



We must be clever

Steve Vinton, December 2, 2007

I couldn't hardly get out of bed these last few days let alone think of traveling to the little village of Kimala with Godfrey. I already went with him once, and the roads are horrible and the hills are steep, and one of the few advantages of being as sick as I've been is that I had an excellent excuse for not making the trip with him. I jokingly told him that a clever man knows how to time his sicknesses! Well Godfrey made the trip yesterday and this morning I sent Josh out on the hill to find that spot where the wireless internet works and to download my emails and I was thrilled to read Godfrey's email with the news of Kimala.

Kimala is a special place. We only went there because of the almost urgent pleadings of a student at Tumaini (Hope) University in Iringa. Godfrey and I had spoken during the church service on campus one Sunday, and right after the service, she came rushing up and wanted to know what had to be done so that one day there might be a school for the children in her home village. The urgency in her voice has since been translated into hundreds of thousands of bricks and an incredible amount of stones and a determination that Ihongole Secondary School will soon open its doors in the village of Kimala ...

Mzee I am sorry to hear that you are still sick in bed. Maybe some good news will make you have happiness in your heart and heal your body also. Our trip to Kimala village was wonderful and Veronica and I were received with great joy. In every village people will always say with words that they need a school. But we will know truthfully if people need a school if they show us by their work that they believe in their own hearts that they need a school. If the need is not big enough so that they themselves will work, then the need is not a true need and they do not need a school. Well today Mzee I can tell you 100% that the people of Kimala need a school. I can say this because I have seen with my own eyes that they already have 11 huge brick kilns of bricks which are burnt and they have 103 tons of foundation stones. Mzee you remember the hills of Kimala so you know that no truck helped the people. They carried all of those stones on their heads up and over big hills. They showed me on their faces that they will do even more than this. This is only the beginning Mzee. What they said is that even if the nation got independence and freedom that we have not gotten yet freedom in our village and we will not have it until our children are educated like all other children.

We have only one problem Mzee. Their land is a very big problem. When we tried to fit in the plans for the school buildings on the land there was no way to make it fit. I had the meter tape and we did it together. Their faces all fell. I told them that we have only one official approved plan for a school because it is the only one that the Ministry of Education has approved and there is no other way. They tried to tell me that this was the best of all of the pieces of land in the village. I told them to show me all of the other places. We walked everywhere Mzee. They are right. They have given the best piece of land in the village. There is no other place to build. The problem is simply that there are no good pieces of land because the geography of Kimala village is all steep hills. I remember when your eyes almost came out of your head when we were driving up the one hill in June. So you know that I am not joking.

So what should we do?

Mzee I remember once when we were your students you explained to us the Gospel in this way: God has his laws with his perfect way. His laws are perfect. Very perfect. And we people fail at those laws. And therefore there is no way we can ever be near to God. We can try our best. We can work hard. But always we can only have failure. Because it is impossible to succeed. So the only thing left for us was punishment and death. Except that God loves us. So God decided to be clever. He decided to come and be punished and die himself

in place of us. So we could be free. So we could be with him always.

What I see is that VST has its perfect school map which is the perfect way which the Ministry of Education has approved. It is a perfect map. Very perfect. The Ministry has said it is wonderful. And the people of Kimala fail at that map. Therefore there is no way that they can ever get a school. They have tried every hard. They have worked very hard. But always failure. There is no piece of land in their village where we can fit the school map in. I tried with them. We failed together. So the only thing left for them is to not have a school. Except Mzee that we must love them enough to be clever just like God was clever. We can discover the way which they can not discover. We can change the map and argue on their behalf at the Ministry. If they go themselves no one will listen to them to change the map. But we can do it. So you rest your brain now. Get better with your health fast. When I get home to Madisi, we will play with the school map together and make a clever map that is special for Kimala village.

You always say that Jesus wants us to help the people Jesus calls “the least of these.” And your wife who is mother to us all spends so much time looking for those who are the least of the least. Of all of the villages that we have gone to in these past three years, Mzee I think that you will agree with me about this: the village of Kimala is the least of the least. Which is why we have to go so far to get to it. Yourself you said because it is far and the road is so bad it will cost two times as much money to build a school in Kimala as in any other village. But these people have also worked two times as hard Mzee In every village we have insisted that our law be followed. The law of the map of the school must be obeyed because it is the only map we have approved by the Ministry of Education. But for the village of Kimala it is my thought to say we must be clever.

One thing I know is that after we build the school we will never have to worry about any inspectors going all the way to that village to visit the school!

I pray you are better soon. Godfrey

I'm planning to save Godfrey's email. One day years from now after the classrooms are all built, the school is registered and hundreds of student are studying away, I see myself getting the opportunity of speaking in chapel at their school, pulling out of my pocket a copy of Godfrey's email and reading it slowly line by

line to them. And then helping their minds to understand not just why their school is build the way it is built, but why it is that God decided to send Jesus to live amongst us. Some chapels are better than others. That will be a really good one. I can't wait for that school to be built in the village of Kimala!