



Missão Aracaju

Robert & Marie Ledbetter

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Watching the Son rise beyond Aracaju

June— 2017

Goodbye For The Moment

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven, Ecc. 1:1

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Prayer Requests:

- * Pray that we find more truth-seekers here in Aracaju.
- * Pray that peace and unity would continue among the congregations of the church here in Sergipe as they seek to develop Biblical leadership.
- * Pray for Johnathan and Amarylis as they work with the Lord's church in Guelph, Canada.
- * Pray that our congregations in Bugio and Zona Sul would continue to grow.
- * Pray for the nation of Brazil that is struggling fiscally.
- * Pray for the new Christians in Petrolândia, Pernambuco and Serrinha, Bahia.
- * Pray for Morwyn that she would come back to the Lord.

I left Marie crying at the garage door at Amber's house and clutching at her sweater in the pre-dawn chill. It was hard to say goodbye to her for 6 weeks, but that's the deal we've made. Every year she gets a month with the kids and grands and a couple of weeks with her parents.

Actually, I'm not even supposed to be here. If not for preaching a June wedding for some dear friends in Hondo (shout out to Jeremy and Desiree Ellis – congratulations again you two!) and filling in for a weekend for Paul Shero at Southgate Church of Christ, I hadn't even planned on being Stateside this year. Bra-

zilian and American holidays kind-of overlapped and airline tickets for mid-June were dirt cheap. So, yeah...

With all of the hurrying about in Aracaju for classroom activities at school, back to back discipleship studies, teacher training and out of state church planting... we needed a family furlough to not get burned out, I just couldn't see it.

After a little over a week with the grandkids and Phil and Amber in Wisconsin, it was time for me to get back to work. We had gotten to meet their church family and new friends – they recently moved

from California to Milwaukee – and that was really important to us. Putting the kids to bed as a family is a really sweet ritual of stories, prayer, and singing. It's hard to believe Emmerick is now 5 and Aureilia is 3 – how many grandpa moments have I missed? We played hard! Late night coffee and conversations with Phil and Amber were comforting. They are really active in the church and have made themselves servants and "missionaries" there. I'm so proud of them.

It was 5:30 AM and long past time to be on the road. All the kisses and tearful

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*Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you...
2 Cor. 13:11*

In The Interval

Maybe it's just me (and this is Robert again!), but sometimes I have the tendency to forget life happens to the people around you even if you're not there. Some things happen that are so big that you feel left out when you get back and look around. I could say the same thing about Christ's church in my month absence this summer.

Plans to go out the Suvaco de Gata church planting have been temporarily put on the back burner because of a serious fallout between our brother Luciano and our mutual friend Sergio. Sergio is Senhor Francisco's son and my bible/ English student. Apparently, Sergio and Luciano parted ways in their business venture and Sergio has left him with R\$4000 in bills, a monthly rent that was affordable when they shared their building together, and evidently tried to plant drugs in the wall of the

school while calling on of his friends in the military police to come and investigate.

It's put Luciano's entire teaching certificate and his education projects in jeopardy. That's hard on both of us as we try to work with at risk kids in this poor neighborhood. Unfortunately, Sergio came up to the office the day before I got back and used a metal saw to cut down the awning in front of Luciano's school and then cut it into little pieces. Luciano was away and the school was closed for the day. With no awning to protect it from the heavy winter rains, the front of the office of the school and the computer lab flooded and ruined some of his equipment.

I can't figure Sergio out and he's not answering my phone calls or texts. Anyway, evidently they are on the outs, and Luciano wept and confessed before the

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For the Moment cont.

hugs happened last night. Still, the image of Marie is etched in my mind, I'm already regretting this. Six hours to Ohio and 18 back to Texas. Spending the night in Saint Louis was looking like a really good idea.

Just outside of O'hare airport in Chicago I got stuck in traffic for an hour, so I downloaded a sermon from Southgate and listened to the meaningfulness of leaving a Godly heritage behind for future generations. Apropos for my mood. I repented and resolved to do better.

I regret that I didn't get to see John and Amarylis and the amazing work they are doing up near Toronto. Just 6 hours away on the map, but I'm out of time. We'll talk on skype I console myself. Maybe next year I tell myself. Maybe next year.

I drove to my brother, Bryan's house in Ohio in thoughtful silence and picked up my dad for the trip back to Texas. We had managed to spend the 4th of July holiday all together at their place when I dropped him off a week earlier and that was all kinds of nice. Planting American flags along the driveway, fireworks, cookouts, swimming, playing games, staying up til well past midnight, and sleeping in a "barn" - it was a real 'merican holiday and made me nostalgic and homesick.

They've been married almost 20 years and I've never been to their place... 12 since we've had a long meaningful conversation face to face at my grandparents funerals. Heck, I have a nine-year old nephew that I'd never met... Lisa, my sister-in-law and classic southern hostess, made dinner for us and insisted that we eat before we got back on the road. Saying goodbye was hard - Bryan was my best friend for 16 years of my life and I felt like I was saying goodbye to him again the same way I did when I married Marie and she became my best friend. It's strange how your lives can come to a Y and go in vastly different directions and yet the fundamentals are

the same. We're family. As we turned out of the driveway I looked back to catch him standing there with his hands in his pockets. I'd like to think he caught the same sudden eye allergy.



All in all, dad and I got to spend 36 hours in conversation for the trip up there and back, and that's what I wanted to do with him most of all. I learned quite a few things about my grandparents, his childhood, him falling in love with my mom, his adventures/misadventures as an adult. Almost a man I never knew. As the mile markers clicked by, it was a raw and honest series of conversations that ended too soon. You know, the kind that happen only after you get past the surface stuff of daily living? I think I understand him a little better. We got into Ballinger in time to take a shower and crash. I needed to say goodbye to everyone at the Southgate church Sunday morning. I said goodnight and slept 8 hours in the same spot. When I left him the next morning he was tinkering in his garden in his church clothes. Maybe we'll plant a tree together at his house next year.

Sunday went well enough, but I didn't get to give/get nearly as many hugs as I meant to. Somehow I missed sweet lil Grace Rogers, my biggest encourager at Southgate. I also hunted for Steve Stanley to finish up the wonderful conversation on mission strategy that we had had back in late June. Next year. The elders and ministers prayed over me, encouraged me, and joked with me. I gave them as good as I got! What a great group of men. That was the

sweetest goodbye.

T - 48 hours before flight time and I've got to get back over and see my mom for one last genealogy tree searching, walking-dead binge watching, Mexican food night together. Fajitas at Alejandra's in Ballinger - my favorite. That, and she had some last minute handy man projects that needed doing. (ha!) Actually that's how the quick summer trip began when we picked her to take her down to a Bed and Breakfast in Fredricksburg. After 3 days together it was great to see her kicking her heels up and dancing a little jig like I remember her doing when she was in her early 20's. It's hard for me to think of her as a great grandma. She's still got a great sense of humor. Yes, we did all the touristy things, but what I really wanted was the time together. I remember how much she loves me and good-bye is always, "until next time."

Thursday afternoon as I stood in the airport in Angelo, all tensed up for the 24 hour gauntlet ahead of me, Paul Shero and my father-in-law both gave me a big bear hug. Paul told a joke, Milt cuffed my ears verbally and sang a little ditty - "thank-God and American airlines, he's gone!" Really, I wish I could have held on to that moment for a little longer. Two of my biggest heroes in the faith... what can you say?

My first Sunday back, I was pretty low. I had to suit up in heavy gear to ride through the torrential rain alone and I was feeling pretty sorry for myself. I got to the house where we were meeting and there was a "welcome-home" party waiting for me. We sang and I preached. Then we gathered around the table together... and when we ate the Lord's Supper together Edivanio reminded us that even the final goodbye is only a temporary one for those who are in Christ. Good-bye is only for the moment.

I wish with all of my heart that I could have every one of you all at the same place at the same time so I could enjoy the blessings that every one of you are in my life and ministry. To know you all even as I know myself. Surely that's what heaven will be like.

"Walking" in the Son in Aracaju - rob

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Picture Gallery

Right: With the Grandkids at Lake Michigan

Far Right: Marie and Pamela on last day of class

Far Right Below: Welcome new Sister! Paula Mendonca

Below : Wedding Fun!

Thank- you all for this!



Provincial Living

You wouldn't really think it was possible living in the 21st century with all of the radio, TV, and social media... but many of the people that we live and work with are provincial in the way they think. For example, in general, most people here (and there are exceptions) live, play, and die in their own neighborhoods. They may leave to go to work, to the beach on Saturday, or maybe to visit a family member on their farm in the interior for holidays, but for the most part, everything they need is right there in their neighborhood. Corner grocery stores, hole in the wall bakeries, weekly farmers markets, etc. Everything you could need for daily life is within walking distance of your fortified house. Their vision of the world is just so, so... provincial. I really think it's something you have to experience. Life outside those little circles really has nothing to do with you. Aracaju is almost effectively a collection of 100 some odd little villages and shanty towns. It's so hard for me get into that mode of thinking sometimes. A good example is the frustration that I sometimes encounter when our brothers in Bugio don't understand why I just don't come over there and live with them in my office for a week or two when Marie is stateside. And I confess it does have a certain rustic appeal to it. Except when I think that my apartment with everything in it that I need is only 12km away. But for their sake, I'm going to try it. Blow up mattress, kettle coffee, biting ants and mosquitoes... Come on! It'll be fun I'm telling myself! After all, I did buy an alarm for my bike this trip. Hmmm, I'll let you know!

Missão Aracaju

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In The Interval cont....

So teach us to number our days aright that we may get a heart of wisdom—Psalm 90:12

church that he needs our prayers because if it weren't for the fact that he was a believer walking with Jesus every day, he would have bought a gun. He was a street tough in his youth, but he's a different man now. Jailson has been meeting and praying with him this last month in the interval and that has kept his frustration in check.

I also arrived to news that our sister Pamela's fiancé was gunned down in front of her at 4:30 pm on July 4th on the street in front her aunt's house. Ragube was a street orphan and at 23, had just gotten out of prison in February on a possession of a firearm charge. He served his 2 year sentence and was getting his life together – left the mafia, gotten a part-time job, a little car, and made plans to marry Pamela in September. They asked me to officiate and I've been a little encouraged that he was coming around to see me and asking good questions. But I guess the mafia never really lets you go. It's been a hard life lesson for Pamela who I've had as a student for English and bible since she was 13. She's always been a happy, lighthearted girl, and is actually like a daughter to me. She was so happy to have someone who really wanted her, and even

though some of us may've had our doubts, she saw some good in him.

In the interval, Jailson and his wife Josie, have been over several times to just hold her hand and listen to her. I think that it's been a real growth process for everyone in the Bugio congregation, including Luciano who had to put his anger aside and help Pamela bury him. And that was hard on her too, that since him being poor, she had to go and clean and prepare the body herself. I would ask you to pray for her that she can make peace with this grief and find a good husband in the church. Strange as it may seem, it's hard for girls in her neighborhood to even find a husband, let alone as "old" as she is at 21. I pray for her sake that her reality could be different.

The Santa Maria church plant has been stable in my absence. They just continued on like any other week. Different men took turns teaching and leading songs, they met in different houses, and they broke bread together. They took up collections and helped the poor and needy. Igor and Rogeria will welcome a son in August. Victor Co-carelli may be moving back to Aracaju in December – a great teacher and song leader

that we lost last December. But all in all, they are stable and living their Christian lives in mutual encouragement. I can see at least one man emerging as an elder in that group, but I'm still on the lookout. This next year Marie and I will probably be moving into the watching phase in that church plant – and that's comforting.

In other news, the churches in Serrinha and Petrolandia have both had some baptisms and both evangelists, Demas and Edivanio, are begging me to make a trip out to visit them. Not so much that I would make that much of a difference, but that I would come and encourage them with a series of lessons and stay long enough to do some house to house teaching during the day. Maybe help with some church discipline issues. And in the interval of Marie's absence... challenge accepted! I've noticed that some nights I've started talking out loud to myself – I haven't answered back yet, but as Marie has trained me to be a man of 20,000 words a day, I'm feeling kind of pent up. It'll be fun, and I'll do my best to be safe.

I guess, all in all, we pray, we love, and we work in the interval.

Until the Lord of Peace returns – **rob (again!)**