DaySpring Sermon

“Of Strawberries and New Hope”

By Blair Quinius, Jorge Garcia, and Carolina Garcia

Translated by Victor Hinojosa

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Rev. 21:1—6

**Blair Quinius: Greetings from Urban Promise**

A couple of weeks ago, my family and I went out to our garden and picked a big bucket of strawberries. I hope that some of you have had the pleasure of eating a home-grown, organic strawberry before. I will admit that I do love my strawberry patch, and I think my wife, Lauren, was probably tired of hearing me talk about my strawberry patch--until she got to taste the strawberries here this year. My strawberry patch began three or four years ago with four little strawberry plants. And I learned something as the strawberries started to grow.

Some of you might know what a “runner” is—a strawberry runner. I didn’t know. And I was watching as the strawberry plants were growing that if a branch of the plant touched good soil, roots would start to grow. It would form a new strawberry plant. I loved that because it meant that I didn’t have to go buy a bunch more strawberry plants and spend $5 per strawberry plant so that I could fill my strawberry patch. Before I knew it, I had fifty strawberry plants that had been replicated over the years in this little strawberry patch.

And I share that because that is an example of what is happening in our ministry in Honduras. Ten years ago, we went down and we planted a couple little “strawberry plants.” We started one afterschool program with thirty kids, and over the years, that vision has grown. We serve around 300-325 children in our little town of Honduras, Copan Ruinas. We employ around 75 teenagers, and recently, we have had the blessing of receiving leaders from around Latin America, like the ones you’ll hear from today, who come and have been impacted by what we are doing and say, “This is exactly what we need in our communities, our countries.”

So, we are here today to celebrate this ministry replicating in other areas of Latin America. And I really see our ministry as a “strawberry runner” of DaySpring, an extension of DaySpring in Honduras. Now that’s a generation or two further along, and it’s being replicated to other areas of Latin America.

So today, it really is a fulfillment of a lot of hoping that one day I could bring some folks that I get to work with in Honduras that have impacted my life so much and to be with us here, sharing with you. Eric said that I could preach today, but I gave the spot to my friends, Jorge and Carolina. They’re here from Columbia. They have a lot of experience doing peace and reconciliation work in war zones of conflict in Columbia. They are part of our training program, wanting to go back and replicate what we have done in Honduras. They have graduated from a great, little Baptist seminary in Cali, Columbia, and are very excited to share with you. I look at the Lectionary passages for today, and I was really excited because—knowing that this passage would be translated, I saw the passage in John, and I thought “loving one another—that’s going to be a really easy way to go—easy for translation.” And they chose the Revelation passage for preaching today. But their passion is preaching and teaching. They’re very excited to share with you. They are top-notch; we love them. My friend Victor will be translating the sermon, so it will be a different style of receiving. But I was inspired by the last verse of the first song we read, which said “we die alone, for on its own each ember loses fire. Yet joined in one flame, burns on to give warmth and light and to inspire. So, I hope that you are inspired by the words they are bringing for you today.

**Jorge**

Good morning. We don’t speak English very much. We are learning in Honduras, so we are going to preach in Spanish. You will have Victor. We were practicing in a way in the chapel. He’s a very good translator. Thank you, Victor. Thank you for having us here. Praise God for this opportunity.

**Victor**

Let’s pray. Gracious God we give you thanks. For our brothers and sisters who join us today from Latin America. For Marcia, for Jorge, for Carolina. Today, we are reminded in a special way that whenever we gather, Christians are gathering all around the world in your Name to worship and to pray. So today we especially remember and we pray for the churches that our friends come from: Churches in Copan, Honduras, churches in Cartagena, Bucaramanga, and Cali, Columbia. We pray for our brothers and sisters there and for the work you are doing in and through them, and we give you thanks for the opportunity to hear of that work today. We thank you and we pray for our friends, Jorge and Carolina, as they bring your word to us. Open our hearts that we might hear and believe. Amen

The text that they have chosen today is the Revelation text, and they have asked me to read it for you again:

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

 *He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making all things new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”*

 *He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.”*

**Carolina**

Good morning to all. It is a real pleasure to be with you this morning. And I’m always thrilled to experience again how though we are different, from different languages and countries and cultures, we are also one in Christ. And I’m excited to experience that this morning. God truly is marvelous.

The young German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer has been a real inspiration to us. He was worried about the signs of the times and the problems he was seeing and experiencing in his time. And Bonhoeffer asked his friends, his family, his advisors what was going on in his time. He had even asked some in the Nazi government that he knew what was happening, and they all told him “It is better not to know.” “Stay quiet. Don’t go looking for trouble. You don’t want to know what’s happening.”

Bonhoeffer came to a very different conclusion: A Christian like you and like me has to know what is happening in our world. And so out of this text in Revelation, we have some signs that we thing God wants us to understand about how we are to work in our own contexts.

El joven teólogo alemán Dietrich Bonhoeffer preocupado por las señales de injusticia y desorden social que observaba en su época, buscaba amigos y parientes, algunos de ellos con puestos importantes dentro del gobierno Nazi para que aclararan la realidad de lo que estaba pasando en su patria. Todos respondían evasivamente y algunos contestaban: “Es mejor no saber”. El consejo era no meterse en líos y no buscar problemas. Pero reflexionando lo que significaba ser discípulo de Jesucristo, Bonhoeffer llegó a otra conclusión: un cristiano tiene que saber… Saber qué está pasando en nuestro mundo.

Hay algo Nuevo para nosotros por venir, y que paradójicamente ya está hecho como lo afirma el versículo 6 de Apocalipsis 21, pero mientras esa perfecta obra, esa morada eterna de Dios llega a nuestras vidas, nos corresponde tener presente dos de los desafíos que Dios nos deja como sus hijos:

**Jorge**

The first thing we want to Know how to respond to every crisis and social situation that God gives us the grace to live.

 He wants us to look in your Bible, if you have them at Ephesians 5, verse 14 is where we begin.

*Ephesians 5:14-17: This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.*

Sometimes the emphasis is placed on verse 16. The understanding of time that is talked about in that verse is often misinterpreted and understood very literally and very strictly to mean the time that we have on this earth. We often take that verse to mean that we need to live very strict, very regimented lives to not miss any opportunity and to do our work, but being more faithful to the original Greek translation, the word “time” (*Kairos* in the Greek)—that word really implies that what we need is to have a strategic intuition about what the Spirit is asking us to do and what God is doing around us. Verse 18 which continues after what we just read says, “rather, be full of the Spirit.” So be full of the Spirit so that you know how to respond to every crisis and social situation that you find yourself in—each historical moment. It is a strategic intuition of the Spirit to know how we should respond to each historical moment. It’s like the orchestra conductor—or the choir director this morning--who understands just when each instrument or each voice should enter the piece of music.

Or for you chess players out there, it is the chess player who can visualize the whole board and be thinking two or three moves ahead in order to win. So, one of the questions we have is how are we discerning of these times?

When we were single, Carolina and I always enjoyed working with children, youth, and young adults--that’s what we did in the cities that we grew up in. (They grew up in different cities, in Cartagena and Bucaramanga, but then they moved together to Cali to study at the seminary there.) When we went **to** seminary, one of the things we began to understand through God’s word is service to others is also a way of worshiping God and serving God. When we got married, this desire to serve God by acting on behalf of vulnerable communities continued. This call on our lives has been consistent so we know that God was calling us to this work for the rest of our lives.

Now we find ourselves living in Honduras, continuing to think about this, about how respond to the social divisions and the social crises back in our home country of Colombia.

Saber responder a cada coyuntura que el Señor nos permite vivir.

Efesios 5.14-17 DHH

14 porque todo lo que se deja poner en claro, participa de la luz. Por eso se dice: «Despierta, tú que duermes; levántate de entre los muertos, y Cristo te alumbrará.» 15 Por lo tanto, cuiden mucho su comportamiento. No vivan neciamente, sino con sabiduría. 16 Aprovechen bien este momento decisivo, porque los días son malos. 17 No actúen tontamente; procuren entender cuál es la voluntad del Señor.

En ocasiones en este versículo 16 se malentiende el sentido de presupuestar el tiempo muy estricta y disciplinadamente, el sentido más fiel al griego sería “rescatando la oportunidad estratégica” Aquí la palabra “tiempo” (Kairos) implica un sentido agudo de lo que está pasando y una intuición estratégica en la plenitud del Espíritu (5.18, antes bien sed llenos del Espíritu) de cómo responder a cada coyuntura histórica. Es como el director de la orquesta sabiendo cuándo debe entrar cada instrumento, el ajedrecista visualizando acertadamente el partido para marchar hacia la victoria.

¿De qué forma estamos aprovechando este momento/tiempo?

Cuando éramos solteros a Caro y a mí nos gustó contribuir con el desarrollo de NNAJ en nuestras ciudades de origen. Cuando fuimos a estudiar Teología en la ciudad de Cali, tuvimos la oportunidad de conocer más profundamente la voluntad de servir a Dios por medio de acciones sociales a favor de comunidades vulnerables. Cuando nos casamos continuó el deseo de hacer esta praxis y supimos que esto era lo que Dios nos estaba llamando a hacer por el resto de nuestras vidas.

Y hoy nos encontramos viviendo en Honduras pensando en cómo continuar ese camino de respuestas a las coyunturas sociales de Colombia.

**Carolina**

And our second intuition is that we are to guide communities of faith to remain expectant and in the hope of the new reality God is offering and bringing. Verse five in the Revelation passage--“I am making all things new! And I am doing this new work.Here, the word “new” is the Greek word *Kainos* which is something new – or something you are not accustomed to using or to doing. Something that is new in form or quality, and that is exactly what Jesus has promised to do in us—to give us a new way of living. John 13, Jesus gives us a new commandment, calling us to be new men and new women, but above all, people with a new hope. And when I read Revelation, I get hope of all the new things God is giving us. This gives us hope because we want to do something new in Columbia.

Also, living with Blair and our friends in Honduras has given us new eyes as well and new experiences. This has given us a hope that all the difficult circumstances that we still live in our home country, in Columbia, still can get better. And we want to contribute to that change in Columbia.

We are convinced that as more people go about learning that it is possible to be non-violent that our country will become non-violent. So I want to tell you that there is hope for the difficult circumstances that you also face.

Orientar a la comunidad de fe para que permanezca expectante y con esperanza de lo nuevo que el Señor nos ofrece.

Palabra Nueva... hace referencia en el griego a la palabra kainos (), significa nuevo, o aquello que no es costumbre usar; no nuevo en tiempo, sino nuevo en forma o cualidad, de diferente naturaleza de aquello con lo que se contrasta como viejo. Y es exactamente lo que Jesús nos ha prometido un nuevo pacto, nos dio un nuevo mandamiento en juan 13, a manda a ser un nuevo hombre y una nueva mujer, pero sobre todo una nueva esperanza.

Estamos a las puertas, después de haber estado recibiendo por casi un poco más de un año entrenamiento en un programa de beca que nos ofreció UrbanPromise Latin America, de abrir un NUEVO proyecto en Colombia con la visión de ser Paz y ayudar a que ésta vaya creciendo en todo el país por medio de los NNAJ. Tenemos la confianza que el realizar un acompañamiento integral con enfoque de Paz a estas nuevas generaciones, en las diferentes dimensiones del ser permitirá avanzar hacia una sociedad menos violenta y más unida.

**Jorge**

So to conclude, if you are a disciple who through the years been growing in the Word and in communion with God, it is important that you continue discerning the times, discerning the necessities of your own context, that you may teach others who are walking the same road and bring them hope.

If you do not yet know Christ, this is an invitation His Word offers you this morning, that you may have the hope He will make all things new – beginning with your own life. He offers you life abundant, life that is full, life that is complete; life that is eternal. It is only necessary that you place your faith in Him.

Para reflexionar:

Si eres un discípulo que con los años has venido creciendo en la Palabra y comunión con Dios es importante seguir reconociendo los tiempos, las necesidades de nuestros contextos, poder ayudar a orientar a otros que vienen por el mismo camino que tú y brindandarles esperanza.

Si aún no has creído en Cristo, es una invitación que Su Palabra te hace esta mañana para que puedas tener la esperanza que Él hará nuevas todas las cosas, principalmente tu Vida, el te ofrece Vida Abundante, Vida Plena, Vida Eterna, pero es necesario depositar tu confianza en Él.

Aunque cotidianamente tengamos temores por las circunstancias adversas que vivimos, es necesario tener presente que podemos reconocer los tiempos para dar una respuesta esperanzadora a la comunidad.

**Carolina:**

Let’s pray:

Gracious God, we give you thanks for your unmerited love. Thank you for continuing to reveal yourself to us through your Word. Thank you for giving us hope. Thank you for working through our lives to transmit hope to others. We pray that as we wait for that day when we will be with you, we may continue to work here on earth, that our families and our communities may live abundantly, may receive love, but above all may come to know you better. Thank you for everyone that is here today. Bless this church and the work they have been doing for so many years. Give new energy to those who are tired, and show them new things that they may continue in your work. Here we are, Lord, honoring your name. May we continue to serve you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.