

Westerholm – eMail News

Monday, November 27, 2006

Friends and Family,

Last month I asked for prayers for Lazarus, who had just been baptized into Christ and was severely ill. The Friday following his baptism he went to be with the Lord. On Saturday I went out to Nanhupo where we had the funeral. The believers needed direction, since this was the first Christian funeral for the young church. One major difference exists between Christian funerals and those of non-Christians. At most funerals, all the family and friends arrive at the house of the mourning family where they stay for about three days. The bereaved family is then responsible to provide food for all the people, including meat (which is really expensive for them). The Christians feel that it is not right to have a party when someone dies and that rather we are called to mourn with those who mourn (Rom. 12:15). Instead, they take up a collection for the widow on the third day after the burial. On the third day, the custom is to go to the grave and put a cross up. Afterward everyone gave money and food to the widow. This was a great testimony and afterward Lazarus' sister and mother said that they wanted to become Christians too.

I suspect that Lazarus died of AIDS, though there is no way to be sure. I talked to his wife and asked her to come to Montepuez in order to get tested to see if she was HIV positive. I was especially concerned because she has four young children. We went to the testing center together and we rejoiced to see that she did not have HIV.

Over the past few months I have been teaching through Mark with some men at the Church of Christ here in town. Initially I began studying with a young man named Felizberto who has been a Christian for a few years now. He hadn't been coming to the Bible study for the past few weeks, so I went with Germino to visit his village just outside of town. He told us that he was tired of going to church and wanted to take a break. He wanted to spend his time working in his field, going to school, and working with an agricultural project in his village. He didn't have time for church and he said he just wanted to do his own thing right now. It was a sad conversation, especially since I felt that he understood a lot of what we were studying in the gospel of Mark. We had just studied chapter 8 and I read to him verses 34-38 which talk about the need to give up our lives, take up our cross, and the futility of gaining the whole world without Christ. I asked him if he didn't understand these verses or if he understood and was just rejecting them. He told me he understood and he was rejecting the teaching. I am reminded that as Christians we are called to proclaim a message that can be rejected as much as it can be accepted.

This month the annual conference for the Churches of Christ in Cabo Delgado was held here in Montepuez. This year we decided to help drive people to the conference, so that the attendance would be good. Over 150 people came to the conference from seven different districts. The conference lasted three days and our team had the opportunity to teach on church leadership, the Christian life, the Christian family, and evangelism. I taught on church leadership, specifically the roles of shepherds and deacons. I taught in Portuguese, but it was useful to know enough Makua to be able to correct my translator at several points. The Portuguese Bible translates elders as "responsavel" or "responsible one", which when translated into Makua became "yuluupale" or "big person". After correcting the translator several times and emphasizing that Jesus is our "yuluupale", I think some progress was made. This was heavy for many of the believers, because many church leaders think of themselves as "big people". Here in Mozambique church leadership is often about telling people what to do rather than serving others. Overall people left the conference encouraged and excited about what they had learned.

Shortly after the church conference, our team headed to the beach for our annual team retreat. We had a really refreshing time of fellowship, relaxation, prayer, and planning. We thought about our priorities for 2007 and what we felt God was leading us to focus on. It was a good reflection time and made us excited about what the Lord will do in the upcoming year.

We are blessed to have a couple from the States, Russell and Shannon Vaughn, who are visiting us for a few weeks. They are interested in working in Mozambique and are learning about various ministries that are taking place here. They will be following our team through our daily routines and seeing all the different aspects of our work.

My back has been continuing to cause a lot of discomfort. We were really blessed to have a Christian doctor from Australia fly into Montepuez for a few hours this month and he wanted to interview our team. He had just enough time to see me and give me some advice. He suggested I go to South Africa, but said that it wasn't an urgent problem. I was thinking of going in January, but I have been in a lot of pain for the past week, so I am trying to make arrangements to go down as soon as possible. Amy

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has also been quite sick this month with a stomach bug. She took medication several times and it would get better for a few days and then return. Finally we tried another medication and she has been better since. Between her sickness and my back pains, November has been a stressful month.

Maggie is healthy and happy as ever. She shows off her four upper teeth and two lower teeth every time she smiles. She also has learned to clap her hands this month. She is not crawling yet, but that doesn't stop her from scooting all around the house. She is eating a lot more on her own and is learning to drink from her sippy cup by herself. She still loves to read her books and recently she has been enjoying taking the toys out of her little toy baskets; it is so fun to watch her developing new skills.

We pray that you have a blessed holiday season!

Praise God For:

1. The testimony of Lazarus' funeral.
2. The health of Lazarus' widow.
3. The success of the provincial church conference.
4. Sending the Australian doctor to visit.
5. The Vaughn's interest in Mozambique.

Please Pray For:

1. Wisdom as we consider people to mentor next year in Nanjua.
2. Continued healing for Chad's back.
3. Felizberto, that he would repent.
4. Frederico, the pastor of the Assembly of God, who lost his wife recently.
5. Details to be arranged as Chad heads to South Africa.

Donations to this ministry can be written to Cordova Community Church with the memo "Mozambique" and sent to:

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