

Trip to Sri Lanka
Saturday March 12, 2016
Day Two

With all the sleep the day before I woke at 4:20 am. I laid in bed trying to get back to sleep, but I stopped fighting it at 6 am. I got up at that point, did my exercises, organized my room, had a shower, dressed and began reading. After a bit Dan was up and joined me. We chatted some more and then had breakfast together.

Breakfast consisted of a pancake, some rice noodles formed into patties, eggs, and what I am starting to think of as the usual 'things'. After breakfast I did up the dishes and waited for our taxi to come to take us out for the day.

Once the taxi came we were on our way. Sister Hilda joined us, calling ahead and getting directions to give to the driver. Pastor Lazarus also came bringing with him one of his young leaders. Those two drove separately from us on Pastor's motorcycle. Driving in Sri Lanka is it's own adventure. There were large trucks, small trucks, vans, cars, 3 wheelers, motorcycles, bicycles, and pedestrians. There is a constant tacking from one side to another as the driver passes or dodges slower moving obstacles or on coming traffic.



Dan's mission for this trip is to connect with the local church pastors as well as the board of administration here. So, we headed to meet the first pastor, pastor Saman. Pastor Saman has been ill for awhile. It seems he had a kidney stone which was quite debilitating, but now has passed. While waiting for restored health he was bed ridden and seems to have developed pneumonia.

This persistent illness has resulted in several changes. Of course, he is physically altered. He has clearly lost a lot of weight due to his inability to eat. He has also had to step back from his pastoral ministry. It was unclear if his congregation is still meeting with different leadership or if they have just disbanded. He has also had to give up the physical church building with pastor's apartment and move back to his first home. This was for financial considerations, but he is now living in very rough conditions again and the location is not good for church meetings.

To balance that picture though, he has a beautiful family. A wife and two daughters who know how to smile and seem happy despite their worry and change in circumstances. They are facing financial challenges, but are weathering the situation expressing deep faith that God will provide. The collection of pastors are taking up a special offering to help this family. We had the opportunity to pray with them which was a great honour; we will also contribute to the collection.

From there we got back into our taxi and went to visit Pastor Raffee. Unfortunately, his phone has not been working so he didn't know we were coming. However, he was quite close, meeting with some young church leaders doing prayer and fasting, so he came right over. They have a beautiful church space and he seems to have a vibrant ministry.



Pastor Raffee has a passion for evangelism, so he does a crusade event on a regular basis. The man beside me in the picture is a believer as a result of one of these crusades and his daughter is in the purple, she is one of the praise leaders. Raffle also is working through a four year course on developing and equipping church leaders. It's an amazing amount of work for someone who is bi-vocational; he is also a taxi driver.

After a bit he was able to contact and pickup his wife so she could visit too. It was nice to meet her and their 9 year old daughter. I am so happy to meet these little girls as it makes being away from mine a little easier. Pastor Raffee insisted we come to his evening service tomorrow, and Dan has asked if I would bring the word since he is preaching at Pastor Lazarus's service in the morning. I will be preaching on Isaiah 43:16-21, "We Can Trust God." I hope I won't go too fast for the

interpreter!

Once we were finished with that visit it was time to return to the residence for lunch. Again, the rice dish with the variety of flavours added. I am aware that the food is spicy, but I'm happy to say it is not overpowering — I am enjoying the food. After lunch I went for a lay down. At first I couldn't fall asleep, so I got up and read. After a bit I tried again and was more successful! The downside is I again slept until the next meal.

For dinner we were invited to go to Sister Hilda's home. She lives quite close, so she came and got us and walked us to her apartment where she and her son live (her husband passed away recently). I was grateful that Dan prepared me to the fact that we are served and fed; she and her son will eat separately later. This

is part of the cultural adjustment.



Sister Hilda has a nice situation there. Her sister lives in the same building, so provides company for her. Also the Free Methodist's superintendent's daughter also lives in the building. She is married to Hilda's nephew and they have a 6 month old son. We went to visit them and say hello as well. All in all a nice Christian community lives there!

After dinner Hilda walked us back. I started into my evening reading while Dan went to speak with Pastor Lazarus's 14 year old daughter. She will be interpreting for him tomorrow morning. It was lovely to hear the choir practicing the music for tomorrow morning. Once Dan got back we discussed what I would preach on myself for tomorrow evening and I began planning that.



It has been a wonderful day of being greeted and receiving hospitality. I have also been able to extend greetings from our Western region to these pastors. It's amazing how our lives have been brought together by the gospel of Jesus Christ.