

## Haiti Presentation – Echo Hill Presbyterian Church

### *Matthew 5:1-10*

- Overview of Visiting Orphans including mission statement and purpose of trip.
- One of the great privileges of the trip was listening to people's stories.
- Through my time at the hospital, I've come to appreciate how everyone has a story and how important for people to share their experiences and the plot of their individual story.
- Interestingly, people in Haiti didn't share earthquake stories with each other because they felt their stories were the same - as a result, few people had time to listen.
- So I found myself asking children and adults to describe the day the earth came alive.

### *Blessed are the meek*

- Jesus shared the beatitudes to a large crowd on a hillside who would have related to the people of Haiti. They were poor peasants, oppressed by the almighty Roman government and without power. In short – they understood what it is to be meek.

### *Young Boy*

- The orphans of Haiti are without power too. They have no voice, no say, no one to advocate for them. The orphans of Haiti also know what it is to be meek.

### *Sightless Boy*

- But just because they were without power, didn't mean they were without hope.
- The boy little boy was born without sight.
- Yet he had goal of being a drummer in a rock band, and paid in chocolate.
- For many of us, and for me, it would be easy to let earthquake shatter dreams
- But this boy believed in the power of God to be the divine advocate on his behalf.
- He may be meek and he may be without sight - but in God he is strong.
- He may not have sight, but he has vision!

### *Children Together*

- And these meek children of God will claim their inheritance too – all the earth will be theirs one day!

### *Blessed are the poor*

- By every measurable standard Haiti is poor. Some have claimed it to be the second poorest nation on earth.
- Brief description of tent cities.

- We measure poverty by financial and material wealth; having a job, a car, or a home.
- Haitians define wealth differently. As Jesus said, “don’t worry about tomorrow – God provides for the sparrows and the birds and God will provide for you. Even if it means living in a wheelbarrow.
- Haitians define rich or poor in terms of life and spirit.
- What moved me is that the spirits and souls of the people of Haiti are anything but poor.
- Materially, they have nothing.
- Yet, if you ask them, they are rich because they are alive!
- Over and over again I heard the Haitian mantra – Live for today, plan for tomorrow!

*Blessed are those who mourn*

- The tears dripping from the face say it all. Haiti is a country in mourning.
- More than 300,000 people have died from the earthquake and quake related illnesses.
- The piles of rubble in Port of Prince look like a war zone.
- I’m still haunted by the words of a boy whose entire family was killed in the earthquake – and who now lives in a tent camp.
- Like I mentioned before, most of the children and adults didn’t talk about their own personal tragedy because they figured that everyone had a similar story.
- But I when had a chance to talk to him (through our translator) he said with tears in his eyes, “I also feel like I died.”
- And tears dripped from my eyes when he told me that despite all the pain, he was happy in knowing his family was with God.
- Jesus has a special promise for those who hurt the most. They will be comforted.
- And even in the midst of horrific pain, and eyes that have witnessed far too much, the children found comfort in their community. They may have lost all those close to them.
- Most of us would withdraw. We’d be frightened to forge new relationships because we never know when we might lose them too – and that would simply hurt too much.
- But these children trusted a Jesus who offers comfort in community. They may have lost a family. So they do an even more courageous thing. They dare to invite you to become part of their new family.

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst*

- This is the kitchen of an orphanage where they prepare the lunches for school, usually consisting of beans and rice. It certainly doesn’t look the kitchens in our homes.
- But I was inspired by the attitude of the children. They were honestly thankful.
- The children were grateful for food; they gave gratitude to God for feeding them.
- They all waited until each one was served.
- Even though was meal was routine, and it wasn’t much, they waited for grace before they began to eat.
- It was odd. The children came hungry to the meal and were filled.

- Thinking of my refrigerator and pantry, I came full – and at the end of the meal I found myself hungering and thirsting for the trust in God that these school-children displayed.

*Blessed are the merciful*

- Kids always came up, opened their arms, and invited us in.
- Many of children had lost the only community they had ever had, but unlike many of us, were open to seeking love from someone else, even a stranger.
- The kids were happy to play, even for the short time we were able to be with them.
- You know, mowing the lawn isn't my favorite activity as our yard is pretty good size.
- But after watching the joy of children – playing and laughing and singing under a tarp – I now have a different perspective.
- Because at least I have a yard to mow, which means I have a house, and it means I have a mower, and it means I have the gasoline to run the mower.
- These children have nothing – at least materially – and yet they are so joyful!

*Blessed are the pure in heart*

- Look at that trust – little pure eyes, that have witnessed so much pain . . .

*For they shall see God*

- Worship and faith are central to Haitian life. As Jesus pointed out when he first delivered these words – it's easier to accept God's grace when you have nothing left.
- When you have no money, no goods, no pride, no status, no home, or family – then you have nothing left to cling to – except for the God who loves and clings to you.

*For they shall see God*

- At the hospital people are always questioning God.
- How could God do this? Where is God?
- But here people were thankful. Yes, they were sad that people had died – but the gratitude for the even the small blessings of life was moving and inspiring.

*For they shall see God*

- In the smiles and optimistic spirit of the people of Haiti, I was inspired.
- In them, I saw God . . .

*For they shall see God*

- So I challenge you now to take your connection cards – and write where you've seen and experienced God . . . Amen.