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THE LAO "M"PRESSION

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Dear Friends

Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us. The creation waits in eager expectation...

Romans 8:18.19

Greetings, from a hot and dusty Laos!! We look forward to the coming rains which will bring relief from the heat. It is already April and Easter is in sight. (for us, by the time this reaches you Easter will be just over). Easter is a great time to reflect on our expectations for a glorious future!!!

Expectations for a Better Future in PhAKOK

Exciting things are underway in Phakok village, a CRWRC target area. The villagers are working on the construction of the new small scale irrigation scheme that will irrigate 10 hectare of newly developed land which will be distributed to 15-poor families in the village who are currently without paddy (farm) land. This village is a hive of activity as gravel must be made from rock, rock must be collected and the rock, together with sand, cement and steel bar must be carried manually to the site for the dam. Wood for structure forms must be gathered from trees nearby with the use of a long handsaw and two men! A kilometer long canal is being dug to bring water from the dam to the rice field. The rice field is being cleared and leveled into paddy fields.

Mr. Waaloh (25 yrs. old) is one of the beneficiaries of the scheme. He explained his situation – his mother is living with him, his wife and three children. He has been farming upland and planted rice on 0.9 hectare but this hard work has brought low rice yields. Mr. Waaloh will receive about a 0.6 hectare paddy. This will give produce more rice with less labor and allow him to use his time with other activities. He believes will change his life tremendously.

The Phakok Village leader explained why they decided to distribute fields to poor families only:
to give every family a sustainable livelihood,
to increase solidarity in the village,
to reduce the need for slash and burn in the village
and ensure that the poorest families have enough resources to be able to stay in this location in the future.

There were 19 families in the village without paddy land but 4 were not interested and did not join the scheme. The village leader has shown unusual leadership and foresight and is able to integrate good values in decision making and he has avoided showing favoritism to the rich but instead cares for the poor in the village. The village is looking forward to no longer having the official distinction of being a "poor village."



Sand must be carried over 1 km up the mountain to the dam site.

The Three Tree

Author: Angie Hunt

Once upon a mountain top, three little trees stood and dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up. The first little tree looked at the stars and said, "I want to hold treasure. I want to be covered with gold and filled with precious stones. I will be the most beautiful treasure chest in the world!"

The second little tree looked out at the small stream trickling by on its way to the ocean. "I want to be traveling mighty waters and carrying powerful kings. I'll be the strongest ship in the world!"

The third little tree looked down into the valley below where busy men and women worked in the busy town. "I don't want to leave the mountain top at all. I want to grow so tall that when people look at me, they'll raise their eyes to heaven and think of God. I will be the tallest tree in the world."

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Years passed. The rains came, the sun shone and the three little trees grew tall. One day three woodcutters climbed the mountain. The first woodcutter looked at the first tree and said, "*This tree is beautiful. It is perfect for me.*" With a swoop of his shining axe, the first tree fell. "*Now I shall be made into a beautiful chest, I shall hold wonderful treasure,*" the first tree said.

The second woodcutter looked at the second tree and said, "*This tree is strong, it is perfect for me.*" With a swoop of his shining axe the second tree fell. "*Now I shall sail mighty waters,*" thought the second tree. "*I shall be a strong ship for mighty kings!*"

The third tree felt her heart sink when the last woodcutter looked her way. She stood straight and tall and pointed bravely to heaven. But the woodcutter never even looked up. "*Any kind of tree will do for me,*" he muttered. With a swoop of his shining axe the third tree fell.

The first tree rejoiced when the woodcutter brought her to a carpenter's shop, but the carpenter fashioned her into a feedbox for animals. The once beautiful tree was not covered with gold nor with treasure. She was coated in sawdust and filled with hay for hungry farm animals.

The second tree smiled when the woodcutter took her to a shipyard, but no mighty sailing ship was made that day. Instead the once strong tree was hammered and sawed into a simple fishing boat. She was too small and too weak to sail to an ocean, or even a river, instead she was taken to a little lake.

The third tree was confused when the woodcutter cut her into strong beams and left her in a lumberyard. "*What happened,*" the once tall tree wondered? "*All I ever wanted was to stay on the mountain top and point to God.*" Many, many days and nights passed. The three trees nearly forgot their dreams. But one night golden starlight poured over the first tree as a woman and her husband whispered. The mother squeezed his hand and smiled as the starlight shone on the smooth and sturdy wood. "*This manger is beautiful,*" she said. And suddenly the first tree knew that he was holding the greatest treasure in the world.

One evening a tired traveler and his friends crowded into the old fishing boat. The traveler fell asleep as the second tree sailed quietly out into the lake. Soon a thundering and thrashing storm arose. The little tree shuddered, she knew she didn't have the strength to carry so many passengers safely through the wind and the rain. The tired man awakened. He stood up, stretched out his hand and said, "*Peace.*" The storm stopped as quickly as it had begun. And suddenly the second tree knew that he was carrying the king of heaven and earth.

One Friday morning, the third tree was startled when her beams were yanked from the forgotten woodpile. She flinched as she was carried through an angry jeering crowd. She shuddered when soldieries nailed a man's hands to her. She felt ugly, harsh and cruel. But, on Sunday morning, when the sun rose and the earth trembled with joy beneath her, the third tree knew that God's love had changed everything. It had made the third tree strong. And every time people thought of the third tree, they would think of God. That was better than being the tallest tree in the world.

So the next time you feel down because you didn't get what you wanted, just sit tight and be happy because God is thinking of something better to give you.

An Update on the family

Exciting things are happening at our home lately!!!

Here in Asia each country is celebrating Pii Mai (New Year). This celebration involves throwing water on everyone in sight. Anyway, this also means that right now the girls are on a week-break from school. Maria has decided to challenge herself with learning to ride a bike. Three-days later, presto, she was able to balance all the way to the

