

STICKY RICE MINISTRY

Lao Attached Field Newsletter

Special Edition—March 2015

Help Save Thunwa



Thunwa or December is too young to understand what happened to him. He was born with severe defects, cleft palate and with eyes and throat abnormal. His mother is too poor to provide special care for him. She couldn't breastfeed him because he could not suck her nipples. She couldn't afford proper formula milk for him either. His father blamed his mother's new found religion for his misfortune, born with defects. He turned his back on his family. He does not care for them. Too discouraged he turned to illicit substances and addicted to them. His mother could not care for *Thunwa* and his other 3 siblings. She has no job. How can she go to work when she has to care for 4 little children, and 1 with birth defects? In a country where there is no social security system where will she get help from? Help is nowhere to be found. Even her husband has 'abandoned' her.

Yet, this Sabbath, 21 March 2015, by faith she was among the other two mothers who dedicated their babies to the Lord. As I held *Thunwa* in my arms to dedicate him to the Lord I plead with the Lord to help this little baby to grow up to be a normal person and later to serve Him in a mighty way.

"But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

(Matthew 6:3-4, ESV)

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Thunwa in his mother's arms of love

Save Thunwa (Continued)

If *Thunwa* were to be born in the USA or Australia he would be taken care of by the system, some organizations, or some kind-hearted people. Surgical repairs would have been organized for him. And of course, he would be given the best formula milk and he would have gained weight and growing up as a normal baby.

But, *Thunwa* happened to be born in Laos. And he was born into a poor family. Worst still his father does not care about him, but blamed his mother's faith for his misfortune. He thought it was the ancestral spirits who became angry because his mother left the traditions and religion of their ancestors to become Christian. That, he believed, has provoked the anger of the ancestral spirits and they took their vengeance on *Thunwa*. After all, his three senior siblings were born before him were born with perfect health.



Why did God allow *Thunwa* to be born like that? Was it because the anger of his father's ancestors that caused him to be born with severe defects? Or was that because his mother left the faith of her ancestors? Or was it the sin of his mother? Or was it his own *karma* (the law of cause and effect that goes beyond one life cycle to the next)? Whose sin or *karma* anyway? If we find out about all these reasons, will it help *Thunwa*? Will it make him better or become normal again? Absolutely "Not." Finding out the reason does not help save *Thunwa*.

For *Thunwa*, if he can speak now he would just want to tell us that he would like to become a normal and healthy boy. Can something be done to help *Thunwa*? Maybe some of you may know how we can help *Thunwa*. If you do, please let us know. I asked *Thunwa*'s mother if she had been to a doctor and discussed options about what to do to help *Thunwa*? She just soberly told me that without money one could do nothing here. Any treatment needs money. And she could not even afford to buy baby milk for her baby. No wonder when I carried *Thunwa*, I felt like he was just a few days old. His weight would be just around 2.5-3.0 kg. But, he was already three months old. A normal three month Asian baby would weigh at least 5-6 kg! So, *Thunwa* is severely malnourished. Because of his cleft palate he could not suck and drink properly. Obviously, he did not receive proper nutritious food intake.

I feel audacious to ask you for financial help since I just asked you to help save *Kong Vang* last year. By the way, your *Kong Vang* is now doing very well. He is now working at our Manna Health Food Restaurant on weekdays and on weekends ministers to church members and teaches bible and English to their youth at Thong Namee Church, 2.5 hour drive from Vientiane.

Why did the Lord put *Thunwa* in my arms to be dedicated to Him? I think, His heavenly Father, our Father also, would want to heal him. I will leave his heavenly father to impress you whether

you would like the Lord to use you to help *Thunwa* or not.

At least, will you help *Thunwa* get proper milk formula? Generous Buddhists would be kind to animals like strayed dogs and cats. They would pick them up and take them to their homes and feed them. Just dogs and cats! How much more should we care for our fellow humans, especially when he is also a son of God?

As for how to help repair his cleft palate and eyes I don't know how much it will cost. But any financial support would be helpful. At the very least, it will show that we as fellow Christians do care for the sick and needy. It will show to the unbelievers that the church is caring for its own needy and sick people. It will preach the gospel of love loud and clear. And God will be praised. If you would like to be used by God to do your part in helping save *Thunwa* please do let us know. We, the church in Laos, already have too many needs and have done what we could—sharing the burdens with the mother in a small way and of course praying with her.

But, without your help *Thunwa* cannot have surgeries to repair his cleft palate. He stands little chance to survive into adulthood. His mother will probably not survive her marriage that is already at the edge. His siblings will probably face uncertain future in a broken home in a country with no state social security support.

Even dogs eat crumbs falling from the hands of generous Buddhists. Would Adventists help feed *Thunwa* and repair his cleft palate? Thank you for your generous heart.

When the Buddhists Give



Buddhist monks file for alms collection in Luang Prabang for tourist to take photos

The Buddhists are mostly generous people. They give alms, offerings, and help the poor. And most importantly they take their religious practices seriously. What about you? Do you take Jesus' teaching and your religious practices seriously?

"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.." (Matthew 5:20, ESV)

It's early morning in Luang Prabang, Laos. While tourists are seated ready for the coming of the monks their friends are ready with their cameras. When the monks finally arrived the tourists are giving alms to the monks while their friends flashed their cameras multiple times, making sure they capture all acts of alms giving of their friends. The streets are full with tourists carrying cameras, tourists giving alms, merchants selling raw materials for offerings, and onlookers.

The monks dressed up in their orange robes come out with their alms bowls doing their round, not once, not twice, but three rounds. Just to satisfy the tourists. The foods were not prepared by the adherents, but by merchants rather. The merchants even arranged their seats, soft cushions, and sticky rice baskets, and foods. All the tourists need to do is to pay money and sit on one of the cushions prepared and have a go. For the monks, their bowls would not be sufficient to collect all the foods. So they dump the offerings into the baskets that are also prepared



every 50 meters or so. It is all commercialized for the sake of tourists. What happened is that we have an artificial act of giving and artificial faith, and artificial godliness.

Even though it is artificial people give anyway. They buy from the merchants and give to the monks. The monks are not needy. They have too much of the same things. Even though they are not needy, but they



are perceived to be holy. So, people are just too happy to give to their holy men.

Why should they give alms to the monks? Not only the Laotians, but the Chinese, the Japanese, the Koreans, the Thai, and even the Westerners. In fact, the Laotians are the minority who give alms to the monks.

The Buddhists give alms to the monks who are neither poor nor hungry. They give because they believe that



Tourists and monks in Luang Prabang

by giving to these holy men they will earn merits that will enable them to enter paradise or gain a better life in the next life cycle. Who they give to is not god. How could they be so sure that they will receive merits and gain a better life in the next life? But, they still give anyway.



These dogs receive foods from Buddhist monks and look fat and healthy

As Christians, are we like those tourists? Are we giving for photographs? Do we give to earn merits, respect, or praises? No, we should not be like the tourists who do good works for the sake of photographs. We should not be like the monks either because they only do our rounds of duty to entertain the tourists.

But, we are to be genuine in our practice of our religion. Our worship must be genuinely coming out of our hearts, out of gratitude in response to the Lord's love and salvation. Our service must be in response to His love and service to us first. Our love must be genuine. Our faith must be true, not artificial. Our giving must be given to the poor and must be in secret, not for photographs. And the Lord who sees in secret will reward us accordingly.

Remember? It is those who give who will inherit the Kingdom? "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to

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You can write to us or give us a call for more information about our works and other mission projects.

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me" (Matthew 25:34-36, ESV).

Now, let's look at ourselves. Does our righteousness exceed that of the Buddhists? When we give do we give in secret or in full view of people who take photographs of what we are doing? Are we, like the Buddhists, who give in order to receive merits? Or are we, like followers of Jesus, who give in secret without expecting the return of favor?

Generous Buddhists will give food to strayed dogs. Even strayed dogs can have plenty of food to eat. While 30 percent of Lao population are malnourished these dogs are still better off than their human relatives.

My heart was broken when I looked at *Thunwa* who God had placed in my arms to dedicate him to the Lord on that day. Would you help me raise *Thunwa* and repair his cleft palate? Would you, instead of buying foods for your pets, use that money to buy food for *Thunwa* instead? Would you join us in praying for *Thunwa's* father, who is addicted to substances, to return to his sense and care for the family? Would you join us in praying for *Thunwa's* mother to keep her faith strong despite having a husband who is a burden and causing troubles for the family? Would you pray for her to be able to raise her four children, including *Thunwa*, to healthy and responsible adulthood? At the very least, you can pray for *Thunwa*, can you? Thank you for your thoughts and prayers for *Thunwa*..