

# IMPROVING HEALTH IN GUATEMALA

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**MATTHEW 11:2-11 | PREPARING THE WAY FOR THE LORD**

As we enter the penultimate week of Advent, our collective anticipation for the incarnation and the expected joy of celebrating Christ can cloud us from being present in our current surroundings, from seeing God in our current preparatory status.

In Matthew's gospel this week we are reunited with John and his disciples, who despite having baptized Jesus and seemingly being aware of his divinity have doubts of Jesus as Messiah, asking: "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus' response to this question is simple. He tells John's messengers: "Go tell John what you hear and see" and asks: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at?"

Many of John's followers were searching for something that we often don't associate with the desolate and dire environs of the desert — hope. But like in Jesus' time, hope exists in even the most desperate of places, even when it is buried and hidden until it is almost forgotten.

For Irma Morales Morales, home in the future seemed like a long-ago memory. Living in the rural, poverty-stricken community of Canton Pin Pin in Guatemala, Irma wasn't able to provide for her family. Because clean water was hard to come by, her children often contracted waterborne illnesses. And with no way to eat a steady, nutritious diet, Irma's breastmilk had dried up and she couldn't produce enough for her young child.

But through your generosity, Irma was reminded of the hopes and dreams that had been buried deep. By participating in a Lutheran World Relief health and nutrition project, she is providing for her family in ways that hadn't been possible before. She plants crops, something she's always done, but with her newfound knowledge, her crops are now plentiful and include a wide variety of vegetables



*Your kindness has helped Irma and her family rediscover hope and health in Guatemala.*

that provide better nutrition for herself and her children. She joined a community group where she learned agricultural skills, received a water filtration unit, and was trained in food preparation and child nutrition, all of which have resulted in a healthier family.

Irma is also growing more vegetables than she and her family can eat, meaning she can sell the surplus at the local market for an income. And with her improved understanding of nutrition, Irma is able to provide more for her children and is also able to provide more breastmilk for her baby.

Like any mother, Irma's hopes for her children are that they grow up healthy. And because of your love, that hope has been rediscovered.

1. **When your congregation thinks of our most vulnerable neighbors around the world, and the often desolate or poverty-stricken communities they grow up in, what do they expect to see or find? How do they expect their love to reach their neighbors in these communities?**
2. **The gospel shares John's hopes that Jesus is the one to come and the crowd's expectations that John was indeed a prophet. What are some ways that your hopes align with your expectations? Some ways that they do not?**
3. **What are some hopes of your congregation, that looking back, have been buried? How has God's grace or a neighbor's love helped your congregation rediscover lost hope?**



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