



December 22, 2010

## Tanzania Update

Christmas greetings to all,

Glenna and I send warm wishes for the holiday season from sunny Tanzania. It never seems like Christmas here, with gardens growing, temperatures soaring, and not so much as a note of our favorite carols. But wherever we are, whatever circumstances we find ourselves in, Jesus Christ is the reason for the season!

The last two weeks have been busy for us as we fulfilled speaking engagements in two churches in the Mwanza area. On Sunday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, we responded to an invitation to speak at the Gilgal Christian Worship Center, receiving a warm welcome from Pastor Sentozi and his ministerial staff. The church is one of the largest in the city, with over a thousand members attending each weekend. Presently, they are in a transitional phase as they have acquired land and have plans for a large worship complex.

After several songs from a spirit filled choir, each of our mission's team extended greetings and words of encouragement to the congregation. This was followed by the message presented on Christ's calling of the first disciples found in Luke 5:1-11. This particular episode occurred by the Sea of Galilee, where our Lord asked Peter if they had caught any fish. He replied that they "had fished all night and caught nothing." Then Jesus instructed them to go into deeper water – a command that made little sense to these experienced fishermen. However, when you follow God's instructions, you're always blessed, and the disciples caught so many fish that their nets were breaking! I stressed the point that the Lord wants to take their church, in this time of transition, out of their comfort zones and into a deeper experience with Him.

Pastor Sentozi, one of the most ambitious and committed church leaders that we've worked with, was very pleased with the message and asked us to do a seminar in the first week of January.

The following Wednesday, we started a seminar in Kilamahewa, a place not far from where we live. We had been asked by Pastor Irene in response to a service we spoke at a few months earlier.

Irene is also extremely committed to her faith and is not hesitant to speak firmly to her congregation about being totally surrendered to the Lord. Her husband, who had led the church for several years, died suddenly leaving his wife with a deep, almost over whelming sense of loss. After a year of battling depression and experiencing disappointment with "temporary pastors," she enrolled in Bible College, and eventually took on the position in "leading the flock."

The seminar was a joy from the beginning as the church members showed genuine enthusiasm for each message that we presented. Glenna spoke on the subject of making choices and read from Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction ... But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life and only a few find it." She stated that every day of our lives, we have to make decisions that put us on one road or the other. God has given us the gift of free will and each of us are responsible for the choices we make, with some having eternal consequences!

One of the studies I presented focused on Romans 12:1-2, "Therefore I urge you brothers ... to offer your bodies as living sacrifices to God ... Then you will be able to discern what God's will is, His good, pleasing and perfect will." Paul emphasizes in this particular passage that we are to make a total commitment to Christ. This kind of relationship requires a "daily surrender" in our Christian walk.

Unfortunately, as “living sacrifices” we can crawl off the altar at any time, denying the true destiny God has prepared for us.

Following the final message on Sunday, Pastor Irene gave a spirited altar call and over fifty people made their way forward. Frank and I offered up prayers for those desiring to rededicate their lives to Jesus, in addition to the multiple requests for healing, physically and spiritually. Many of these people appeared deeply moved by the spirit, raising their hands and crying out to Him as children desperately seeking a loving parent.

Before we left the church that day, Irene thanked us repeatedly for coming and said that everyone had been blessed so much by the seminar. She gave us an open invitation to return whenever we wished to preach the “Word” to her people. As I stated previously, it’s always such a rewarding experience when we encounter a pastor like Irene with a congregation that sincerely desires the things of God.

We were also pleased to hear of phone calls Frank had received concerning the seminar we did a few weeks ago in the village of Mubuhenge. Both Pastor Joel and one of his elders reported that the people had been greatly encouraged by our trip there and hoped that we would return in the near future!

In closing, we pray that the Lord will show you His special favor in the coming New Year. All of you have been such a blessing to us, with your prayers and financial support. May our Heavenly Father reward your kindness in ways you never thought possible!

***In His service,***

***John and Glenna***

***John and Glenna in Tanzania***