

Shoemaker, Tend Your Shoes

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Arriving at the border of Chiapas, Mexico, the immigration official asked me, “How long are you going to be in Mexico?”

“Seven days,” I answered.

“Where are you going?”

“To Yajalón, Shaxijá and Tumbalá.”

“And where is that?” the official responded.

When I heard those words, I realized that these are places that appear on the map, but that the government and even Christians have abandoned these people.

My good friend Daniel Ruiz, founder of the ministry Light to the Nations (Luz a las Naciones), and I traveled to the interior of Chiapas and finally arrived at Yajalón. There we were going to meet up with our collaborator and guide to enter the jungle. “Brother Juan, we are almost there,” we told him.



“Oh! Great, but I am *tronel* (which means “working” in the Chol dialect). I am fixing shoes in the streets, but I will meet you a little later.”

That night, Juan Mendez arrived with the tools of his trade...tired, wet and sweaty. Brother Juan is a cobbler by profession and the Lord’s servant by conviction.

We set off on one of the most dangerous roads of that region. Juan’s wife went with us. On the way, they were discussing things like, “Here there was a shooting,” and “Here was where some people burned the police officers and their cars.” “Here was where they killed two people...you should never drive through here in the dark...” “Thank God that in the last shooting they killed the main criminals who organized the violence!”

They also told us about the miracles that God had done while Juan the cobbler and his wife faithfully visited a small group of believers, details like, “We went on a small bus and then we walked for two hours more after that. We have seen some very strange things...once I was completely wet from rain,” said Juan. “But when I got up the mountain to preach, I was totally dry, and my clothes were ironed. I have never been able to explain that!”

“On another occasion while I walked, my foot started to hurt as if the sole of my foot had split open. I still needed to walk another hour, when all



of a sudden a stone in the path went into my shoe. When I stepped on it, it hurt, but it fixed my foot! God sent the stone and cured me!"

Juan Mendez is God's cobbler, a man of 55 years who takes the gospel to the hardest places in Chiapas, Mexico.

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace...who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!' " Isaiah 52:7

Although Juan's profession is to fix shoes, his conviction is to be a servant of the Most High God; he is really a testimony for all of us.

His denomination told him, "Cobbler, just pay attention to fixing shoes! Stop going to all these places like a wasp, just stinging here and stinging there." They even took away his title of pastor and lowered him to a common worker because he was not "starting enough churches." Juan has had a really rough time for several years. By the grace of God he was able to contact Pastor Daniel Ruiz, who became his spiritual covering.

Juan is now serving as the cobbler of the King of kings and Lord of lords, straightening crooked paths and opening new ones for God's glory.

It was an honor to serve with these humble and simple men. At the end of our trip, Juan, God's cobbler, with his own shoes falling apart, washed my car, toasted coffee, ground it by hand and gave it to me. Before we left, I encouraged him to keep persevering, and I gave an offering to this true servant of God. What an honor it was to serve with Pastor Daniel and Juan...God's cobbler.

By Carlos S. Romero

Pastor Daniel Ruiz is one of the pastors that we have been helping with your financial support; please keep him in your prayers.

