



Youth Sunday

Meditation 1: Bridgette Hollar

Meditation 2: Michael Navarro

Meditation 3: Melanie Jones

Quail Hollow Presbyterian Church

August 31, 2008

Meditation 1 - Bridgette Hollar

Acts 1:8

Our trip to the Rosebud reservation this summer was a fun experience, but also a learning experience. It was shocking to me that such poverty exists right here in the United States. It's hard to imagine living in those conditions, but that is these people's life. Most of the people there live in run down trailers, often with holes in the wall and several families in one house. The town of Mission where we stayed had a post office, a gas station, a few stores, a small local college, and that's about it. On every surface was gang graffiti. Outside the town was miles and miles of nothing, grasslands as far as the eye can see, which gives one a rather isolated feeling.

In Rosebud and neighboring reservations the unemployment rate is 85% and 97% of the population are living below the federal poverty level, with families bringing in an average income of \$3500 a year. The infant mortality rate is five times the United States national average. The shortest life expectancies of any group in the western hemisphere exist on Rosebud and the neighboring Pine Ridge Reservations. One of the main causes of these problems is alcoholism, which is rampant in these communities. Money given to families by the government is often used not on food or necessities for growing children, but on alcohol and drugs.

In the beginning of Acts, Jesus makes a promise to the disciples telling them what will happen after he returns to his father's side: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." In the Bible, the Samaritan people were largely ignored by the Israelites and looked down upon. Jesus, however, called upon his disciples to help the Samaritans, and he also calls upon us to help the Native Americans, who are living in extreme poverty in our very own country. These reservations such as Rosebud are basically a place where our government stuck people they didn't want to deal with. While it is of course admirable to go into 3rd world countries to help the people there, there are people in the United States living in similar conditions, and as Christians, it is our duty to help them as well.

Meditation 2 - Michael Navarro

Matthew 25:34-40

During our mission trip to Mission, South Dakota we stayed at All Nations Assembly of God Church on the Rosebud Reservation. All Nations is a small church with a sanctuary and a basement where most activities take place. Downstairs is a kitchen, a few rooms and a dining area for the soup kitchen.

The vision for All Nations began when Pastor Gus Craven, who is part Lakota, went to Seminary and came back to help the poor community he lived in. He married Terry and together they began All Nations in Rosebud where they established the church and the soup kitchen. After nine years they established a second center on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Pine Ridge is the poorer of the two. In addition to their church building, they are building a community center and there already is a children's home where they raise five foster children. One of the challenges they face is that the children's home is heated by a wood burning furnace. It takes a lot of wood to heat a home during winters that can get to -30 degrees!

Recently, All Nations added Carla Felton as an associate pastor and she now runs the Rosebud location where we stayed. In addition to running the soup kitchen for breakfast and lunch, she also runs a children's learning center during the summer and after school.

In Matthew 25:32-36 we hear Jesus tell the parable of the sheep and the goats. He said, "All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

God wants us to help out all the people that can't help themselves. We got to see how All Nations does that in the week we spent there. They do a lot of building and gathering supplies for the community. For instance, on the first day we went out and spent a few hours chopping and loading wood for the Pine Ridge church for their furnace. All Nations also houses a lot of Mission trips. By using their building they can share their vision of a peaceful, enjoyable community with God's help. They also try to reach that goal by having regular church services and hosting summer vacation Bible schools. The pastors open their homes to orphans and foster children. We had the luck to see its positive influence on the community and how they are helping those who can't help themselves. This is one determined church!

Meditation 3 - Melanie Jones

Titus 2:11-14

Last summer I was one of the members of the youth group that went to Jamaica. While there I got to see first hand the happiness and the hope that the people of Jamaica carried with them everyday. It was difficult at first to understand how people of such despair could be so optimistic.

This summer while attending Pineridge and Rosebud, I got to spend four eye opening days with Native Americans living on a reservation. It was a once in a lifetime experience to work with and observe the perspectives of the people there. Before I went on the trip I was clueless as to what the Native Americans would be like. Once arriving and spending time with them I realized that hope wasn't something that most of them embraced. It was almost like the reservation had a cloud of gloom hanging over it. For me it was a hard concept to grasp as to why these people were so unhappy and unhopeful. Looking around the town you could see churches and soup kitchens every couple blocks, so my question was, why the gloom?

Titus 2: 11-14 says "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."

This bible passage tells us that we must be gracious and have faith even if the future seems bleak. The Native Americans living on the reservation had given up on hope. Gangs, drugs, and alcohol are the escapes that most of them choose to get lost in.

The ray of hope that I found in this whole experience was the children. To see their excitement from us being there was motivation enough to make me believe in them. There's always the chance that a child will turn away from God and turn to drugs and violence, but then again there's always that chance that they find the strength and hope to take a different path that allows God to lead them to a better life.

Given the chance to return to Pineridge and Rosebud I would. We may not have made a huge impact on everyone living there, but to see the smiling faces of the children we played with and taught in vacation bible school was worth it. Helping out in the soup kitchen let me know that we were helping feed people that depended on our helping hands.

South Dakota wasn't like the experience I had in Jamaica building houses and observing the tropical land. On the other hand it taught me the importance of staying strong and believing in a better future. I've learned not to get caught up in the spoils of life because relying on momentary pleasures won't give us peace. Our Lord wants us to live with hope so that we can have happiness and take our faith with us wherever we may be.