



Thomas Essah: Kindergarten - Age 11
I and the Father are One." John 10:30

Thomas: living in squander **But God...**

Thomas is an 11-year old Kindergarten student living in northwest Liberia. This area was particularly affected by Ebola in 2014 as was his own family. His father passed away when he was 3 years old, leaving his mother a widow of 3 children.

Thomas' stepfather and mother are uneducated subsistence farmers with a high food insecurity, making tuition costs far out of their reach. His family lives near St. Joseph Lutheran Church, where they heard tuition assistance was available to children in need. But a free education, though great, doesn't solve the issue. School would still take him away from working on the family farm, where the work is urgent and relentless.

After weeks of Thomas begging his parents and God, his prayers were answered when out of the blue, the pastor came to visit and spoke to his parents, encouraging them to enroll Thomas in school. The pastor explained that the value of Thomas' education is an investment in Thomas' future, the family's, as well as the community and nation. At last Thomas' parents agreed, and he was enrolled as a 10-year-old Pre-K student in 2021.

Thomas went home from school every day, eagerly repeating much of what he had learned. Of course Jesus was a big part these discussions and God used Thomas to bring his whole to church. The Essah family was recently baptized and joined St. Joseph Lutheran Church. Thomas knows he is being given an opportunity that most children don't have. He knows kids who work on their farm instead of going to school. Thomas believes he was saved twice, once to go to school and once to go to heaven.

Hope and Care Outreach was able to assist 588 students with tuition assistance to attend 21 different Liberian Lutheran Schools this academic year. Many of those students would not have the opportunity to attend any school without this assistance, since even public schools in Liberia have costs.

Each of these schools scattered throughout the nation has a worshipping Lutheran community connected to them. Many of these students come from families in a traditional religion or the Muslim faith. The schools and churches are working together to harvest the low-hanging fruit of these families by visitations and invitations to worship. Of course the greatest blessing of all remains the student who goes home proclaiming to all that Jesus is the Son of God who died to save him from sin, death and the devil.

Hope and Care Outreach is thrilled to partner with the Pacific Southwest Schools during the Hearts for Jesus program. We are praying for you as you impact the students God has entrusted to you. May every unsurmountable challenge become a But God story in Jesus' Name.