

*'The world has watches. Africa has time.'*

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Dear Friends & Family,

This season of reflection has touched me deeply -- in this place where there is *time*.

At the centre is the narrative, Jesus identifies himself as the good shepherd whose flock knows his voice; anyone else is a thief. He points out the two small coins of a poor widow to make his point about injustice. He releases Lazarus from the tomb and returns him to the family Jesus loves.

Then the tone shifts. Where once the sun shone on fields of ripening grain, darkness gathers. A woman kneels to lavish on him perfume so costly that Judas objects, and Jesus justifies her act by saying it is for his burial. He washes his disciple's feet, modelling the servant role they must take, and this time it is Peter who objects. Confusion reigns as Jesus predicts his death and no one understands.

'One of you will betray me.'    'Lord, who is it?'  
'I will be with you just a little longer.'    'Where are you going?'  
'Why can't I follow you? I will die for you!'    'No, Peter. You will deny me three times.'

Then there is an interlude when Jesus tries to help them understand. His words are comforting: they have seen the Father through him. He will do whatever they ask in his name. The Spirit will come and they will not be alone.

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Today students in my English classes from Rwanda, some of them pastors, asked me to pray for them. Their nation is preparing the national **Day of Remembrance** for victims of The Genocide. It will be exactly twenty years.

We, in this sheltered place just across the border from Rwanda, in a nation that looked on in horror, have no museums of death, no flags of mourning that fly in silence because there are no words for the atrocities. These mature students, men and women from that place of holocaust, are safe now in time and space yet cannot detach. All through the night they are awakened by phone calls from distraught relatives overwhelmed and crushed by memory of a storm that destroyed the lives of nearly a million people in a hundred days. The students ask for prayers of comfort that they can gather and lift for those at home who are in darkness. The sun shines here; not there.

My grasp of what happened in Rwanda is limited. I see it as shadows against the eastern hills. Many fled to Uganda and remained, or returned to rebuild but never forget. Many have come here years later for education. They bring their past.

One gifted young man in my class leads a dance troupe -- because music and movement can rebuild shattered lives. Some young ones, as I take their details and assess their English, say they have guardians -- not parents. They are the ones who are closed, guarded, hard to draw out. One, at my desk for language assessment today, bore the scars of a terrible head wound and the deep agitation of trauma. Another did well in writing but could not speak. How slow I was to realise that they had been children when the machetes fell.

*Janet*

Please pray --

That what I have not brought to this place I may learn through discernment and compassion.

*Reflections* -- Nine years have passed since I sat in my freshly white-washed classroom with mended concrete floor, a chair at my desk to speak to each applicant to my English language programme. Indeed, I was slow to realise that a Genocide survivor would sometimes occupy that chair and the very concept of language assessment would change in my mind forever.

No one told me. No one said, 'These young people need so much more than language'. No one said, 'The skills you offer are hardly relevant in their lives. You can ask them about their families but they have none. How can you ask them about their lives? They survive.'

The two young Rwandans did not return for English. Did they go to the back of a lecture hall where their need for language could be overtaken by their need to 'disappear'? Or did they return to Rwanda, where there are scarred people in every crowded place?

*Son of Man, who put aside your despair to comfort your people,  
help us to walk with you to Golgotha,  
stand aghast and grieving and wait ...  
... wait ...  
For the sun to rise on the third day.*

*John 14: 7-14*

