



TLM Daily Devotions

January 2018





Blessed New Year,

TLM!



Psalm 90

A prayer of Moses the man of God.

- ¹ Lord, you have been our dwelling place
throughout all generations.
- ² Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
- ³ You turn people back to dust,
saying, “Return to dust, you mortals.”
- ⁴ A thousand years in your sight
are like a day that has just gone by,
or like a watch in the night.
- ⁵ Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death—
they are like the new grass of the morning:
- ⁶ In the morning it springs up new,
but by evening it is dry and withered.
- ⁷ We are consumed by your anger
and terrified by your indignation.
- ⁸ You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your presence.
- ⁹ All our days pass away under your wrath;
we finish our years with a moan.
- ¹⁰ Our days may come to seventy years,
or eighty, if our strength endures;
yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow,
for they quickly pass, and we fly away.
- ¹¹ If only we knew the power of your anger!
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due.
- ¹² Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.
- ¹³ Relent, LORD! How long will it be?
Have compassion on your servants.
- ¹⁴ Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love,
that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.
- ¹⁵ Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,
for as many years as we have seen trouble.
- ¹⁶ May your deeds be shown to your servants,
your splendor to their children.
- ¹⁷ *May the favour of the Lord our God rest on us;
establish the work of our hands for us—
yes, establish the work of our hands.*



Faith in Action

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. Hebrews 11.1-3

I recently made a statement: *"The Church, Christian ministry is dying by degrees. We've become too clever, we have too many ideas, we know too much to use faith"; it's so easy to explain away the supernatural and apply our own understanding. Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6*

The Church should live by faith: *"The just shall live by faith..." Hebrews 11.6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

So what are we facing in this world today?

- Is this day & age any different to the past?
- Has this situation ever been encountered before?
- Economic meltdown
- Wars, unrest...
- Strained generosity
- Reduction in giving...
- Can we say yes?
- Remember Jesus Christ is still *"the same yesterday, today, & forever!" Luke 18:8 "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"*

The work of the Lord is above all these things

- If we've trusted our ways, the ways of mankind, the instruction of man, our abilities to work it out... we will encounter difficulties & challenges
- We will find ourselves as those who know no God

You see *By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.*

- When we believe in evolution faith has just flown out of the window
- When we doubt the Word of God and replace Bible teaching with well planned reasoning, faith has just flown out of the window
- But when we use faith we'll be surprised what we can do! *Psalm 60:12 KJV Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies.*

A short list of people who used their faith in God from Hebrews chapter 11

By faith – Abel worshiped God

By faith – Enoch walked into heaven

By faith – Noah built an ark

By faith – Abraham received his inheritance

By faith – Abraham & Sarah had Isaac

By faith – Israel passed through the Red Sea

By faith – TLM will accomplish God's call to this mission! Hebrews 11:32

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak...

And what more shall I say?

By faith – the staff of all the TLM offices around the world

- Will do mighty exploits
- Will see God as the answer to the challenge
- Trust the Lord

Trust our Heavenly Father for Holy Spirit motivated inspired ways of reaching the people of this world to complete the calling Our Heavenly Father has placed on TLM! When you see the invisible by faith, you can do the impossible, it's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see!

Where to now?

- Back to faith
- Repent of lack of faith & trust in God & using own ways
- Ask for forgiveness
- Accept forgiveness
- Get into God's programme for TLM!
- You may not be doing things wrong, but give God a chance to bring about change for the good in any negative situation
- Shake off the dust, pray, trust, hope and see the hand of God move *Matthew 19:26 Jesus looked at them (and He is looking at you today) and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* Proverbs 14:12

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

And what more shall I say?

By faith – TLM will trust their God to do good works!

Dan Izzett - Zimbabwe. Retired pastor. I was diagnosed with lepromatous leprosy in 1972. Served on TLMI board for eight years and on the Zimbabwe board for 15 years. I now serve on the ALM board and do advocacy for them.



Guidance – the call of Abra(ha)m

Genesis 12: 1-7

Should I marry? Should I take this job? Is God calling me to something new? God's guidance is something many Christians are rightly concerned about.

This story is from a long time ago, and yet the basic principles do not change.

1. Listen to God (v1)
 - a. He is speaking, how do we listen?
 - b. To know the will of God we need to know God himself.
 - c. In our case, we need a range of ways to hear him speak - through Bible reading, prayer, wise advice, common sense, circumstances (Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem because of a government decree – but it was still God's will).
2. Obedience leads to the promise of blessings (vv2-3)
 - a. Blessings to ourselves;
 - b. Blessings to others;
 - c. Blessings to those we do not know.
3. Step out in faith (vv4-6)
 - a. This is equally true in matters great and small.
 - b. Abram was a 75 year old, heading from a settled civilized life to be a nomad, a traveller; this puts our dilemmas into perspective.
 - c. Serving God does not leave you impoverished or friendless.
4. A mission and a purpose (v7a)
 - a. God gives us faith in the future.
 - b. God has plans which are the reason for his guidance.
 - c. There is always the likelihood of opposition.
5. God is with you (v7b)
 - a. God appears when we are doing his will.
 - b. We acknowledge that fact through worshipping him.
 - c. God's guidance is continuous; our experience is just one frame from the video of God's plan.

May we also 'go on' with God as he does with us.

Paul and Niki Jakeman served as TLM missionaries from 1979-1994, successively in Mongar, Lhuntse and Thimphu (Bhutan) and then in Singapore. They returned to the UK and worked in the east end of London for ten years, moving to Wiltshire where they continued medicine and midwifery for another decade. They have both recently retired.



Let's keep hope!

Along the road supporters encourage the cyclists. Hop, hop, go on! Stand firm! This applause and the words of support addressed from the first one to the last runner encourage them to persevere. To feel supported helps greatly to pursue the effort. even if all do not arrive first, all will have the joy to participate and to achieve the goal.

This example taken from the sport underlines an essential truth. We work much better when we are valued rather than denigrated. The criticisms, the non-recognition of what we do can only lead us to have a crushed down spirit *"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones" Solomon tells us in Proverbs ch. 17,22.*

The blow with a stick is never good! It leaves resentments of bitterness in th heart, even sometimes hatred. Whereas words of encouragement motivate us in our deeds and relations with the others. Each of us has values which deserve to be recognised and not buried under negative and destructive criticisms.

Whí do we like to read especially the Book of Psalms? Because we find words of encouragement. Whatever is our mood, there will be a word which will comfort us like these for example:

"The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down." Ps 145,14

The hope is at the end of the road. Good luck and happy New Year 2018! This wish, which we dare to pronounce soon, is nevertheless reachable by all! The promise that we are never left alone stipulated by the psalm 118,6 is also for me and I can endorse it: "the Eternal is for me, I will not be afraid! What can man do to me? The Lord is with me: he is my helper!"

Gardons l'espoir !

Le long de la route des supporters encouragent les cyclistes. Hop, hop, vas-y ! Tiens bon !

Ces applaudissements et ces mots de support adressés du premier au dernier coureur les encouragent à persévérer. Se sentir soutenu aide grandement à poursuivre l'effort. Même si tous n'arrivent pas premier, tous auront eu la joie de participer et d'arriver au but.

Cet exemple emprunté au sport souligne une vérité essentielle. Nous fonctionnons beaucoup mieux lorsque nous sommes valorisés que dénigrés. Les critiques, la dépréciation de ce que l'on fait ne peuvent que nous entraîner à avoir un esprit abattu. *Un cœur joyeux est un bon remède; mais un esprit abattu dessèche les os nous dit Salomon dans les Proverbes ch.17:22.*

Le coup de bâton n'est jamais bon ! Il laisse des séquelles d'amertume dans le cœur, de rancœur, voire parfois de haine. Tandis que des paroles d'encouragement nous motivent dans le faire comme dans l'être, dans nos actions et relations avec les autres. Chacun d'entre nous a des valeurs qui méritent d'être exploitées et non enfouies sous des critiques négatives et destructrices.

Pourquoi aimons-nous lire d'une manière toute particulière le livre des Psaumes ? Parce que nous y trouvons des paroles d'encouragement. Quel que soit notre état d'âme, il y aura une parole qui nous fera du bien comme celles-ci par exemple: *"L'Eternel soutient tous ceux qui tombent et il redresse tous ceux qui sont courbés." Ps 145:14*

L'espoir est au bout de la route. Bon courage et bonne année 2018! Ce vœu, que l'on ose bientôt plus prononcer, est pourtant à la portée de tous ! La promesse que nous ne sommes pas seuls tirée du psaume 118 :6 s'adresse aussi à moi et je peux me l'approprier : « L'Eternel est pour moi, je ne crains rien ; Que peuvent me faire des hommes ? L'Eternel est mon secours. »

Eric Chollet - I'm retired since four years. I used to work with TLM Switzerland for 32 years. During that time, I have had the privilege to stand in different committees (e.g. executive committee - directorate) with TLMI, which has been very rewarding. All along these years of service, I have met a lot of wonderful and dedicated people. May God continue to bless the mission for His glory.



Learning from Shepherds

Luke 2,8-20

This incident is mentioned in the Gospel of Luke only. As per the culture and tradition of that time in Israel and in Palestine, the flock of sheep was kept out in the fields only by night also. As practice the shepherds used to be with the flock of sheep during the night, taking care and protecting them. There is no definite evidence that it was the month of December but it is believed that it was winter season when this incident took place.

We read (9 -12) that that an Angel of the Lord appeared to them and gave them Good news of birth of Christ with other details. Let us now focus (15 onwards) on the reaction of these shepherds to the message of angle which now a great teaching for all of us.

- Listened carefully the message.
- Believed what was said to them.
- Made a right decision to go to Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus. Took trouble to travel in night.
- Witness the birth of Jesus and worshipped him.
- Rejoiced
- Shared the good news with others.

I think because of our nature and personality - questioning always, think that we know better & asking proof and believing in our own knowledge etc. that,

- Many of us if were there at that time probably would have not listened to the good news of Angle carefully. We must have been in half sleep situation and not alert on night duty.
- Even if we have listened to the message but would have not believed in the good news of angles.
- Suppose we would have believed the message but we would have not taken trouble to find out the truth of the message and would have taken trouble to travel by walk to Bethlehem to witness and to worship Baby Jesus.
- Probably we would have not rejoiced after seeing the Baby Jesus or would have not shared this good news with others.

The story of shepherds teaches us a lot on our own commitment to Christ. The challenges are with us today.

- The message of Good News is there even today for us. Do we pay attention and listen carefully?
- Do we trust, believe and follow, what Bible says to us and on the teachings of Christ?
- Do we accept Christ as our Saviour?
- Do we rejoice when we receive Christ in our life?
- Do we share this good news with others?

It is important that we learn some things very important and essential from the story of shepherds not just at the time of Christmas but also onwards!

Pradeep & Sarah Failbus Worked for 39 years and 29 years with TLM(most at Anandaban,Nepal) Now retired and settled at: Kathgodam, District Nainital Uttarakhand, India M - 8853551227



Psalm 2

¹ Why do the nations conspire
and the peoples plot in vain?
² The kings of the earth rise up
and the rulers band together
against the LORD and against his anointed, saying,
³ “Let us break their chains
and throw off their shackles.”

⁴ The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.
⁵ He rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
⁶ “I have installed my king
on Zion, my holy mountain.”

⁷ I will proclaim the LORD’s decree:

He said to me, “You are my son;
today I have become your father.
⁸ Ask me,
and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession.
⁹ You will break them with a rod of iron;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”

¹⁰ Therefore, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the earth.
¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear
and celebrate his rule with trembling.
¹² Kiss his son, or he will be angry
and your way will lead to your destruction,
for his wrath can flare up in a moment.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.



Psalm 3

A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom.

¹ LORD, how many are my foes!
How many rise up against me!

² Many are saying of me,
“God will not deliver him.”

³ But you, LORD, are a shield around me,
my glory, the One who lifts my head high.

⁴ I call out to the LORD,
and he answers me from his holy mountain.

⁵ I lie down and sleep;
I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.

⁶ I will not fear though tens of thousands
assail me on every side.

⁷ Arise, LORD!
Deliver me, my God!
Strike all my enemies on the jaw;
break the teeth of the wicked.

⁸ From the LORD comes deliverance.
May your blessing be on your people.



To be or ... to do

1 Peter 4.10-11

It's important to be or rather to grow as the person I'm in Christ but it's also important to use the gifts received by grace to serve God and others.

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4.10.

In verse 11, the measure is given : *"If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides."*

When I do something even it is for God, I don't have to do it by myself. I have to do good works, which God prepared in advance for me to do (*Ephesians 2.10*).

If we read the passage of 1 Peter 4 from verse 7 it's said : *"The end of all things is near"*.

When we know it's almost the end we want to communicate the essential.

The main things are :

- to pray (verse 7)– to develop the relationship with God;
- above all, to love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins (verse 8);
- to offer hospitality to one another without grumbling (verse 9).

Love covers over a multitude of sins!

I can imagine that when Peter wrote this, he had in mind what is written in John 21.15-19.

When in verse 16, Jesus asked him the most important question *"Do you truly love me?"* he called him Simon, son of John. (Remember, Jesus changed his name when he called him as disciple : *"Simon – to whom he gave the name Peter"* *Mark 3.16*).

Then, Jesus said : *"Take care of my sheep"*.

Jesus brought him back first to his identity and then to his ministry.

For God the important thing is that I develop my relationship with him and this will help me to do what He asks me to do to others. My prayer is to grow in this relationship.

And so it's not to be or ... to do but to be and ... to do!

"If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen" 1 Peter 4.11



CBR principles

Mark 10:46-52

This is a story about a blind man, a beggar. He did not fully participate in society. He sat by the roadside in this urban area asking for charity and listening to what people talked about. Of course, he noticed when a large group of travellers passed by on the road. He noticed that many curious people flocked around them to see what was happening. He asked what it was and processed the news quickly: Jesus of Nazareth was walking there at the centre of the crowd.

Bartimaeus realizes in seconds the opportunity that is presented to him. He knows about Jesus, that he is a descendant of David, that people say he is sent from God, that he heals people... He springs into action and starts calling out at the top of his voice: "Have mercy on me!"

Typically, the people around him tell him to shut up. His action is embarrassing and, anyway, there are more important people Jesus should be talking to. Bartimaeus is marginalised, excluded. He is not allowed to speak. No-one wants to listen to him. Not until Jesus stops and pays attention to him. Then suddenly people's attitude to him changes 180 degrees. Suddenly he is now important, the centre of attention. Suddenly he is valued. People encourage him and tell him to get up and they help him to walk towards Jesus.

Jesus asks him an open-ended question: "What do you want me to do for you?" Rather than offering anything specific, Jesus leaves the initiative and the choice to the person with disability. Personally, I would not have been surprised if Bartimaeus had not known what to say at this point. After all the noise and disturbance he had caused, to just be baffled and perplexed now that he had actually succeeded in meeting Jesus. But this man knew what he wanted and pursued it with all his might. He saw the one chance he had and took it with both hands. He said: "Rabbi, I want to see!"

We learn from the way he puts all his trust in Jesus and the story invites us to do the same. The story also shows how Jesus applies basic CBR principles. When he stops for Bartimaeus, he gives him importance and includes him and other people then do the same. When he gives Bartimaeus the initiative, he recognizes his ability to think for himself and to express what he needs. That is a form of empowerment.

Following Jesus' example, we do the same. By taking time for persons with disability, we give them value and include them. By asking them open-ended questions, we show respect and show we take them seriously. It is not our interventions or programs that should form the point of departure in the conversation but the expressed needs of the target population.

Jesus approach leads to transformation for Bartimaeus – physically, socially and spiritually.

May we similarly bring transformation to individuals and communities by following his example.

Johan Velema headed TLM's Evaluation & Monitoring Service from 1999 to 2007, co-ordinating evaluations of projects and programmes and collecting statistical data from all centres. He did research & development work for TLM International from 2007 to 2011.



Give us this day our daily bread

Mathew 6.11

What is the meaning of *our daily bread* in the words we say as we pray the Lord's Prayer.

I was struck by an explanation in a sermon I heard, I looked up the English translated and used the same text in a sermon at harvest thanksgiving.

They were from Luther's explanation of the Lord's Prayer from the Catechism. Martin Luther wrote 2 catechisms a longer and a shorter. I guess this is from the shorter.

As Luther explains the different phrases of the Lord's Prayer when he comes to *Give us today our daily bread* he asks

"What does this mean? God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realise this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving."

It continues

"Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as

food,	drink,	clothing,
shoes,	house,	home,
land,	animals,	money,
goods,	a devout husband or wife,	
devout children,	devout workers,	devout and faithful rulers,
good government,	good weather,	peace,
health,	self-control,	good reputation,
good friends,	faithful neighbors, and the like."	

For those who live in countries where there is civil war, problems of poverty, famine, natural disasters many of these things are not available all the time. For those living live in in countries where there is a rule of law, where we have comfortable homes, we risk taking all these things for granted, and may forget to give thanks for our daily bread.

Today may we remember all who do not have their Daily bread, the supplication is a must the US is universal we pray Give US, that is all people our daily bread.

Elisabeth Liz Hichens épouse Barnett, Occupational Therapist worked with TLM at the Philadelphia Leprosy Hospital, Salur, AP India and at RSK Sungai Kunda, Palembang Sumatra, Indonesia. 1979-88. Today, she is retired living in South West France; with her husband James, she is joint secretary of la Mission Lèpre, France.



Rough and Gentle

Some peasant women in Nicaragua were discussing the Nativity scene set up in church. One said, “Mary wouldn’t have been wearing those beautiful blue and white clothes. She’d have been dressed like the poor, like us.” And another said, “And she had rough hands like ours....”

The birth of my new granddaughter reminded me of the softness of a baby’s skin. I imagined Mary’s hands, the skin roughened by work in a peasant home, holding Jesus. I thought of Joseph’s hands, the hands of a carpenter, skin thickened by his trade, teaching Jesus to walk. Rough but caring hands, comforting, clothing, feeding the baby. Hard hands but softened by love.

As the baby grew, the hand of God was rough in Jesus’ life. From wilderness experience to the life of a wandering teacher, it wasn’t easy being God’s son. He had to face the doubt, the questions, the growing hatred, and the rejection of the establishment. And, finally, the cross. And there the soldiers’ hands were rough, calloused and callous, and so was the wood. No softness there.

But through the roughness, love was let loose into the world. A love alternately gentle and abrasive, comforting and challenging, pruning and healing.

And because of the roughness, the suffering and the pain in Jesus’ life, the poor of Nicaragua can recognise God-with-us and identify with him. If the hand of God had been only gentle he would have been less relevant, easier to ignore.

Taken from Breaking the Rules by Eddie Askew – with thanks to TLMTrading

Eddie Askew (1927-2007) devoted half a century to leprosy and its consequences. In 1950 he and his wife Barbara set sail for India. Eddie's first placement was in Purulia, West Bengal. In 1965 Eddie took up the post of executive secretary at TLM's office in London. His first overseas visit in this new role was to Ethiopia, where he learned of plans to set up a leprosy training centre that would benefit patients and medics throughout Africa. He offered to become a founding member and signed TLM up to support what was to become ALERT (All Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre). The following year, the organisation now known as the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP) was set up. In 1974 Eddie became general director of TLM. He was keen to develop TLM's work elsewhere, and took a team into the closed land of Bhutan in response to a request from its government. - Inspired by his travels and his Christian faith, Eddie found an outlet for his creativity in painting and poetry. He retired in 1987. From 1998 until his death he was TLM- vice-president, and in 2000 he was awarded an OBE. (Fiona Spence)



Twice Blessed

God can bless you with everything you need, and you will always have more than enough to do all kinds of good things for others. 2 Corinthians 9:8 (CEV)

Have you ever forgotten a close friend's birthday? It's embarrassing isn't it? You don't want them to think you don't care, but there's no escaping the fact that you've missed their special day.

Not so long ago, the opposite happened to me. I didn't forget a friend's birthday, I simply forgot that I had already remembered it - until I received a perplexed thank you note.

Thank you for the birthday gifts.

Did you realise that you sent me two lots of presents.

And then I remembered that in a particularly organised moment, and in order to save the postage as she lives some miles away, I had taken her present to a barbecue in July and left it with her to open in September. Wow! Thinking ahead. So organised and so out of character.

Then, September arrived and off I went to choose, buy, wrap and dispatch another present for the postie to deliver on her actual birthday. Forgetful, or what? But then again, perhaps it's rather nice to be remembered twice. Two presents equals twice the enjoyment, but don't tell everyone or all my friends will expect similar treatment.

Double the gifts. Double the love. Double the blessings. God blesses us in just the same way, and more so, not just with a double portion, but with *abundant* blessings. He enfolds us, surrounds us, wraps us in his love and care every single day not just once a year. His love is a wonderful gift to be enjoyed every day.

Lord, your blessings come wrapped in love and not just on our birthday, but every day. Thank you.



Psalm 4

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm of David.

¹ Answer me when I call to you,
my righteous God.
Give me relief from my distress;
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

² How long will you people turn my glory into shame?
How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?

³ Know that the LORD has set apart his faithful servant for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.

⁴ Tremble and do not sin;
when you are on your beds,
search your hearts and be silent.

⁵ Offer the sacrifices of the righteous
and trust in the LORD.

⁶ Many, LORD, are asking, "Who will bring us prosperity?"
Let the light of your face shine on us.

⁷ Fill my heart with joy
when their grain and new wine abound.

⁸ In peace I will lie down and sleep,
for you alone, LORD,
make me dwell in safety.



Psalm 5

For the director of music. For pipes. A psalm of David.

¹ Listen to my words, LORD,
consider my lament.

² Hear my cry for help,
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.

³ In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice;
in the morning I lay my requests before you
and wait expectantly.

⁴ For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness;
with you, evil people are not welcome.

⁵ The arrogant cannot stand
in your presence.

You hate all who do wrong;

⁶ you destroy those who tell lies.
The bloodthirsty and deceitful
you, LORD, detest.

⁷ But I, by your great love,
can come into your house;
in reverence I bow down
toward your holy temple.

⁸ Lead me, LORD, in your righteousness
because of my enemies—
make your way straight before me.

⁹ Not a word from their mouth can be trusted;
their heart is filled with malice.

Their throat is an open grave;
with their tongues they tell lies.

¹⁰ Declare them guilty, O God!

Let their intrigues be their downfall.

Banish them for their many sins,
for they have rebelled against you.

¹¹ But let all who take refuge in you be glad;
let them ever sing for joy.

Spread your protection over them,
that those who love your name may rejoice in you.

¹² Surely, LORD, you bless the righteous;
you surround them with your favor as with a shield.



God's Heart for the Poor – Me, a Steward! Part 1.

Often a question arises, what is more important – proclamation of the Good News of salvation or providing for the poor. An underlying dimension of this question is stewardship. A steward is the vessel through which God pours Himself out into this world. God, the owner has all the rights; Man, the manager has the accountability.

What does God command us to do for the poor?

“God is a God of justice and wants his people to make a difference in the world, standing up for those who cannot stand up for themselves and sharing what we have with those who have nothing”.

We must stand up and defend the poor

- *Psalm 82:3–4 Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.*

We must provide for the poor

- *Deuteronomy 15:7–8 If there is among you anyone in need ... do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbour. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be.*

Not mere words; actions are necessary

- *James 2:15-16 Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. What good is there in your saying to them, "God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!" – if you don't give them the necessities of life?*

Do not defer charity. Charity delayed is charity denied

- *Proverbs 3:27–28 Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbour, "come back later; I'll give it tomorrow" when you now have it with you.*

Why does God want us to meet the needs of the poor?

By being kind to the poor, we honour God

- *Proverbs 14:31 He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God.*
- *Matthew 25: 31-40 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats..... "Then the King will say to those on his right,..... For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,, I needed clothes and you clothed me," "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?, or needing clothes and clothe you?.....' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'*

Caring for the poor manifests our love for God

- *1 John 3:16–18 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?*



God's Heart for the Poor – Me, a Steward! Part 2.

Does God judge us in our stewardship towards the poor?

Our actions with respect to the poor will be judged

- *Proverbs 28:2 "He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses."*
- *Proverbs 21:13 Whoever ignores the poor when they cry for help will also cry for help and not be answered.*

Does God reward us when we take care of the poor?

One who blesses the needy shall be blessed.

- *Matthew 10:42 And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple, I tell you the truth, he will never lose his reward.*
- *Proverbs 22:9 The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.*

Why do Christians fail in their generosity to the poor?

Many Christians are ignorant of the scriptures that command us to serve the poor. Our understanding of the Gospel is incomplete. It is limited to the promises of God and not as to how we ought to respond. There is also a Platonic thought that saving the soul is all that matters. There is also an underlying fear of being accused of overcompensating the "Social Gospel". Our sinful nature leads us to convincing ourselves that the problem of the poor is too big for us to manage. In a secular and socialistic environment, the Government should provide for the needy. We do not have the means to make any impact. So why bother.

Summing up

In stewardship, faith, works and economics intersect. God does not give us the option to serve the poor. He is not making suggestions or giving guidelines. He is commanding us so that we manifest His love and honour Him. Grace must be responded through gratitude – one such expression is caring for the poor. Jesus Himself was a perfect example of a steward for the care of the poor and needy. He catered to all their needs – spiritual and material. Serving the poor is the unlimited opportunity God has created to strengthen our relationship with Him by manifesting His love. "The great thing about serving the poor is that there is no competition", Eugene Rivers. What a wonderful world we would have if every Christian understands the heart of God for the poor.

I am a steward of God's resources for the betterment of His creation and His glory through Jesus Christ.

Dr PLN Raju - Former Director (Resource Mobilization), The Leprosy Mission Trust India, New Delhi



God's invitation to friendship

John 15:15

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you / revealed to you.

Greetings from my green summer garden in Pretoria. I'm sitting in the shade of a tree with large overhanging branches. It feels like I'm in the bush. It is a glorious quiet Sunday morning.

Recently I met a new friend on a Skype discussion group. She lives overseas, we have never met in person, but I immediately felt drawn to her lovely personality, her faith that she shared spontaneously and her insight into our common field of work.

Afterwards she wrote to ask if I will help her with a specific task. I was delighted. I enjoyed the contact with her, we had further stimulating sharing of experiences, and we advised each other on difficult questions.

Her invitation to friendship was such an excitement. It came from her side, I couldn't resist it. Now it is such a beautiful new space where we can grow in many aspects of our lives. I feel wanted. I feel my mere presence makes a difference.

But above all I'm learning so much in this new friendship. We have discussed many things which need deep discernment and I'm able to apply these new insights.

And then it occurred to me:

Is this a demonstration of God's invitation to friendship with us?

He calls for our friendship.

He wants to share intimate knowledge that comes from the Father.

He is eager for this friend-relationship.

I see it clearly now, responding to an invitation to friendship is a two-way dynamic. Where both sides give themselves freely, immense riches start to flow. I can't afford to miss it.

Erna Möller is a social worker with TLM South Africa since 1987.

(This meditation is a continuation of an earlier one written in 2016)



Peace I leave with you

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14: 27

Recently when I collected most of my old newsletters, I found the first letter written from Nepal was written in January 1994. It was full of thanksgiving and challenges. Now after 24 years, when I came to Nepal again, it is still full of thanksgiving and challenges, nothing less. Because our God is a faithful God, His grace is always sufficient, the peace He leaves with me hasn't changed, same as 24 years ago, His love is forever, Praise Him!

First challenge – road trip with heavy luggage

God always knows my need, when my heart was trouble with my four heavy suitcases after arriving in Kathmandu, I wondered how I could take the long hour public bus from Kathmandu to Pokhara by myself alone. However, He provided a private vehicle to take me there in 8 hours journey beyond my imagination. Because one of the expatriates rang me one night and offered me to go with her and others to Pokhara, when I asked her how she knew I was in Kathmandu with such urgent need. She said the Lord told her to contact me when she read the Mission newsletter regarding my arrival, what a surprise to me!

Second challenge - survive in village stay

It has been nearly two months since I came to Nepal, Pokhara is the place where I am staying and will be working. I have started my language learning and orientation program after settling in another expatriate couple's home, therefore, there is a need to stay in a village in order to experience the culture and refresh my language during the Hindu festival time. Although the village people were very friendly and the village life was quiet and simple, however, the facilities of living was very primitive, especially challenge me most was the outside toilet by the side of the main road without light and water, I found it hard to use in the dark especially when heavy rain pouring down in the last few nights. During that stay, I slept very well every night and had good chance to make friends with the villagers even with my limited Nepali. I realized His peace ruled deeply in my heart, to take away my fear. From John 14:27 Jesus left His peace with His disciples, His peace is not as the world gives, His peace really protected me and won over my fear, and that was the experience I really enjoyed with His presence.

Third challenge – Language learning

After village stay, I have started learning Nepali language full time with five days a week for two months, although I have had some foundation of the language 24 years ago, no need to start from the beginning. But I nearly forgot how to write and read the words, and my grammar is totally wrong, my pronunciation is still out of control. I tried to memorize every word and writing in Nepali scripts only. However, it seems a lot of discipline and good memory every day, the language became so new to me although some words sound so familiar to my ears. To learn a new language is a challenge in such age, but nothing is impossible from our God.

Yuek Ming Poon - Worked with The Leprosy Mission for 22 years. 1993 – 2000 seconded to INF to work in Nepal in leprosy clinic as Clinic Manager. 2002 – 2004 worked with TLM as POID Technical Officer in India, 2005 – 2012 worked with TLM as Country Leader in China and Laos, 2013 -2015 worked with TLM in PNG as TLMPNG Capacity Building Advisor. June 2015 left TLM and then studied in Vancouver Regent Bible College from September 15 to April 2016. Now working as Leprosy Nursing advisor with INF in Nepal.



The fragrance of the Spirit

When I was a child, January was a month of abundance at my home. Our fruit trees provided a seemingly endless profusion of peaches, plums, figs, apricots and my all-time favourite, nectarines.

The fruit was juicy and full of flavour and irresistible when eaten straight from the tree.

My parents spent their evenings peeling and canning, keeping us supplied with fruit and jams throughout winter. I would harvest cobs of maize from “my” garden and sit on the pavement, trying to sell them. Occasionally, I would hop over the fence and take maize from Johan’s garden – I don’t think of it as theft, more as an apprenticeship in fundraising. Sadly, there were few buyers for my wares, as the neighbours grew maize and vegetables in their gardens too.

Towards the end of the month, the supply of apricots in particular became a blizzard and even my hard-working parents could not keep pace with the deluge of fruit. We ate all we could, but lots of fruit ended up in the compost. To this day, I associate January with the smell of fruit fermenting in afternoon sun. Had we been able to give away half of it, we would still have had more than enough for our own needs.

Fruitfulness features prominently throughout the Scriptures. Verses like Leviticus 25:18-19 speak of rich harvests as a reward for obedience. Paul develops the idea of fruitful abundance to embrace the fruit of the Spirit in *Galatians 5*. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."*

Thinking back to my parental home, it was no accident that January was a time of extravagant abundance. May was a time of hard work – pruning and preparation of the soil; June, July and August were times of waiting and September was a month of watering and spraying.

I believe that each one of us who takes the trouble to work through these devotions desires to be fruitful and desires the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. Are we as keen to work hard during the months of Autumn, Winter and Summer to enjoy the fruits of Autumn?

Are there things that need to be pruned from our lives at the start of this new year? Habits? Relationships? Skewed priorities? If they’re lurking in your garden, I doubt that you need anyone to point them out to you. What can you do to improve the fertility of your soil? It is so important to feed the soul on the things it needs, not the things our heart so often wants. Are we prepared to be patient with ourselves – and more especially with others [*note to self ...*] Are we prepared to kill the bugs that hunger after our fruit? Spraying is hard and messy work, but bad insects can undo the good work of the honeybees in no time at all. Make sure that doesn't happen in your garden.

I wish you a fruitful year. A year of abundance. A year of growth. I leave you with one final recollection. One of my loveliest aural memories was the sound, on a hot, still afternoon, of the honeybees at work in our garden during September and October. At times the garden seemed to roar with the sound of the bees rejoicing amongst the riot of blossom in our garden. Dear friend, may the bees of the Kingdom of God rejoice when they find the garden of your life filled with the sweet fragrances of Spring.

Peter Laubscher - Country Leader, Southern Africa. Peter and Elizabeth Laubscher have worked with the Leprosy Mission since 1981. They are blessed with three children. Peter cruises the waters of False Bay when he’s not trying to polish scratches out of telescope mirrors.



Psalm 6

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. According to sheminith. A psalm of David.

¹ LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your wrath.

² Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am faint;
heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.

³ My soul is in deep anguish.
How long, LORD, how long?

⁴ Turn, LORD, and deliver me;
save me because of your unfailing love.

⁵ Among the dead no one proclaims your name.
Who praises you from the grave?

⁶ I am worn out from my groaning.

All night long I flood my bed with weeping
and drench my couch with tears.

⁷ My eyes grow weak with sorrow;
they fail because of all my foes.

⁸ Away from me, all you who do evil,
for the LORD has heard my weeping.

⁹ The LORD has heard my cry for mercy;
the LORD accepts my prayer.

¹⁰ All my enemies will be overwhelmed with shame and anguish;
they will turn back and suddenly be put to shame.



Psalm 7

A shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjamite.

¹ LORD my God, I take refuge in you;
save and deliver me from all who pursue me,
² or they will tear me apart like a lion
and rip me to pieces with no one to rescue me.

³ LORD my God, if I have done this
and there is guilt on my hands—
⁴ if I have repaid my ally with evil
or without cause have robbed my foe—
⁵ then let my enemy pursue and overtake me;
let him trample my life to the ground
and make me sleep in the dust.

⁶ Arise, LORD, in your anger;
rise up against the rage of my enemies.
Awake, my God; decree justice.
⁷ Let the assembled peoples gather around you,
while you sit enthroned over them on high.
⁸ Let the LORD judge the peoples.
Vindicate me, LORD, according to my righteousness,
according to my integrity, O Most High.
⁹ Bring to an end the violence of the wicked
and make the righteous secure—
you, the righteous God
who probes minds and hearts.

¹⁰ My shield^[d] is God Most High,
who saves the upright in heart.
¹¹ God is a righteous judge,
a God who displays his wrath every day.
¹² If he does not relent,
he will sharpen his sword;
he will bend and string his bow.
¹³ He has prepared his deadly weapons;
he makes ready his flaming arrows.

¹⁴ Whoever is pregnant with evil
conceives trouble and gives birth to disillusionment.
¹⁵ Whoever digs a hole and scoops it out
falls into the pit they have made.
¹⁶ The trouble they cause recoils on them;
their violence comes down on their own heads.

¹⁷ I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness;
I will sing the praises of the name of the LORD Most High.



It's not just about what we can give

I have told this account many times, so it may be familiar to some reading this. However it still moves me when I recall the scene described below.

Dr. Osahon Ogbeiwi was host on my first trip to Nigeria in 1994, and I vividly recall the visit to the Okegbala hospital. We toured the hospital in the usual way and then we went outside to visit the leprosy village. As we've seen in so many places, leprosy hospitals have attracted people affected by the disease who are essentially homeless, and typically they end up on some vacant plot of land adjacent to the hospital grounds, where they make their home. Shelters turn into shacks, and shacks sometimes turn into more permanent houses. Some houses at the Okegbala village had tin roofs and TV aerials

Dr. Osahon and I walked down the rough track talking to some of the residents. Further down the more permanent houses degenerated into shacks made from very flimsy materials. They were more like tents than huts – often with only a plastic tarpaulin as a roof stretched over whatever wooden frame they could conjure up.

As we walked on, Dr Osahon stopped outside one such shack, and introduced me to Samuel and Sarah. They had both had developed leprosy in their teenage years, and it had gone untreated for a long time, so they had ended up with severe disabilities. Samuel had already had one leg amputated, and Dr. Osahon said he was seriously considering having to do the same with the other leg because the condition of the bones in his foot was so bad.

Samuel and his wife insisted that we came into their little shack for some tea. It was a struggle to get in through the low door and not enough space to stand up inside. We sat on low stools and waited while Sarah made the tea.

I looked around at the reality of their lives. You could probably fit their whole house into my bedroom. There was just enough space for the four of us to sit down; there was a small area where Sarah cooked their meals and was another small space with mats and bedding rolled up for them to sleep at night. We chatted for about 10 minutes (with Dr. Osahon translating) enjoying their very welcome hospitality.

When it was time to go and we went outside and started to bid them farewell – which I had quickly learned is not something to be rushed in Nigeria. After a while I thought we were done with the farewells and was about to walk away when Samuel pulled me back. He would not let me leave till we had prayed together. And so we stood there – the four of us in a small circle outside the entrance of their shack and bowed our heads while Samuel prayed.

Of course I had no idea what he was saying, but when he had finished Dr. Osahon translated for me. He told me that Samuel was asking God to **bless me!** I could hardly believe what was I was hearing, and still marvel about it to this day. Samuel was asking God to bless me; to bless the work of the Leprosy Mission and to bless all the people who support this work all over the world!

This couple had suffered so much because of this crazy disease of leprosy. But in that moment I got a glimpse of the power of the Gospel of love. Here was a man so poor in the eyes of the world – yet rich beyond measure in the eyes of God. It seemed to me that in spite of their suffering they had been set free from the oppression that we all too often associate with leprosy, and had been released into a ministry of their own. **They were ministering to me!**

It helped me understand how important our Christian ministry is. Samuel and Sarah had learned something about the richness of the Kingdom of God that is deeply challenging – probably to all of us.



Grains of Wheat

"Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. John 12:24

In the late 1970's while visiting the Congo, I was invited to preach in a church in the North-East. It was a big congregation of a major evangelical denomination celebrating the centenary of mission work in the country.

The whole town was taking part in the celebration with banners, choirs, orchestras, singing, parades a kaleidoscope of colours and a cacophony of sounds. Long before the service started, hundreds of people packed the building and thousands filled up the space around it.

Aiming for a moment of quiet prayer, I went a little way into the jungle behind the building, found an overgrown path which I followed to a spot that had been used as a cemetery.

Looking at the crosses and reading the simple inscriptions carved on planks, I made a startling discovery. "...arrived for Jesus 1880, went to be with Jesus 1883". "...born 1881, went home 1882". In a period of less than 20 years, over 15 men, women and children had died of malaria, fevers, dysentery, snake bites, out of love for Christ and His gospel. Each year, facing rejection, persecution, sickness, death, they kept on coming, seeing very little fruit for their labour but motivated by His love.

One hundred years later, thousands were celebrating and rejoicing in Christ as Saviour. Instead of bringing the message I had prepared, we read the above passage, prayed the prayer "Lord help me to understand what it means to die to self that I may bring forth fruit and give me enough love for you to do it." Then we walked silently past the graves and prayed the same prayer again.

Where do I stand today?

Silvano Perotti

Secretary for Europe then Deputy International Director and Director for Support and Development TLMI

Born in Italy - retired in Switzerland.

Worked with TLMI until 1990.



A 1 PETER 'LADDER SERMON'

Written by the Apostle Peter to a persecuted and suffering 1st Century Church.

1) DO YOU LOVE HIM?

1 Pet.1:8 – “Though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him

And rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory...”

2) DO YOU BELONG TO HIM?

1 Pet.2:9 – “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,

A people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.”

3) DO YOU THINK LIKE HIM?

1 Pet.3:8 – “Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love,

A tender heart, and a humble mind.”

4) DO YOU CARE LIKE HIM?

1 Pet.4:8 – “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly,

Since love covers a multitude of sins.”

5) DO YOU RESIST LIKE HIM?

1 Pet.5:8 – “Be sober-minded; be watchful.

Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion,

Seeking someone to devour.

Resist him, firm in your Faith....”

- Amen.

Otto Kingsley is the Cape Regional Director of TLM(SA), operating from Cape Town, RSA.



The Christian obligation to rejoice

“Rejoice always” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 Among the most neglected of all our Christian obligations is the obligation to rejoice. Just as the word of God commands us to believe and to love, so does it command us to rejoice. We need to remind ourselves of this often forgotten obligation.

This is season of “Gaudate”. Gaudate is Latin for “rejoice”. It is a command taken directly from Paul’s First Letter to the Thessalonians: *“Rejoice always” (1 Thess 5: 16)*. It is a positive command, one that we are supposed to keep at all times and in all circumstances. It is not a conditional command that we keep only when things are going well with us.

The command to rejoice, like every other command, is demanding. As we sing in the Lord of the Dance, “It’s hard to dance with the devil on your back.” Author Leo Bascaglia tells his story about his mother which shows that it takes a lot of faith to rejoice. His father came from work one day and announced that he had lost all his money because his business partner had duped him and ran away with their firms funds. That same evening, his mother went out, sold some of her expensive jewelry, and bought food for a sumptuous feast. People criticized her for reckless spending at a time when poverty was staring her in the face. But she told them that “the time for joy is now when we need it most, not next week.” Her courageous act rallied the family and gave them the hope they needed to face the future with confidence and trust that God was in control.

Paul begins by telling us what we must do at all times. *“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thess 5:16-18)*. At all times and in all circumstances we must rejoice, pray and give thanks. He adds that this command reflects the will of God for those who come to Him through Jesus Christ. As followers of Christ we know that life on earth is not always rosy, but life after death is bliss. Our hope is not in this life only. That is why we are able to rejoice in good times and in bad, as Jesus himself did.

Next, Paul tells us what we must never do, what we have to avoid at all costs. *“Do not quench the spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thess 5:19-22)*.

We must not stifle the spirit, despise the words of prophets or indulge in any form of evil. Paul is asking us to activate and nourish the spiritual part of our lives. As humans we have a material and a spiritual life. Some of us pay all attention to the material, neglecting the spiritual dimension. You can see it in the way we prepare for Christmas. We take more care to decorate our homes more than we do to clean up our souls. We are more concerned with the gifts we give to family and friends than we are with the gifts of self we should make to God. This is a time to prepare not only materially but also spiritually for the coming of the Lord.

Finally, Paul tells us how to achieve the ideal life of God’s children to which he calls us. It is not something we achieve by dint of will power or human effort alone. It is something that God Himself accomplishes in us. *“May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this” (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)*

The life of holiness to which Paul invites us this season is the life of God in us. It is God who makes this happen. Our part is mainly to say yes to God, to surrender totally to Him. It is hard for us to live a life of rejoicing always, but the One who calls us to this life is one who always gives us what He commands. He is faithful, and He will do it in our lives. So be it. Amen.

Moses Onoh, MD, is the former Country leader of TLM Nigeria.



The Good Shepherd

In John 10 verse 14-15 Jesus said "I am the good Shepherd... I lay down My life for the sheep.

Probably the most well known and perhaps well loved Psalm in the Bible is Psalm 23, the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not lack. What an amazing thought, that the Creator of all the earth, our Saviour is also the One who will be a Shepherd to His people, throughout their lives, even through the valley of the shadow of death. Throughout the ages this Psalm has ministered to the deepest needs of untold numbers of the Shepherds fearful and hurting flock.

In Ezekiel 34 verses 2-4 Ezekiel rebukes the false prophets and self seeking rulers and says to them that shepherds should take care of the flock, but they have not cared for theirs. He goes on to tell them what a true shepherd should do. Ezekiel 34 verse 10-16 He will rescue them, search for them, look after them, take them to good pastures, bind up their wounds and strengthen the weak.

Shepherds, in the New Testament at least, were disliked. It was considered a disreputable line of work, so it was remarkable that God chose to reveal, to shepherds first of all the wonderful news of Christs birth. The Angels appearing to them, and the glory of God shining around them. Luke 2 8-9, so they were able to be amongst the first to visit the stable and worship Him. We are all on an equal level in Gods sight. He loves us all the same, poor or rich, servant or master.

In 1 Corinthians 1 27-28 it tells us that God uses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to put to shame the strong, etc.. I know when reading this many years ago, I thought if this is the case then I am fully equipped! The weak and needy are particularly the concern of the Good Shepherd.

In Isaiah 53 we see that we all like sheep have gone astray, therefore we all need a Shepherd, a good Shepherd. Jesus said in Johns Gospel, I know My sheep and My sheep know me, I call them by their name. It also says in Isaiah, " He was led as a lamb to the slaughter" and the Person we are reading about is our good Shepherd, the One Who gathers us in His arms, and carries us close to His heart. Yet this Shepherd was willing to be made a sacrifice for us. There is no greater love than this.

We finish with that beautiful benediction in Hebrews 13: 20-21.

May the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen

Mollie Clark, Purulia, Bhutan and the International Office.



Psalm 8

For the director of music. According to gittith. A psalm of David.

¹ LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory
in the heavens.

² Through the praise of children and infants
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.

³ When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,

⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?

⁵ You have made them a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honor.

⁶ You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their feet:

⁷ all flocks and herds,
and the animals of the wild,
⁸ the birds in the sky,
and the fish in the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.

⁹ LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!



-World Day of Leprosy -

Celebrating our Identity

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)

In my role with The Leprosy Mission, I travel widely to different countries around the world. Often when I pass through immigration into a country, I am required to give fingerprints in addition to presenting my passport. Sometimes my photograph is taken and complex facial recognition software is used by the immigration authorities to identify me. Other organisations scan the retinas in our eyes, because like our fingerprints our retinas are unique to us, and everyone else's is slightly different. All these things are done in order to confirm that we are who we say we are – to confirm our identity.

Our identity can be a valuable commodity. In today's cyber-world, criminals often attempt to steal our identity and pretend to be us; taking our personal details and using them for their own gain. In fact they can sometimes use our identity to commit all kinds of crimes in our name.

I was saddened by a story that appeared in the world media recently about a woman affected by leprosy in India. Sajida, age 65, had lost her pension because she was unable to provide the necessary biometric information – fingerprints or a retinal scan. The reason was that she did not have any fingers and was blind as a consequence of her leprosy. Essentially, and as far as the authorities were concerned, she had no identity. Sajida was not able to link her biometric identification with her pension account and her pension was stopped for several months. Fortunately, common sense prevailed and the authorities eventually issued Sajida with a new identification card.

We can be identified in a range of different ways; by nationality, ethnicity, creed, tribal group, family, gender, where we live, our preferences, and even by the sports teams we support. And of course by the biometric information I mentioned earlier; fingerprints, retinas, and our DNA. But more important than any of these forms of identification is our identity in Christ. In Peter's first epistle, followers of Jesus are identified as 'a chosen people' and 'God's special possession' – what wonderful endorsements of our identity in Christ and being part of His family!

As we come to World Leprosy Day, let us celebrate our special identity in Christ. But at the same time, let us remember those like Sajida who have been stripped of their identity, robbed of their dignity, and identified first and foremost by their disease status, or the consequences thereof. Our global vision is 'Leprosy Defeated, Lives Transformed'. I believe that part of 'transforming lives' is helping people to rediscover their identities; their uniqueness and value as individuals (Psalm 139:14) and their immense value to Christ.

My prayer for World Leprosy Day is that you celebrate your special identity in Christ, and that you are empowered to help others discover their unique identities too.

Brent Morgan is the International Director, based in Brentford, London



Touched by person living with the effects of Leprosy – Part 1

The promise of glory and joy - 1 Thessalonians 2:19 I grew up in Erima Port Moresby, with an Adventist background, together with my big brother and two younger sisters, my mum (a house-wife) and my father, who was a tradesman working with woods. He taught us the skills to work with him and build with our hands. And those skills were also imparted to many people from all walks of life who walked into our door steps. Seeing the compassion my parents had in helping other people, inspired me of my dream to become a doctor especially for women and children. But this didn't happen. Instead I have been blessed to work for humanitarian organisations - one being World Vision and now with The Leprosy Mission. Rewinding back the clock, I recalled my time of meditating and reading a truly remarkable story of Paul Brand and his Wife Margaret, which I want to share with you all. And this is how the story is told:

Paul Brand grew up in India, the son of Baptist missionaries. His father taught him how to work with wood, explained Margaret. "He loved working with his hands. When his mother told Paul that his uncle would pay for his schooling to become a doctor, Paul replied, 'I don't want to go into medicine. I want to be a builder and a missionary like my dad was.' "

For four years he was a builder. When he was 21, Paul went to Missionary Training College outside of London for a program that included some first aid and other basic medical instruction at a nearby hospital. One morning he was stationed in the emergency room, when a woman with an internal haemorrhage was rushed in. Her face was white, her body lifeless. As doctors checked her pulse and started a blood transfusion, Paul looked on, convinced the woman was gone. "What a waste," he thought, "to pump blood into a dead person's body."

"Within moments, however, everything changed," said Margaret. "As the doctors worked, Paul saw some colour come back into her cheeks. A few moments later she opened her eyes. From that day on, he knew he had to become a doctor." As a physician, Paul developed a special interest in leprosy. In India, where Paul and Margaret worked in the 1940s, leprosy affected at least seven million people.

"The disease causes nerve damage, particularly in the cool parts of the body: the hands, the feet and parts of the face," said Margaret. "Loss of sensation and muscle paralysis follows. The subject cannot straighten his fingers. The thumb lies helpless beside the palm. The action of grasp becomes impossible. Even more critically, all feeling and ability to appreciate pain has gone. "

With his talent for building, his love for medicine and compassion for others, Paul explored new ways to treat leprosy. He believed he could restore a new range of motion to leprosy patients whose hands and feet were otherwise useless. As an orthopaedic surgeon, he found ways to optimize muscle tissue. He replaced weaker tissue with stronger tissue so that with continued therapy a patient could regain the use of his or her hands and feet. This meant that the individual could once again hold tools or household articles effectively and walk normal gait once more.

"Paul often said that if he could give his leprosy patients one gift only, he would choose for them the gift of pain," said Margaret. "He tried in many ways to find a substitute for it, but concluded that no substitute will work unless it hurts."

To be continued tomorrow...

Dorothy Owen – Administration Logistics Officer since April 2017 – TLM Papua-New-Guinea.

Dedicated to Dr Paul & Margaret Brand.



Touched by Person living with the effects of Leprosy - Part 2

The promise of glory and joy - 1 Thessalonians 2:19 Leprosy, Paul Brand discovered, carried a stigma. Back in the 1940s, it was widely misperceived as a highly communicable disease. (Some people even thought they could contract the disease if the shadow of a person with leprosy fell on them). "Leprosy patients were labelled as outcasts," explained Margaret. "No one would speak to them, much less hire them. Many were left to beg for food and, literally, live in the shacks or gutters."

Ardi was one such man. "He had suffered from leprosy since his youth, and I remember the day he came to Paul's office in Vellore. He spoke beautiful English and was well-educated, yet he had the look of utter despair. Because of leprosy, Ardi dragged his left foot. People rejected him. No one would hire him. Strangers cursed him. He had nowhere to go."

As he told his story to Dr Brand, this young Indian realized the doctor was giving him *the one thing he had hardly known in his life — Respect*. Paul took Ardi's hands gently in his own as he examined them. Ardi tried to stretch out his clawed fingers. "Your joints are very good. We just need to get them working more," said Paul. He then looked at Ardi's feet. Paul cradled each one in his hands. "Your feet are good; however we'll need to do surgery. Then you're going to need lots of physical therapy. Are you willing to do this?" Ardi nodded, "Yes."

Paul never discussed the cost of surgery because Ardi would not have to pay. Generous financial contributors in other countries would cover the expense. Still, *Ardi asked Paul if there was something he could do as a gesture of thanks*. Paul thought for a moment and said, "There is something you can do for me. I need to learn Tamil." After successful surgery, doctor became student and Ardi the teacher. "Paul saw to it that Ardi became stronger physically," "At the same time he loved Ardi with compassion and respect." Margaret and two of their friends were also eager to learn the language to take the Mission Board of Examiner's First Tamil Exam. Soon Ardi had four eager students. The syllabus for the exam included the study of the Gospel of Luke in Tamil.

Margaret remembered, "Often, we would talk about what we read, and that led Ardi to ask a number of questions about Jesus. One day he said to me, 'You know, I believe in Jesus. I worship him along with all the other gods.' "Yes," Margaret told him, "but no other god died for you. Jesus, the holy Son of God died for you." Ardi didn't want to take the discussion further.

After six months of study, his students passed their Tamil language exam and Ardi was appointed as the Tamil teacher on the payroll of the Christian Medical College. Forty years went by and the Brands had lost touch with Ardi. In August of 2000 the couple returned to Vellore, India, where Paul was scheduled to give a series of presentations drawn from their experience of missionary medical service.

"A few days after we had arrived on the campus of the Christian Medical College a young man came to visit us," Margaret said. "He arrived in the middle of a heavy rainstorm, a late monsoon. Just as we were about to enter our lodging, he and seven family members stepped forward into the light. He introduced himself, 'I am Ardi Kesavelu's son, and this is my mother, my wife and family. We heard you were coming. We've travelled six hours on the bus to meet you. We just want to come and thank you for all you did for my father.'

To be continued tomorrow...

Dorothy Owen – Administration Logistics Officer since April 2017 – TLM Papua-New-Guinea.

Dedicated to Dr Paul & Margaret Brand.



Touched by Person living with the effects of Leprosy - Part 3

The promise of glory and joy - 1 Thessalonians 2:19 "Ardi's son and his family were dripping wet," remembered Margaret. "We took them indoors and tried to dry them off a bit. We were sad to learn that Ardi himself had died eight years earlier. We expressed our sympathy and told them how much we had loved and respected him. I didn't add then how often I had thought of our discussions about Jesus, and how they had seemingly ended.

"Ardi's son then handed Paul and me a gift. I opened the box. Inside, neatly wrapped, was a beautiful little brass bowl. But it was the wrapper that got my attention. It was a piece of a Tamil newspaper, but there, in the middle was a copy of Holman Hunt's famous picture of Jesus knocking outside a closed door. I immediately asked our young visitor if he knew that picture.

"'oh, yes, that's Jesus,' he said. 'He's standing outside, knocking at the door.' "

Margaret asked, "Is there anything else you know?" totally unprepared for what I was about to hear.

"Jesus can't open the door from the outside, Mrs. Brand. He can't open it unless someone from the inside decides to let him in. Jesus wants to come into our lives, and He's knocking. But He can't force His way in. He's waiting for us to open the door."

"Have you done that?" she asked. His eyes lit up. "Oh, yes. And not just me." He then looked at Paul and continued: "The reason we are Christians today is because of our father. Forty years ago, you accepted him just as he was. When everyone else cursed and ridiculed him, you treated him with respect.

You lifted my father out of the gutter. And because of him, my whole family and I have become Christians and serve the Lord. "I could tell from the look on his face," said Margaret, "that he was a joyous believer."

The Story Lives On . . .

Paul Brand used his God-given gifts of constructing things with his hands to become a world-renowned surgeon to treat leprosy. Think of how one of your gifts could meet (or is already meeting) a need in the community.

If you could invest your gifts and talents in one person who shows potential for what you do, what would you do to increase that person's chance for success?

THE PROMISE OF GLORY AND JOY - 1 Thessalonians 2:19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed you are our glory and joy.

By giving up everything to serve in Jesus' name and loving others to Christ, a crown awaits for us in Heaven. How can we continue to serve and love others today?

Dorothy Owen – Administration Logistics Officer since April 2017 – TLM Papua-New-Guinea.

Dedicated to Dr Paul & Margaret Brand.



Authors in Alphabetical Order

Textuarium

Anne-Claude Jonah	8 January		Genesis 12,1-7	3 January
Brent Morgan	28 January		Psalm 2	6 January
Dan Izzett	2 January		Psalm 3	7 January
David, King of Israel	7, 13, 14, 20, 27 January		Psalm 4	13 January
Dorothy Owen	29, 30, 31 January		Psalm 5	14 January
Eddie Askew	11 January		Psalm 6	20 January
Elisabeth Barnett	10 January		Psalm 7	21 January
Eric Chollet	4 January		Psalm 8	22 January
Erna Moeller	7 January		Psalm 90	1 January
Johan Velema Dr	9 January		Proverbs 17,22	4 January
Judith Merell	12 January		Matthew 6,11	10 January
Mollie Clark	26 January		Mark 10,46-52	9 January
Moses Onoh Dr	25 January		Luke 2,8-20	5 January
Otto Kingsley	24 January		John 10,14-15	26 January
Paul Dr and Niki Jakeman	3 January		John 12,24	23 January
Peter Laubscher	19 January		John 14,27	18 January
Pradeep and Sarah Failbus	5 January		John 15,15	17 January
Raju Dr PLN	15, 16 January		Gal 5	19 January
Silvano Perotti	23 January		1 Thess 2,19	29, 30,31 January
Trevor Durston	22 January		1 Thess 5,16-24	25 January
Yuek Ming Poon	18 January		1 Peter 2,9	28 January
			1 Peter	24 January

The Bridge - TLM Daily Devotions

Editor: Marta Risko - Theological lector: Allan Ekstedt - Grammar proof: Christine Osman, Mo Lewis.