

Good morning church! Thank you, Charles! Thank you for having me here this morning. On my first visit to an orphanage in Haiti, as soon as I got off the bus one of the children called me Jackie Chan then the whole orphanage started to call me “Jackie”. Till this day I am known as Jackie Chan to the children in Haiti. Je suis Jackie. You have a great privilege today to meet and listen to Jackie Chan for the next 15 minutes or so.

I would like to share the story of one of the rescued children from child labor in Ghana this morning. A little boy named Baba was about 7 or 8 years old when he was sold into child labor. The extreme poverty of his family led Baba to be sold and put to work at this young age. One day Baba had to follow this stranger, a fisherman, leaving his family not knowing when he will return to his home. The grueling work began early in the morning for Baba. While the lake water was still very cold, he had to jump in the water to untangle the net and clean the net. He heard stories of some child slaves drowning while working the nets under the water. Baba was scared to jump into that cold and dark water but any hesitation only kindled anger of his master, scolding and beating him. Baba was always hungry because for a growing boy he was never given enough food. And yet there was always work to be done – cleaning the fish and carrying them to a market. He was only a child....

Many nights he cried himself to sleep, cold, hungry, and scared. Baba hoped that his parents would come and bring him home soon. But no one came to bring him home. Baba missed his family and friends terribly. A week went by, and then a month, six months – his hope of going home started to fade away quickly.

A seven year old boy should be going to school, learning how to read and write. A seven year old boy should be playing with his friends. A seven year old boy should eat three times a day plus snacks in between. This just was not Baba’s reality. He had to endure hunger, work in cold lake water, body aches and pains, and beating from his master. As the days went by and the grueling work continued, which was too much for this little boy to bear, Baba felt utterly hopeless.....

About 2 years later, I repeat almost two years later, Baba saw a boat coming towards him across the lake. There were strangers on this boat, including couple of foreigners. When the group got off the boat, they started to talk to Baba’s master. He didn’t seem to be happy with the conversation. The fisherman shook his head, raised his voice in anger and disapproval. Shortly after the village chief came and join in on the conversation with the group. Baba was curious but couldn’t fully understand what was going on. After a long discussion, one of the strangers came to Baba and said “you are coming with us. You don’t have to work here anymore”. Baba could not believe what he was hearing, but at the same time he was afraid to follow this group of strangers. For a second he thought maybe he was being sold to the foreigners.

Once Baba arrived at Touch A Life rescue center, he saw other rescued children eating, playing games and soccer. They had clean clothes and shoes on them. Now Baba was given three nutritious meals a day. Received art therapy, played soccer with other children, learned how to read and write. The signs of malnutrition started to disappear from him. Today Baba is 17 year old healthy young man who I am scared to play soccer with because he is too fast, too strong, and really great at soccer. He is attending high school now, full of hope for the future, dreams of becoming a doctor, teacher, believing he can do anything. This is his rescue story.

Now let us look at our rescue story. You and me. The Bible describes our conditions before we knew Christ as the following: In Ephesians 2:1-3 it reads ***“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind”*** and in Romans 3:23 ***“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”***

We needed to be rescued from our eternally hopeless state. Just like Baba was rescued from being a child slave to a high school student full of hopes and dreams, we needed to be rescued from being eternally separated from God to eternally united with God. There is no fishing boat in our rescue story. But there is a King. A humble king. In Philippians 2:5-11 ***“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*** And because of what our humble King did on the cross for us, paying for the penalty of our sins, now whoever puts his or her trust in Jesus and believes in His name is rescued, saved, sins are forgiven, no condemnation, and eternally united with our God. Going back to Ephesians chapter 2, verses 4-5 ***“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved.*** This is our rescue story...

But there's more to our story. Jesus told us in John Chapter 14:16-18 ***“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you”*** Now just like Jesus promised, we have the Holy Spirit living with us, comforting, guiding, counseling, and praying for us. Earlier in John chapter 14:2 ***“In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself.”*** Jesus gave us this unwavering

eternal hope, his presence in us through the Holy Spirit and that He promised to bring us to God's kingdom one day. My brothers and sisters in Christ, isn't this the true Christian hope for all mankind? This hope is not taking a deep breath and hoping things are going to turn out all right. It is assurance that God is going to do what he says He will do. This is why we rejoice in Him. In two weeks we will remember and celebrate Jesus' resurrection with full assurance that we too will someday rise from dead in full glorious body.

Now let me conclude with two applications this morning:

First, Jesus commissioned us to share this Good News which brings salvation and eternal hope both locally and globally. In Matthew chapter 28, Jesus said, "***All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age***" This is known as The Great Commission. Jesus is telling us to go and share this Good News with people who are still walking in darkness without hope.

Second is this. In Matthew 25 Jesus tells people about the Final Judgment: On that day of the Final Judgment, Jesus our King will separate people into two groups, as if a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Jesus tells the first group on his right – when I was hungry you gave me food, when I was thirsty you gave me water, when I was naked you clothed me, when I was sick you came and visited me, and when I was in prison you came to see me. This group was greatly surprised. They said to Jesus: when did we see you hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and in prison? Then Jesus said

***When you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me.***

Come join me in my kingdom.

Then Jesus addressed the next group to his left saying: when I was hungry you did not feed me, when I was thirsty you did not give me drink, when I was naked you did not give me any clothes, when I was sick you never came to visit me, and when I was in prison you did not come to me. Now this group was shocked. They asked Jesus – when did we ever see you hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and in prison?

Then Jesus said:

***When you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.*** Go away from me into eternal punishment.

When Mother Teresa worked in India, she saw people dying on a street like animals. One day she was assigned to take care of a man dying of TB, vomiting and coughing up blood, a poor

sick man whose been lying in the gutter. Mother Teresa was given this task so he can die with dignity- being taken care of and being loved. These are Mother Teresa's Words: *"that dying man looked at me with such a painful gaze, with tears in his eyes. In one second a flash of light came in my heart, and in my eyes I saw, it is Jesus who was taken into the arms of Mary from the cross. This experience of Jesus in reality, present in the sick and dying, in such a disguise, will never leave me. The faith that was implanted in my soul, this reality of Jesus in such a distressing disguise, is something rooted within me from that day"*.

I understand this congregation has mercy ministry blessing many people through Days for girls, Chapel on the Green, Soup Kitchen, and Columbus House. Praise God. Bless you for doing that. Can we see the suffering Jesus in the faces of refugees, exploited children, victims of human trafficking, homeless, struggling single parents, jobless, and physically ill.... Can we be instruments of God bringing the Good News of eternal hope and practical help to the least of these Jesus' brothers and sisters?

As Charles mentioned earlier, I will be at the back of the church after the service. I have some materials and books from Touch A Life Foundation. I will be a voice for the rescued children and many more children need to be rescued, today. Your generous donations will enable Touch A Life Foundation to continue this on- going rescue missions and provide food, shelter, education, and art therapy to the rescued former child slaves. Last summer they added trauma counseling to these children. Won't you please be instruments of God bringing the love, hope, and compassion of Jesus to these children today?

Let us pray!