

Raise UP! **John 2: 13-22**

Destroy the Temple and in three days, I will raise it up!

Today's scripture reading is known as the "Cleansing of the Temple." When the Passover approached, Jesus went to the temple. "He found the Temple teeming with people selling cattle and sheep and doves. The loan sharks were also there in full strength." So what did he do? Jesus put together a whip out of strips of leather and chased them out of the Temple. He shouted, "Get your things out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a shopping mall!" What Jesus did was more than a mere prohibition of commercial activities in the temple. Jesus was turning the temple upside down, challenging the unjust temple system that benefited only small numbers of social elites. As we all know, any system can turn oppressive towards people for the benefit of small numbers of elites.

Of course, religious leaders didn't like it. When they asked, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up." "Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up." He refers to raising up a new temple in three days — something his disciples later remembered as a foretelling of his resurrection. This is the story of our faith. We believe in Jesus Christ who lived, has died and has risen. The primary gospel of our faith is a story of rising up from death. That rising can come to life in many forms today. Many Christians and churches rise up in new ways to be the body of Christ offered to the world.

Guatemala mission

During the last week, I visited a Guatemalan mission site. As many of you are aware, I love traveling. Over the years, I've had the opportunity to explore many places, learning about the diverse cultures that each region possesses. Yet, my recent journey to Guatemala proved to be unlike any other, as it challenged my preconceived notions and stretched the limits of my understanding.

[ppt] Anticipating Guatemala's location in Central America, I expected warm weather and mainly packed thin summer clothes. Juhee even told me to pack extra summer clothes because we would sweat a lot due to the heat. However, upon arriving at the mission center located in the highlands, we were greeted by chilly temperatures that brought frosty mornings. Moreover, unlike New England, where extreme cold is common, so all buildings are well equipped with heating systems, there was no heating facility in the mission center. Imagine that you are sleeping in a room without heat when outside temperatures reach 35 to 37 degrees. It was cold and I was only able to sleep with my winter coat on. Do you know the official language of Guatemala? It's Spanish. So I assumed that everyone could speak Spanish but there were many Mayan indigenous people who couldn't speak Spanish.

[ppt] Since Guatemala is an agricultural country, I expected fresh air. Unfortunately, when I woke up in the morning, the air in the valley was filled with smoke. Since there was no concept of garbage collection, plastic waste and household waste were burned, filling the air with the smell of burning garbage and car exhaust fumes. My common sense turned out to be not common here.

[ppt] Witnessing dental treatments conducted during mobile clinics broke my notion of common sense. When we go to the dentist, we want it to be clean, sanitary and private to some degree. You don't want to show yourself opening your mouth wide to other people. But the

mobile clinic took place outdoors so there were crowds of people all around. You could smell car exhaust and see big dogs sniffing around people. Of course, the luxury of privacy was nonexistent. But about 400 people came to seek medical assistance when the mobile clinic was available because many people don't have access to healthcare services. My common sense was not common here.

[ppt] Many people struggle to meet their basic needs for living. Ironically, people don't proactively work to improve their living situations. Missionary Rev. Luke Rhyee shared his struggle. He would like to help the indigenous people improve their living conditions, but he doesn't want them to be dependent on external assistance. He wants them to be self-reliant. Figuratively speaking, he would like to give them a fishing pole and teach them how to fish instead of giving them fish. Of course, it is not easy. For instance, he happened to meet a poor single mother with two children. She collected wood from some else's property and sold it for a living. But that barely met their needs, so Rev. Luke thought that if she raised chickens and sold the eggs, it would help her family a lot. So, he asked his friend to provide a small patch of land for free. He set up the chicken coop, bought chickens and chicken feed. All she needed to do was feed them and collect and sell the eggs. Despite being provided with the resources to raise chickens for income, she wasn't responsible. She didn't regularly feed the chicken or collect the eggs on time. She chose to neglect her responsibilities and squander the opportunity. Instead of seizing the chance for improvement, she turned to alcohol, forsaking the path to self-sufficiency.

The missionary said that most of the people here do not try to work proactively. They are afraid of being criticized or punished if they do something other than what is expected of them. The long history of Spanish colonization over indigenous people has left a deep wound on the souls of the Mayans.

God is still working there to raise up people.

Yet, God is still working to raise people up even in a place, where the lingering effects of colonialism and poverty seem to destroy human souls and bodies. God has continued God's work to restore the souls of people in that land through Rev. Luke and faithful people of God who pray and serve the people. Yes. God is still working there, to raise people up, helping them to remember who they are, a holy temple, a holy dwelling place of God.

One of the most memorable things during the missionary trip was the smile of a medical student. One of the ministries Rev. Luke carries out is a scholarship ministry. He started this ministry seven years ago. He didn't want to simply give money away, but put it to work meaningfully. So, when medical students were selected, they made a contract to participate in mentoring meetings and volunteering with the mobile clinic. As you can imagine, this means extra work for Rev. Luke, but this ongoing relationship with students can be transformative for them. [ppt] On the day of the mobile clinic, the Zion mission team prepared kimbaps as lunch for the volunteers. We woke up at 5:30 a.m. and rolled 55 kimbaps from various ingredients. When the medical students arrived a little early, they offered to help. While preparing kimbaps, I saw one student with a smile on her face. Do you know why? Upon seeing Rev. Luke entering the building, I was sure that no student would have smiled in that way, if they had just received money. Seeing her and the other student's smile was heartwarming. I could imagine how the missionary worked hard for these students as a supporter and a mentor. In the desert-like wasteland of Guatemala, love was being poured out, and small seeds were sprouting.

God is raising people up there through those who have been raised by the love of Christ! Asbury UMC has supported Healing Guatemala when the need was dire. Your prayers and

contributions are like the dew of love that nourishes the parched soil of Guatemala, and small seeds are growing there with your love. My beloved Asbury family, let us continue to raise others up as much as we can. That's what we are up to. Amen.