If You See, If You Hear…

On June 3, Volcán de Fuego erupted. The devastation was immediate and immense. Bodies incinerated. Entire families wiped out. Heavy rains continue, leading to rivers of flowing volcanic ash and rock. Fields surrounding the eruption have been destroyed. Loss of crops, jobs, will be felt for years to come. And there are the displaced, homeless, and traumatized. All this, in a country whose citizens live in a state of chronic crisis each day, without an epic volcanic eruption.

There is so much pain, senseless violence, man or nature made, all around us. It is, at times, too much to absorb. And, then I read this by Cathy Hatch, the blogger on the Hartline team that was in Antigua when Fuego erupted. I hope it brings you comfort as it did me.

“We are all processing what has happened here in Guatemala since our arrival. Why has this happened? Why here? Why now? What are the implications for our lives?

Team Hartline has the unique honor of working alongside nurse Julie Workman who is from Sutherland Springs, TX. Julie and

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“The source of humility is the habit of realizing the presence of God.” - William Temple

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her family are members of the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs, which was the site of a mass shooting seven months ago where 26 people died and 22 others wounded. Julie and her sons were among the wounded.

Monday, we heard three statements that God says to us through the scripture: 1) I have seen, 2) I have heard, and 3) I know. Pastor framed these statements in the context of the Mark 4 story where Jesus told his disciples, “We are going to the other side [of the lake].” They got in a boat and started across when a storm threatened their safety. The disciples looked for Jesus and found he was asleep and seemingly unaware of their peril. They woke him up and asked this question, which is one that we often ask as well: “Jesus, don’t you care?”

God, if you see, if you hear, if you know, then why has this happened? Don’t you care? Pastor invited Julie to tell us her story. We were moved to hear her tell what happened in her church that Sunday morning in November….I can’t retell Julie’s full story here, but I want to focus on Julie’s witness and faith. Julie has no doubt that God was there in the church with her that day. She told us that she saw a cloud rise from the church as the shooting ended. She is sure the cloud was the souls of those who died being escorted to heaven.

So here we are today in Antigua. The television news coverage is devoted to the rescue efforts underway only a few miles from us. The devastation is unimaginable. Bodies are not identifiable due to the heat of the explosion. There are Facebook feeds of babies and young children who have been found with no living adult to claim them. Their photos are posted with the question, do you know this child?

God, if you see, if you hear, if you know....don’t you care? For this blogger, the answer comes to me as a still small voice which says, “Cathy, if you see and if you care, then I see, and I care.” We sang in chapel yesterday the hymn, “Here I am Lord. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.”

Today we hold the people in Guatemala in our hearts. Those who are at the Obras for surgery we also hold in our hands. We are the hands and feet of Jesus in this place, at this time—his perfect kairos time, for it is in this time that he makes all things beautiful.” — Cathy Hatch, June 6, 2018

*Thank you to all who contributed to relief efforts. Thank you for holding the people of Guatemala in your hearts and in your prayers every day, not only during this particular time of trouble.*
Thank you for seeing, for caring, for offering yourself, asking God to lead you, and for holding God’s people, all of God’s people, in your heart.

Rev. Linda L. McCarty
President & CEO

PS We will continue to coordinate efforts to care for those affected by the eruption in the weeks and months to come.

As Dr. Phil Johnson put it, we are here for the long haul. Therefore, since the eruption, we have provided supplies, medicines, immediately, of course. But, we are currently planning for the “long haul,” strategically assessing needs as international relief efforts begin to wane.

USAID and the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala have contacted us to coordinate efforts.

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