The Lord is His Pastor

By: Gary Kurz

"*No, I don't think you understand me Chief*," explained Mike in pigeon English, a blend of English and local dialect he had managed to learn in his short time with the tribe. "*I am trying to tell you about Jesus and how much he loves you and your people, but you are talking about someone else, some real person*."

Almost as quickly as the words left his mouth, Mike quickly retracted them; "*I don't mean that Jesus is not real, but that you are talking about someone who you met in person and you can't meet Jesus in person.*"

Mike's voice trailed off as he realized he had muffed it again. That wasn't what he wanted to say either. Of course, Jesus is a real person. Of course, you can meet him. He knew what he wanted to say, but this language barrier was proving to be more of an obstacle than he had anticipated.

Why had he volunteered to come here as a temporary substitute for the missionary anyway? Surely the tribe could do without their missionary pastor while he was on a few months furlough. Mike and the other Bible College students visiting this mission location thought they would be having fun in the field during their summer vacation. Arguing with a tribal Chief who didn’t understand him and who was accustomed to getting the last word in anyway was not his idea of fun.

But he was deep into it now. Focusing, he tried again. "*My friend, I am trying to tell you about the one true God. He lives in a place up there*," he said, pointing upwards, "*and he hasn't been here in a long, long time. You simply could not have met him in person*."

Obviously frustrated himself, the chief retorted in his own blend of English and local language "*How God help me if no come village*"? Before Mike could answer, the Chief added "*Him did come village. Him live here many days. Him give food, teach people, heal sick. Him love my people. Him Lord*".

"*No, no Chief, you don't understand*" Mike cried, "*whoever you are talking about is not Jesus. Jesus left this world. He is not here. But he promised he will come back one day*".

The Chief, with great enthusiasm responded "*Ah yes, now you see Chief's point. He come here. Him do all you say. Him love people. Feed people. Help people. Him leave like you say. But him promise to come back.*"

Exasperated, Mike said mockingly, "*Okay chief, when? When will he come back?*" Certain he had finally prevailed; Mike folded his arms and leaned back on his stool with a grin. But the Chief's response quickly erased the grin and almost caused Mike to fall off the stool; "*two days Jesus come*."

Not knowing how to respond, Mike decided to leave the conversation there and wait for two days to pass. "*Then*", he thought to himself, "*the Chief will realize his folly and see that I was right*."

It was barely dawn two days later when a young native messenger shook Mike from sleep. "*Come, come; Chief say you come? Him say Jesus here*." Half asleep and half numbed by the startling, unexpected news, Mike hurriedly dressed and ran as fast as his feet could take him to the main camp. His mind raced ahead of his feet as he wondered what on earth this news could mean.

As he came into the camp, he saw a large group of villagers crowded around the meeting arena. As he pushed his way past the outer ring of the crowd, he saw a tall man towering above the people. Several were patting him on the back. Others were hugging him with tears of joy.

Mike couldn't quite make out who the man was until he was almost upon him. But when he did finally recognize him, Mike stopped dead in his tracks. There in front of him was the missionary Pastor he had been filling in for. Mike had forgotten that the Pastor's furlough was almost over and that this was the day he was to return.

Immediately, Mike understood. While he had been right in what he had told the Chief, it was a hollow victory as the Chief's position had been more accurate and insightful. The missionary Pastor had set such a perfect Christian example of love and giving, that the people had mistaken him for the very Savior he was telling them about.

He had so personified the attributes of Jesus in his service to the villagers that when he spoke about the Lord, they could not make a distinction between the one speaking and the one spoken of. Naturally, they had assumed that he was speaking of himself.

No doubt, after I enlightened him regarding their ideas, the Pastor would correct this misconception when the time was right. But misconception or not, is this not the type of example all Christians should set? Sometimes the only Jesus people will ever see is us. Win them by example.