

Pentecost 5, Proper 10  
Church of the Good Shepherd, Silver City, NM

July 13, 2014  
Rev. Paul Moore

## **Good Seed**

This week nine people from New Mexico, most of them from Silver City, will join up with about 75 others in Houston and go to Honduras for the annual medical mission. We go with the organization called Honduras Good Works. We have a huge team this year, larger than it has ever been. We will be going to more villages, seeing more people, and giving out more medicine. It will be more complicated logistically than other trips, but hopefully more people will provide more hands to do more good in a place that desperately needs it.

Maybe our efforts are like seed in the pouch of the sower. Notice that the sower sows with a curious sense of abandon. (I take my thoughts from a talk on this parable I heard once by the abbot of the Society of St. John in Washington.) The growth of the seed is not in the hands of the Sower, so he spreads the seed with an incredible generosity. In the end, he is the one who reaps benefits. It's all gift to him, a small price to pay for potentially great rewards. It's worth the seed that falls on the path for the sake of the seed that falls on good ground.

Let me tell you about some of the seed that produces good fruit. We do three things in Honduras. We attend to the needs of body, mind and spirit. For the body, we provide medical care to underserved people in southeastern Honduras. For many of these people, we are the only medical services they get. For some doctors are just too far away. For most, they are out of reach economically. I sat with a man in a town called Pericón a couple of years ago. He was in his seventies. His wizened old face showed the vagaries of countless hours under the hot sun, working the soil to provide for his family. He looked at me with tears in his eyes. "You know where Jesus tells us to go serve the least of his brothers and sisters?" he asked me. "Yes, I know." "Well, we are the least of the brothers and sisters of Jesus, and you have come to serve us." Wow!

Then there is the young mother who comes in with six children. "Are all these yours?" asks the doctor. "No, but I am raising them," she replies. "The mother of these three died last year and they have no one." They are undernourished, and we send her home with medicines, but also bags of rice and beans. Hope blossoms on her young face. Wow!

We made a home visit to a woman who was 87. She had fallen the year before and broken her hip. The hip had healed without any medical attention, rendering her bedridden. When we walked into the little hut her sons and grandsons were there,

attending to her needs. The doctor checked her out—except for the hip she was in good health. "How many children do you have?" I asked her, making small talk. "Oh, Padrecito," she replied animatedly, "I'm so sorry--I only had 18!" Wow!

People with chronic conditions like diabetes and hypertension get a year's worth of medications. Others get treated for respiratory afflictions, intestinal parasites, and a host of other less serious conditions. Jesus healed people—and promised through the Holy Spirit that we would do greater things than these. We scatter the seed of health.

For the mind we provide scholarships for kids to go to High School. A young woman came to the clinic with six children. Five of them were barefoot. When we asked about their schooling it came out that only one of them attended each day. They rotated who got to wear the shoes! Can you imagine making it through school attending only every sixth day?

\$250 a year makes the difference for a child from an outlying town to go to High School. High School graduates are far less likely to end up working the soil for pennies a day. High school graduates are far less likely to have a family of 4 by the time they're 20. High School graduates are far less likely to try to jump onto a moving train, hitch-hike for 2 weeks across Mexico at risk (literally) of life, limb and honor, to arrive at a border across which lie unrealistic expectations that are bound to be dashed. Fr. Dagoberto told me two weeks ago when he was here that since the scholarship program has been in place the frequency with which people say they are going to go has dropped noticeably. The letters that come back from scholarship recipients reflect the sense of pride and purpose that these young men and women get from being able to go to School.

Graduates have asked for help to go to college. We now set aside 10% of our scholarship budget to help meet this need. And these kids do not forget where they came from. They either come home to practice their trade, or they send money home regularly.

We work for the wellbeing of the communities. We work with an organization called Institute for Development in Honduras. We have the contacts, they have the expertise in microfinance. They specialize in micro-finance loans to poor people. Typically these are loans of \$100-1000 repayable in 6-36 months. They finance a number of things, one such project right now is a pig farm. We are working together with a number of others for a larger micro-finance project. I will be touring the beginnings of a stone tile factory. The factory will be owned and operated by the Episcopal Church, it will produce fine stone tile for home-builders in the U.S. An importer in Houston will purchase all that we can produce. We hope to employ 17 "unemployable" women and give them a fair shake at life.

Fr. Dagoberto, after his sermon, told me something you need to hear. He said that if he were preaching this sermon in Honduras he would have added a piece. This is what he said: The Americans are being very generous in taking care of the thousands of women and children who have arrived at the border seeking asylum from the violence in their countries. However, the real answer does not lie here, but there. Only a transformed Honduras will solve the problem. He is so right. With him, we want to see our little corner of Honduras, one of the poorest in the nation, transformed by the power of the Spirit.

But there is other seed as well. A woman named Wendy went on the trip one year. She met a young girl with the same name and they developed quite a friendship. The two Wendys played jacks together, and got a whole lot of other kids involved. The big Wendy came back from Honduras and wrote a poem that she read in church. It was titled, "I can't stop hearing the music." It was about how the joy in these poor people was music to her, a breath of fresh air that buoyed up her spirit. There was not a dry eye in the congregation when she was done.

Another man had a thriving home health care business. While in Honduras Congress overhauled the reimbursement schedule for home health care. He knew while there that he would probably lose his business. When he came back he shared with the church that he had to go 2000 miles away to realize just what was really important to him: His faith, and his family.

Just last year a young man went on the trip from Arizona. He was a sports star, and had gotten a basketball scholarship to college. But he had gotten injured and it sidelined him. While in Honduras it all came to him: He wants to spend his life working in developing countries using his sports skills and interest to work with young people to keep them off the streets.

We hold a Eucharist toward the end of the week for just the team. Instead of a sermon we have a time of sharing. A Honduran doctor who had joined us stood up and said, "You Americans come with love in your hearts to do for our people what we are unwilling to do. But I, a Honduran, can begin to change that! Thank you for the opportunity to learn what service means!"

A man named Don took his wife on a trip in the late 1990's. Don is a doctor, his wife is a nurse. They had just been to Cursillo, and were casting around for what their Apostolic Action would be. He noticed a Ceiba tree along a road that had a simple wooden sign tacked onto it way up high: "Ultreya" it read. A light went off in Don's head. He turned to his wife, Bobbi, and said, "You know, we're going to be doing this." "No way!"

replied Bobbi, always the pragmatist. Yet from the inspiration of that moment came the organization called Honduras Good Works. Honduras Good Works is non-profit corporation with which we go to Honduras. In 2013 it had a budget of just over \$277K. Your rector sits on the board.

We say we go with full suitcases and empty hearts, and we return with empty suitcases and full hearts. We give all we can, and we receive so much more! Good soil produces much fruit, some 30, some 60 some a hundred fold.