

Hope's Promise Kenya Short Term Mission March 28-April 10

Part 6: I saw what I saw (The End)

You are the last to step off the bus in hustling Kasarani, just down the road from Little Sisters' Guest House where the team is staying. You are bone-weary. A day of ministry complete, you savor the sweet exhaustion of having given your best. Other team members weave across traffic to a grocery store. There is a child near the bus, maybe seven years old or younger. All but invisible, fading into the dust. You pause, notice his scrappy clothing and bare feet. He doesn't smile. He starts to motion for you to give him something. You don't have any money with you. And you are tired. The grime of the day still clings to your clothes. And you've seen so many hungry children today that you couldn't count them if you tried. You wish you didn't see him. You politely raise your empty hands and shake your head. But sadness tugs at your heart as you turn away, leaving him standing alone and so very small. The misery in his eyes somehow gets inside your head, and you can't see the busy town around you anymore. Suddenly you remember your left-over lunch – there wasn't time to eat it in the rush of the day. You turn around, relieved that he is still there, and bound up the steps of the bus to retrieve the sack. He takes it gratefully. You ask if you can pray for him, not knowing if he understands English. You place your hand on his head anyway. As the words tumble out, you feel a keen longing flood the space between you and the child; and it feels like Jesus. He feels as near as if you were the disciple Peter eating fish with Him by a morning fire.

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Joanna is a nurse. Alleviating the suffering of others is her vocation. But, in America, medical professionals wear gloves to heal the sick. In Bernard's stuffy Mathare Valley ramshackle shanty, racked with echoes of the harrowing cough of tuberculosis, there are no gloves. She hesitates only a moment, then lays her bare hands on the sick man to pray. She remembers that moment, "I knew in my heart that this was an experience like what Jesus did. I felt His Presence. And as I looked at Bernard, I knew Jesus was there with us."

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The problem with the invitation to "come and see" is that you can't un-see what you've seen. After our team returned, a member shared this song with us: "I Saw What I Saw" by Sara Groves (it's worth persevering through the short ad at the beginning):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lt_WpluguwE

Each of us saw what we saw.

What I have seen more than anything else in Kenya is that He is longing for the lost to be found. All around the world, the Spirit of God is calling in many languages for His children to come home.

You see, Sanctuary of Hope is but a parable for the heart of God.



*Left: Kevin, now a member of the SoH #1 family, in 2006, in his Mathare home.
Right: Victor and Kevin, taking a break from playing soccer in April 2012.*

Jesus wanders the slum labyrinths of our days, gathering us into His arms from forgotten corners. He loves us through the healing process, when we can't quite shake the trauma of being lost. And He invites us, as His dearly loved children, to join His quest – there are still sheep quivering on the cliffs!

The irony is that Jesus is both the One who leads the search party for stray sheep, and at the same time also identifies so closely with the poor and vulnerable that He once said, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25:35-36, 40

Jesus is all around you, whether you are serving in Kenya or walking the streets of your neighborhood. Of one thing I am certain - if you let yourself see Him, He will show you what to do. And then you will see Him more, and you won't be able to take your eyes off Him.