

[Eres Todo Poderoso]

[Put on hat and scarf]

God is Good. [All the time]

All the time [God is good]

I thought I'd start out with something familiar tonight since nothing else is going to be. In case you aren't having a very observant night, yes, the sanctuary is a little brighter than usual. No, the song I just played wasn't in English. And in case you're thinking "The pastor looks a little short tonight..." I'm Danny Peck and I'm usually the guy hiding in the corner with a bass guitar.

Some of you probably know that I went to Ecuador for two weeks this summer with a mission team from Christ Episcopal Church. Mason asked me to give a report about it and I decided "What better way to tell you guys about Ecuador than to take you there?" So for roughly the next hour, I'm hijacking this service, and I'm transporting you to Ecuador.

Now this is usually the point in the service where everybody stands up and shakes hands and greets one another and Mason tries to get everybody to sit really close to the front. And we are going to greet each other, but we're going to do it Ecuadorian style. So if [volunteer] will join me, we're going to demonstrate proper Besitos.

Besitos literally means "kisses" in Spanish and this is how everyone says hello. There is some biblical basis for it. The first part of Romans 16:16 says "Greet one another with a holy kiss..."

So instead of shaking hands, I want you to grab somebody, give them a big hug and...

[demonstrate besitos]

Now guys, you have to do this too, but if you come to another guy, a good, manly pat on the back will suffice. And I want you all to try your hardest not to sit down until you've given your besitos to everyone in this room. So let's share God's love.

[Besitos]

All right, you can keep right on with the Besitos as we sing if you want, but our praise songs tonight are two new songs for most of you. And they're in Spanish. So give it a try, especially those of you who know them already. The first one is the song you heard earlier, Eres Todo Poderoso. Raquel and I are going to sing the verse the first time to give you all a chance to see and hear the words. Then everybody can jump in on the chorus and the second time through. Here we go.

[Eres Todo Poderoso]

[Espiritu Santo]

Buen trabajo! Now if you guys are slightly confused and overwhelmed from all this crazy stuff I'm making you do tonight, you might be beginning to feel like I did for the first part of my time in Ecuador. Most everybody outside our group spoke in all Spanish. I know just enough to make y'all think I know these songs, and to be able to order Empanadas con pollo y agua sin gas. I ate a lot of Empanadas con pollo.

Eight of the team members went to Ecuador last year. And for the four of us who were new to the group this time around [picture of group before leaving], I'm not sure if we totally knew what to expect standing in Hunter's driveway getting ready to leave. We expected to have some experiences

we'd never had before. We probably expected to be slightly confused whenever Mama Julia o Roberto weren't nearby to translate for us. [pictures of them]. We expected to work hard.

[Coleman with mask, Deborah painting, moving rocks]. And I know we all expected to encounter God in new ways [Jesus in Cathedral]. But I doubt we really knew how that was going to happen.

We worked the first week at a church in Quito, Mission Emaus. And I can draw all kinds of parallels between our travelling and our experiences at Emaus with the disciples' meeting Jesus on their own road to Emmaus in Luke 24. Because the first and most powerful thing we began to experience the second we walked through the door was love.

Dozens of people I had never met before were hugging us and giving us besitos. They were genuinely excited to see us. So excited in fact, that most of the members of the church were there all week long while we were there, working with us, cooking for us, eating lunch with us, worshiping and singing praises with us every single day that we were at Emaus.

Now before I go on and tell you about what we did and learned in Quito, we're going to sing two more songs. One more in Spanish, and then I'll give you all a break and we'll sing You Are My King in English. And even if you don't understand the words that you are singing, know that you're praising the Lord, and that this is how or fellow Christians in Ecuador worship. Let's praise the Lord.

[Bueno es Alabar]  
[You Are My King]

[picture of Don Rodrigo]

This is Don Rodrigo. He was in charge of the construction projects all week. Now Don Rodrigo speaks no English, and I've already told spoken all the Spanish I know to y'all. So Don Rodrigo had to explain to the three guys, Coleman, Bradham and me, how to build a table, just by demonstrating and pointing to tools or work that he had already done.

Now I'm about as skilled at carpentry as I am in Spanish. So while Rodrigo would saw off huge chunks of wood in about three strokes, the rest of us are working away for seemingly endless periods of time trying to get our boards the correct size and put notches in the correct places with nothing more than a hammer and chisel. He made building tables look easy. We made it look like a big chopped up uneven mess. And he would just smile at us, and laugh along when we'd make notches in the wrong side of the wood and ruin ten minutes worth of work. And he never got frustrated that we were just silly gringos who couldn't build a table and couldn't speak any Spanish.

Most evening when we were finished working and began worship, and at the Bible school we did at the end of the week, I played guitar. Now that's something I can at least fool people into thinking I do well.

So when we were saying our good-byes on Sunday afternoon before we went to our second week's worksite, I got a chance to talk to Don Rodrigo for a minute. Everyone is standing around and hugging and dancing and saying goodbye. And when I came around to him, he smiled at me, and mimed playing guitar and gave me a thumbs-up.

And I realized that Rodrigo appreciated my skill as much as I appreciated his. I'll never be a master carpenter, and I doubt my guitar-playing will have any lasting effect on the church like the tables and cabinets and other projects that he and the guys built. But building a table isn't going to be what I remember from Ecuador.

I'll remember Rodrigo's appreciation for my music, and my willingness to attempt to build a table. I'll remember singing and dancing with the church and worshiping together in two languages

simultaneously.

On our morning briefing one day, Cameron, director of the program and an American missionary in Quito, told us a lot about poverty. She said that 18% of Ecuadorians live on less than a dollar a day. 20% of the world lives on less than a dollar a day. And 45% of the world lives on less than two dollars a day.

A lot of the people we worked with at Emaus were those very people who live on such a tiny amount of money. Those people, who could feed, clothe, shelter, and entertain their whole family for a week on a ten dollar bill. And they thought we were so lucky to be able to travel there. To be able to help them work on their church. To buy them a TV and a blender. To have time to play guitar.

But as we spent more and more time with them, it was our group who thought they were the lucky ones. They had so much faith, so much trust in God, and so much love for their families and one another and for us. Just giving besitos to us as we walked through their door for us the first time and cooking lunch helped us see the love of Christ that they experienced and wanted to share with those around them, even these twelve people they didn't know. They had an incredible faith in God in some ways despite what they didn't have, and in some ways because of it. They knew what was important. People. Kindness. Trust in God.

I'm going to play a Caedmon's call song. It tells a story of a woman they met in Ecuador, that is actually very similar to some of the people we met.

[Song]