



You can't eat stones

Steve Vinton, April 24, 2008

Allow me my friends, to share with you the wonderful news that I got today from Godfrey from way down in the south of Tanzania near the Malawian border, from a little village called Longa ...

Mzee I saw a "marriage" in the events of today. I know many people pray to God to open up doors for this work we are doing. Paul told the Colossians to pray for open doors then, and I know you tell people everywhere to pray for open doors now. The prayers for open doors are on the left. I also know that many people are crying out to God because they are desperate. They want to go to school. They want their children to go to school. But all they know is that the doors are closed. So they can only cry to God. It is like when the Israelites were in Egypt. They cried out and God heard their cries of suffering and desperation. I believe God has now also heard the cries of people in the villages of Mkumbi, Mkalanga, Lugari and Longa. The prayers of those suffering are on the right. And so today I think God brought the prayers on the left and the prayers on the right together like a marriage. Today God answered the prayers of people who are desperate for schooling. Mzee I know what it was like for me in my life to cry out for some way that I could go to school so I know what this is for people. Today the doors are open for the children of these four villages for now, and for all years in the future. You would have been very happy to be in Longa today Mzee.

We met with the elders of the village first to explain everything. They read my letter I wrote to them in February but I thought we should talk about every line. When we came out of the meeting all the people saw we were smiling and so the people began to cheer and then to chant Ukombozi umefika Longa, Ukombozi umefika

Longa, Ukombozi umefika Longa (*salvation has come to Longa*). The Diwani made everyone be quiet. He read the agreement so everyone in the village would know what work they had to do. He doesn't want any person to say they are surprised. They will work for 4 months to make bricks and carry stones, and bring sand. That is their job. They are willing. Our job is to find good people who will help us with the metal roofing and the cement. Our job is to pray God will send us good teachers to live in the village so we can have an excellent school. We are willing. We read every line and explained every detail. Then the Diwani stood up and asked, "Should we sign?" And with a loud voice the whole village roared SIGN. And so the Diwani signed with great ceremony and everyone was so happy.

There was another time people were very happy. Someone asked if watu wazima (adults) could also come to school. Some people made fun of him because people know that it's not permitted in any schools. So people thought he was just asking a troublesome question for no reason. But I used what you said many times Mzee. "Everyone means everyone." And we want everyone to come to school. Rich. Poor. Boys. Girls. Those who parents are alive. Those whose parents are dead. Those who are married. Those who are single. And yes those who are young. And those who are old. They were so happy Mzee!

You always remind me Mzee to look for events we can use in future days to share the gospel. I think I see something good that we can share about Longa one day. Because here people said that "salvation" has come to their village. But this kind of "salvation" will come through so much work and so much sacrifice. The people of these villages will have to work so hard.

They will earn salvation for their village and for their children and their grandchildren. I think we can tell people how different this kind of salvation is from the salvation that God gives to us. When our “salvation” comes, it comes totally by grace and kindness from God who loves us so much. We don’t have to work for it. Not even a little. He gives it to us. We will use it one day in chapel to compare today when the elders said that “salvation” has come to their village and the day when a greater salvation will come to them.

I like what we are doing Mzee. You know that. But I still want to say it to you. Our job is the best job. Now that Jonathan’s heart is fixed, hurry back to us. I have so many things to share with you I cannot write them all. The people of Longa gave us a goat at the end of the meeting. We will kill it to be part of the welcome home feast when you are home with us in Tanzania. I don’t have a picture of the

goat but I have a picture of the first stones for Longa Secondary School. You can’t eat stones but I know the stones will make you happy.



Godfrey is right. The stones do indeed make me happy. The goat makes me happy. His whole letter makes me happy.