

Sunday, June 27, 2021

Dear Friends and Family,

May this note find you blessed according to the promises of Matthew 10:42 and Mark 9:41. He who has pity upon the poor lends to the Lord and that which he has given He will pay him again. Proverbs 19:17 As you're sharing God's blessings with others God has promised that He also will bless you. May you find peace and comfort in that promise.

Since our last letter we have had a continuation of sickness. It has been a most difficult period; not just for us but for many others as well. Tests show the sickness to be malaria but it feels different and response to treatment is different than normal. 47 of us fell sick and of those 26 had to be hospitalized. Typically we started self treating as normal but when it reached the point that normal medications could not help we had no choice but to be admitted for IV quinine treatment. Two or three days of IV treatments were usually enough to start the healing process.

Nkiru was among those who fell ill. She started with three days of tablets. Then she went to the hospital for six painful injections which still didn't clear the symptoms. Finally when fever and vomiting were severe she had to be admitted. In the past 15 years I've never seen her so sick. Thankfully she is well now. It was painful to see so many that you love especially younger ones feeling so sick. Nkiru said that she was thankful that now she could understand how others were feeling. Her illness also helped me to appreciate more the huge load that Nkiru carries each day. The little kids were quick to point out when I didn't do it "Mom's Way".

Although several who were severely sick were probably closer to death than we realized at the time, we did have only one tragic ending. I reported last time that Joy was admitted with a very low blood pressure, high fever and that her unborn baby was very stressed. After her discharge from the hospital she complained that the baby wasn't moving as normal and one day she felt no movement at all. When she went to the local health clinic it was confirmed that the baby had died. She had to have induced labor and after 24 painful hours she delivered an unborn child. This is Joy's and Chidibem's second child to die at or just before birth.

The current security situation continues to be of concern. Two Sundays ago a sister who worships with us reported that her nephew was missing. He had been picked up by a local state sponsored vigilante group. The charge was that the boy and a couple of his friends has stolen a motorcycle. His two friends were released but he disappeared while in custody The aunt continued to press the issue and even got the state commissioner for police and army involved. They finally found his body along with five others buried 15 feet in the ground. Parts of his body had been harvested for sale. As painful as the loss of this young man is, hopefully the spotlight has now been turned on to an area just outside of Port Harcourt that has been known for trafficking in human body parts.

I agree with an editorial from a national paper that said in their opinion there has never been as many ongoing security challenges since the Biafran war in the 1960s. We don't know how much of this makes news on CNN but we still have almost daily reports of armed conflicts, mass kidnappings, etc. all over the country. Our immediate area is no exception. We pray and ask you to pray for the Lord to heal this broken world. Only he can bring the piece we all desire.

Because of the insecurity challenges between Herdsmen and farmers southern governors have banded together to state that there should no longer be open grazing. This in turn has led to a shortage of beef so the last couple of weeks we bought 15 pounds of chicken necks. One young boy came proudly to show me just this small stub of a neck. With a toothless grin he said "look Daddy I got a whole chicken neck". What is snubbed by some is coveted by others.

By the grace of God and your generous gifts we still continue to feed up to 30 extra children every evening. Often adults join them. We always have some children who come with a little plastic bag. They take the plate of food they are given and put it in their bag to go back home and share with parents. So their portion is shared with several people. One day I saw such a child. After having put his food in his bag, completely lick the plate for every drop of oil or rice that might be left. Please feel encouraged by the news that you help give at least one meal a day to a hungry child.

Your contributions also help those that are sick and unable to pay for the bare minimum of medicines. One young lady who lives near us comes for our evening devotional. When she didn't show even for Sunday worship we looked for her and in the brief period of her absence she had visibly emaciated. She cried on Nkiru's shoulder saying she did not want to be a burden knowing how many come to us for help. Thankfully she was able to be admitted and after a couple of days of treatment she was able to come home to her family. Currently she works as a cleaner at a local bakery earning a little over 50 cents a day. She works 14 hours a day six days a week. Even with all her effort this is not a livable wage for a woman and her three children

I have a new friend. His name is Emmanuel. Emmanuel is 13 years old. He is an albino and because of this his father abandoned him. His mother remarried but her husband does not also not accept him. So he lives with his grandmother. She has never been able to put him in school. Even though he comes from quite a distance to visit us on Sundays and brings his Bible, Emmanuel is not able to read. Because of poverty and prejudice Emmanuel has had a difficult life. Without any education it will be very hard for him. Thankfully we were able to give him and his grandmother a little help and he's able to spend a little time with other children. Gradually we hopefully will feel accepted and welcomed. All of us yearn for this.

In stateside news, my dad's last remaining brother passed away after a battle with leukemia. Uncle Dealon was a barber much of his life. He always showed up at family reunions with his clippers and gave all us boys free haircuts. He was an early caregiver for me and loved to remind me how he made me morning breakfast of bacon and eggs.

He leaves behind a son and daughter and grandchildren and lots of barber jokes. We were able to visit with him in my last trip to America; once at my dad's funeral and once when he came to pick up an old plow and rocking chair off of daddy's front porch. After a short visit I brought out for him a pocket knife and pocket watch from the back bedroom which my daddy obviously didn't need any more. It was a John Wayne gift set and I knew John Wayne was his hero. Among his final words to me were "You don't know how much this means to me". I never knew that would be our last goodbye. Uncle Dealon, and so many others, "You don't know how much you meant to me". I wish I had said it more while I had the chance.

We were also saddened by the passing of a childhood friend, Robert Johnson. Robert and his family have been part of the glue God has used to keep the congregation of Saucer Creek together. Ever faithful in attendance and participation, he leaves behind a solid legacy as an elder in the church, a song leader, an excellent Bible teacher, a loving father and husband of 51 years. His faithfulness to his Lord will always remain an encouragement to me and so many others. Such people are the backbone of the church and our country. We mourn their passing.

Thank you too for your faithfulness as well. When I feel I can go no further, I remember your kindness and how much you sacrifice to help us here. May the Good Lord continue to reward and sustain you as you faithfully serve.

Remain blessed,  
Cliff, Nkiru and family