

Faith In Practice

Life Changing Medical Mission



Hearts Stirring Within Us

I have called you by name and you are mine. Isaiah 43:1

This is the scripture that came to mind when I was speaking with Bob and Marilyn Ewing, preparing to write an article about their 100 trips with Faith In Practice. Within the first few seconds of conversation, however, it became apparent that this 'interview' had much to teach me, to remind me of, and to ground me. Which is why, I believe, this, of all scriptures, came to mind.

I have called you by name.... In Hebrew, the word Name holds much more than what appears on your driver's license or passport. In Hebrew, your name means your essence. The essence of *you*. So, in the scripture, God is calling and claiming the true you. Not your role, or title, or appearance. Not your successes or failures by which many define or name you. But rather, the true 'you' that no one else can see. The 'you' you yourself, at times, have trouble seeing through all of your other 'names'.

In Bob and Marilyn's faces, it was this essence that glowed as they spoke of the mission. It was as if I could only truly see them when they had completely forgotten themselves. I could see their essence when they spoke with deep and humble gratitude for the ways in which this mission had blessed them, gifted them, changed them. It was only when they lost themselves in the memories that I could find them, glimpse their true selves. Their true hearts.

As I listened, I was also reminded of Mark Woolf, one of our board members and team leaders. Mark is always saying, 'Less me, more Jesus', to paraphrase St. Paul. Mark Woolf, so humble, so busy forgetting himself, that in some way he becomes *more* himself, *more* present, *more* vulnerable to others in his 'forgetting of self'. And it is because of this 'forgetting' that we can see his 'essence', his true heart, so very clearly. The Mark that God calls by name and to whom God whispers, 'You are mine'.

What are our true 'names'? Our true essence? Are we a core constant that is buffeted and formed by the world and our experiences across a lifetime yet remain the same or are we ever changing, evolving, becoming? Are we both?

In a world that is constantly telling us to pull in, to be afraid, to self-protect, it might be easy to opt for 'the true constant' version. The version that says we must close in, and close off, to ensure that the world does not change us, hurt us. I see it in our churches. Church becoming a refuge, a place of escape from the challenges 'out there' rather than a place to be challenged so that we might go out and meet him in the world he loves so much. With all the fear that understandably exists and yet is also being whipped up into a mad froth through the news, we are forgetting at times, I believe, that we are called to follow the One who is always telling us to risk our hearts, to let those hearts be broken, to allow ourselves to be changed, for love. Called by name to follow the One who sacrificed his life for love. The One who asks us to do the same.

But the longer I am privileged to see this mission up close, the more clearly I see that he is not asking us to sacrifice our lives for his name's sake. Rather, he is showing us the way to true life. What at first might seem like the sacrifice of our lives is his gift to us. The One who tells us, shows us, that the only way to find our lives is by losing them. The only way to find our true name, our essence that is so deeply hidden inside us, is to place ourselves in circumstances that tear down the walls that we have constructed around our hearts. And when we do, then the truth is allowed to emerge. And, others can see our true hearts, our true selves. And, somehow when we allow others to see our true hearts, we can see them too.

I have seen in time and time again through this mission. Friendships forged, lives changed through this mission, because somehow through it, we can see each other's hearts. We can see each other's true selves, our best selves because of this mission.

That has been God's greatest gift to me through Faith In Practice. I have been privileged to witness the wonder in others' eyes and to glimpse their true selves, their expansive and open hearts. Hearts that are offered to be broken and therein find healing. And, because they have - - because you have - - allowed me to see your hearts, I have been able to feel my own heart stir. A sense of my best self-straining to meet the best selves I see in you. And, when I do, I know myself to be called by name and to hear the words, "You are mine."

You have heard me say it time and time again. This is not a medical mission. It is God gathering us together as community to witness, and to witness to, God's love and healing work in the world. We simply happen to do it *through* medical mission.

I know you feel the same. And, as you come to the end of my musings, I hope that you will take a moment to wander through the memories of how this mission has changed you. How you have seen others' hearts through this mission and somehow, miraculously found your own heart stirring within you. Open to hearing the voice that forever tells you: ***I have called you by name and you are mine.***

In gratitude for your witness to me across the years, you, who have allowed me to see your true hearts and made me better and blessed for it,

Rev. Linda L. McCarty
President & CEO



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