

**Children's Message and Sermon-- Partnering with God and His People  
based on Deut. 8: 7-18, Luke 17: 15-24, David Jahnke, 1/22/17**

*Reading from Deut.*

We just heard about the Israelites being brought out of slavery and into the promised land of God-- a land of great abundance. God warns them to be careful about not forgetting Him and their newfound blessings.

We too have been saved and brought into abundance and material blessing like the Israelites. So we have to remember God and His call to bless others.

This all has to do with my mission trip to Nicaragua. I want to show you some pictures of a place called Inhijambia which brings in children living on the streets of a big city in Nicaragua. Most of these children had either abandoned, kicked out of their home or had run away. And this woman in the middle started this organization 17 years ago to help them. We got to see them singing and dancing and making crafts. PICTURES 1 AND 2 And at the end I played my guitar and we sang with them as well.



This video is of a traditional Nicaraguan dance connected to making corn tortillas. Let's watch it. VIDEO

These girls asked about my house in America. PICTURE 3



They wanted to see pictures of it. A lot of kids asked about my car as well. And they were probably disappointed in my '97 Nissan! Anyway, these are basic things that we take for granted that they would love to have.

I asked one of the boys what you as American children should know about *their* lives or what they would like to teach you. And one of them said something striking. He said you should know that material blessings-- toys and games etc.-- are not everything; that it's nice to have cool things but there are more important things like love and support and kindness and guidance.

That was what he had gotten from this organization. So please remember what he said. Life's not about getting a good job so you can get rich and have cool stuff. It's about loving and helping...; that's what these kids needed and were so grateful for.

But life is also about hard work which I saw a ton of kids doing over their summer break-- helping in the market and at restaurants.

So in other words, we have got it pretty good here. So be grateful for your parents, your teachers, your church and all the good things in your life. And since we have all been so blessed, please study hard to get good work so that you can bless those who are less fortunate.

*Reading from Luke*

So with all the focus on America this inauguration weekend, I am going to say nothing about our great nation; and instead keep talking about my visit to another great nation whose people earn a dime for every dollar we earn. Teachers earn around \$300 or so a month. And yet the people have a joy and a vitality which often seems lacking in the developed world.

They live materially as people did in Jesus' day. And we just read about why they can be so content. The Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God would come, he said that the Kingdom was already within and among them-- within and among even the Pharisees who often opposed him. The same message came time and again to the poor, the outcast and the sinful as well.

The Kingdom of God-- its joy and peace is here already-- it is within and among-- it is an interior and relational thing; a state of mind and soul determined by how attentive and connected you are to the immaterial things of heaven. It's about your relationships with God and others. And I saw this over and over on my trip.

We started our trip at a less famous Rio Grande which was more a trickling stream than a Grand River. It is the dry season and farmers spoke of having to go a few kilometers with their horse to get to clean water.



donkey or  
a well with  
PICTURE 1

His family and about a hundred others, along with a school, will hopefully be blessed with a new water system if our group and our contacts can raise \$56,000 which will then be matched 2.5x by Rotary International for a total of \$200,000. Here are a couple of pictures taken recently of water sources for cleaning bodies and clothes. PICTURES 2 AND 3

We were part of ironing out the grant proposal and the logistics for this project which will be carried out by an agricultural development group called Fedicamp and which will be overseen by a Rotary group of young professionals in a small village who are doing so much good work. They even got a couple of bridges built, one of which you can see here. PICTURE 4



We were deeply blessed by one of the communities helped by Fedicamp. This woman with a withered hand taught us about their progress in the farming collective-- PICTURE 5



And then these girls danced for us. PICTURE 4



The youngest did a traditional dance in traditional dress and then she ran and jumped out of her dress and came back for a hip-hop dance. Hip-hop music and teenage clothes and even cell phones-- they wanted to connect to my son on Instagram-- all this in very poor rural Nicaragua!! We live in an amazing world with tremendous possibility.

But these two little ones spoke to the community's needs and struggles. The boy seemed to have a skin disease or infection of some kind and the girl does not yet speak at 2.5 years old.  
5 and then 6.

PICTURES



Her dad asked us to pray for her which we did at the end of our time together-- my first ever prayer in Spanish. But some in our group commented about how they hoped our prayers could be answered through medical attention. Amen!

After the dance, they provided *us* with a feast. They did all this for us and we had done nothing for them. The Kingdom is with them already. They were witnessing to us!! They had been blessed with cleaner water and better farming practices and they wanted to give thanks. And they also knew that through our fund-raising, some of their neighbors to the north would get cleaner water closer to their homes and in their children's school.

I was surprised by how little physical work we did on this trip. One reason is that the funding for the new women's shelter ran out so they had to take a break in construction. Your gifts and support along with another \$12,000 given by other churches will help them get going again. I will go more into their amazing work in the weeks ahead.

PICTURE 7



But I also was reminded that Christian mission is not about going and doing everything for others. There is an arrogance underlying this. And it is unreasonable as well. Our job is to make disciples or teach others about the things of God and give them the tools to do the work themselves.

That is what all these organizations are doing. I was blown away by the intelligence, compassion and sheer willpower of the leaders we met. It was all about teaching children and farmers and the poor how to better live into the abundance of God's Kingdom around and within them. And also providing some infrastructure and funding for that to be possible.

The Inijambia school that I spoke about with the children is a perfect example of this. The kids rise up from one phase in the program to the next, many of them eventually becoming “promoters” or youth mentors for the newcomers. We got to hear some of their stories. We learned how drug addiction and child prostitution can be a thing of the past for them as they get back into school and go to Inijambia afterward for fellowship, food and training.

I believe the same sort of discipleship and retraining is needed in our own nation. I really hope President Trump can bring industry and manufacturing jobs back but I have my doubts. If he cannot, we need to retrain people blue collar communities to move them into the new science, technology, information and service economies. This problem is so broad-- it is an ecclesiological and social matter as well as a political one.

On our last morning as we were having final reflections about our journey, the word initiative kept coming to me. These incredible leaders were always looking for the new thing to do which would bless those around them.

I too was called to take initiative on the trip-- asking questions and leading prayers and forcing conversations in a language I enjoy struggling with; engaging children day after day with smiles and small-talk which always ended with me saying God bless you to them.

I want to ask you all to take some initiative this year. What is the new and good thing God is calling you to? I was able to give the women’s shelter a check for over \$1000 through

and  
all of my  
contacts.



poking  
prodding  
e-mail

What is a heavenly cause you can get behind in the year ahead? Because your educational and moral training mean that you are now called to lead. FPC always has so many opportunities for you to bless people locally and internationally and we look forward to presenting more of this great work before and afterward in the year ahead.

*It is* going to be another banner year for mission at FPC. With a focus on the great things that can and will be done through each of us taking initiative, we won't have to be looking here or there for the Kingdom-- we will see it within and around us all.

Because initiative is how we return to the joy and peace mentioned at the beginning of the service; how we more clearly hear the Word and powerfully feel the Spirit of God. When I got on the plane coming back here, I got out my notebook and 90 minutes later my sermon was pretty much written. I had been in the mission field with His children. I had followed God's lead. So God's Word came to me like that! And His Spirit has once again re-energized my life and ministry. God will do the same for you as you follow his call into his mission field. So let's do it through the one who can do far more abundantly in us than all we can ask or imagine; to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations. And God's people say...

