

Having three months of ministry information to catch-up on, I recognize reading four pages is a large request to make of you. So if you are short on time, please scan the brief highlight section below to get the bird's eye view and if you are led to read about a circumstance in more detail, you can locate it by the month it occurred.

Highlights

September:

1. We found out that the Lord is blessing our family with a fourth child due in April.
2. Our neighbor began acting like the man possessed in Matthew 8:28; providing a necessary reminder of the spiritual need in our area.

October:

1. Work on the church building project was postponed due to the custom of nose-piercing.
2. Insight has been gained regarding the spirit lurking behind this custom.

November:

1. We have seen God working powerfully: salvations despite a myriad of challenges.
2. Men, women and now children have entered the kingdom of God through His grace.
3. Some of our brethren are growing in their commitment to the Lord.
4. The wood has been cut and church construction is being planned for January.

September 2018

I am thankful for the prayers made on behalf of our family. The three girls have recovered well from their illness mentioned in our last update. They are busy as Cherith is homeschooling them: Grace is in the second grade while Melody is in kindergarten. Hannah is auditing both classes simultaneously. We also rejoice to share that Cherith is pregnant and we expect our fourth child sometime in April. Our family is planning to return to the USA in order to deliver the baby and return to PNG a few months later.

The weather sidelined this month's activities. Consistent rain kept our crew of men from cutting timber for our building project. The tent adjacent to my house, made to shelter our timber, was torn open as strong winds cut across our property. All the wood is now stacked under our house until the milling is completed. If it rains during our services, nearly 30% of the church roof allows precipitation to drip on people attending. With thatch roofing, water can follow an imperceptible trail and drip when and where you least expect. One Sunday, I was eventually backed into a corner as the rain seemed to follow me as I scooted away.

Please do pray that the meeting of Komako's leaders mentioned in July's update happens soon. This event has been pushed back due to an escalating personal conflict between Alpert and Hendri, two brothers who are our acting as magistrate and police.

Pastor Jack's family had the opportunity to hike out for the National Pastor's Conference in Mount Hagen. It was a great opportunity to fellowship with fellow labourers in ministry and sit under great preaching.

Our last report included large cultural trials that our Christians are faced with. Two of which are steeped in spiritism: the nose-piercing custom and "vanity fair." These activities may have contributed to this next account...

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. (Matthew 8:28)

The Legion Linger

News came of a strange occurrence at our community school. A teacher, Mr. Loomi, had suddenly become irrational, vulgar and violent. He was previously known to be a very religious man, as well as a dedicated father and teacher. He provided consistent service as a teacher even when others left their post midstream this school year. Inexplicably Loomi's change was both drastic and dreadful. He initially became abusive to his children and then toward anyone who came along the main pathway to the airstrip and market. It took three men to restrain him long enough to bind his hands and feet. It was not long until volunteers ceased attempts to manage him and he would roam. Our whole village was virtually taken captive by one man.

People first thought he ate a noxious mushroom that has been known to cause temporary raving symptoms. When such mushrooms would have worn off, Loomi was getting worse. The community then tried every remedy from the homespun variety to the purely clinical. They tried the cleansing-power of ginger, water that had secret healing power, incantations, medicine, and also the procedure of whipping his whole body with certain barbed vines until his skin was swollen and pulsated with pain. Nothing availed in this case.

Now in reflection of the Biblical testimony of the two men possessed with devils, I can't help but see similarities. A man exceedingly fierce...no man passing by...unable to be tamed. It illustrates the magnitude of satanic activity in one person's life, but also Jesus Christ's ultimate power to remedy the physical, emotional and spiritual bondage people are brought under. In the eighth chapter of Matthew we see an extreme case with enough devils to drive a great herd of about two thousand swine to drown, but what if a man is dominated by a single unclean spirit? Would he act in such a way as Mr. Loomi?

After hearing such a story can we deny the darkness that multitudes live in daily; those apart from the Lord Jesus Christ? Imagine if this situation occurred to someone in your town and every one responded this way. Please intercede prayerfully for our people to be convicted of their own sin, and have clarity regarding the remedy only available in Jesus Christ. Will you dedicate a portion of time every week or each day for those taken captive by the snare of the devil?

October 2018

Our hope of internet returning to normal is being stretched further as communication has been cut-off for nearly two months. Although we have not been able to read the emails sent to us or notify you of our latest news we continue to daily pray for our friends outside of our village.

Sunny weather arrived and after a month of rainy weather everyone seemed eager to get the building project completed. That is until I was notified that work could not continue until the nose-piercing custom was completed. Jop has allowed us to cut his trees freely, but his older brother, Suwanas was leading the nose-piercing custom. I purposely avoided cutting trees on Suwanas' ground and focused on Jop's properties instead to avoid being put in a compromised position. Despite my efforts, our project was put on hiatus until the entire ceremony, which had already been going on for months, was finished. The reason given: because "nature" is close to where we are operating the chainsaw.

The central element of this custom, which generates the spiritual and physical power the initiates desire to gain by going through with this rite, is an object they call "nature." It is regarded as being powerful enough to kill anyone who stumbles upon it or sees it while being carried around by initiates. Suwanas did not want me to interfere in their custom nor did he want workmen from his family to die if we happen to glance in its direction while cutting trees on a nearby ridge. "Nature" is thought to be inhabited by strong malevolent spirits. When "nature" is approached and handled, the spirits are supposedly placated by sacrificing a bandicoot or another small creature. If not done properly, death will certainly occur.

No one is allowed to travel when "nature" is being transported until it is properly hidden within a makeshift "forbidden house" located on site of the closing week-long celebratory dance. I used this conflict of schedule to encourage Suwanas to wrap up the custom promptly so we could complete our job cutting lumber in the good weather. Our entire village became an eerie ghost town the day the spirit-object was being transported.

I was able to attend the closing ceremony. The main activity consisted of people repeatedly circling a post erected a short distance from the forbidden house. Their belief in this custom is reinforced by a reported sensation of heat in the bosom to all those participating. Cherith and I are blessed to see more deeply into their lives, but more greatly burdened to see all reached for Christ.

November 2018

The past few months have been marked by frustration in postponed plans and heaviness due to temptations befalling Christians in our church. Weather and then the local custom kept us from completing physical tasks. Meanwhile God graciously

reminded me that ministry is about building people up on the most holy faith, not constructing mere buildings. After praying, sowing and waiting on His timing, God gave an increase. Despite difficult circumstances we have finished cutting wood and are seeing more salvations!

First, Rafort came forward. He made a profession of faith years ago and was baptized. He was convicted by the Holy Ghost during preaching and realized he had no hunger for the truth of scripture and honestly acknowledged that church had not made a difference in his life. These thoughts showed him that he was indeed far away from God and needed to truly get saved. As he sat across from my desk, I was overwhelmed by the honest humility it took for Rafort to admit all he said that day. He has been under Biblical preaching and teaching for years, and knew the gospel of God's grace well but never made it his own. He had not personally trusted Jesus for his own salvation. Knowledge without true faith did not produce fruit (Hebrews 4:2). After reviewing the gospel I gave him space to call on Jesus Christ himself. Rafort was feeling the immensity of that moment but comically began his prayer the same way our song leader starts each new song, "Alright, 1, 2, 3...."

We have also seen the firstfruits of the children's Sunday School Class. Cherith and Jack's wife, Esila, faithfully teach the children. Klerens, Mau and Elin are between 10-12 years old but all three have responded to the gospel in faith! This past Sunday we also saw a well-aged woman, Sara, also receive Jesus Christ as her Saviour. Sara and her family have attended our church for several years. Seeing long-held prayer answered by friends being saved is especially sweet to our soul.

Stanford has been through a lot since getting saved: health issues, miscarriages, and now his wife Miriam has had an emotional breakdown of sorts. He is growing in faith through these hardships. As we sat down to discuss these things he looked at me with the heaviness of his situation bearing upon him and said, "Miriam and I have agreed that we will not leave our church no matter what happens." Even in the darker times, God is faithfully working and preparing the soil of men's hearts. Alleluia.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. (1 Peter 5:10)

Our church is preparing for a special outreach during Christmas. I am praying for visitors to be saved and for our church to be prepared for Christ's soon return. We are making plans to build the church in January after all the wood has dried.

Thank you for praying as we continue to strive for the faith in this place.

In His Service,

Jason, Cherith, Grace, Melody, Hannah, and Baby