



We are privileged to live in a warm climate, surrounded by a beautiful lake framed by volcanoes (all inactive!). It is a place filled with amazing nature and generous people, a place where we have meaningful work. It is easy to think of God here and sense his presence. It is from this place that we are also acutely aware that many people (those we know and love and those we only hear about) are living with a dark view of the world around them where there is no peace and evil is having its way.

Having just spent precious time with our family (Kathleen's Mom's 100th birthday), being alone this Christmas feels especially heavy. It seems that this is a time to be in those back-and-forth feelings. Thankful, sad, blessed, bereft, hopeful, discouraged. No doubt, we are not alone with these thoughts.

As these feelings come and go, we do reflect on what God has been doing around us.

During 2023, our partner CIBG's (Convention of Baptist Churches in Guatemala) seminary, with CBM funding, provided practical theological courses in Q'eqchi for 56 "missionaries" who have been enthusiastically sharing the gospel but often have lacked a deep understanding of the Bible. Concurrently, the students have been receiving academic classes structured for mature students to allow them to finish their high school education at the same time (less than 20% have attended school past grade 6). This December, we attended their graduation where we met Victor, a young missionary from Coban. Alcoholism, divorce, lack of housing, lack of work, poverty (living on less than 2.25\$/day), extreme poverty (living on less than 1.25\$/day), and inequality are all significant issues facing communities like Coban. Victor loves working with youth and is using what he has been learning about how to read the Bible and better understand what is written. He is better prepared to lead others to Christ and to disciple others to love God and to love

your neighbour as yourself! He wants to help young people to live well in their families, to think of others and not just themselves. He is also committed to helping young people improve the economic situation of their families rather than taking on a risky escape of leaving the community or migrating north. God is at work through those willing to serve.

Our very musically gifted daughter shared this song with me which has touched me today. The words to *O Come, All You Unfaithful*, written by Sovereign Grace writers, Lisa Clow & Bob Kauflin:

*O come, all you unfaithful.
Come, know that you are not alone.
O come barren and waiting ones. Weary of praying, come.
See what your God has done.
Christ is born. Christ is born for you.
O come, bitter and broken. Come with fears unspoken.
Come, taste of His perfect love.
O come, guilty and hiding ones. There is no need to run.
See what your God has done.
Christ is born. Christ is born for you.
He is the Lamb who was given. Slain for our pardon.
His promise is peace for those who believe.
So come, though you have nothing. Come, He is the offering.
Come, see what your God has done. Christ is born for you.*

This Christmas may we all focus on our Living Saviour and the light, peace, joy, and hope that He wants each of us to experience in the midst of our reality today.

Thank you all for standing with us this year through your faithful giving and prayer.

Bendiciones

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