

My Friend Luis

Episode 9 — “A Burrito With Jesus”

A podcast by Wayne Jacobsen · myfriendluis.com · April 2021

LUIS: When I opened the door, the first thing I noticed, it was this smell, this stench. Then I started calling out the name of the person, the owner of the house, and he wouldn't answer. As I started getting closer to his room, I started getting worse and worse the smell. I went straight into his room to see — the door was open, and then when I looked, I saw something, you know — it was blood coming from the closet.

WAYNE: Hi, I'm Wayne Jacobsen, and this is My Friend Luis — the story of one of the most engaging men I've ever met, and of the friendship that developed between us. It has transformed both of our lives and left us in grateful awe at the adventure of life on this little planet.

Finding a way to legalize status in the U.S. is constantly on Luis's mind. It doesn't get easier the longer you live here, but more complicated — especially when you thought you'd already qualified for a green card. Sadly, this could have all been resolved for Luis when he was 15 years old. Luis's mother and his siblings were already in the U.S. when President Reagan offered amnesty in 1988 to undocumented immigrants in America. They all qualified and became permanent residents. If you remember, at the time Luis was living alone in Mexico, and even though his brothers could have helped him out, they weren't willing to do so.

And you have done everything you can to make your status legal here.

LUIS: Yes. Look at what happened on the amnesty, right? It's like an open amnesty. Anybody could apply, and most of the people got in. I know how my brothers and sisters got their green card, because of the last amnesty. I had to stay behind, watch the house, the lab, the crops. Somebody had to do the job, and I guess it was me. None of my brothers who already had a green card — they could have said, "Look, I already have a green card. I want to go back, stay there for three or four months. Take care of that, so you can come in and do this." No — nobody said.

WAYNE: These are the same brothers that gave you manure for your birthday, right?

LUIS: Oh.

WAYNE: Living in the shadow takes its toll over time — not only in how vulnerable you are, but how restricted you are from building a life freely. Maria has not seen her parents since first coming to the U.S., and for that reason alone, they would love the status that would allow them to visit Mexico and return to their daughters here. They're reminded of that pain every few days, when Maria calls her parents.

LUIS: Being able to go back and see the place where you were born — now, in my case, all my family's here, including my mother. My dad already passed away. But my wife — it really hurts me to see her cry when she talks to her parents, and when she sees them, you know, on Skype. And when they see them — I told my wife, and my daughter said the same thing. She said, "Mom, when you guys Skype, don't Skype —

because when you Skype, they don't talk. They just look at each other and cry." And then they cry for like half an hour, and then my mother-in-law says, "Okay, mija, I'll see you soon. Okay." And my wife, "Okay, Mom, okay." That's all they talked. They just look at each other and cry. And it hurts me. I really want her to — to see them.

It is amazing the power you have as an American citizen. Even when you're a resident, you have so much power. It's amazing, you know — being able to come in and just show your documents, and they tell you, "Welcome."

WAYNE: Watching Luis and Maria negotiate the difficulties of living in the U.S. without documentation has not been easy. They have taken great pains not to access government programs for healthcare or sustenance. By paying his own way, he is following the counsel he was given a long time ago.

LUIS: This is what Captain Herrera told me, okay? And my father, too, told me this. They said, "Look, son, one day you're going to go to the U.S., okay? When you go over there," they said, "first of all, you're going to learn the language. It's not up to them to adapt to you. You have to adapt to them. You have to embrace the American way of life. But never forget your roots. Never forget your values, okay? Obey the laws, and be part of the solution." That's what they told me, and that's what I'm trying to do. Now, does everybody have the same mentality? I don't know. I cannot speak for everybody. But that'll be awesome, if we could all come in to the U.S. with the mentality of not what the country can do for me, but what I can do for the country. JFK, you know?

WAYNE: Every day presents new challenges, but there was one day in particular that will illustrate the tragedies and triumphs Luis faces. He's about to take us through the worst day he faced since coming to the U.S. The entire day is filled with tragedy and disappointment that overwhelm him — and then an encounter at three in the morning the next day soothes over all those wounds.

I still remember the first time he told me the story — the day after it happened, actually. As it kept unfolding, I was wondering why he was telling me the story, and why he wasn't in as much pain as listening to the details of his day would indicate. It was tragic, certainly, and had deeply impacted him. At times, he would fight back the tears trying to retell it. But I could tell there was an undercurrent of excitement in his countenance as he moved through the day, as if there were some incredible secret that would turn this all around. I kept waiting for it, even as the story kept getting darker and darker.

I'm going to let Luis tell it to you. And though it won't be easy to hear, if you don't appreciate the depth of his pain, you won't be able to celebrate how gloriously it all ends. We begin at his first job of the day, cleaning a small home for a very troubled man. The resident's father had hired Luis and Maria to clean his drug-addicted son's home, since he found it impossible to care for himself.

LUIS: This was one of the worst days of my life. I started in the morning, okay? When we came into this house to clean it, we kept ringing the bell, and nobody answered. I called the owner, and he wouldn't answer. Then — I was told before, if the front door was not open, go through the back door. And in fact, the back door was open. When I opened the door, the first thing I noticed was this smell, this stench on the

air. And I thought it was really weird. Then I automatically opened all the windows, and then I let my wife in. Then I started calling out the name of the person, the owner of the house, and he wouldn't answer. As I started getting closer to his room, I started getting worse and worse the smell. I went straight into his room to see — the door was open, and then when I looked, I saw something, you know — it was blood coming from the closet. And then I was really afraid at that moment. I knew — in the back of my mind I said, oh no. I put gloves real quick, and then I kind of peeked through my finger to open the door a little bit more, and there he was. He hanged himself.

My wife was like four or five steps behind me. So I turned around and I grabbed my wife, and I said, "Let's go, let's go." So I took her outside, and she was like, "What was that smell? Did the cat die?" She kept saying that — "Did the cat die?" I said, "Don't worry about the cat." So I dialed 911. They came in right away. Obviously, they said, "You guys cannot clean that house." They took my information. They asked me what happened, you know — what I saw and everything.

WAYNE: This is the police, right?

LUIS: The police.

WAYNE: Are you getting concerned about the fact that you're —

LUIS: Then again, yes. Always concerned about what if, you know — they keep checking and say, you know, immigration, you know, legal status on this country. They went through everything, and came and asked me, "Were the doors open?" I said, "No, this one was locked." "What about the back door? Was it open?" I said, "It wasn't open open — it was unlocked. But I opened it." I said, "No — the windows, I opened." They say, "Why?" I said, "For the smell to go away. I didn't know what was causing the smell, so I was just opening the windows automatically." I told them exactly what happened.

WAYNE: How long had they been dead? Did they know?

LUIS: Four, five days, maybe. After they took my information, I gave them my testimony, and thank God, they let us go. That's how we started our day.

WAYNE: After dealing with the police, Luis and Maria continued to the next home. There, they are interrupted by a desperate call from their oldest daughter, working at a local bagel shop. She had just been torn apart by an encounter with a customer.

LUIS: Jennifer — she had a part-time job at a local bagel shop. She called me crying while I was at work. "I'm on my break right now." I said, "What happened?" She said, "Well, this lady just starts screaming at me for no reason." And I said, "What do you mean, for no reason? Did you do something?" She said, "No, no." And I said, "Okay. Tell me what happened." She said, well, she came in — and she didn't even take care of that customer; somebody else did. But she kept saying that it was her. She grabbed the bagel and she tossed it on her face. When she told me that, I was very upset at that. I said, "What did you do?" I said, "Did you kick her out of the store?" She says, "No — she kept screaming at me that I didn't make her bagel the right way." And I said, "Did you tell her you didn't do it?" She said yes, but she wouldn't let up. She

was yelling at her — not just obscene words, but also demeaning stuff, telling her, "If you cannot do anything right here in the U.S., stop wasting air and leave it for somebody else who's more useful than you. You can't even make a bagel the right way."

Of course, she called her demeaning names. She called her — being an American citizen — she started telling her to go back to Mexico, where she came from. First of all, I don't even know how she made out that she was Mexican — but she was right on that, though. I mean, she's Mexican descent. She's American by birth. And she kept calling her names. She said a couple of times this — and I didn't know it was a thing — "beaners." And I didn't know. That was the first time I heard it. And I was like, "Oh, really? Beaners?" I said, "Well, I like beans."

WAYNE: Very derogatory.

LUIS: I was joking about it later on, but I didn't know that she meant it in a way that it was demeaning, and to try to make her more upset about it. But yeah, that encounter was really racist. Now that I think about it, it was more race-motivated.

I said, "Okay — did you call the manager?" She said he was on break. I said, "Okay, where was he?" She said he wasn't in the store. "Then what happened later?" She said, "Well, after screaming at me — I was there with somebody else, and the other person was new. So I was the only one left to deal with her." "Did you give her her money back?" She said she wouldn't want her money back. "So I kept doing it the way she wanted it. She was making me really nervous, and I kept making mistakes. And I was trying really hard, to the point that I couldn't no more. So I looked at her and I said, 'You know what? No. This is not right. You cannot treat me like this. Okay? I didn't do that.' So I said, 'I want to ask you to leave.'" She wouldn't leave.

And at that moment, that's when the manager walked in, and the manager at first was screaming at my daughter. That's what made me even more upset. She was on speaker, and I could hear him screaming at her, and I was screaming back, you know, hoping that he can hear me. And then she explained to him what happened, and then he goes like, "Oh — oh, I apologize. I apologize." Then he turned to the lady and said, "Look, she didn't make the bagel." The manager said, "I did it. How did you go from this six-five male making your bagel to a five-four girl, a teenager, making your bagel?" I don't know how that happened. I couldn't understand what was going on.

Finally, my daughter — she said, "I'm on break right now, and I'm just venting. That's the reason," she said, "I'm calling you — so I can vent. I don't know what else to do." And I said, "It's okay." We pray together. We cry together — because at that moment, that's the only thing I could do. I mean, what can I tell her right now? She was just crying. And after we finished talking, she says, "Okay, Dad, I gotta go back to work." And I was like, "Okay, my daughter. I love you. Okay? Remember that. I love you. Jesus loves you. Never forget that." She says, "I know, I know." She went back to work, and she finished her day.

WAYNE: Worn out from the day and emotionally exhausted, Luis goes to his evening job to clean up after the school kids. Unaware of the pain he'd already suffered that day, his supervisor only piles on more.

LUIS: At night, I was working for a school-slash-church. So I was working as a janitor. I was working there every day, from like 4 p.m. or 5 p.m. all the way out to two or three in the morning. I was extremely tired on that day. Plus, I learned when I drop off my girls that they were mistreating them. And it was very unjust, what they were doing — extremely unfair, what happened. When I came into work, I was frustrated. I was upset that they mistreated my daughters like that, and I was going to go talk to them. But when I walked in, before I even talked to them, they called me into the office.

They used to leave a note on my timecard. It says, "Before you punch in — not after — please come and see me." You know, the person that left it — in this case, it was the office manager. I went to talk to her. She said, "Oh, walk with me." So I started walking, and she said, "See this toilet?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Look — dirty." I said, "Okay." Then she went to another one. She said, "See that toilet?" "Yes." She said, "Dirty." I said, "Okay." And then I looked at her, and she says, "And most of them — dirty." And she says, "What's going on?" I looked at her and I said, "Of course they're dirty. I'm here to clean them." She says, "Yes." And I said, "What? Okay. What is your point?" She says, "They're dirty." And I said, "Yes. But I cleaned them yesterday. They were used throughout that day, today. That's why I'm here today — to clean them." She couldn't — I don't know. She couldn't register that — that in her mind, I was doing a bad work. She said, "You know what? Okay. I just don't want to see that again." I said, "Oh, of course you're going to see it." Because, you know, I said, "Look — if after I'm done cleaning, if you see them dirty, then please let me know. Then, yeah, of course, that's on me. But a day later, after they use them — how does that make sense?" She said, "Don't talk back to me" — you know, kind of like — I said, "Okay. Okay." I said, "Look, I'm saying this in the most respectful way I can. But okay."

I was already upset about what happened with my girls. I brought it up while I was there, because I was already mad. So I told them about it. And she denied it, and she put the blame on me, saying that if I raised them better — so I was like, "Oh, okay. All right." At that moment I said, you know what? This is not working out. I don't need this.

After I finished cleaning the entire church and school — I finished around 3 a.m. I remember this very vividly, because all the light poles — the electricity goes off at 12 a.m. There was no moon. There was no full moon, nothing like that. It was pitch black. When I turned off the last light, I keep looking the way where I was going to go, so I can have a mental picture and not to crash on any walls or anything. So I was like, okay, that's the path I'm going to take. Okay. I turned the light off, and everything — like, my eyes have to adjust to the dark. So I closed the door, and I stand there for like a minute. And when I was there, I waved my hand in front of my face — I couldn't even see it. And I started crying. I don't know — that darkness, for some reason, made me so more emotional, I guess. And I started crying at everything. And I just started calling out on God right there. From the moment I get out, I started walking, and I started feeling for the walls and touching it. Once I got to the parking lot — you know, I know because there was no more walls — then my eyes started to clear more, and I could see a little bit better, and I could make out the lines that divide in the parking lot. So I walked to my truck. I opened it, and then I sit in my truck for

like 10 more minutes, crying.

When I got home, my wife was sleeping, and my daughters were sleeping. And there was a little bit of food on the table for me, and my wife left a little note saying, "For you, my beloved." When I looked at that a bit, I started crying more. And then I looked at the room of my girls, and they were sleeping. And then my wife — she was sleeping. I started eating the food, and the dogs ate most of it, because they were there begging. And I was like — crying and eating — "Here, here, here," giving to the dogs. But anyways, I couldn't take it.

So one part of me was kind of like — not mad at God, but I wanted to bring that to his attention. I said, "Okay. Okay. This is so unfair. This is an injustice." I said, "You are a just judge. I mean, you are just. You're righteous. You are a righteous judge. So I'm going to bring this to your throne. I want to bring this to your chambers and tell you exactly what happened." And I even said it — I said, "Not that you don't know what happened, but I just want to tell you. Not that you don't know how I feel, but I just want to vent. I want to talk to you about this." So I went outside, and I started crying out to God. And then, at one point, I got really desperate, and I said, "Jesus, can you hear me?" And then I switched gears and started talking to him in Spanish. I started saying, "Jesús, can you hear me? Jesús." And then I started screaming outside. In the little patio where I live, there's a wall, and there's a little sidewalk at the other side — that's for the public to walk by. And there are some houses on the side. And I started screaming, "¡Jesús! ¡Jesús!"

And all of a sudden, I stopped talking, because the silence got broken by this kind of like hoarse and very deep voice that says, in Spanish — like really slang Spanish — "¿Qué quieres?" Not even saying "¿qué quieres?" — no, he said, "¡¿Qué quieres?!". That's really slang. And that means, what do you want? I really — I was really shocked. I was blown away when I heard that. And then I said — like, and I said it again — "¿Jesús? ¿Jesús? ¿Jesús, eres tú?" — or, Jesus, is that you? "Sí, yo soy Jesús. Jesús. ¿Qué quieres?" — what do you want?

And then I followed the sound of the voice, and it was coming from the other side of the wall. So when I look over — and I was expecting to see Jesus. Jesus! I was expecting to see him in a white robe, and, I don't know, maybe glory, and kind of like fluorescent or something like that — kind of like, I don't know, illuminating or something. And then I turn around, and I see this — this kind of like little guy. And there I could see, because there's a light pole on the street — the streetlight. And then I saw — and I look around, and he was looking up. Kind of like a shorter guy. He startled me, and I startled him too. And then I looked out and I said, "Who are you?" And he said, "Yo soy Jesús" — I am Jesús. You know, it's Jesse, you know, but in Spanish, it's Jesús. And then he looked up and he says, "What do you want? Why are you calling?" I said, "Oh, I see what's going on." I said, "I thought you were Jesus — Jesús, you know." Because I was calling to Jesus. And he says, "How funny — I thought you were God." He says, "Because I thought — I thought you were God, calling my name." And I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "Yeah — because when I was walking by, I was asking, you know, about my family in Mexico, and how would they be doing." He says, "So I thought it was you, calling me to tell me about it."

And then, right there, we started — both of us — we started laughing. We laughed for like, probably five — I don't know — 10 minutes. And we started talking, and he started telling me who he was, and what he was doing walking at, you know, almost 4 a.m. in the morning. He was working at a little restaurant — Mexican restaurant — down the street, and how he passes there at the same time. After we had a laugh together and we kept talking, he pulled a burrito from his little backpack. He cut it right there with his hands — you know, he broke it in half. I remember it was kind of funny, because he put it right next to the other, like this, and he says, "I think I got it even." He says, "Here — I think this one is bigger. Here, you take the bigger piece, because you're bigger. You're probably more hungry than I am." And then we shared the burrito there. We ate together, right there.

WAYNE: So the worst day of your life — you end up sharing a burrito with Jesús in the early morning hours.

LUIS: The worst day of my life end up being the best. When I was calling out, crying out to Jesus, I was like, what else can happen to me? What else can the enemy throw at me? And by that way, he showed me that he's watching me. He sees us. He hears us. And he cares. He loves us. In the most funniest way, he show up.

WAYNE: I love that. I love that. And so, with just — the worst day of your life ends up with laughter at the end of it, and joy, and a burrito with someone — he thought you were God, and you thought he was Jesus.

LUIS: Oh, yeah. He said, "You really scared me." And he says the reason he didn't run is because — he said, "I couldn't." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I tried, but I was froze. I froze with fear." He says, "Who hears that in the middle of the night? Who hears that?" I said, "Oh, okay." No — he shocked me too. He scared me too.

So after that, we strike a friendship, and we kept talking about it from there. I keep talking about Jesus to Jesús — I keep talking about Jesus to Jesse, or Jesús in Spanish. Every time he'll walk by, he'll scream, "¡Amigo! ¡Amigo! ¿Estás ahí?" — which means, amigo, are you there? Friend, are you there? And then usually I'm coming from work — or if I'm there, I just — at that point, I was kind of waiting for him, so we can talk. And then I'll say, "Yeah, I am." And he'll put a burrito on top of the wall, like this. He jumped — because he was kind of short, so he'll jump — and put it kind of like on top of the brick wall. And then I'll pick up the burrito. I said, "Oh, thank you, thank you. You don't have to do that." And he says, "Oh, it's okay." He always gave me the same reason. He says, "I was finishing my work, and I said, my friend Luis probably is hungry. So I'm going to take a burrito to my friend Luis."

That happened for a while — for like maybe two or three more months. If I wasn't there — if I was working — when I came home, the first thing I do, because my daughters and my wife were sleeping: I go to the wall and look, and there was a burrito right on top of it. I knew that he walked by and he left me the burrito.

One time, he came in with this guy. And the guy was looking at me, and he was like — and he reached over the wall, and he says, "Oh, hi," and shook my hand. And I said, "Hi." But he looked like really hyper. He looked like really excited — kind of like a puppy, you know, like when a puppy is really happy to see his master, whatever. And he looks different. And then I looked at Jesús and I said, "What's up with this guy here, though? I thought he had too much coffee." I said, "You got too much coffee, buddy?" And he just smiled. He said, "No." So — and then we start talking, right? And then he gave me the burrito. He said, "I work there — I work there a lot," he said — Mexican restaurant down the street from my house. So we start talking, and the guy kept looking at me when I was talking. And really, he was — he was paying really close attention to what I was saying. But he was looking at me — the way he was looking at me, I thought — I was getting freaked out, because he was looking at me like really attentive. He was like — yeah, really interested in what I had to say.

After talking for a while, Jesús looked at the guy — and he looked at him, and he says, "Oh, you have to go." He said, "Yeah, yeah, I do." And then he shook my hand, and he says, "I'm so happy — I'm so happy to see you." And I'm like — and I said, "Okay, yeah. Same here, buddy." But I thought it was weird. So he just starts walking. He turns around, and he looks at me, and he smiles and waves. And I waved at him, and I was like, okay. And then I asked Jesús, and I said, "What's — what's with your friend here? What's going on with the guy? He's freaking me out." And he says, "No, nothing." He says, "I told him I was going to stop by. He wanted to see you." He didn't say "he wanted to meet you" — he said "he wanted to see you." I said, "Okay." I said, "What did you tell him about me?" He says, "No — I told him that you're a good friend, and you're a great guy, and you're a good — you're a great man." So, okay.

So he left, and that was the last time I saw Jesús. I never saw him again. And I didn't know what happened to him until one day, my daughter got invited to a birthday party, and I took her there. And there were more parents sitting down at a table, and they started talking. The conversation wasn't even with me — it was between somebody else — but I overheard it. One person: "Hey, you know, it's really sad what happened to Jesús." He says, "Yeah — it is really bad." And I was like, what — Jesús? And they kept talking. He says, "Yeah, it was hard, how immigration went to his work and picked him up and deported him." They're like, "Oh, poor guy." "Yeah — oh, man, I feel so bad for him." He says, "But, you know, whatever happened —" and then he says, "Oh, he went to his family."

When he said that, I was like, "Wait — are you talking about a short guy, you know, that used to work at this Mexican restaurant down the street?" And I gave him the name. And he says, "Yeah, yeah, that's him." He says, "He used to rent a room in my house." I said, "Really?" "Yeah." And I said, "I was wondering whatever happened to him." "What do you mean — you knew him?" I said, "Yeah, we used to talk every morning." He says, "That's right — you're Luis, right?" I said, "Yeah." He says, "He used to talk about you too." He says, "He made a friend." And I said, "Really?" He says, "Yeah — he said you were sent by God." And he says, "He really appreciated you, because you were sent by God to talk to him." And I said, "Yeah — he was sent by Jesus to talk to me too." And then he started laughing. I didn't really tell him the entire story about how it happened. We all started laughing.

And then I said, "What happened to him?" And he says, "Oh, well — he got deported back to Oaxaca. Great man, great man," he says. "He would just happen to be at the wrong place at the wrong time." I said, "Well, yeah. But if you ever talked to him — or if he left stuff?" He said, "Yeah, he left some of his stuff here." I said, "If you want, I can try to find his address. I can try to send it back to him. I don't know how much it is, but I'll try to pay for his freight." He says, "Oh, we can share — we can split it." So we sent his belongings back to Mexico.

I don't know — Jesús was there for like four months, right? When the guy said that he got deported, right — I start talking about it. "Wait," I said, "do you have any pictures with the guy?" He says, "Yeah, look — we're playing soccer here." He showed me this guy — he was really tall. And I said, "No, no, no, no, no. This is not Jesús. Jesús is more like —" and I described Jesús. And he says, "No, no, no, no, no. It's not — no, I don't know who you're talking about, then."

I said, I gotta go back to the Mexican restaurant down the street from where I live. I went over there, and I went and I bought a burrito, and then I asked him. But that place, it's been open for like — gosh, I don't know, maybe like 10 years or so. This happened around, what, 2016? It was open kind of like two or three years that it was open, or four. So I asked him. I said, "Hey, listen — you guys ever had a guy named Jesús working here? And he looks like this." And he goes like, "Uh, no, we don't." I said, "What do you mean, you don't? He worked here, right? And he looked like this." He says, "No, no, no, no." He says, "You see," he says, "I'm the original manager, from when we opened. And all these people you see here — they've all been here. We haven't hired anybody yet — anybody else. What you see is what — all we have." So I said, "Okay." I said, "Well, maybe I got the wrong Mexican restaurant." And he says, "This is the only Mexican restaurant here." There's other places, so I started looking. There's two Japanese restaurants, so I went in there and asked them, "Hey, do you guys have a guy named Jesús?" "No." "No." So I keep looking all the way around, and I couldn't find anything. And there's nothing around.

WAYNE: Luis never discovered where Jesús worked, or any more about him. He's confused by the descriptions other people gave, which didn't match the Jesús he had spent so many nights with outside his home. It has remained one of those inexplicable events in his life.

But after we recorded the story in episode five, of Raphael appearing in the back of a trailer rig to rescue Luis from the cartel, I asked him if that was the last time he saw Rafa. He said it was — except for the occasional dream in which Rafa will appear. I'd heard those before, but he told me that night in the trailer rig was the last time he saw him physically. As he finished that last sentence, I could tell his eyes were searching mine, as if he had more to say. Then a strange smile creased his face. He definitely had more to say, but he wasn't sure how I would respond to it. I waited, and then he told me. After this last encounter with Jesús and the friend he had brought to meet Luis, he had had a dream with Raphael.

LUIS: On that night, I had a dream. And in the dream, I could see myself as a third person. And Rafa appears right there, right next to me in the dream, looking at that. And he says, "Oh, I remember — I remember that day." And I said, "Oh yeah, that's right — you were here." He says, "Yeah, I was." And I said, "Yeah — you're always here." He says, "Yes, I was. I'm always here, yes," he said. I said, "Yeah, but

I didn't see you." He says, "No, you didn't see me. Right there, I was." "What? That was you?" He said, "Yes, that was me." In the dream, he was telling me that. And I looked at him — in the dream, I was looking at him — and I was like, "Oh, really?" And I said, "That explains why you were acting like a weirdo." He grabbed my shoulder. He said, "It was so nice to finally see you, and talk to you, and shake your hand. It felt so good," he said. "So I asked — I asked to come and see you." And I said, "That was you?" He said — I said, "That explains that. I thought either you were, like — I don't know — maybe you were on something, or you had a lot of coffee. Because you were freaking me out, man. It's like you were a fan of me or something." He says, "Yeah, I'm a fan of you. Yeah — I love you, and I really enjoy your company. That's why I was so thrilled and happy to see you."

That got me really thinking — that, you know, the love that they feel for you, the love that God feels for you. And it really got me thinking — look at that. I was like, "And I didn't see you. So how many times have I not seen you, and you're there?" He said, "If you need to see me, you will." So that was the last time I saw him — without knowing I was seeing him.

WAYNE: I know it's hard to believe. As we parted that day, Luis winked at me and said, "I want you to meet my friend someday." It took me a minute to realize who he was talking about. "Rafa?" I asked, to be certain. A smile beamed across his face. "I hope it happens." I do too. I'd love to meet Rafa, or Jesús, and do some sorting out on my own. But I have no reason to doubt these stories. I believe in angels, and have seen them both as celestial beings on this planet, and I've been helped by people who made me wonder later if they were angels in human form. Scripture says that in our hospitality to others we can entertain angels unawares, and said that anytime we visit someone in prison, clothe the naked, or feed the hungry, that we are in fact doing those things to him — not for him, but to him. He makes himself known in the least of these.

I won't be surprised someday if Luis calls me up to meet him somewhere, and there will be a third party there. But it has not happened yet. If it does, it might merit a whole new episode for My Friend Luis. And I do admit that I occasionally keep an eye out during my four-mile walk every day, just in case I spot someone in those telltale Converse running shoes and white t-shirt. And I'll be calling Luis. Life is full of mystery, and though I don't seek out such experiences, I also don't want to miss them when they come my way. Sometimes, in very simple ways, God makes himself known to us in things we might pass off as coincidence — or maybe we don't even look deep enough to see.

None of this is easy, of course. Things will soon come to a head at the church and school Luis cleans every day. It will lead to some difficult choices, and yet another encounter with law enforcement. We'll also talk about how he reconciles his honesty and character with continuing to live in a country without the appropriate documentation. Next time, on My Friend Luis...

LUIS: When I drove by, there was a police officer there. And as I drove by, and I looked over to look at him, and he looked at me, and I just waved, like this, as I kept driving. I was there like 30, 35 miles per hour. I got this thought on my mind, and I thought, hmm — it'll be funny if he pulls me over. Soon as I'm thinking that, I look on my rearview mirror, and he's turning around, and right behind me. And I'm like, oh,

really? As soon as I start turning, he turns on his lights and pulls me over. So I got pulled over, and I started laughing, you know — just laughing.

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This transcript was generated from the episode audio and lightly edited for readability: paragraph breaks and speaker labels were added, and obvious transcription errors were corrected. The speakers' own words and phrasing have been preserved.