

My dear friends,

I arrived safely back to Kenya and am trying to get over jet lag but wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you so much for the amazing hospitality that was extended to me while I was in the States. Honestly, I was so well taken care of. I will never be able to express in words my gratitude for the ways you have surrounded me and cheered for me as I seek to follow Christ. More than ever before, I know I cannot do this alone. It is equally clear that I was never intended to.

In unique and generous ways, love was poured out upon me by my family and friends. I think about the dear lady, who I had never met before, hugging me as she shared that she often wakes up in the middle of the night to pray for me. In one church, I was talking to a man who was standing with his little boy. The father asked his son: "who do we pray for every morning?" Without hesitation, the little boy pointed his finger towards me. His boldness caught me off guard and moved my heart. I had conversations with people who explained that, in spite of their hard economic situations, they wanted to continue to support the health ministry. One moment that continues to make me smile centers around a little girl named Molly. About a year and a half ago, I wrote an update about an orphaned child named Kipchumba. Molly's mom had read the update in a church bulletin; and one night when Molly did not want to eat her supper, Molly's mom told her about Kipchumba's story. Molly left the dinner table that night and went to her dad to explain that she wanted to give all of the money in her piggybank to Kipchumba. Since then, Molly has written letters and drawn pictures for this little boy who lives on the other side of the world. God only knows if Molly will ever get to meet Kipchumba, but her generous love and child-like faith have helped to empower his life.

The night before I left for Kenya, I was laying in bed and thinking about the season of ministry that is ahead. In truth, I was feeling overwhelmed by uncertainties that fill our broken world. I sensed God saying to me: *Are you going to believe Me?* The real issue is not the world's economic situation or on-going transitions that accompany ministry. This is about *trust*. Following Jesus will not allow me to lean on my own understanding. He will direct the paths, but I have to be willing to let go of my expectations of how God must act. I think about John the Baptist, a man whose purpose was to prepare the way for Jesus to come. When he was in prison, he sent a couple of friends to ask Jesus: "are you the Coming One or should we look for another?" Jesus was not acting the way he was expected to; and yet, I love his reply. He answered, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see. The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me" (Matthew 11:2-6). This message relayed back to John is what Jesus is still about: rescuing the lost, binding the broken, offering hope to the hopeless. His words about the poor are striking. Jesus did not say that the blind see and the lame walk... the dead are raised and the poor have become rich. No, Jesus said that good news was being offered to the poor. He was telling the worthless of the world: *Take heart. There's hope. I am Yours.* That was their healing. It is also ours. While in the States, I was introduced to a man living in the streets of downtown Fresno. His name is Walker, and he explained that he has been clean from drugs for the past year and a half. When

I asked him how he has the strength to get up each day and not turn back to drugs. Without hesitation, he answered with one word: "God."

I recently came across a quote that has challenged me greatly in what it means to be a Christian. It comes from a letter that was written in 131 AD, not by a Christian but about Christians, to the Emperor of Rome. It states:

"It is the Christians, O Emperor, who seem to have sought and found the truth; for they acknowledge God. They don't keep for themselves the goods entrusted to them. They show love to their neighbors. "They don't do to another what they would not want done to themselves. They speak gently to those who oppress them. In this way, they make their enemies their friends. It has become their passion to do good to their enemies. Everyone among them who has anything gives ungrudgingly to the one among them who has nothing. If they see a homeless stranger, they bring them in under their own roof. They rejoice over that brother or sister as if they were a real sister or brother. For they do not call one another sister or brother because of the flesh, but because of the Spirit of their God. If anyone among them is poor, while they themselves have little to spare, then the whole community will fast for two or three days until everyone can eat together. In this way, they can supply any poor person with what they need. This, O Emperor, is the rule of life of the Christians. This is the way that they have come to live."

May we, as followers of Christ, continue to seek and find the truth. May we ever be growing in trust and in love.

With love, Juli