

A City of Jóbs

*Naked I came from my mother's womb,
and naked I will depart.*

*The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away;
may the name of the LORD be praised. Job 1:21*

God allowed Job, his faithful servant to suffer following Satan's accusation that if he suffered great loss, he would turn away from God. God knew his servant's faithfulness was not based on a comfortable life and allowed him to be tested to reveal the true depth of his faith.

In Goma, in the early hours of May 21st, an unseen mist came out of Lake Kivu making it difficult to breathe. It soon dissipated and was forgotten but was a harbinger of future events.



That evening, the skies above Goma turned red, and Mt. Nyiragongo, the volcano overlooking the city, erupted for the first time in 19 years, spewing fire into the sky and lava towards the city. Within hours, over 16 villages and 3,000+ homes would be destroyed forcing 25,000 people to flee on foot in a panicked (first) evacuation of the city. The next morning, Pentecost Sunday, the sky had a yellow tint and the air smelled of sulfur. Cinders were on the ground and ash fell from the sky covering everything with soot. Over 35 persons died

a horrific death unable to escape the flowing lava, and hundreds of children, separated from their parents during the middle of the night evacuation were unaccounted for.

After that devastating eruption, the foundations of the earth began to shake. Earthquakes and seismic tremors shook day and night, continuing until now. In the ensuing days homes collapsed, roads cracked, utilities failed. Water and electricity became scarce and food prices rose dramatically as a major road into the city was covered by lava. The hundreds of thousands of homeless endured torrential rains and high winds.



Five days later, when all were in earnest prayer for relief, the governor announced that active pools of flowing lava were detected under the city and below Lake Kivu which holds one of world's largest deposits of methane gas in its depths. With gas already spewing from new fissures, and the fear of a catastrophic lake eruption, the governor ordered the immediate (2nd) evacuation from most neighborhoods of the city.

Bill and I (along with 400,000 other persons) made our way to one of three exit points to evacuate Goma. Our departure across the border to Rwanda took over 11 hours in the midst of panicked crowds, mothers trying to keep their children in sight, and harried authorities hurriedly processing exit documents, finally opening the gates to let the masses through. It was a trying day.



A recent news article characterized Goma as the most dangerous city in the world... not only due to surrounding active volcanoes and a methane-filled lake but a long history of other stressors: attacks from 100+ armed militia groups and horrific episodes of sexual violence and kidnapping. Goma experienced the recent Ebola outbreak (Congo's most deadly in history) with a near 70% fatality rate claiming over 2,000 lives.

Why does so much suffering center on this small corner of the world? There truly is a spiritual battle raging around today's world. Perhaps, as in the book of Job, Satan has permission to test these people... these precious believers who have suffered... but who continue to worship, sing, praise, dance and express joy in the Lord as we meet for worship not just on Sundays but weekdays as well.

Undoubtedly as the current crisis abates and we gather again in Goma there will be tales not just of the trials experienced, but of God's blessings and tender mercies along the way. The faithful in Goma are not defeated. They will continue to praise God and sing for joy as they cling to his promises with expectant joy for all their tomorrows.



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For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Romans 8:18