

Kenya Trip October 21-November 6, 2020

Saturday October 31

It was a beautiful day on Saturday after a cool rainy Friday. We had a great breakfast and then Benjamin, who had arrived in the middle of the night from Nairobi where he works as a sales manager for a pharmaceutical company, took us on a tour of his farming operation. We looked at his several dairy cows, pigs, goats and a menagerie of chickens, turkeys, ducks and rabbits. I noticed one of the cows was suffering from pinkeye, and Alex suggested treating her.

I knew Alex was the real deal, when as we were trying to corral the cow, he grabbed her around the neck when she bolted, twisted her head around and stuck his fingers in her nose and subdued her - a maneuver I've used many times in my younger days. And all of this while he was wearing dress clothes and shoes. He treated not only her eye, but several places where birds had opened the skin on the cow and had exposed the flesh so that they could drink the fluids that seeped out of the wounds. He then also, with the help of warm water and soap, did a bare-armed pregnancy check and confirmed her 4 months pregnant. My admiration for Alex rose greatly as the day progressed!



Benjamin showed us what he was growing there at the home place, which included corn, naiper grass, bananas and other crops. He also had a fish pond where he was raising about 500 tilapia, which he started as fingerlings and were currently about 5-6 inches in length.

Among the crops he was growing was khat, or qat, also know by other names. This is a plant that is classified as a drug by many countries, but is legal to grow in Kenya. It is a bit of a dilemma for Christian farmers in Kenya, since it is so profitable to grow. It is in great demand in Somalia and surrounding countries where the fresh leaves are chewed. It predates coffee as a stimulant and is often used in social gatherings, as well as by workers who don't stop to eat.

Probox drivers collect the leaves early in the morning from farmers and then drive like crazy person to deliver it fresh to the airport to be flown to various countries, primarily Somalia. The fresher it is the more potent it is, as over the next 48 hours it decreases in potency. It is often used dry in many ways, but the preferred use is as a young fresh leaf. Over the next week we got to observe many probox drivers delivering their cargo, and believe me you do not want to get in their way.

Of course Ed and I had to pick one, smell it and even taste it a little. I think I did mine a little longer than Ed, taking a very small leaf and chewing on it for maybe 5-10 seconds. I did notice

a very slight buzz, and wouldn't have wanted to partake of a significant amount for any length of time - I'm quite satisfied with my experience as it was, thank-you. But again, it is a dilemma for many farmers as the demand is growing and it is quite profitable over many other traditional crops.

Benjamin then took us to some other land he had purchased, and some he was in the process of purchasing. He is growing corn, beans and and wants to start some banana plants. He also has a pumping station at the nearby river so that he can irrigate his land, which makes it very productive. He also allows neighboring farms to use his pump for their own needs, only requiring that they put enough fuel in the tank for the amount of water that they need.

I greatly enjoyed our time with Benjamin, he and his family very hard working people who want to do the best that they can, and have great faith that Kenya can rise up to provide the rest of the world with many types of different products. He also has the desire to make his farm a place where other farmers can come to learn how to implement better farming practices.

That afternoon we were invited to a special celebration in a neighboring village. Benjamin had been in a very serious car accident about 6 months earlier and God spared his life. He had many serious injuries, among them losing 2 fingers from one hand. A nurse in a neighboring village came almost every morning and evening for many weeks to clean and dress his hand and other areas. She refused to take any pay for what she did, having someone watch her 2 young children while she drove 30 minutes each way and tended Benjamin.

Benjamin and Naomi had a feast prepared for friends and family to thank and honor Veronica and her husband Moses, who is a doctor who treated Benjamin. We unworthily were given seats of honor at the celebration, and enjoyed the goat and many other delicious dishes. Afterwards, Randy short - relative in Kenya terms - message on serving, and there was singing and dancing and the giving of gifts to Veronica. Afterwards Moses took us to see the family farm, wanting me to see some problems with a couple of corn fields. They were having some reactions to pesticides they were using to control a very damaging insect problem, and while I did not have all of the answers, was able to point him in where to find some of the answers to his problem. We also looked at their goats and chickens, some of the most well tended and happiest animals I saw during my time in Kenya. It was interesting that while both of them had good jobs in the medical field, how involved they were with growing food both for themselves and to sell.



Sunday, November 1

Sunday morning we went to the church in the village where Naomi grew up and was started by her father, Bishop Munene, who oversees about 11 different churches in the region. Randy was



scheduled to preach that morning, which unknown to us, was also the annual appreciation day for Bishop Munene. Most of the pastors from the churches were in attendance along with some members of their congregations. They all got up and had a few words, and then congregation, by congregation, came up and offered gifts of money and food to the bishop and his wife who were standing in the front of the church.

The pastor would give them a gift of money, receive a prayer from the Bishop and his wife, and then the rest of the people would come singing and dancing and give their gifts of money or food, sometimes even live chickens. I had to wonder how Pastors Lester and Erma would respond to a gift of a live goat on Pastor's Appreciation Sunday at Petra.

There was a large crowd at the mud brick, dirt floor church for the celebration, and more people were sitting outside than were able to be inside. Of course we sat up front and were asked to share a few words also before Randy preached the sermon. After that, we went and had lunch in the pastor's house before everyone gathered outside for another seminar presentation.

I had to cut my presentation short, as we were starting about 2 hours later than expected due to the celebration and the lunch. There was a very good crowd, all of the people stayed, well over a hundred people. Some of them had traveled up to 70 kms to be there, some of them walking 20 kms, and Bishop wanted them to be able to get back before dark. Again, they greatly appreciated the literature which we had available to them.



We then walked the fields of Bishop Munene's farm, where Benjamin also had some crops planted. Once again I was impressed with the potential of Kenyan soils to produce crops given adequate water and using good practices. We gathered again with those who remained and Bishop thanked us, and opened the door for us to return to provide much needed education.



Sunday evening we enjoyed visiting with Benjamin and Naomi, eating supper together, and spending some time singing and praying together. It is a normal practice when enjoying Kenyan hospitality to pray a blessing over the hosts and their household. Benjamin also greatly appreciated the gifts and extra agriculture literature



that I left with him. They both invited us to come back whenever we could, Benjamin offering a piece of land that we could build a guest house to stay in whenever we are in their area.

tdown because of the COVID pandemic. He drew up the plans, welded the first truss, and managed the work of erecting the building. It was such a blessing to the church, as they had just lost the lease on the property their previous building was on. Another God story that you need to hear from Randy. And Pastor Joan's daughter was there with her 3 month old daughter