

I Smell Rain



WELS world missionaries recently attended a conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Yesterday, I returned to Malawi from a week-long gathering of WELS missionaries that was held in the city of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Almost every WELS missionary from all their scattered posts throughout the world had assembled there, about 50 men in all. While we were there, the missionaries shared story after story about how the sweet and fragrant message of the gospel was pouring out like summer rains on this sin-parched, unbelieving world. From the continued success of our missions in Africa to the exciting new possibilities in the Far East, God is keeping his promise to spread his saving gospel to the farthest corners of the Earth. Even now, souls from every tribe and nation are being won for eternal life in heaven.



L-R: Mike Hartman (Latin America), Dan Rautenberg (Apacheland), Glen Hieb (BWM World Board)

In Malawi, there are basically two seasons in the year: the rainy season and the dry. During the dry season, it never rains at all... not even a little bit. The ground is dry and hard and everything is dusty. This lasts from May until November, and maybe even longer. When I was living in the United States, a rainy day was considered to be a bad day. But in Malawi, a rainy day is reason to rejoice. After months of dusty dryness, God is pouring out his blessings. The rain comes down from heaven and softens the dry ground. Grass greens up. Seeds begin to germinate. Fields begin to grow and to produce their precious crops. As they say in Malawi, "*madzi ndi moyo*" (water is life).

Yesterday, when I stepped off the plane in Malawi after one week at our missionary conference in Malaysia, I noticed immediately that something was very different. "I smell rain," I said out loud - even though I was travelling alone and spoke those words to no one. A Malawian lady standing next to me turned to me and smiled. The first rain of the season had come while we were away, and the evidence of it was unmistakable. The rains had come and washed the dust off of the eucalyptus trees. The whole country was filled with their sweet and fragrant eucalyptus scent. I almost felt a little sad that I had missed it. Malawi was rejoicing.



L-R: Nathan Schulte (Equador), Luke Wolfgramm (Russia)

As I stood in line at the airport waiting to pass through immigration, it occurred to me that maybe this had been my 'takeaway' from our entire missionary conference: "I smell rain." The gospel shower of God's grace is falling gently on the world. The effects of it are powerful, and the fragrant evidence of it is unmistakable. Jesus Christ is the Living Water that gives life to our thirsty souls. By his sinless life and his innocent death on the cross, he has redeemed all the people of the world. By the preaching of his saving gospel and by the power of his Spirit, he gathers men and women from every nation under heaven. By that same shower of the gospel, he washes away their sins. He empowers them and makes their lives to be a fragrant offering to God. He gives them the life that will never end, even eternal life in heaven. I wish you could have heard the stories that I heard in Malaysia! God's grace is pouring down from heaven. From the Apaches to the Zambians and at all points in between, God's people are rejoicing.



Dr. Glen Thompson teaches at Asia Lutheran Seminary in Hong Kong

You are the witnesses of Christ throughout the world, as much as any missionary. Thank you to everyone who has supported the work of WELS World Missions! Your faithful prayers and generous offerings have enabled and empowered Gospel messengers to share the good news of Jesus Christ all around the globe. Your efforts in this work have not been without effect, and they will never be without effect. God himself has promised: “As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10, 11).

The world in which we live may be a desert of sin and death. But God is good and gracious, and I smell rain.

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