

Unreached Peoples: The Sumatran Malay People

by Paul Hattaway

The Sumatran Malay people, known for their warmth and hospitality, face significant economic and social challenges in modern Indonesia.

Scripture: Proverbs 11:25, Romans 12:10, Galatians 6:2, Ephesians 4:32, Philippians 2:3-4, Colossians 3:12, 1 Peter 4:9

Topics: "Cultural Diversity", "Simple Living"

Description

This sermon reflects on the richness of kindness and character, using the Malayu people of Indonesia as an example. It explores the warmth, hospitality, and diversity of Indonesia, highlighting its history, cultural complexity, and struggles with corruption. The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a simple life rich in kindness, despite external challenges.

Transcript

We may live a simple life and have few possessions, but we are rich in kindness. It's our character. The essential characteristic of the Malayu is their warmth and hospitality.

An old prophet says, although my house is narrow, my heart is as wide as a river. Like a string of exotic jewels nestled in a sapphire sea, Indonesia's 17,000 islands stretch along the earth's equator for 3,200 miles. Known for its lush rainforests, distinctive wildlife, spectacular volcanoes, and ancient ruins, Indonesia is an unusual kaleidoscope of contrasts.

As Southeast Asia's largest country, Indonesia boasts the world's fourth largest population with over 200 million people. The national motto, Unity in Diversity, reflects the variety of cultures that form this complex nation. One of the most ethnically diverse populations in the world, Indonesia consists of more than 600 different people groups with more than 250 spoken languages.

Rich in natural resources, Indonesia has drawn foreigners to its shores for thousands of years. In the first millennium, merchants from South India discovered Indonesia's wealth of spices while en route to China. The trade between these civilizations led to the rise of Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms that ruled the islands for six centuries.

Ancient temple ruins bear witness to the greatness of these vanished civilizations. Islam arrived in Indonesia as Arabic traders established outposts on the island of Sumatra in the 7th century. As trade with Arabia increased, so did the influence of Islam.

When Marco Polo visited northern Sumatra in 1292, Islam was already established and rapidly replacing Buddhism among the island trade routes. As a result, today there are more Muslims in Indonesia than in any other country in the world. By the early 1600s, the Dutch became a supreme trading power in the region, drawing fortunes from the islands while introducing their inhabitants to Christianity.

The lucrative Dutch Empire lasted until Indonesia's independence in 1949. Today, modern Indonesia is a rapidly developing nation, yet it is still struggling to establish leadership that will bring peace and prosperity to its citizens. Home to nearly one quarter of Indonesia's population, Sumatra is the world's fourth largest island.

Extremely rich in natural resources, Sumatra keeps Indonesia's fragile economy from collapsing by generating 50% of the national export revenue. Crude oil, Indonesia's most lucrative commodity, is abundant here. The Sumatran rainforest, rich with exotic timber, diminishes a little each day as portions are clear-cut and sold to meet international demands.

Tobacco, rubber, coffee, and palm oil are also harvested here and exported to the world's markets. Unfortunately, corruption runs deep in Indonesia. Much of Sumatra's prosperity is pocketed by a few privileged authorities, while the average Sumatran family struggles to eke out a meager existence.

Of the 40 million people who live in Sumatra, the largest ethnic group are the Malayu, also known as the Malay. There are approximately 30 distinct Malayu tribes in Sumatra, the largest groups being the Deli Malay, Riau Malay, and the Jambi Malay. Historically, Sumatran Malays have thrived as a seafaring people, skilled as fishermen,

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