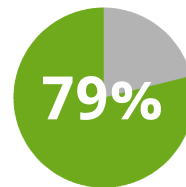


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A NEW HOPE: Checkpoints & Chihuahuas: Baja Journey Part II



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SUPPORT PLEDGED



Jedi Mind Tricks

As we left La Paz and began the journey home, two unusual events happened. First, along the Baja Peninsula are military checkpoints. As you leave the country, you are detained at each of these checkpoints and asked "Where have you been" and "Where are you going?" Usually, you are also requested to exit your vehicle so they can inspect your car and check for drugs. I (Joyce) have always found these checkpoints particularly nerve wracking, so I specifically asked God to calm my nerves and give me extraordinary peace. At the first checkpoint, we were asked to exit the car, but after a brief inspection, we were quickly on our way again. Then, at each subsequent checkpoint, we were not asked to exit the vehicle again.

In all the times we have traveled up and down the Baja, this has NEVER happened to us! People ahead and behind us at each checkpoint were stopped and asked to exit their cars, but not us. It was surreal. It felt like that scene in Star Wars when Obi Wan, Luke, CP30 and R2D2 are stopped by Imperial soldiers and Ben does his Jedi Mind trick. "These are not the droids you're looking for!" And the soldiers let them continue unharmed. But what happened to us wasn't a Jedi mind trick. It was God's amazing providential care! God just kept saying to my heart, "Trust me. I've got this!"

When I was a teenager I loved reading stories of missionaries who miraculously traveled across one border to the next in the midst of harrowing circumstances. Even though our situation was not that dire, it still felt like a miracle! Crossing each military check point was wrapped in the mystery of God's grace and love. During Advent, it reminds me of how God guided every step of Joseph and Mary's journey, each moment bathed in holy. Proverbs 3:5-6 promises us, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

Caballeros and Chihuahuas



The second thing that happened was a series of unexpected detours due to holiday parades. We thought traffic on Monday, November 20, would be a breeze as we headed into the more populated towns of Northern Baja because it was *Dia de la Revolucion*. What we forgot is that the celebration of every Mexican holiday always comes with a parade! The first parade detoured us on a dirt road that paralleled the main highway so we actually enjoyed seeing the festivities. At the next town, however, we were detoured to the back roads, along the cemetery, and past houses and laundry covered in the silty dirt common to the Baja.



The third town found us on a detour that actually took us even deeper into community life as we wandered through the local town plaza where people were dressed in outfits that made me think I'd stepped back into the 1800s. By the fourth parade we were laughing and resigned to not getting anywhere fast. We missed most of the fifth town's parade except for the 6 caballeros (cowboys) on horseback with two tiny Chihuahuas—with lots of attitude—leading the way! (Unfortunately the dogs didn't make the picture!)



What should have taken us 3 hours, turned into 5 hours and 5 parades. But we both realized the truth of “It’s about the journey, not the destination.” During the last day of what might have been our last drive up the Baja Peninsula (flying the next time!), we had the opportunity to see glimpses of Mexican towns that we’d never seen before. There was color and pageantry. There was laughter and pride. Caballeros and Chihuahuas. And lots of gritty dirt. Real life. Real people. Real stories for one of Jesus’ parables. The Kingdom of God is like . . .

A Galaxy Near You

Thank you for your prayers! For us, for the people of Southern Baja, for the ministry of Theological Education and Spiritual Renewal. It’s not happening in a galaxy far, far away. It’s happening in a country with whom you share a border, and with a people who worship the same God. Churches are being planted. Pastors are being disciplined. Hearts are drawing closer to God! And we are filled with New Hope as 2018 dawns on the horizon.

In Christ’s Love,

Merry Christmas!

David and Joyce