

SERVING THE LEAST OF THESE HAITI TRIP MEMORIES



Scripture:

Psalm 23

¹The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; ³he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

Matthew 25:31–40

³¹When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to

drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'

³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



SERVING THE LEAST OF THESE

When I return from Haiti many people expect me to feel exhausted and worn out. But actually it is very energizing, like an injection of the Holy Spirit when I spend a week with the people of Haiti. I always learn new lessons about resilience, survival, what it means to have deep faith and trust God every day for our daily needs. I have come back with even more admiration for the hopeful Haitian people and with even more love for the orphans there who truly represent "the least of these" in our world.

This passage in Matthew fits our service in Haiti very well.

Jesus calls us to go out of our way and serve those in the world who are being neglected, who seem hopeless, and provide food, water, clothes and especially our love and friendship as if they are Jesus himself. I saw many examples of Jesus in Haiti.

Wesley, one of the staff member-shepherds on our Haiti trip, shared his faith with us during our devotion time the first night.

A QUESTION

We split into two groups, seven in each group, and discussed one of the questions. The question was: "How have you seen what Americans might view as weaknesses

or poverty be strengths for some of the Haitian people in the church?"

ONE BIG FAMILY

Some of us talked about how resilient the Haitian people are and how they treat each other like they are all in one big family.

Dieph said, "When we walk down the street we say, 'Hi' to everybody because they are part of our family. We ask, 'How are you and how is your family? How did you sleep?' This is because we take the time to care about one another. We are not in a hurry and even if we don't know that person well, we acknowledge them like a brother or a sister because our culture is about friendship, helping each other and hospitality."

Then Wesley, who had been pondering the question for quite awhile, shared a memory of how the disaster of the earthquake in 2010 was tragic but it changed his life in ways he never expected. Sorrow turned into joy, and tears into laughter.

Wesley said, "After the earthquake happened we all automatically had the attitude of helping one another to survive each day. Strangers who happened to be near you at that time became your closest

friends. We took sticks and found a sheet and wrapped it around the sticks to make a temporary shelter from the rains. We let as many people who asked to go inside and it was packed full of people but nobody cared that they were crowded. We worked together to pick up the messes and rubble that were once our homes. We helped dig out people and worked together with anyone who was nearby in need because we were all in the same disaster trying to survive.

Wesley said that the tragedy of the earthquake disaster ended up being a very good thing for him. He went to the temporary hospitals near the border of the Dominican Republic and there he met Pastor Valentin and Dieph and a few other members of the Foundation for Peace staff. They recruited him to join them in their efforts to help the victims. And now he said he has the best friends in the world and a chance to work with the groups that come from the United States to serve. He feels very blessed.

TEARS

Becky Smith who was on the trip shared her tears with us every day in Haiti. When a person is first confronted with extreme poverty they can be repulsed or get inspired, let it break their heart, and decide to do something about it. Becky decided to let the compassion flow with her tears and she reached out to the orphans and even the animals in Haiti who benefited from her love.

Last Sunday we talked about the shortest verse in the Bible: Jesus wept. Becky shed tears daily over the poverty she witnessed in Haiti and the sad condition of the kitties that lived in our hotel yard. Yet she turned those tears into compassion and action. She fed and played with the two kitties. By the time we left they were both healthier and happier.

SEEING GOD AT WORK

I am so grateful to have had another opportunity to see God at work in Haiti through the amazing faithful people who live there and through those who came to serve the least of these.

I'll show you a few slides of the trip and then the rest of the team here will give brief testimonies, too.

TEAM TESTEMONIES

Norm Smith gave a testimony about not being sure he had the energy and ability to do construction work on the chicken coop. But God strengthened him and even with his arthritis he was able to shovel cement two days!

Craig and Robby Rusert shared how they were touched deeply by the experience and how the children were so loving they felt blessed by them even more than the blessings they were able to give.

Pastor Cindy commented that the sharing of their musical gifts enhanced the trip greatly and the kids loved dancing and singing to their guitar music.

AMAZONG GRACE/ PEACEFUL FEELING

Dieph and Craig and Norm sang "Amazing Grace/Peaceful Feeling" at the end of the testimonies because they were all so thankful for the support from our church to enable them to go to Haiti and serve the orphans there.

Dieph Domingue tearfully thanked the church congregation for the support we gave

him this past year helping him attend Santa Rosa Junior College and for embracing him with our church ministries. The congregation gave him a special goodbye cake and many hugs and best wishes for his future education in Washington State.

Pastor Cindy closed the service with an invitation to the all Church Picnic and said grace as part of the Prayer of the People that included the prayer for orphans printed in the bulletin.

PRAYER FOR ORPHANS

**Almighty Creator and loving parent-God,
we pray for all the orphans in this world,**

**who have no parents,
or who have parents who cannot
care for them.**

**Holy Lord, watch over these children
and bless them with your great
mercy and thanksgiving.**

**Comfort them when they are lonely,
feed them when they are hungry,
help them be educated and resilient.
Heal them when they are sick or sad,**

**and give these children
good dreams and rest and hope!**

**O Lord, our God, we come to you
about all children**

**who need money and sustenance
for their care.**

**Touch the hearts of all of us
to help these children.**

**Please make adoption easier,
so that more of these
children can be adopted
and receive parental love.**

**Bless our work that strives to give them
healthier and happier lives.**

**Thank you for the generous hearts
who are giving to the children of Haiti
to give them life and a future.**

In Jesus name, Amen.

The members of the Haiti Mission Trip team were:

Cindy Alloway
Tia & Nathan Burlingame
Dieph Domingue
Tonie Quigley
Robby and Craig Rusert
Brian Smith
Norm and Becky Smith

Benediction:

**And may the grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ, the love of God and
the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be
with you now and forever more.
Amen**



**Rev. Dr. Cindy Alloway
and Haiti mission team representatives
Presbyterian Church of the Roses
2500 Patio Court
Santa Rosa, CA 95405
June 12, 2016**