmar and has many ethnically and linguistically diverse peoples. It's also rife with ethnic conflict and violence. Entire villages have been burnt down, and, recently, 11 people were killed and 14 were injured in a violent outbreak. India has experienced worse and worse violence, and particularly persecution against its Christian minority. Please pray for this country, and ask the Lord to protect the church there. Pray that it would grow in number and in depth of faith. Pray that unbelievers who see all of this violence would seek Christ and his peace. *(Source: CNN)*