

**Rich Tarro, Kenya – Lent 2024**

**Nurturing beauty and goodness in the mess of this world**

“Start seeing the world for what it really is — dirty, rough, tragic and beautiful. It is truly a wonderful mess.” This quote by Alan Graham, the founder of Mobile Loaves and Fishes, an outreach ministry to homeless people in Texas, is advice we often need to be reminded of.

It often seems like the world is falling apart. But as Christians, we know that love has the final word. We can see beauty and goodness in the mess of the world if we look with the eyes of faith.

Ruphus is 42 years old and lives with his three children on the street, albeit in a space enclosed by makeshift walls that he put up. Jeremiah is 8 years old and in second grade, Margaret is 5 and in preprimary school, and Geoffrey is 2 ½. Ruphus works part time (a few nights a week) with a security firm but only earns about \$40 a month — hardly enough to support a family.

Ruphus got married 10 years ago to a divorced woman with four kids. He built a two-room house for his family and started a wholesale business selling charcoal. Ruphus and his wife proceeded to have three children of their own — Jeremiah, Margaret and Geoffrey. The charcoal business was doing well, and Ruphus was able to comfortably support his wife and the seven children. Life was pretty good, or so it seemed.

Ruphus often had to work at night, traveling upcountry to buy charcoal in bulk for his wholesale business. Ruphus’s wife began cheating on him with her ex-husband. Eventually Ruphus found out, and his wife left him and their three children to go back to her former husband. She sent the four kids from her first marriage to her rural home to live with her mother. The wife and the former husband have not been heard from since.

In August 2023 Kenya Pipeline, which is a state corporation, claimed that most of the land where Ruphus had built the house belonged to them. Ruphus had no means to contest the claim, so Kenya Pipeline proceeded to take the land where the house was located, to install pipes to transport oil from the Port of Mombasa. The family’s house was demolished without any compensation, and Ruphus and the three children were left homeless.

The family now lives on the side of the road, right behind where the house used to be located. Ruphus constructed a temporary wall out of corrugated steel and partial roof out of plastic to enclose the space where the family lives. But it is not a strong structure and only partially covered. When it rains, the family has little protection. Ruphus and the children sleep on plastic spread on the ground.



*Inside the family's temporary structure*



*Jeremiah, Margaret, Geoffrey and Ruphus*

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Jeremiah and Margaret did not attend school in 2023 as Ruphus had no means to pay for them to be in school. They are both now a grade behind from where they should be.

The HOPE Project began supporting Jeremiah and Margaret in school in January, and we also help the family with food.

Ruphus continues to work a few nights a week for the security company. He prepares food for the children for dinner before he departs for work. Jeremiah locks himself, Margaret, and Geoffrey behind the makeshift wall when Ruphus leaves for work.

Jeremiah wakes Margaret in the morning and helps her get ready for school. Because the children are not old enough to light the propane burner that the family uses for cooking, Jeremiah feeds Margaret and Geoffrey cold leftovers for breakfast.

Ruphus returns from work just in time for Jeremiah and Margaret to leave for school. They walk to school on their own — a 30-minute walk — and Ruphus stays home to take care of Geoffrey.

We are so happy to be supporting Jeremiah and Margaret in school. Jeremiah loves football and makes toy cars out of boxes and bottle caps. Margaret loves playing with dolls that she makes out of items that she finds and pretends to “cook” using bottles and other materials as cooking utensils.

Despite being homeless, Ruphus and his family are happy and doing well — especially with Jeremiah and Margaret now in school. Our hope is to build a house for the family and provide them with beds and mattresses. No one should have to live on the street and sleep on the ground, especially children.

The world is indeed dirty, rough and tragic, but it is also beautiful, especially in the light of God’s love for us and our love for each other.

***Please consider financially supporting our work to improve the lives of families like Ruphus, Jeremiah, Margaret, and Geoffrey.***

God is good!

*P.S.: We created a short video that takes you to Ruphus’s family’s living space. Watch at [tinyurl.com/RuphusFamily](https://tinyurl.com/RuphusFamily).*



*Ruphus and Geoffrey outside their house*



*The inside of the structure*

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