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I'm Not Santa! No Soy Papá Noel!

January 1, 2023

In the US I am just another old man with blue eyes, grey hair, and a beard to match. But in a country of dark-skinned people where very few have grey hair, I tend to be more of a novelty. Children take a second and third look and many tug at their parents and whisper (*or not*) "Papá Noel" (*Santa*). As anyone can tell you, I am not a fan of this character and the distraction it is to the true meaning of Christmas. BUT this year I decided to take advantage of a ministry opportunity. I allowed my beard to grow out to attention-getting length. I created a gospel tract with a picture of the jolly, red-suited guy that says on the cover (*in Spanish*), "I AM NOT SANTA". Bro. Bill Goins of Calvary Stand ministries helped with the graphic design. I give this tract out to anyone whose child gives me a second look or even adults who seem to notice. It has been a good way to get a smile as I share the Gospel. One child literally squealed when I gave him one and his mother was very happy to receive it. I have seen many stop and read it. I have also had many other great responses to this tract. Once they open the tract it continues inside, "But I know who gave the best Gift!". It goes on to explain Who that is, why they need that Gift, and how they can receive Him. Knowing that we were going to go to the poorer neighborhoods again this year with Christmas gifts, I had plenty of tracts printed and placed one in each of the gift bags so that they would go into the homes of the children. I also preached in one gathering using the tract as my outline. Sharing God's gift can be a lot of fun and is always very rewarding.

Speaking of the Christmas gift program, we want to thank each of you who sent extra to help provide something special to many kids from poor families. The packages included a special toy, along with the "I'm Not Santa" gospel tract, a coloring book, another booklet, and a special fruit bread treat. We were blessed to be able to deliver 350 gifts this year. What a joy to see each child's face as they received them. Pictures of one program where we distributed them is on our website, along with other new photo albums.

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seminary on the coast of Peru. They were taking a trip to celebrate completing their classes. It was great to see these future church leaders and encourage them in their calling.

December 7th was a fast-moving day in politics in Peru. Congress was planning on voting once again to see if they had enough votes to remove the sitting president. President Castillo tried to avoid it by announcing that he was dissolving the Congress, which would make him a dictator. Moments later it was announced that Congress had quickly voted to remove him. Next on the news we heard that he had left the capitol building and was attempting to get to the Mexican embassy to seek asylum there. But his driver drove just a short distance where Police were waiting with a roadblock. Castillo was detained and he is now being investigated on charges of conspiracy and rebellion against the constitution and the country. The vice-president was sworn in that afternoon. There have now been six presidents in the past five years. And many are not happy with the new one.

The next few weeks were filled with violent protests throughout Peru demanding Congress be shut down and that the new President leave office. The protests include blocking of the Pan-American Highway and other roads throughout the country with burning tires and piled rocks, forcefully taking over an airport and some police precincts, burning buildings, and other riotous acts. The protesters wanted immediate elections to replace the former president instead of the vice-president finishing the ex-president's term. There have been at least thirty deaths caused by the riots with well over seven hundred reported injured. The protests calmed down somewhat for the Christmas holiday. But, just two days after Christmas a large group of an indigenous jungle tribe (the Ashaninka) loaded up in big trucks to travel to Lima to be part of the protests to shut down Congress. They were stopped along the way by police. Many bows and arrows were confiscated from the group. Large groups are already planning more roadblocks and protests into the New Year. Only time will tell how it will all play out. Please continue to pray for the country of Peru and your missionaries in this uncertain time.

Carla and I are still waiting to hear from immigrations about our request to change from resident visas to immigrant visa status. Please continue to pray that it will be approved. This will help us as missionaries in several ways.

The New Year will be a busy one for us with new ministry opportunities, visitors, another container of Bibles to distribute, ministry trips, and another milestone in our ministry. These will be shared in future letters. Thank you for your faithful continued prayer and financial support of the ministry God called us to. Each of you are a blessing and an encouragement.

May you have a Blessed and Happy New Year!

Don & Carla Rich

Romans 12:1-2

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