

“...the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” Mt. 21:42

December 2022

In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. --Job 1:1.

Most of us can relate to some part of the pre-tested Job. Most of us sort of fear God, try to walk upright and avoid evil. Though on the other hand, none of us is really blameless. But if you know the rest of the story of Job, that did not mean that he was immune to hardship. In fact, it is the hardship of Job that we all can relate to. Because hardship is in the DNA of the human condition. What makes Job's story so instructional and inspirational for us humans is what that hardship did to him... and what he did with that hardship.

In the course of one day, Job receives messages from the sole surviving servants of a series of catastrophes. He has lost his wealth and his livelihood (seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys), his “large number of” servants, and, by far the worst of all, his seven sons and three daughters. Yet, somehow, he still praises God. I don't want to find out, but I'm pretty sure that this would just be beyond me. When his health is wrecked and his wife tells him to curse God and die, his friends show up. They get off to a good start by shutting up for seven days, but then ruin it all by opening their mouths and spend the next 29 chapters arguing about who is at fault... until God shows up to set them all straight.

But buried roughly in the middle of the book (19:24-27), in the midst of all of the trauma and conflict and inexpressible loss, Job makes one of the most inspired declarations of faith in scripture. *“For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”* This is the heart of the tale. This is something to hold onto. All the rest of this ancient, beautiful, and sometimes strange book could be considered inspired epilogue and prologue to this central statement. When all else is lost Job could only wait for the Lord. This is Advent, the season of the year and the season of the world when we await the coming of the Lord. What follows are four vignettes and a poem from

Loma de Luz missionaries, each in their own way, writing about waiting on the Lord, waiting to see what He will do.

--Jeff

From Chase and Reagan Gray (Casa Santuario and El Camino School):

Recently one of our teenage girls underwent surgery to remove lesions from her face and mouth. These surgeries have been semi-frequent in her life as she lives with a rare skin disease which makes her skin extremely susceptible to skin cancer. Because of her condition, she is completely blind and we, as a home, school, and community, have to take many precautions to protect her. Many of you have followed her story through different newsletters and know that she has been able to attend El Camino, where we both work. It is one of her favorite things.

As a result of a recent surgery, she could not attend school for a few weeks, and it made her recovery a lot harder. She was noticeably different in character. She was less happy, joyful and bubbly. Her absence from school did not only affect her, but it was felt by all in her classroom, particularly by her best friend, Briany.



About a week after her surgery, Briany came to visit her

in the hospital and brought a little present. There were 6 or 7 of us crowded into a small, dimly lit room, and I told her that she had a special visitor. With her ability to recognize people by the way they walk or smell, she may have already known her sweet friend Briany was standing in the doorway, because she let out a squeal of excitement. Her demeanor instantly changed, and joy had overtaken the room. Briany had brought a gift, and with each item that was removed from the bag, there was another squeal. She ran her fingers over the fluffy hair ties and clips for her hair. She ran her hands over the crayons and pages that her friend brought to color with her. How do I express how the Holy Spirit felt in the room/the moment? I don't think I can. A precious little girl who brought a simple gift to her friend who was going through something hard covered us in goosebumps, and the presence of the Lord was tangible. We sensed the love of Christ filling the room, and I believe it was the moment He had been preparing this friendship for.

--Chase and Reagan

From Haley Ens, (missionary teacher, 2nd grade, El Camino School):

“God give me the strength to get through this day, the wisdom to meet the needs of my students, and help me to model your love to them today.” Some variation of these words is on my lips most mornings, in the quiet of my classroom before the room is filled with students.

Each student is created by God with unique personalities, strengths, and also needs. Each student is a puzzle that begins to be put together, forming a more complete picture as the year goes on and a relationship is formed.

This year, I had a few students whose puzzles presented a greater challenge for me early in the year. At the beginning of this school year, this prayer crossed my lips many times a day and was on my mind each night as I wondered how the next day would go. I was tired. I felt weak and ended many days feeling at a loss. I knew that I would not get through the next day on my own strength.

One night as I lay awake pondering what strategy to try next, I was struck by how the Lord had been sustaining me. He *had been* giving me the strength to get through each day. He *had been* renewing my strength each day as I waited on and trusted in Him.

*But those who wait on the Lord
Shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.*

--Isaiah 40: 31

Many nights have passed since this night of realization, and more puzzle pieces have been laid. I am

more aware of how to help these students and have seen growth on their end, and on mine as their teacher. Not only did the Lord provide strength each day and keep me from growing weary, He also provided people whose wisdom and experience helped me, as well as practical supports at school.



Haley and her students

God also used others to *encourage* me. On one particularly rough day, someone from back home reached out and told me that while lying awake at night, the Lord put me on their mind, so they had prayed for me. That same day I also received an email from the global leaders of my sending organization saying they were praying for me that week. I immediately felt encouraged and strengthened by the timing of these prayers and was once again reminded of how the Lord sustains us when we are weak. The everlasting God was giving me strength when my own was lacking, a true reminder that He is the provider of our strength each and every day.

--Haley

From Angela Desmaris (missionary teacher, 4th & 5th grades, El Camino School):

On March 12, 2020 El Camino closed its doors, like most schools around the world, for an indefinite amount of time. First a week. Then two. Then, reluctantly, for the rest of the school year. As May came around and the students turned in their final homework packets, the teachers began plans for the next school year: who would teach what grade, what classroom would the teachers be in, what new policies would be needed for the era of covid, etc. And the plans continued to be adapted over the summer as the teachers rested in the States and, for all of us, without knowing when we would be able to reopen again.

At the end of July 2020, I returned to Honduras while asking a lot of questions: When will we be able to reopen? How will my colleagues without residency

return to Honduras while its borders were closed? What if we can reopen but don't have enough teachers? Will I go back to the States for Christmas without having taught a single lesson? And there were many more questions.

Uncertain. Questioning. Impatient. And hesitantly trying to trust. All schools in the country were closed and employing "online-learning" (which in a rural area of a developing country equated to very little) and laws were enforced that strictly limited the movement and gathering of individuals. So how could El Camino reopen in these conditions? I knew God was ABLE to make a way, but I had no idea HOW or IF He would.

Slowly, the plans were modified. Meetings were held with our local district to discuss possibilities. The borders reopened, and teachers were able to return. And, finally, a solution was created and approved by our local district.

Then, after six months of waiting, and two months later than planned, our prayers were answered: El Camino started school again on September 28, 2020. Due to national laws, we were only able to have 10 students in the classroom at a time, but our students receiving two days of school a week was better than none.

That Thanksgiving as some of the teachers and hospital missionaries reflected on what they were grateful for, I shared about how I'd known God could answer our prayers but hadn't known *whether* He would nor *in what manner* He would--and then saw His answers come.

When I landed in the States a few weeks later for Christmas break, my phone lit up with a notification: we would be able to fully reopen with normal, full class-sized school in January. Another unexpected prayer was answered.



Back to School

My hesitant trusting was overwhelmed by God's trustworthy faithfulness.

--Angela

From Daria Ochenkowski (6th – 10th grade English and History):

I have everything when I have you
Lord, let my waiting proclaim your power
I won't despair
Even though I only feel like I'm coming up for air

For so long, day after day, the building blocks have been set
Why aren't we there yet?
Lord, my hands are dirty from the work
And yet something still lurks

It is said, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."
The grind begins and continues
Keep my head down, keep sewing
The seeds of my work, but I only receive grim news.

All of a sudden I look up, and I see bare trees, a brown
ground
But Lord, why am I not being crowned?
I have the dreams, the passion, the energy
All I'm experiencing is a penitentiary

As I look and I plea
Feeling all but free
Bound by expectations
And blind by the unknown destinations

"Yet, I call this to mind; therefore, I have hope."
I roll up my cloak
The cloak of my plans, my desires

You have not handed me over to the enemy
But
Have set my feet in a spacious place
One where I'm embraced with love, healing, grace

I have everything when I have you
Lord, let my waiting proclaim your power
I won't despair
Even though I only feel like I'm coming up for air

--Daria

From Travis Harris (Medical Missionary, Hospital Loma de Luz):

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." --James 1:17

An Unexpected Gift

Typically, when we think of an unexpected gift, we think of something that was received. As we approach Christmas season there are many minds focused on gifts they would like to receive. This season is celebrated to remember the ultimate gift that was given when God gave His Son to pay the price for our sins.

At Loma de Luz we have recently had an Unexpected Gift. It is the opportunity to share our medical knowledge, healthcare facility, and other resources with

Honduran Medical Students (completing their final 6 months of Medical School) and with newly graduated Honduran Physicians. They are gifted, bright, humble, grateful, ready to learn, ready to serve, and bring a new perspective to the team. What a joy to unwrap this unexpected gift that is essentially another opportunity for Loma de Luz to bless the community.



Honduran providers

It has reminded us of what is expressed in Acts 20:35b: *“it is more blessed to give than to receive.”* For years the hospital has been serving Honduras by providing good quality health care and sharing the Gospel. Now we also have the opportunity to teach and equip young physicians not only with medical knowledge and skill, but also with spiritual knowledge and skill. We are grateful for this opportunity and ask that you pray for our students and physicians. That God would work mightily in them and through them to shine a light for His Glory at Loma de Luz.

--Travis

Scripture instructs us that King David was a man “after God’s Own Heart.” And, that heart was tempered in the fires of strife and betrayal, longing and loss. In the Psalms he often wrote of what his heart had learned:
*... I would have lost heart, unless I had believed
 That I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land
 of the living. Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage,
 And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on
 the LORD! --Psalm 27: 13,14*

In this season of Advent, we await the coming of our Lord. How wonderful that day will be. Now... what shall we do while we wait?

In Christ Jesus,

Jefferson McKenney, M.D.

News and Needs:

The Land Invasion of property adjacent to Loma de Luz continues, and continues as a serious threat to the work and the community. Please keep successful resolution of this in your prayers.

Mike Yost: Mike Yost, our faithful, highly competent, and greatly beloved Construction and Maintenance Director will be retiring (for health reasons) at the end of this month. He and Peggy will be continuing to support Loma de Luz with consultation and wisdom... and as salt and light in Balfate.

Personnel needed:

--As Travis mentioned, we have a number of promising young (Honduran) General Practitioner Doctors on staff. We have an ongoing need for **Specialist Medical Missionaries** to teach and mentor, and to provide specialty care for Hondurans in need.

--We also are anticipating the need for a **high school English teacher** and a **4th grade teacher**.

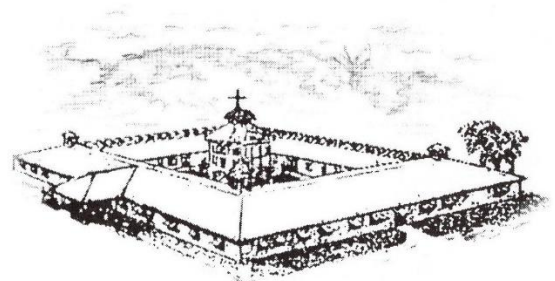
--And, we have an ongoing need for missionaries skilled in **Construction/Maintenance**.

--We are also still in need of a **stateside Administrator** for the Cornerstone Foundation.

*Please keep praying for us. We are thankful for you.
 May "the Day Star arise in your hearts" and in ours
 as we wait for Him and look toward Him.*

*May you be blessed
 this Christmas and in the coming New Year!*

--Sally for Cornerstone



Hospital Loma de La Luz