

God Is Still Working During a Global Shutdown

Last Sunday, a young preacher named Nickson Ngwira stood in front of his small congregation in the village of Mpamba, Malawi, and taught the people a song in their Chichewa language. Nobody knew the words because they were all new converts to Christianity.

They sang: “Palibe ofana naye ndi Yesu / Sazapezekanso.” It means: “There is no one like Jesus / There is no one like Him.”

Nickson, who is 32, moved to this village four weeks ago. His home church in Mzuzu, 20 miles away, could only afford to give him \$25 to help him plant the new Pentecostal Holiness congregation. But in a month Nickson has led 51 people to Jesus. He is now discipling them in spite of the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic.

“I came here to be a voice for Jesus to these people so they can become a part of the family of God,” Nickson told me. “The people are suffering so much because they don’t know Christ.”

Before the pandemic hit, this area near the shores of Lake Malawi was already suffering from family breakdown and a rise in AIDS infections. Many young people dropped out of school because they lack money for school fees. When COVID-19 hit, people began starving because they weren’t allowed to work.

Witchcraft is also a serious problem. Just this week Nickson had to meet with a woman who had previously been involved in sorcery. He had to cast a demon out of her.

I met Nickson four years ago during a trip to Mzuzu, where he was serving as a worship leader for his church. He went to Bible college in Kenya for two years and then sensed the call

to Mpamba. He is trusting God to meet his needs because the cost to rent a small room is more than he receives in support.

Last Sunday when he took up the offering in his new church, the total given was 680 Malawian kwacha. That's less than one U.S. dollar.

These challenges may seem overwhelming, but Nickson always has a smile on his face when he texts me photos from Malawi. And he probably doesn't even realize his church is growing faster than most churches in the world.

I love to hear testimonies from people like Nickson because they remind me the Holy Spirit is still working today—just as He did in the book of Acts—and that the challenges we are facing during this pandemic can't stop the spread of the gospel.

I meet so many Americans who are depressed because they listen to the mainstream media for hours each day. The constant barrage of negative news—about COVID-19 deaths, violent protests and constant bickering about politics—is triggering anxiety and causing insomnia. The media's dishonest manipulation of news is creating a mental health crisis that is more serious than the coronavirus itself.

Sometimes Christians are as guilty as secular journalists for creating a toxic atmosphere of negativity. I can't count how many times people have sent me emails and videos about the latest conspiracy theory, or a certain pastor's doom and gloom dreams or prophecies. It's no wonder some believers are throwing up their hands and saying they hope Jesus returns before 2020 ends.

I have a prediction. We will live through 2020. Life will go on. The pandemic will soon end, we will take our masks off, flights will resume, the global economy will start humming again, churches will reopen, and we will discover that even in the darkest days of 2020 God was at work.

The Bible is not a pessimistic book. It tells us that God loves us so much He sent Jesus to forgive sinners, overcome death and throw the devil into hell. It also tells us that Jesus gave us a global mission to take the message of salvation to every nation and that the Holy Spirit will empower us to finish that task.

That doesn't mean we won't struggle. We will face ups and downs, hardships, persecution and every other form of spiritual resistance. But nothing will stop God's work. The gospel will continue spreading in spite of pandemics, natural disasters, wars, political turmoil, financial collapse, Marxist movements, church scandals and dangerous heresies.

Jesus told us His kingdom is like a seed that grows so large it "becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches" (Matt. 13:32b, NASB). The growth may be slow. But no matter what the media says, nothing will stop this kingdom from increasing. No matter how dark it gets, the light will come. Open your eyes, and you'll see glimmers of hope everywhere. {eoa}