

# Living Hope Bible Church Philippines Missions Trip Report

## *Team Testimonies*

June 20<sup>th</sup> – July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014



### **Smiling Faces in the Philippines – Vicki Miyatake**

I have only been away from the Philippines a few days now, but faces of the people are still very vivid in my mind. Faces with huge smiles and welcoming arms, not just the ones we knew, but even people we never met, opened their arms and doors to us. The many who had nothing to offer us, but a warm smile and time to listen. Everywhere we went was the same, floodways, prisons, garbage dumps, churches, and birthing centers, all were so welcoming and loving.

The people living and serving there, Robbie, Deanna Nichols and their children, pastors and helpers, they have a hard life in the Philippines, but stay because they want these loving people to come to know the Lord.

Don't get me wrong it was one of the hardest missions trips I was on, but I would definitely go back again to share God's love and word.

### Visiting Smokey Mountain – Andrew Chang

I will never forget the day we went to Smokey Mountain, a "mountain" made by years of garbage landfill. We met Pastor Ramilo at his church just right outside the "city" that survives from Manila's garbage. His small church is next to a river flowing with garbage and sewage. He grew up as a street kid, stealing to survive. Later he was able to do well in business but was living in immorality. He became a Christian through his wife, and God called him into full time ministry serving among the poorest in Manila. When funds are available, he is involved in weekly feedings to children in areas around and on top of Smokey Mountain. LHBC provided the funds for the feeding that day.

As we got near the area, the stench was indescribable, despite the peppermint oil we applied on our clothes. We made our way through houses partitioned by cardboard and trash. The path was outlined by trampled garbage, but we were careful not to step on mud, sewage, and feces. People were busy organizing garbage into piles of plastic bags, bottles, tires, etc. Kids were cleaning and stacking various plastic condiment containers from fast food joints using their fingers. Some boys were cleaning and sorting eaten chicken bones (Filipinos love fried chicken) into neat piles. One boy found some bits of meat on one and placed them in his mouth. The kids sell these bones for people to cook. The kids surprisingly looked happy to see us, waving and shouting. As I was handing out candies, I was ashamed to admit I did not want to touch the hands of these children.



We hiked up to top of the landfill mountain, surprised to see people living in shacks. Apparently some 30,000 people used to live there, but due to negative international publicity, the government built nearby public housing and moved people out in the early 90's. But people are starting to return. We reached Pastor Ramilo's "church"- a small open shack. Soon, close to 100 dirty and disheveled kids gathered, many without shoes. There, Pastor Ramilo led singing, and David shared the gospel via "magic" tricks. Each child was given rice with egg. I admired the courage of some from our team that were able to hug and hold some of these kids. Those that graduated middle school were given backpacks before we left.

Later on as we were having dinner at a buffet restaurant in a mall that would put Bellevue Square to shame, I had trouble eating and stuffing myself. Smokey Mountain was a world away but only some 9 miles in distance. As I reflected on the despair of the place, I was encouraged by the love of God displayed by people like Pastor Ramilo. He is my hero, like other men and women I have met on this trip that live out the gospel by giving themselves fully to the work of the Lord. Am I able to follow the example of these faithful men and women? Do I love Him more than what I am holding on to in order to bring the message of hope and love? The next time I have a nice meal at a restaurant, will I be bothered by the spiritual poverty around me? I pray that my heart continues to be broken with the things that break the heart of God.

### **A Heart-Breaking Contrast – Matthew Chang**

What stuck out to me most in the Philippines was the rift between the extravagantly wealthy and the desperately poor. You could literally walk through a slum and then drive an hour to a massive supermall and shop for \$800 designer-brand purses. I experienced this first-hand one day, when a group of couples from the Higher Rock church generously treated us to dinner at a fancy buffet restaurant. As I wandered around filling my plate with all kinds of delicacies, I suddenly realized how ironic this was. Only a few short hours before, our team had been ministering to the people of the Floodway slums, where barefoot children ran through streets lined with garbage and filth, and where many lived in houses made of cardboard and tin. Yet here I stood, dining at a fine buffet while other kids went hungry in the Floodway. I recall how guilty I felt at having such opportunity that eludes the poverty-stricken portions of our world, and even now I still struggle with that issue. However, God used this experience to instill a greater sense of gratefulness for what He, in His sovereignty and goodness, has blessed me with. Thank you for all your prayers and support!

### **Perspective of an Older Mission Member – Don Chin**

Acts 1:8 – “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses.” This is a powerful statement when we were able to go out to share the gospel for our Lord. This trip to the Philippines was a very rewarding in sharing the gospels, our testimonies and to do a vacation Bible study with around 75 young kids.

Our first Sunday in Manila was to attend the Higher Rock Church, Doug Nichols’ home church in the Philippines. Pastor Joe gave the sermon that morning. The people were like Living Hope Bible’s church congregation, loving and caring to welcome us.

Due to the heat and humidity I soon learned that I was restricted in some of the activities that the younger members were able to perform, during the VBS, but still able to go door to door during the first four days at the floodway area, where the squatters were living around the church on block 54, where Pastor Bong was the pastor and the Redemptio Christian School, started by Robbie Nichols.

As I watched our young mission’s team doing the songs and doing the various classes of VBS, I saw the love and compassion they had for the children of the area. The team involved various ages, from teens to seniors. The entire team showed this great love and wanting to share the gospels to being able to bring the good news to all. As they share our experiences over the next few days and weeks, you will see the great experience we all had in serving our Lord.

From VBS to prison ministry to visiting the birthing clinic and some free time, we all had an experience that will be with us for the rest of our lives, knowing that we were able to share His Words.

Matthew 5:16 – “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

### What God Has Taught Me – Daniel Mar

It's safe to say that each of us on the Philippines team was deeply affected by what we experienced during our two weeks there. We saw poverty at a level that none of us had ever experienced; we felt the great spiritual darkness brought on by the pervasive influence of Catholicism and other false religions; and we got a taste of some of the amazing ministries that seek to break the hold of that darkness. Through all these experiences, I want to share a couple of observations that have especially impacted me.



First, I am thankful that God allowed me to experience extreme poverty close-up, because it reminds me of how much God has shown His love to His children. As several of the team members have observed, from God's perspective, we were all living in the garbage dump of sin and worldly values. Despite our destitute condition, we lived in rebellion against God and His ways. As heartbreaking as it was for us to see families living and scavenging for food in the Manila garbage dump, it must have been so much more heartbreaking for God to see people, made in His image, rejecting Him in exchange for a meager life on earth and an eternity separated from Him. And yet God sent Jesus to live among us in this garbage dump and rescue us for adoption as His own, to live in heavenly mansions with Him! As strange as it must sound, my experience at the garbage dump has led me to a deeper appreciation for who God is and greater worship of Him.

Second, I see a great need for churches such as ours to partner with ministries in the Philippines. During our time in Manila, we were encouraged to see local believers having a heart to reach out to the poor with the gospel. However, this is a very grueling task. It involves caring for both physical needs – through feeding programs, school classes, and vocational training – and spiritual needs – through door-to-door sharing, church services, Bible studies, VBS, and mentorships. Additionally, they are often working in areas where not many others would seek to serve, such as in the floodway and the garbage dump, or among the street kids. While God can give the local believers the endurance and insight to accomplish His work, I believe He also calls many believers outside the Philippines who have great resources to partner with them and be an encouragement to them. How can we help? There are many options! We can pray. We can give financially toward local ministries. We can donate useful items such as school supplies, laptops, and solid theological resources, as our church has done before. We can return to the Philippines for short-term or long-term ministry alongside them. In whatever way that God leads you to serve, I pray that you will think about how He might use you for His work in the Philippines.

While God calls all of us to serve Him wherever we are in life, I am grateful that He has also given me experiences through this trip that have expanded my view of Him and what He is doing in the world. I hope that, by sharing these experiences, I have encouraged you to reflect on God's goodness, gain a bigger view of His work around the world, and consider what your role might be in world missions.

### **An Illustration of Christ's Love – Shirley Chang**

I always liked book illustrations. They help me visualize what the author has in mind, to imagine what it's like to be there. During my time in the Philippines, God helped me understand Him and His truth better through human illustrations.

Picture this. Hundreds of hungry children lined up waiting for food under a brutal sun. Waiting anxiously for a fried egg, some rice, and hopefully a hot cake. Children with hungry eyes and dirty hands crowded around us, waiting for their only decent meal in days. They smiled shyly when asked about their names and ages. They loved high-fives, delighted in this simple touch of humanity. As I looked around, I understood a little better how Jesus felt when He saw the multitudes. Matthew 9:36 says, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

Some kids in the Smokey Mountain area were very dirty. I am ashamed to say I didn't really want to touch their filthy hands, greasy and slimy from the garbage food they had been digging. I tried to avoid the kids with severe pinkeye, always ready to pull out my hand-sanitizer. When asked to wash their hands, I hesitated. Yet the Lord so gently reminded me of John 13, when Jesus, the King of glory, washed the disciples' feet, with such love and compassion. And I became humbled. John 13:34 says, "A new commandment I give to you...just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."

I had never been to a prison and was apprehensive about the visit to New Bibliid Prison. Smiling, sincere faces greeted us at the gate and put me at ease. I wish you could hear how they sung praises to the Lord. Such powerful singing, declaring Jesus was the reason they sung, the reason that they lived. Beautiful voices from prisoners who lost their physical freedom, yet gained true freedom in Christ. They were alcoholics, drug addicts, even murderers, yet those identities have faded. They are now redeemed, greatly loved, children of the almighty God. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

One of the many blessings of this trip was to meet modern day heroes of the faith. These missionaries and ministers gave up good incomes and jobs, left their loved ones, and chose to serve the poorest of the poor in Manila or remote tribal areas. Their testimonies both encouraged and challenged me. If a street kid invited me over for a meal, would I eat the leftover chicken from his garbage bag? This is what missionary Raffy Sison did, when he was asked to share a meal with some street kids he tried to reach out to. This act of love softened those rebellious kids' hearts. As they put it, "You showed us Jesus." I was reminded again how the King of the Universe came to dwell among sinful men and to die for our sins.

John 1:14 – "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

2 Corinthians 8:9 – "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich."

### My Five Loaves and Two Fish – Amanda Chang

I am the boy with the five loaves and two fish, my efforts meager, my contributions few. Yet, even in my weakness, God accepted my humble offerings and transformed them into something beautiful. Truly, I am living proof that in our weakest moments, He is strongest. Though I had little to give, He used me, even me, for His kingdom.

God taught me joy. During this trip, the Filipino climate, the crazy traffic, the strange foods, and the toilets that we manually flushed with a bucket, joy wasn't easy. There were days when I told God I couldn't do it. I couldn't find joy within my tired self, and I needed Him to teach me to rejoice in Him once again. And He did. When I was weak, grumpy and irritable and tired, He gave me joy. Not only that, but He showed me joy among the kids at Floodway or the children living among the largest garbage dump in Manila. He showed me the joy of the pastors as they sacrificially served God and the joy of my team as they worked together. And as I saw the joy of others amid poverty and hardship and stress, God used those moments to teach me that joy comes not from emotions or circumstances, but from recognizing and rejoicing in the love of our Heavenly Father.

God taught me love. On top of Smokey Mountain, there was a little boy, stripped from the waist down, grimy and sticky and covered in dirt, reaching out to be carried. I hesitated. Could I love him? Could I reach out and hold him in my arms? Or could I let a child sit in my lap with white flecks in her hair and eyes red with pinkeye? In those moments, God rebuked my own selfishness as I thought of what Christ would have done. He would have held them. After all, He loved them enough to die for them, and as His hands and feet, how could I not do the same?

God also taught me sacrifice. When I think of sacrifice now, I think of the many pastors and workers I've met. Men who picked up a chicken bone from a trash heap and ate because they loved the people they served enough to live like them. Couples who abandoned wealth and success to shepherd a church near Manila's largest garbage dump. Families who left the Western world to seek and save the lost. Now I know what sacrifice is. Christ gave up His life for us, and these giants of the faith understood they are called to do the same.



And so here I am, back home, holding out my feeble offering once again. Recognizing that God multiplied my loaves and fish during this trip and sitting in awe of what He has done and is doing in Manila. Realizing that this team and the many missionaries and pastors we encountered are just living examples of how Christ takes our meager offerings, our five loaves and two fish, and multiplies and blesses our efforts for His glory.

## Reflections on God's Work in the Philippines: Joe Lum

“Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” (James 1:27) While I've seen poverty in the world in many developing countries, what the Lord showed us was particularly heartbreaking when we visited the garbage dumps of Manila. Thousands of people live and scavenge the trash for food and materials to sell. The sights were unbelievable. I could not stand by and watch children pick through bags of trash from Kentucky Fried Chicken for uneaten leftovers. When we prepared the food to feed the street children, hundreds of them came with a bowl in hand. I was monitoring the lines of kids when we ran out of egg and rice to feed them. They then had to line up for just one pancake. The team had to leave the feeding early and I wondered to myself whether or not some of those children, especially the young ones, would get any food at all. “Lord, what will happen to them?” The pastor who ministered among the poor was himself a former street kid. As a child, he stood in the food lines when the Salvation Army did their feedings and stole food from the market. I thought, “Perhaps one of these children we are feeding will someday be a pastor too...”



As great as their physical needs were, their spiritual hunger and needs were far greater. When going door-to-door in the US, we might be blessed if one person lets us in to share the gospel. In the slums, many people we visited listened carefully as we shared the Good News of the gospel with many of them praying to receive Christ as their Lord & savior! God was so very gracious as their spiritual treasure is far greater than this life has to offer.



The all-day pastor's conference I taught was on two subjects: The Prosperity Gospel & Biblical Counseling. Two subjects I could not adequately cover in a day, but the need was so great. The prosperity gospel has made inroads among the people and the pastors there. One pastor ministering among the poor was told by peers, “Perhaps you are poor because you do not have enough faith.” Similar false sentiments are not uncommon in the Philippines as false teachers have influenced many Christians.

I am grateful to the Lord for what He has shown us and strengthened us to do. The team was a wonderful team with each and every person working hard for the Lord. God was gracious to our team, protecting, providing, and blessings us in many ways. With the prayers and gifts of many, we were able to feed and share the gospel to hundreds of people with many people coming to Christ. Thank you to all who supported us. May our hearts break with the things that break the heart of our God.



### **A Deeper Appreciation for the Gospel – Jessica Yamashita**

About halfway through our time in the Philippines, we took a day to partner with a local pastor, Pastor Ramilo, to help feed children in garbage dump communities. The people who live there live lives that revolve around garbage—earning their living by sorting it, building their houses out of it and on top of it, and raising their children amongst it. The children run over the cluttered streets of garbage and play in the cast off filth of society. While we were there, children were even pulling chicken bones out of the piles and eating what little meat remained on them.

The children themselves were mottled with dirt. Some had crusty noses and eyes weeping with infection. Some had lice. They came to us, stretching out cracked bowls (or make-shift bowls) to receive a portion of food that might fill them for a time. But we knew they would be hungry again. We knew a little rice and egg wouldn't solve their poverty or heal their bodies.

Still, though, the message we told them about a wonderful Savior who came to die to conquer sin and purify a people for Himself, to bring a sure hope and life everlasting, is powerful. My acute awareness of our inability to alleviate their physical burdens drove home all the more how hope-filled and good the Gospel really is. Through Jesus's redeeming work, these people could know a richness and satisfaction of their souls that they might never be able to know physically.

For me, as we came away from that day, the Gospel felt incredibly fresh to me as well. I felt like I could understand a little better the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice and the foulness that He saved us out of. Certainly, I had not been unfamiliar with the idea of our sins being "like garbage" to God, but I had never experienced garbage before like we did in the Philippines.

Just a day in the dumps of Manila was difficult for us. We were exhausted and dirty. We so looked forward to a tasty meal, a good shower, and a clean bed at the end of the day. But Jesus left the absolutely pristine paradise of Heaven to not just visit, but to  *dwell*  among us, a dirty, sinful people, a people stained by sin, who have polluted our world with it, who wallow in it, and whose lives revolve around it. He lived among us, maintaining His own purity, for a long 33 years! In Manila, we had reservations about embracing the half-clothed, dirty, sick children. But Jesus embraced us in our putrid state whole-heartedly, even knowing that it would cost Him His life. And I'm sure that we, in our sin, were less lovable than these children in their physical dirtiness. But Jesus saw our hunger; He saw our hopelessness; He saw our need. He saw, and He had compassion. Then, He took the filth of the world on Himself, dying so that we might be free from our unhealthy, unfulfilling, death-bound, garbage-centered life. He did it so that we might have a permanent home, a glorious future to look forward to, real food that satisfies, and everything we need according to His great riches.

What a loving and merciful God we serve! That He would pursue us, filthy and dirty as we are, at such a great cost to Himself; that He would pluck us out of the refuse and adopt us into the Family of Heaven, uniting us to Him! Too often, these truths seem less incredible to me than they should. But I look forward to the time when we are finally Home and when we can more fully understand the depth of who God is and what He has done. Then we will worship with overflowing hearts. I look forward to that pure worship alongside brothers and sisters from all tribes and nations, people with different backgrounds, different stories, all united under an inexpressibly good God.

### God's Provision in the Philippines – Erin Chin

It was such a blessing to be able to see how the Lord is working in the Philippines. From the very start of the trip, one passage that always came to mind was Philippians 4:6-7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." With my type A personality and need to be in control, I had to let my worries go and rely upon God during the trip.

When we were in the Floodway area, we had the opportunity to go door to door to share the gospel. While doing this, I was definitely pushed out of my comfort zone. However, this is where the Lord taught me the most. It was amazing to see how open the people were to hear the gospel. Almost every family invited us into their home when we offered to pray for them. Just by being from America, the people were willing to listen to what we had to say. On the last day of going door to door, the interpreter for my group was a young lady named Mahvik. She was a recent college graduate who had accepted the Lord as a young child during a vacation Bible school. During our time together, we got to share the gospel with people that lived on her block. The experience that impacted me the most was being able to go into her home and share the gospel with her mother. After talking with Mahvik, she shared how it is the hardest to share the gospel with her own family. It caused me to think about my own family and friends who don't know the Lord. I was so willing and focused on sharing the gospel with someone I just met, yet back home I have allowed many opportunities to pass me by.

One amazing sound to hear was the kids singing praises to the Lord. To hear the children shout the words "one way Jesus" is a memory I will never forget. At times you could not even hear yourself singing, the kids were so loud. The kids were so hungry to hear about Jesus. Their thankful attitude was such an encouragement. It reminded me how easily we can get caught up in worldly things and forget that it is our relationship with the Lord that truly matters. Just as Mahvik heard and accepted Jesus Christ from attending a vacation Bible school, I pray that we were able to plant many seeds, and the kids would come to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.



(L-R) Mahvik, her mom, and her sister

### The Best Years of Their Lives – David Miyatake

VBS, prison ministry, feeding children at the garbage dump, during these long tiring days we would come back to our base at New Tribes Mission House for dinner. It was during these meals that I met some true servants of God. New Tribes missionaries were at the mission house for a short stay, either returning to the field (usually a remote area in the Philippines) or coming off the field to return home for furlough. During meal time we had an opportunity to sit and listen to some incredible



stories. One couple I met were typical of most there, in their early 20's they entered the mission field and spent 34 years with a small tribe learning their tribal language, creating a written language for them, then translating the New Testament into their new written language. They told me it took 5 years before they converted their first person to Christianity. After all their years of hard work many in the tribe are now Christians and the couple's focus now is to let the locals share the Gospel while they teach and help new converts grow in Christ. The sacrifices these and many other have made, giving up so



many years of their lives, raising their children in the jungle, sickness, disease, comforts of home, all so that people they don't even know may hear the Good News.

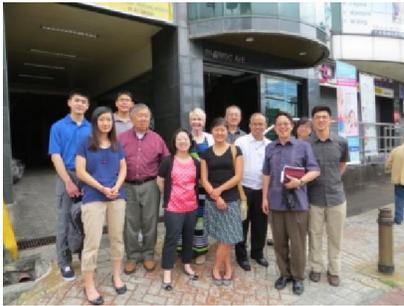
“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt. 6:19-21)



## Fields White with Harvest – Cristina Yee

The 10 days of mission work in the Philippines have been a rewarding and life changing experience that I will never forget. The opportunity to see other fellow believers' sacrificial service, commitment, hard work and love for the Lord will last me a life-time. Coming alongside and serving together with the local churches, hearing their testimony of faith, seeing their labor of love and hearing God's provision for their ministry was very humbling and a great encouragement.

1 Timothy 1:12 says, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me,



because He considered me faithful, putting me into service." Our two weeks of ministry could not have gone well without God's strength and grace upon our team. Daily team devotions and prayer was a great reminder to trust in the Lord and acknowledge that it is God who is doing the work and not us. It was awesome to get involve and visit the various ministries in Manila (Door-to-door outreach, VBS, Prison Ministry, Feeding Program, Smokey Mountain Garbage Dump, Sison's Boys Home,

School for special needs kids and Christian Birthing Center). It was great to see how God is working in the Philippines. It was an awesome opportunity and blessing to minister in Philippine's poorest of the poor community, share the love of Christ, and bring hope to the local Filipino children and adults.

Luke 10:2 says, "And He was saying to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest'." The mission field in the Philippines is tremendous and the work is far from finish. So many children and adults are not only physically starving but also spiritually starving. Although they have the desire to love and worship God, they don't know who He truly is nor do they understand what He has done for them. The Filipinos always greeted us with smiles and are just full of joy despite of their poverty. Strangers came into their community and homes and they were very welcoming and hospitable. I pray that someday their joy will be the full joy of knowing Jesus as their personal Savior.



### A Humbling Experience – Callie Ann Lum

It was such a blessing to visit the Philippines and see God working in another country. We got to meet and interact with individuals from all different walks of life. We saw the finery of Manila's largest mall and the poorest areas in Manila's garbage dump. What amazes me is the cheerfulness of the people, even though they have so little. They welcomed us inside their homes giving us opportunities to share the gospel and pray with them. I'll never forget the warm smiles and sticky hugs from the children at VBS. Hearing 60 children shout, "Mahal ako ni Hesus" (Jesus loves me) in their native tongue. Seeing the hungry looks of desperation when the team helped with the feedings. It's heart breaking to see families living in the dump, with limited electricity, no sewage or running water. We saw children ripping open trash bags and scooping out soggy leftover rice, then sorting plastic Jolabee cups and McDonalds straws to recycle for money. I held a kid who had just a shirt on, and made friends with Mel, a boy with severe pink eye, sores and lice. People live like this, in the dump, in sickness. As my roommate Jessica pointed out, it's humbling to think this is what Christ did for us. He came down from a perfect place to live among us in our diseased, contaminated, sinful world. Our team went down for a day, but Jesus came for thirty some years.

This was a trip of many firsts for me. First time flying out of the country, first time trying interesting foods (balut anyone? ☺), it was also my first time observing a Catholic mass. The only word I can come up with to describe it is sadness. The Philippines is a very Catholic infused country. It saddened me to see people stroking wooden statues of the saints and bowing and praying to them as if they could bring healing or salvation. They don't realize that salvation is by grace alone.

Visiting the different ministries and hearing the testimonies of the missionaries and Christians was so inspiring. I have always considered missionaries heroes of some sort. God is working through them to bless the Filipino people. Watching them serve so unselfishly opened my eyes to serving others with the same love.

Overall, there are no words to articulate all the emotions and experiences God blessed us with. I encourage you go to the Philippines to play with the children, share the gospel with toothless old men and feed the hungry in the dump. I'm so thankful to God for this opportunity. It was truly his work, to God be the glory!

*"All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name. For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God."*

*- Psalm 86:9-10*

