



TLM Daily Devotions

End 2015

January 2016





Take my hand!

This set will lead us over from one year to an other without any rupture, somehow smoothly, just rolling one page down ... expressing that time is just our category. In Him there is no beginning, no end. No years, no days, no minutes. No “old” and no “new” year. He is the First and the Last, the Almighty. He is above all. He is not a part, but the whole. We may not pull Him down into our self-created time, but He wants to lift us up into His everlasting infiniteness.

A special “thankyou!” to each author of this set and of the former and coming ones! Thanks to everyone ready to build The Bridge stone upon stone vertically, and walk through it hand in hand horizontally, but above all singing heavenly:

Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand.
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
Through the storm, through the night lead me on to the light!
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home!

Blessed reading!

Marta Risko



The Star Stopped Over the Child

“The star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.” Matthew 2:9

The Bible tells us an amazing and very special story of how God was guiding some men from the east in their search for God’s plan for their lives. We don’t know so much about these men except that they had seen a bright star and they understood that God had talked to them about a newborn king. They were thirsty to know more about God’s revelation. It was so important for them, so they undertook a long and difficult journey to find out what God was telling them.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a secret birth in a small stable by a very ordinary young woman. But in this secret place God gave His son to humanity; the realization of a divine plan deep in God’s heart since before the creation. God gave the world His answer, His solution to the problem of sin. Through His Son the whole world would be saved.

The men from the east began to follow the star as God guided them. But after a while they tried to find their way without God’s direction. They forgot the star and tried to find God where they thought He was. But they were only disappointed, confused and lost in their own thinking.

Then they saw the star again, the sign from God. They ignored the human discussions and solutions and accepted finally to follow God’s guidance for them. The star moved again to lead them, not to the human solutions, but to the answer God was presenting to them. The star moved again to show them the way. It didn’t stop over the king’s palace nor over the theological institution of the university. It didn’t even stop over the temple. The star passed over the business streets and the cultural neighborhoods of the capital where the influential and important people were. The star led them to the small, poor, insignificant village of Bethlehem and stopped over the house where the child was.

God always leads us to Jesus, His son. If we are honestly seeking God’s answer for our lives He will always lead us to have a personal relationship with Jesus. God’s answer for humanity is not a theory or a philosophy and not even a religion. His answer is a person; Jesus Christ. God’s answer for us personally is not a better moral standard or improved life values. No, His answer still is a person; Jesus Christ.

- **Jesus** is the forgiver of our sins (Col 1:4)
- **Jesus** is able to change our lives and transform us (Gal 2:2)
- **Jesus** wants to give us peace (John 14:6) and joy (Fil 4:4)
- **Jesus** has the power to heal us physically and mentally (Isaiah 53:5)
- **Jesus** will one day restore God’s original plan for humanity when He arrives back

The list can be long if we want to fully explore all the blessings God gave us in Jesus

If we let God guide us in our thirst for the truth and for God’s answer for our lives, he will lead us to Jesus. He always does. Let us, like the men from the east, seek Him, receive Him, worship Him and give Him the gift of our lives.

“Jesus is the answer for the world today. Above Him there’s no other, Jesus is the way”.

Allan Ekstedt

country leader of TLM Sweden since 2010



Recognize the King!

Matt 2:1-12 "Visitors arrive from Eastern Lands"

Magi traditionally called wise men or as in the Message they are called scholars who came from the east. Christmas cards often portray them as three men on camels however, there is not much detail known about them, how many had come and from which particular part of the east they had come. They could have represented many different parts of the Parthian Empire which was a centre of trade and commerce and located on the Silk Trade Road between the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean Basin and the Han Empire of China. It is not mentioned how long the journey took, they followed the star and one thing they seem to be sure of they came to worship the King of the Jews.

What a big contrast with the response of Herod and with him the whole of Jerusalem (vs 3). Herod was quite disturbed when the Magi asked him about the new-born king of the Jews. Herod was known to be a ruthless man who murdered many in his own family. He called the religious leaders to ask where the Christ was to be born. Jesus seemed to be a threat to his rule and he had no intention to worship him. His plan was to kill Jesus (vs 13).

The religious leaders knew where the Messiah was to be born, in Bethlehem. They quoted Micah 5:2 accurately. They knew the prophecies about the coming of the Messiah and were expecting him but they did not move into action to seek out for themselves and respond personally to him. The sad thing is that they did not recognize him (Jn 1:11).

After the encounter in Jerusalem the Magi went on their way and followed the star until it stopped above the house Jesus and his parents were. The Magi were overjoyed and humbly bowed down to worship Jesus. Then they opened and presented him with their gifts, of gold, of frankincense and of myrrh. It is suggested that the actual gifts are seen as symbols of Christ's identity and what he would accomplish. Gold was a gift for a king; frankincense, a gift for deity; myrrh was used to embalm the dead. Jesus was born to die for our sins.

What about us? How precious is Jesus to us? The Magi brought gifts and worshipped Jesus for who he was. This is the essence of true worship – honouring Christ for who he is and willing to give him what is valuable to us. He is worthy of the best we have to give.

Tanny Hagens

Dutch national. Working with TLM since 1983; First in Thailand, moved to Indonesia; worked in Myanmar and PNG; at the moment working in Ethiopia as Interim Country Representative of TLMI-E



Lamentation was heard in Ramah

"A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more." Matthew 2,16-18

"Lamentations helps us face the world's suffering and weep over and protest it. But it does so within the grand narrative of Scripture, with its redemptive center in the cross and resurrection of Christ, and its glorious, hope-filled climax in the new creation, in which all suffering, weeping, and death will be no more". Chris Weight

The advent narrative begins with an arrogant, oppressive ruler decreeing census, for conscription, for taxation and simply to showcase his power. Another violent insecure ruler oversees a pogrom of toddler massacre which was the cause of the lamentation heard in Ramah. The Caesars of our time wield political, military and economic power to favor the interests of the political, religious and corporate elite while the people on the margins are oppressed, persecuted and killed.

There are more reasons for lament as we go through the advent narrative. Lament the unacceptably high maternal mortality rates in India for instance, as we undertake with Mary the torturous journey of a full term pregnant woman, having no access to public transportation or to ambulance services, nor safe roadways. Tired and starving, they reach their over-crowded town of Bethlehem, only to be told "no room." Mary has an "unsafe delivery", with no "trained birth-attendant". Baby Jesus is placed in the cattle feeding trough for a "cradle", in a cattle-shed with the dung, exposing him to the risk of a vaccine preventable disease neo-natal tetanus.

Mary's circumstances were dire but she remembers what angel Gabriel said. *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end... So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.*" Luke 1:32-35

The politics of His nativity is highlighted by the "goodnews" being announced by an angelic host to the most socially marginalized shepherds, the "Shudras" or the un-touchables in South Asia. We lament the centuries old caste system which is responsible for the largest slavery in the world. The spectacle in the sky terrified the shepherds hence the greeting of the angel, "Fear not". He chose the lowly and the out casted to convey the message of "good news", "tidings of great joy" and "peace on earth" to our fearful and anguished world.

The displaced Holy Family find themselves as migrants, homeless and without adequate shelter and no extended family support system. But then, again the family experiences what it means to be refugees, fleeing from their homeland because of state sponsored persecution, to Egypt, the place of Israel's bondage.

As Mary looks into the face of her son she sees her salvation and repeats to herself- My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Luke 1:47.

The advent narrative is fiercely relevant in our times. O'Conner says "In the face of injustice and oppression, lamentations holds up to God the sheer horror of what this suffering feels like, and appeals to him to act justly, to demonstrate his faithfulness. In the light of the liberating vision of the advent narratives we are called to lament the plight of people affected by leprosy, share the "good news" and the message of "hope for eternity" that they too may reign with Him when His kingdom comes.

Dr. Nalini Abraham Vice-Chairperson of The Leprosy Mission International Board of Trustees Board member of The Leprosy Mission India Trust for the past 10 years



3D Protection

„You hem me in – behind and before-, you have laid your hand upon me.” Psalm 139,5

Looking back on 2015 we have mixed memories. Happy ones, flying highs, tears, fears, struggles, sleepless nights. „Toughs”. Caused either by others, or by our own weaknesses, emotions, or sins. All the same. Pressed and stressed. Pharaoh's army behind, Red Sea ahead: fear inbetween.

What should we learn of the past, for being wiser in the future?

I remember the frenetic experience in the early 1980s, when in the Futuroscope in Poitiers, France I first saw a film in 3D. The cinema became filled with thousands of butterflies from the Amazonian rainforests, and the audience was trying to protect their heads from the “invasion.” Nothing else happened. It was just that we had been given special eyewear at the entrance to provide the illusion of depth when viewing the film. The miracle had not been around the screen, but around the eyewear, adding one dimension to the otherwise flat presentation. We felt depth, space and wholeness, and saw the butterflies as God created them in reality.

This special eyewear is exactly what we need! To see all as seen by God! In His dimensions! Unless we have this, all we see is ‘flat’: just what we want, or might not have. Or what we missed, or dreamed about. The special eyewear with its dimensions can help us to realise its depth: what plainly looks “tough” is, in reality, God's 3D protection! Behind, before and upon us, hemming us in!

God sees all as complex. Our whole life from beginning to end, and our final benefit. His purposes we are not able to see ahead. All things are working together for our sake - for the good. Often His time has not come yet. Maybe we are still kept in a waiting phase when nothing happens! But He is in control all the time! Sometimes He hurries us, or slows us down, stops us for a while or puts us “aside” as He knows what ‘tempo’ suits us the best. We do not always understand or like it. Who likes pain, bitterness, disappointments and “tough times”? Nobody. But it is all for our benefit, and is a question of faith. The past is God's promise for the future. We should have no fear of hazardous and hectic events. God is faithful. He demonstrated His protection – and this experience anticipates He will do the same. In Him there is no change at all!

But His ultimate sign about His perfect protection is our salvation on the Cross. Therefore *“I am convinced that neither death, nor life, neither angels, nor demons, neither the present, nor the future, nor any powers, neither height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Rom 8:38-39) Behind, before and upon: in all dimensions, in 2015 and in 2016 and onwards let us go on, believing in His perfect protection anew with the hymn:

Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand.
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
Through the storm, through the night lead me on to the light!
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home! - Amen.

Marta Risko

39 years with TLM Hungary. Formerly volunteer, since 2010 country leader. Minister of the Presbyterian Church.



New Heaven and New Earth

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. *Hebrews 11,1*

As we look further into this chapter we are reminded of so many people in the Old Testament whose faith served them well and from whom we can take an example for our own lives. Two people who really impressed me by their faith were Abraham and Noah. Abraham who left the life he knew to go to a place he didn't know. Who lived in tents with his family – a stranger in a foreign land – just as we are seeing today with refugees fleeing from their home countries to foreign countries which they believe will provide them with a better life. For Abraham though, it was his obedience to God that led him and his family away from all things familiar with no idea of what he would find ahead of him.

With Noah of course, he obeyed God and began to build the ark, despite opposition and insults from those around him – even from his own family. Why? Because he had faith!!! Even though he had no way of knowing what lay ahead, he was completely confident that what God had told him would happen.

When I was a child, one of 8 children living in the East End of London, my parents sent us to Sunday School. They had no particular Christian commitment but to them it was the “right thing to do.” I had no real understanding of what I was hearing and don't remember anyone ever talking to us about a relationship with God. For me it was just like another day at school. When I left school at 16, I was “allowed” not to go to church and so I didn't go anymore. It would be 28 years before I started going to church again and suddenly things began to fall into place. Things came back to me from all those years ago and suddenly everything started to make sense!!

One of the songs we sang all those years ago was “I'm H - A - P - P - Y.” The words said “I know I am, I'm sure I am - I'm H - A - P - P - Y.” The second verse was “I'm L - O - V - E - D.” We happily sang that song with no real understanding of how we knew we were loved! Yes, of course our parents loved us but this was all about God's love!! A love and happiness that comes from faith in God.

I was in my 40's when I came to a real faith in God. Things have happened in my life since coming to a relationship with God, that were difficult and sometimes devastating, but I always knew, and still know today, that He loves me, He will always be there for me. I have FAITH.

As we go into a New Year, none of us knows what lies ahead for us, but my prayer for myself and for my brothers and sisters in Christ, is that we will continue to grow in faith and the belief that our God knows what's best for each one of us. How wonderful it is to have that assurance! We are truly blessed.

Mo Lewis

Former PA to the HR Director, TLM International Office Brentford, January 1993 – January 2014



God Protects

The time when I am writing this devotional note, a terrible thing has happened in Paris killing more than 130 people. Our country has seen some brutal killing within a month or so. We can feel what people of France are going through after having this shock. Their lives have started to become different suddenly. There are even some security concerns for our country at the same time. Seems people's lives become insecure suddenly.

Thinking through these incidents and security, it reminded me of a few passages from the book of *2nd Kings Chapter 6 verses 14-21*. (Bible Scripture – NIV)

The King Aram sent his troops to capture Elisha and they surrounded him. The next morning Elisha woke up and his servant gave him the news with fear as he saw a large troop of soldiers surrounding them. The servant thought they would be captured and killed eventually, which is normal when you don't have your own soldiers to fight.

What Elisha told him in verse 16 *"Those who are with us are more than those who are with them"* what a powerful statement. And how he proved that is found in verse 17 and 18 "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. "Hallelujah! Amen!!"

The servant must have the experience of his lifetime, "The Protection from God" as "his eyes were opened". He could only see as the Lord opens his eyes. Question for us to think... Was he blind? What made him see God's Miracle?

Dear friends, how are we safe from the daily dangers on the road, in the air, through the water and from the threats and acts of the terrors. Can our own protection, power, money save us? I believe God protected Elisha as he was called "Man of God" through His own army.

Brothers and Sisters, let God open our eyes and to see the protection around us. He will protect you that He promised (Psalms 23). I pray that in The Leprosy Mission, as we travel to the most remote to provide treatment & care, work in an unsecured country where people are killed every month by bombs/terrorists, take up the issues with officials/community leaders for the rights of people affected by leprosy, travel across the borders for different issues, our Gracious GOD Protects Us.

God Bless.

Salomon S. Halder

Country Leader The Leprosy Mission Bangladesh



Jesus Presented in the Temple

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and **the Holy Spirit was on him.** ²⁶ It had been revealed to him **by the Holy Spirit** that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ **Moved by the Spirit**, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: ²⁹ "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

Luke 2:25-32 (NIV)

We just celebrated the days of the great gift of the Father in Heaven: Jesus Son of Mary, Son of God. And the angels sung: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." When the Bible speaks of peace - shalom – a.o. it means: rest, fullness, completeness, wholeness, health! And that to everyone on earth! To those on whom his favor rests! He is the God and King of goodness, fullness, grace and love! And he wants to give that to all his creatures! *1

Joseph and Mary went to the temple! And there something remarkable happened! They met a godly man! Simeon. A man who prayerfully and passionately longed for the reign of God! Longed a world were people would live in freedom and peace, in love and abundance! *2

This Simeon was a very old but very special man! He was a man of prayer: Being in God's presence, so that the Spirit was on him. And He knew the One he prayed to: He even understood the voice of God. And he let himself be led by God's Spirit! The Bible says here in Luke 2 that the Spirit of God was on Simeon! We know that the Spirit, the dove, was on Jesus. And will always be on Jesus. The Spirit is upon Jesus and upon those who love Him and given their lives to Him and Adonai, His Father! *3

Being led Simeon met Joseph, Mary and more special: The Messiah. He recognized the Messiah! Meeting this child he knew, in this Child he saw the Messiah of the One Living God! This is what he said: "I have seen *your salvation*, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." And Simeon blessed them as God would! *4

Questions regarding this piece of the Bible:

1. Do you recognize God as the God of all goodness and love, longing to bring healing and recovery to e-v-e-r-y person in this world? How can you tell?
2. We have a great hope! We live in an already/not yet situation regarding God's Kingdom. How can this hope help you to live out a godly life in a broken world today?
3. What is your prayer, what is your passion? Are you longing to know Jesus? And are you therefore filled with and led by God's Spirit. And do you hear his voice occasionally or even more often? So that you **know** what is good, Godpleasing and His perfect will? (Romans 12:2)
4. How can you - seeing Jesus and living in a loving obedience to His Spirit, make the difference for your neighbor? So that His Kingdom is seen and His righteousness is done and His heart is shown? Be blessed!
5. How can we, TLM, develop a ministry that shows more of this Messiah-longing change 'our' people!



If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness

2 Corinthians 11,30 (NIV)

Humility should not be seen as an optional extra to our faith and yet it can be one of the hardest to achieve. It is clear from scripture that God's full blessing will only be given if we humble ourselves. James 4:10 - Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you. 2 Chronicles 7:14 - If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land.

What a challenge we have. God is instructing us to be humble in order for him to exalt us and yet we live in a world where demonstrating humility is seen as weakness and an invite for others to treat us as irrelevant. It is easier for us to be in the world and to be caught up in the world's agenda and its ways of working rather than to stand firm on the word of God. As a younger man in my twenties I definitely had a lot of arrogance and the notion of Humility was not on my radar. When my wife Catherine first knew me she comments that I was a particularly arrogant person!

When I first joined The Leprosy Mission I can clearly recall the experience of meeting TLM people that demonstrated to me, probably for the first time in my life true humility. A humility that can only come through having a loving relationship with Jesus and the knowledge that you are in Christ

I believe that humility does not come naturally. It is something that is gained as we grow in wisdom and our love for Jesus. In biblical terms the opposite of humility can be seen as pride but equally the desire to control, the love of power and our egotistic self worth can all be seen as human traits which demonstrate our lack of humility. To practice humility we should be prepared to give up on self importance, love of power and arrogance even though the world and people around us may see it as a sign of weakness.

Psalms 25 v 8-9. You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh rather serve one another humbly in love. 1 Peter v 5-6. Therefore as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

One of TLM's global values is humility and I believe that the values of this wonderful organisation can be demonstrated by those of us who serve with The Leprosy Mission. I pray that daily we can rejoice in God's grace and blessing which he has poured out on our lives and in response be able to demonstrate ever greater humility in our relationships and actions

Alan Gray

TLM Director of Operations and Finance (1995 - 2014)



The Mind of Christ

Reading: Luke 7: 36-50 *Jesus Anointed by a Sinful Woman (NIV)*

It was a small town where everybody knew everybody and everybody knew about everybody.

One wonders how this 'sinful woman' even gained admittance into the house of a Pharisee. But here she is, anointing Jesus' feet with perfume mixed with tears she cannot control and wiping them with her hair. And Simon is thinking 'If he is who he says he is, how can he not know the kind of woman she is or consent to her even touching him?'

But Jesus knew more than just about the woman. He knew about his host. He did not miss the imperceptible but clear slight intended by neglecting the kiss of greeting, the water to wash his feet and the oil on his hair, all customary marks of honour and hospitality in that time for a guest in a home. And Jesus cared enough about Simon to make him see what really mattered.

You see, for Jesus, it was not about how much she had sinned, for he had forgiven her (*I tell you her many sins have been forgiven...* Luke 7:47). It was about how much she loved, evidenced by her public response of gratitude and worship in the face of the prevalent culture of that day.

What do I see in people? How quick am I to judge and label?

Father, give me the mind of Christ.

Dr Shyamala Anand

Head, Learning & Development

The Leprosy Mission Trust India

Read the story of the Anands' years in Kothara, Maharashtra at the following link:

<http://tlmindia.org/the-story-of-our-time-at-kothara/>



Weakness as Opportunity

But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12: 9-11 NIV

When we become Christians, we are not promised an easy life or an exemption from facing hardships, trials and difficulties. What we are promised, however, is God's Grace.

As human beings, we have limitations and weaknesses but there is a tendency to try and do everything in our own strength. We want to be in control, take care of ourselves but where does that leave God?

The answer is limited. Facing everything by ourselves limits His power in us. There is no room for God if our hearts are proud and conceited.

Whatever the problems or challenges we encounter, how much more do you think can be overcome or achieved when it is the power of Christ that moves in us?

By admitting our vulnerability and our shortcomings, there is opportunity for God to work in us and through us. His power is made perfect when we don't limit it but instead allow it to fill us.

So where does God's Grace fit in?

It is by His Grace that we have a relationship with Him in which we can call out and ask for His help.

It is by His Grace that we can draw on His strength to fulfil His purpose for our lives, even in the difficult times.

As it is by Grace we are made strong, we therefore cannot boast about our own ability but we can delight in our weakness, the weakness which seeks the presence of God in our lives to help us to do what we are not able to do alone.

Are you dealing with a situation, are you facing a new challenge or is God calling you to do something that is out of your comfort zone?

Take your weakness to Him as an opportunity to allow Him to do more in you than you could ever imagine for His glory, by His great power as Almighty God. For it is when we are weak that we are strong.

Mhairi Dawson

TLM Scotland. I have been working for just over a year as the Support Services Administrator



When Disability Becomes Ability

⁹ But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NIV)

It’s my choice; it’s your choice to allow God’s grace to make us strong in difficult times!

Life is never without challenges, we all face them, and depending on who we are, where we are, what time in life we are; all count towards how we handle what comes to us as we live out our lives on earth. There is no respite to this. Challenges come in many forms; sickness, financial difficulties, relationship misunderstandings, raising a family, work related needs, political inequality...

How we handle it is always easier with the help of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, the comforter from God our heavenly Father. The grace of Jesus is within us to guide us in difficult times, to smooth out life’s difficult pathways, as Isaiah says: *“...build up the highway! Remove the stones.”*

What does a “strengthened weakness” look like?

Peaceful: A person that has been strengthened by the grace of Jesus has an aura of peace, not a determined controlled type but a restful peace that is seen and experienced because it comes from deep down, from the inner most being of a person that has been energised because of their relationship with God.

This peace is infectious! Its presence calms situations, it’s sought after by others because just being with people that are strengthened from inside by the grace of Jesus provides a calm environment.

Trusting God: A weak person that’s being strengthened from within the inner core of life by the Holy Spirit is able to trust an invisible indwelling God, without wavering. They will know that the One in whom they trust can do the impossible, do the miraculous and still be aware and all knowing about yours and my situation.

Psalms 9:10 Those who know your name trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

Fearless: What is a fearless weak person? One who knows their God! Even if it seems like their “Lord is sleeping in the boat” they will *“...fear no evil...”* because they know, that they know, that *“...no weapon formed against them can prosper...”* They also know that He said *“...I am with you even unto...”* They never trust *...in chariots...* only in the one who has *“... not given us a spirit of fear, but of a sound mind...”*

Disability becomes an ability where the grace of Jesus the Christ replaces our weaknesses and we accept it and make it a part of our lives!

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.



The Power of the Scriptures to Transform

Philip's Encounter with the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)

Acts 8:26-40 describes Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian Eunuch on the road between Jerusalem and Gaza. Philip, prompted by the Spirit, approaches the Ethiopian's carriage. The Ethiopian is reading aloud from Isaiah 53: 7-8 – one of the favourite messianic passages of the early Church. The Ethiopian is a devout follower of Israel's God, for he had gone to Jerusalem to worship and is now on his way home.

When he approaches the Ethiopian, Philip asks him if he understands what he is reading. The Ethiopian responds saying he does not understand the passage, nor could he without some explanation (8:31-32). Philip rides with the man in his carriage and explains to him the Isaiah passage, and that the servant the prophet describes is in fact Jesus, the son of God. The Ethiopian, his heart so well prepared by the Holy Spirit, believes immediately and soon after asks Philip to baptise him. Philip baptises the man, and is then carried off by the Spirit. The Ethiopian comes out of the water, sees Philip no more, and continues on his way rejoicing (8:39). He is the first African believer!

One of the key themes of this passage is ***the power of the Scriptures to transform***. There is no supernatural experience for the Ethiopian, just close study of the Scriptures with instruction from Philip, and thereafter he believes and is baptised. We can contrast this story with what follows immediately after in the Acts narrative – Saul's supernatural conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-8). In using Philip to explain the Scriptures to the Ethiopian, God used one of the most successful evangelists of the early Church, someone who had brought crowds of people to Christ (Acts 8:1-25). The fact that God used Philip in this one-on-one situation with the Ethiopian, highlights ***the importance of personal evangelism***. God takes a key evangelist of the early Church to a remote location to share the gospel with just one person.

As we reflect on this passage today, let's be reminded again of how powerful the Scriptures are, not only in our lives, but also in the lives of those we come in contact with every day. I pray that we might all have more opportunities, like Philip, to explain the Scriptures to others and to witness their life-transforming power. Amen.

Brent Morgan

Executive Director of TLM New Zealand since 2009.



Peace

PEACE: what comes in your mind when you read this word?

It could be a definition, a concept or a picture according to your experiences, your beliefs or your personality. We relate that a Chinese emperor, founder of the Ming Dynasty, ordered paintings on the theme of "PEACE". Among many paintings, two were chosen.

On the first one, we could admire a peaceful lake with a cloudless blue sky. Nice illustration of peace, isn't it! We could think that the artist who proposed the other artwork didn't understand the theme. We could see a stormy sky and a torrent that carried along dark water. But looking more closely we distinguished in a rock hollow a swallow that protected its nestlings with its wings.

This reminds me the text of *Mark 4 verses 35-41*: Jesus calms the storm. Let me share some thoughts.

- The disciples have chosen the right attitude: they left the crowd behind and took Jesus along. Sometimes I have to leave people or activities to meet Jesus as he is there ready to spend time with me.
- Jesus fell asleep, he was of no help. Have you ever felt that you were in great danger and that Jesus seemed so distant? Remember that Jesus said: I am with you always (Matthew 28.20). In case he seems not present, doesn't he want make my faith grow?
- The disciples cried out a relief prayer: they woke Jesus.
- Jesus answered their prayer: he calmed the storm, he knew what to do. Jesus knows what I live, what I have to face. I can place my trust in him.

Did you guess which painting the Chinese emperor had chosen? He chose the second one, maybe because he aspired to the peace experienced by the nestlings. His life wasn't always peaceful: farmer, he became a monk to escape the famine. He fought against the Mongols and rebels chiefs and proclaimed himself emperor. He was a very suspicious man, he felt threatened.

This shows that even a "great strong" man can feel troubled, restless, just like us.

Only Jesus can give the genuine peace. *"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)*

To end, here is my picture of peace: In the storm Jesus stayed calm, he could sleep. This encourages me, I don't have to wait until everything is calm in my life to experience his peace in my heart, I have to receive it.

Anne-Claude Jonah

With TLM since 2011. Leader for the French part of Switzerland.



Transformation is an essential process

In the very beginning of his ministry Jesus transformed water into wine. This very first miracle performed by Jesus opened door for us that through his love & forgiveness, our lives to be transformed from sinners to be saved once. In simple word transformation is the process which brings positive change to the present life situation of to a better conditions. In *Christian* life also Jesus brings transformation in our lives when we commit & surrender our lives to him and follow his teachings. There is a transformation of our present life as sinner which is renewed to the life of saved once.

Transformation of inner self and actions is must in a Christian life.

The Leprosy Mission is also involved form last many years in the process of transformation, to the life of people affected by leprosy, with the aim to enable them to lead a normal life with dignity in their own community. The new transformed live conditions of these people of leprosy background are surely improved and better to their past life. This transformation involved not only the physical healing or develop abilities of leprosy affected but also to restore their confidence, worth , self esteem & self respect.

I have found myself very fortunate that me and my wife as Christians were and are involved in the process of transformation to the lives of leprosy affected during our long service period with TLM. One side we were involved in the transformation of our own lives as per the teaching of Jesus Christ. Our aim had been to be a better Christians day by day with the help of Jesus .On our personal level we tried and even trying today to bring transformation in our life as per the teaching of CHRIST.

This made very significant impact in our thinking, our behavior, attitude and life style. On individual levels, we were always careful & conscious because we knew that first we have make changes in our own personal life style & daily living as per the teachings of Jesus, and then only we can help in the transformation of lives of leprosy affected.

On the other side, in our professional level while working with TLM, we worked with other team members to bring transformation – positive change into the lives of leprosy affected. We knew very well that leprosy was not a medical problem alone and leprosy does affect significantly to the social, economical and spiritual status of leprosy affected. We worked together to brings positive change, not only by giving medical cure to leprosy but also to bring positive changes in the social, economical and spiritual status of people affect by leprosy.

We also realized that acceptance of present conditions, as it is, has been a very key factor in the both kind of transformation. We have seen that Jesus accepted Mathew and Mary Magdalene as they were. He did not ask them to change their life style and profession, so that he can accept them. He accepted them first and then their life style was changed. In the same we, while working with TLM we learnt to accept leprosy patients as they came to us. Then only we intervened with them to bring transformation in their medical, social, financial conditions of lives. Our aim, through this transformation has been also to bring happiness to the lives of leprosy affected and help them restored a dignified life in the society.

Strong individual will to work for transformation in both the cases (ourselves as sinner and also for leprosy affected) is very important. One condition is necessary & very important that if we want Jesus to bring transformation in our sinful live, then we have to follow (without any question), what he says.

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



Then We Shall See Face to Face

1 Cor. 13: 12. Now we see but a poor reflection, as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. Ps 33: 4, 11: For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

Earlier this year I went with my family to visit my eldest sister and her family, who live in Seychelles. It was, as many may imagine, an enviable beach holiday in the sun, but poignant too, as my sister there has a progressive condition that has rendered her severely physically dis-abled. Furthermore, when we went, my brother-in-law had just undergone major surgery.

Towards the end of our time there, we had a family meal out, and a photograph was taken, of us three sisters together. Earlier that day, I had gone with my brother-in-law to help him carry some of my sister's medical supplies to the health centre to be stored, and for him to collect some medication. Then, those of us who were able, enjoyed the nearby beach, and later I spent time with both my sisters before the meal in the evening. The rest of our holiday passed all too soon, and we returned to Scotland.

Over the following few days I wrote to various family friends and sent a copy of the photograph of "the three Thompson sisters" to them. Arriving early at work, I thought I would send a few more such emails, and as the photograph was not stored on my work computer, I looked into my "sent" messages, to find it. To my surprise, a totally different photograph appeared - a rather hazy one, of a woman standing behind a counter. What on earth is this, I thought? Where could it have come from? The only scenario I could remember, that resembled it at all, was the lady behind the counter in the pharmacy at the health centre in Seychelles, but I didn't remember my brother in law taking any photos then. Such was my puzzlement that I convinced myself that he must have taken a photo in the health centre, which had somehow become attached to an email from him, and was now linked to the photograph of us three sisters, so that it popped up each time I was searching for that. I closed my emails, and got on with my day's work.

Later, at home that evening, I opened my emails, and clicked on the "sent" email I'd tried to use in the morning to find our holiday photo, and once again the hazy "pharmacy counter" picture appeared. But with a little more exploration, I found that it was in a greatly enlarged format, and when I brought the size right down – surprise, surprise : the three Thompson sisters appeared in the foreground, with a small part of the background showing a woman standing behind the dessert counter of the restaurant! Not a pharmacy counter after all! What a straightforward and logical explanation. It got me thinking about how we often deal with life's worries, questions and problems. We work out a "simple" explanation from within our limited knowledge and understanding of life, and choose to believe that, however far-fetched and unlikely it may actually be, if we were to delve a little deeper. But when we take a step back, and look honestly at the whole picture, with all its parts in perspective, the truth is infinitely more logical, and reliably so.

Kirsteen Dutton (née Thompson)

I am British, (but feel more Indian, having been born in Bihar and schooled in Tamil Nadu!), and I worked as an ophthalmic surgeon in Purulia (with regular visits to Bankura, Saldoha and Muzaffarpur) with TLM from 1993 - 1998. I was on the TLM Scotland Board of trustees from 2006 - 2013, and still maintain informal links with TLM Scotland. I also keep in touch with TLM Purulia, as I have a god daughter there - an orphan brought to the hospital when she was 8 years old, and who now has her own little family. My current role is as an NHS consultant ophthalmic surgeon here in the West of Scotland and I am on the board of trustees of a small Indian church in Glasgow city centre.



Compassion

“Jesus wept” John 11: 35

In the hierarchy of miracles that Jesus performed during his brief earthly ministry, the raising of Lazarus from the dead must surely rank right at the top. In the gospel of St. John, this event is recounted in great detail. Very early in the narrative, we see that when Jesus receives the news of Lazarus’ illness, he foresees that it will end in death. In John 11:4, we are told that Jesus makes a decision that He will use Lazarus’ death to do something that will glorify God – He will raise him from the dead. He then slowly makes His way to Bethany taking four days to cover a distance of just over two miles.

When Jesus is close to the home of Lazarus, Martha comes out to meet Him with the news of her brother’s death. She then goes back and sends Mary. Both sisters tell Jesus *“If you had been here, my brother would not have died”*. It is at this point that Jesus sees the distress of the mourners, and John reports that He “was deeply moved in spirit”. Then comes the verse “Jesus wept”.

Why did Jesus weep? We know that He had already decided that this story would have a happy ending, and that Lazarus would be raised to life. Jesus would establish that He did have the power to bring the dead back to life, and God would be glorified. So why did He cry?

St. John says He was deeply moved by the sight of the people in mourning for Lazarus. Despite knowing that everything would change in a few minutes, Jesus took the time to enter into the situation and the suffering that the family of Lazarus were experiencing. When Jesus wept, He personally experienced the pain and the loss of the bereaved.

Compassion is defined as “a strong feeling of sympathy for another in distress which motivates one to do something to alleviate that suffering”. Often when we search for synonyms for the word “compassion”, we come up with words like sympathy, pity, kindness, tenderness, empathy and gentleness. Many of these words are used to describe “soft” emotions. However, compassion equally demands “tougher” qualities like courage, perseverance, solidarity and perseverance.

In Jesus’ ministry on earth, he consciously took the side of the poor, the outcasts and the marginalized, including those affected with leprosy. In doing so, He invited the disapproval and anger of the powerful and the rich, which eventually took Him to His death on the cross. This is the divine model of compassion that we are called to emulate. May God give us the sensitivity to recognize the suffering of others and the strength and courage to stand by them, even at great cost and risk to ourselves.

Joyce Ponnaiya. I am a pathologist and worked for many years , till my retirement at the Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore, India. Apart from my academic appointment, I have served as the Principal (Dean) of the college and later as the Director (CEO) of the organisation. From 2006 to 2011 after retiring from CMC, I worked as Consultant Pathologist at the Schieffelin Institute of Health Research and Leprosy Centre (SIHR &LC), at Karigiri in India. Thereafter, I continue to work at Karigiri in an honorary part-time position as pathologist. I have served on the Board of Governors of both the TLM India Trust and TLM International.

Jesus had a special care for people affected by leprosy

Have you played the game 'Who am I?' I give clues, telling you about me. You guess who I am.

Let's play 'Who am I?'

- I am a fictional character that first appeared in children's books in 1958

Books were originally written in English, but have been translated into 30 languages

- I come from Peru
- I like marmalade sandwiches
- I am a Bear

Have you guessed? I'm Paddington Bear!

When he was younger, Paddington was cared after by his Aunt. Growing up in Peru, he lived Lucy. When he gets older, his Aunt sends him Aunt Lucy sends Paddington away as she knows Paddington needs. Just like Aunt Lucy, Jesus and looks after people. Aunt Lucy ties a label Paddington's neck with the words "Please Look Thank You." Although she sends him away, and cares for Paddington and wants to make someone will look after him. Aunt Lucy had a special care for Paddington. Like this, Jesus has a special interest in people affected by leprosy. Jesus' love for people affected by leprosy tells us that we should do likewise – we should love and care for people affected by leprosy.



for and looked with his Aunt to England. it is what always cares for round After This Bear. Aunt Lucy loves sure that

In the Bible, we hear that Jesus heals a man with leprosy.

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.' Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' And immediately the leprosy left him. Luke 5: 12-13

Jesus has invited each one of us to care for people affected by leprosy. The ways we support are very different. This could be administration, fundraising, medical care ... Whatever we do, remember that we are being like Jesus and following his example to love people affected by leprosy.

Jesus loved everyone, particularly those who other people might have ignored – women, prostitutes, people with leprosy ... Jesus included them and loved them.

Help us today to be like Jesus and show love and care, not only to people affected by leprosy, but to everyone who is feared or rejected by people around them.



Aspire to Gain a Crown in Heaven!

We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus' finished work on the Cross (Eph 2:8-10).

Daily we make it our aim to please God in all things (2 Cor 5:9-11).

One day, believers will have to give a personal account of themselves at the Judgement Seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:13+14).

The Bible encourages us to aspire to an array of Heavenly Crowns –

- 1) THE CROWN OF LIFE (James 1:12) – Are you truly saved by the blood of Jesus Christ to receive this one?
- 2) THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (2 Tim 4:7+8) – Are you pursuing a life of holiness? Do you hate what God hates and love what He loves?
- 3) THE INCORRUPTIBLE CROWN (1 Cor 9:24-27) – Are you serving God faithfully with all your time, talents and treasures? Good + faithful servant!?
- 4) THE CROWN OF GLORY (1 Pet 5:1-4) – Are you a humble Christian leader or a despot of sorts? The great apostle Paul saw himself as a slave to all!
- 5) THE CROWN OF LIFE (Nr 2) (Rev 2:10) – This is the martyrs' crown, but such need not fear the second death!
- 6) THE CROWN OF REJOICING (1 Thes 2:18-20) – Are you endeavouring to witness for Jesus effectively at all times? Gathering souls for Jesus in Heaven?
- 7) THE CROWNS OF GOLD (Rev 4:4,10,11) – Given only to the 24 elders before God's Throne – spontaneously they cast their crowns before Him!

CONCLUSION: All these crowns are made available to God's aspiring children, because of Jesus' CROWN OF THORNS (Matth 27:27 ff)!.....

Weary of self, and laden with my sin, I look at Heaven, and long to enter in; but there no evil thing may find a home, and yet I hear a voice that bids me "come!"

So vile I am, how dare I hope to stand in the pure glory of that Holy Land? Before the whiteness of that Throne appear? Yet there are hands stretched out to me.

It is the voice of Jesus that I hear, His are the hands stretched out to me, and His the blood that can for all atone, and set me faultless there before the Throne.

Yea, Thou wilt answer for me righteous Lord: Thine all the merits, mine the great reward; Thine the sharp thorns, and mine the golden crown; mine the life won,

And Thine the life laid down. Samuel John Stone (1839 – 1900)



RESTORATION

Psalm 51

Podda means lotus in Bengali. It's a beautiful flower that grows out of the murky pond, blooms and raises its face to the creator. Her parents named her Podda, she was beautiful but for a while. When she was thirteen ugly patches appeared on her face. It was the dreaded leprosy but she did not care to notice.

The Bible tells us... We are fearfully and wonderfully made.... In His image. Everything was perfect God had declared. Then sin creeps in... Stealthily....like the mycobacterium leprae does. It makes its home in unsuspected corners of our heart making the perfect into ugly. Very soon the disease spread. Ashamed of her appearance, she stopped looking at herself in the mirror and went about covering her face with a scarf.

Podda was broken and in despair. Sin, like leprosy has a crippling effect on a Christian. It mars our emotions, thoughts and actions. Left unbridled it paralyzes and destroys us. Psalm 51 is a classic psalm that narrates David's downward spiral of sin which can be anyone else's life story. Nathan was sent with a parable so that David would understand. And surely the man after God's own heart realized the horror of his sin.

She accepted her illness and the seriousness of the complications. She was ready for treatment. It was a conscious decision. Painful physiotherapy discouraged her every now and then.

David's response was four fold.

He turned to God – Verse 1: *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.*

He beseeched forgiveness and cleansing. Verse 2: *“Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin verse 7: Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

He confessed. Verse 3: *“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me”.*

He pleaded restoration. Verse 11-12: *“Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

It took 3 long years for young Podda to recover. The road to recovery was riddled with suffering. But she is smiling today. As she peers into the mirror to apply kohl to her large expressive eyes, she sees a restored person.

Are we harboring sins in our heart? Let us respond like David. Let us experience the Joy Of His Salvation now and forever. Amen.

Joydeepa Darlong is a Family Physician, working as Consultant and Deputy Superintendent. For the past 15 years at The Leprosy Mission Hospital, Purulia, West Bengal, India.


Jeremiah 6:16 New International Version (NIV)

16 *This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it.'*

Proverbs 3:5-6 New International Version (NIV)

5 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;*
6 *in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

Living in Mozambique, over the years we have often felt like we were standing at the crossroads. What should we be doing here, how long do we continue, When is our task done? ...

Often we pray and ask for guidance, and often the Lord shows us the next step, or inspires us with a fresh perspective. But after standing at the crossroads and looking at the situation, we need to make up our minds, choose a path and walk it. For worse than choosing the wrong path, would be to get stuck at the crossroads and not move forward. For times in our life when we need to make those pivotal decisions, we need some extra Grace and of course good advice which He often sends us. As important as it is to speak to the right people, it is to ask the right questions. To ask the right questions we need to have the right perspective, and for that, God needs to speak into us till it hurts.

Sometimes also the path we felt led to choose seems long, weary and even boring and we are at risk of turning aside before we have reached the next crossroads. Or maybe worse, we fall into a rut on the side of the road, and just plod on blissfully content in our routines and comfort zone, not seeing (or wanting to see) the signs on the road.

Often in the Bible we find reference to being led in a straight path. In our current state of the world it mostly seems a very unlikely scenario. Change happens so quickly, and fewer people stay in the same situation for longer than 3 years before they need to adapt again to a changed work environment, or learn new skills. One could argue that the passage was not written to refer to our job or life situation specifically, but maybe to a higher moral path, but I do not think we can compartmentalize ourselves in that way. In verse 5 of Proverbs 3, it refers to ALL our ways, and from the context it seems like God wants to have input into our daily reality. Imagine living a lifelong Inspired vocation, that moves us forward, keeps us growing, makes a difference and gives rest to your soul.

So, if resources was not an issue, what would you be devoting your life to?

What advice can we give each other?

Have we heard from God on the issue, yet?

Maybe I am just in my midlife crisis, but what I can tell you from where I am standing is that time has wings. May God lead you along straight paths, leaving deep footprints and giving you rest for your soul.

Arie de Kruijff – Country leader Mozambique



Bartimeus

Mark 10, 46-end

Imagine the scene. It was Passover, so pilgrims would be setting out from Jericho, less than 25km away. The streets would be crowded – even those who were not travelling into the city would line the streets to bid farewell; and then the popular young Rabbi arrives among them, attracting more crowds.

Bartimeus is mentioned in the story by name. He must have been well known to the townsfolk. What did they think of him? Did they even notice him? To Jesus he was not just a bothersome beggar, but a human being with real needs, a body waiting a cure, a soul waiting to be saved. We learn a lot about Bartimeus.

- He had faith in Jesus – he places Jesus in the ancient Messianic tradition stemming from David. He did not really understand Jesus's true role – any more than the disciples have done – but his faith is rewarded.
- He was persistent – he did not have a vague or sentimental wish to see Jesus. He had a desperate desire, and his insistence paid off (compare Luke 11: 5-10 and 18:1-8). How do we balance an insistent prayer to God with the understanding that his answer may be 'no' or 'not yet'?
- He was eager – throwing off his coat so he did not trip over it in his urgency to meet Jesus. Does this mirror our own attitude to meeting Jesus in worship?
- Or maybe throwing off the cloak was a proof of faith - indicating he no longer needed something for people to throw coins into because he was confident that he would return to work and be able to earn a living again. What an example of faith.
- He knew what he wanted when Jesus asked him. Perhaps Jesus wanted to demonstrate to the crowd that he was not just after money. Bartimeus knew his own need. Do we examine ourselves before praying, so we are better aware of what our real needs are?
- He was precise in what he wanted. Is it too easy to be vague in our praying, trying to cover the huge needs of the church and the world? Bartimeus asks for Jesus's response to a specific focused prayer.

We can rejoice because Jesus acknowledged Bartimeus's faith and restored his sight. Jesus demonstrated compassion as well as divine power. He demonstrates the power and love of God to us and to all people. Bartimeus's response of gratitude and increased faith should be our response to every answered prayer.

A blind man can see – he can see who Jesus really is. And for that spiritual insight, his physical sight is restored.

'Sir, we would like to see Jesus' (John 12:21)

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.



Miracle of Hope

Reading: Daniel 6:1-28.

Daniel 6:22 "My God sent His angel, and He shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me."

I got married and moved to my husband's family 15 years ago. Since that time I have learned many things about their cultural beliefs and traditions. A woman from East Timor is very valuable in the eyes of the woman's family, if she is asked for and paid for with a dowry (sometimes measured with buffalo) which is paid as the bride price by the man's family. As a result, the woman can be treated inhumanely by the family of the man, because she has been "bought".

It is even worse if a woman cannot conceive and give birth (whether the cause of is the woman herself or her husband), she will still not be appreciated and will even be equated with pigs. This is truly awful, but it is the cultural way of things in East Timor.

I experienced this very situation 15 years ago. After marriage, I was required to have children and somehow I could not conceive for 14 years. I tried all the advice people gave me, I went to doctors and shaman, I performed traditional rituals and prayed novenas, but had no positive results. All enduring that time I experienced intimidation, insults and even divorce threats.

I begin to seek the Lord with hope. I prayed regularly right at 12 midnight with the same request. Sometimes only tears came out to represent the heartache. I wanted to believe that God created me as a woman and surely God would lift me up. I held onto the verses that stated: "If God is my shield, who can embarrass me?". It is never too late for God, because He does do miracles. With prayer and fasting I found peace. I kept trusting that God loves me and loves the oppressed.

The Lord answered my prayer. In March 2014, I was declared pregnant and gave birth to a daughter in November 2014. We named her Daniella which means God's decision.

I believe that God decided to raise me up, to show His power, His love, and His care to the oppressed. God shout up the mouth of those who liked to berate. He humiliated those who had already condemned me. Another blessing is that through the witness of life me, my husband has drawn closer to God through reading the Word of God and praying more often.

God has restored my family life. My brothers and sisters, I can testify that whatever happens in this life, nothing is an accident. God allows things to happen to us so that His power is expressed. So that we receive better than we can imagine, and so that his name is glorified.

Afliana (Nona) Lishnahan country leader Timor Leste



Don't forget to have Joy

“The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy...” (Gal 5:22)

How often do you actually think about being joyful? We know Jesus was full of joy (Luke 10:21). I'm sure He very much enjoyed the wedding at Cana. But we Christians can sometimes be a joyless lot – like the older brother in the parable of the two brothers (Luke 15: 11-32, more commonly known as the parable of the prodigal son).

It is actually the older brother who interests me most in this parable (read Luke 15, verses 25 to 32), because we who have done the work of the Lord for many years can become like him: staying out in the field, indignant, indulging in self-pity and refusing to join the party because we feel our hard work is unrecognised and we should have more of God's attention or appreciation. But look how the Father goes out to him and pleads for his elder son to join the party, celebrate and have some fun.

Is the elder brother you? It was me at one time – I felt miffed because I thought I was working hard for God without much reward. But God showed me everything of His was already mine and he wanted me to relax, celebrate, rejoice and enjoy life, the abundant life He died for me to have (John 10:10). It's OK to be joyful. Joy is the second listed fruit of the Spirit! (Gal 5:22). In fact we are commanded to **“Be joyful always”** (1 Th 5:16 and Php 4:4).

One reason joy is so important is because joy gives us strength. It is hard to carry on with a dour attitude like the older brother had (and he was a believer). A verse I often say to myself is “the joy of the Lord is my strength” (Ne 8:10). It was “the joy that was set before Him” that gave Jesus the strength to face the cross (Heb 12:2).

Heaven will be full of joy so let's start experiencing it now. Sing, dance and celebrate (Ne 8:12), praise God and take deliberate steps to enjoy your life!

Susan Maiava

TLMNZ Board member and former TLMI Board member.



What *not* to wear

As a teenage boy, I remember discovering little by little about fashion. I once wore a navy top with black trousers. Some fashion savvy girls saw me wearing this combination and were totally aghast. 'NAVY, with BLACK?' they cried. To cut a long story short, and de-shroud this issue for male readers, apparently these two colours don't match. Over time I discovered that our country and culture had a complex and in my opinion somewhat annoying 'dress code'. I'm sure that your country and culture has a code of its own. If you stick within your code, you are culturally acceptable. Once you step out of it, as I found out, you are not!

Our Bible passage today gives us another, altogether more serious example of what *not* to wear. In it, we read about the makeover of a High Priest named Joshua.

Zechariah 3:1-5 (NIV) reads:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. ²The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?"

³Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. ⁴The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes."

⁵Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you."

The High Priest in Israel had a privileged but perilous ministry. Once a year he entered the inner sanctuary of the Temple (known as the Holy of Holies) to offer a sacrifice which would atone for the sins of the people of Israel. He had to carefully wash himself and wear special clothing, which had to be clean. In later years the High Priest would enter the inner sanctuary with a rope around his ankle. This was so his body could be pulled out if God struck him down for not wearing the proper clothing, or incorrectly performing the ceremony.

This passage in Zechariah would have been shocking to the Jewish reader - the most holy man on all the earth, the man allowed into the inner sanctuary, into the very presence of God was standing before Him covered in what the literal Hebrew translates as human excrement.

This is an extreme example of what *not* to wear!

It is also a frightening picture of our deep unworthiness and sinful, fallen state in the eyes of God. We so often think that it is what we do, or who we help, or how we act that makes us clean before God. Of course, just as Joshua finds out in verse 5, we must come before God as we are and trust in His mercy.

Take some time today to acknowledge before God your need for His grace and mercy in your life.

In my next devotion – What *to* wear, we'll think about what those 'fine garments' are, and what it means for us as Christians to wear them.

My name is **Peter Hilton**. I'm the Church and Schools Engagement Officer for TLM Northern Ireland. I've been in post since March 2015. Prior to this I was involved with TLM NI in a part time capacity for 7 years as Youth Associate.



What to wear

I wonder today if you have ever thought what a universal TLM uniform might look like? Perhaps you are in a country that does have a uniform with the TLM logo on a shirt or t-shirt. Perhaps you have a TLM badge or lapel pin that marks you out as a TLM worker in your everyday life.

Joanne, our country leader here in TLM Northern Ireland has been encouraging me to wear our TLM lapel pin to meetings and speaking engagements. As I have started to do this I have seen its value. People have asked what it is and what it stands for, which has opened up some positive conversations.

At a recent student event I wore a TLM polo from India. It not only was a good representation, but it told a story as well. As students spoke to me I was able to share where it had come from. It helped to bridge the gap of distance and relevance to these student's lives with the message of TLM.

As we consider today what to wear, the passage in Paul's letter to the Colossians when he talks about clothing ourselves in Christ is very helpful. *Colossians 3:12-15 (NIV) reads*

"Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful."

In this passage we find an excellent illustration of how to spiritually dress as Christians. As we get up each morning and dress ourselves in our uniforms, whatever shape they may take, whoever they may represent, so too must we wake each morning and clothe ourselves in these values so that we can faithfully represent Jesus in our lives.

Below is a short prayer that I have up on the wall of my office which I try to pray each day to help me to clothe myself in the things of Christ. Perhaps you might want each day to do the same, as we together strive to faithfully represent Christ in many different parts of the world.

Lord, let me be clothed with mercy today, and full of kindness in all I do. Help me to be humble, not thinking of myself as better than others, and gentle so that I don't hurt anyone. Give me patience when I'm losing my temper, and help me to forgive others just as you have forgiven me. Most of all, clothe me in your love, and keep your peace in my heart no matter what the day will bring. In Jesus' name, Amen.

My name is **Peter Hilton**. I'm the Church and Schools Engagement Officer for TLM Northern Ireland. I've been in post since March 2015. Prior to this I was involved with TLM NI in a part time capacity for 7 years as Youth Associate.



Isaiah 50 v 4: The sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue to know the word that sustains the weary (NIV)

James 3 v 2: We get it wrong nearly every time we open our mouths. If you could find someone whose speech was perfectly true, you have a perfect person. (Eugene Peterson The Message)

Which of the above verses do you most often relate to? At times we are conscious of speaking with an informed tongue knowing that God has given us the right word to say at the right time. Equally there are times when we relate to the verse in James and know we have said the wrong thing and wish we could take our words back. That of course is not possible. There are also times when we wish we had spoken out. Times when we should have had the courage to speak out for our faith, times when we should have defended the oppressed but have lacked courage or confidence.

Our tongue is a powerful tool and speech a real gift. James uses three metaphors to describe the power of the tongue.

- A bit in a horse's mouth – a horse can be wild and unruly but with a small bit in its mouth the horse can be controlled
- The rudder on a ship – a small rudder can determine the course of a ship even through a storm.
- A spark from a fire – even a small spark can ignite a fire that causes devastation.

A careless word, a moment of anger, a thoughtless conversation can all lead to hurt and devastation.

Speech is a gift. How do we use it in our day to day relationships? Do we use our words to build up and speak life into those relationships, particularly the ones we find difficult, or do we use our words to criticise and cause hurt.

When Jesus spoke, he spoke with kindness and compassion, words of healing and hope and always spoke truth even in difficult situations.

Matthew 12 v 34: For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.

What we say reflects what is in our hearts that is why they have such power to hurt.

Let us ask God for better hearts, so that the overflow from our hearts will be words of wisdom, full of grace and truth. Words that build up and encourage and speak truth into difficult situations and words that speak up for justice.

Lord may your Spirit prompt us and enable us to speak words that give life and help us to leave unspoken words that would hurt or destroy.

Alison McDonald, previously a Physiotherapist with TLM in Bangladesh, retired Chair of the Board of TLMS and currently a volunteer speaker with TLMS.



Finish well!

Philippians 3:12-14 (NIV UK)

During the Empire Games held in Vancouver, Canada in August 1954 the famous “miracle mile” took place – a race where for the first time two participants in the same race ran the mile under four minutes! John Landy from Australia led the race almost from the start, hoping to negate the well-known and anticipated strong finish from the Brit, Roger Bannister. During the last lap of this fiercely contested race, Landy looked over his shoulder a number of times to see where Bannister was. As he came around the last bend, Landy again glanced over his left shoulder, only to be passed by Bannister on his other side! Bannister beat him in the final sprint to the line.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian believers from Rome, where he was kept under house arrest. At the time, Paul lived in a rented house and had the freedom to impart the gospel to all who came to visit him. He used the picture of an athlete participating in a foot-race to describe the Christian life. Twice he explained that he has not yet reached perfection (“arrived”) in his life, but that he strains every muscle to reach the finish line in order to receive the prize God had called him to. In the previous verses (Phil 3:7-11), Paul emphasised the importance of knowing Christ – not only a knowledge of facts, but also a knowledge gained through experience that transforms the entire person! Paul wanted to know Christ more fully, experience the resurrection power and also share in his sufferings, even to the point of death.

Not having attained this yet, Paul was determined firstly to keep on forgetting (present participle sense of the Greek verb) what was behind him: his old life (including his Jewish cultural and religious background, his training and later persecution of the early church) and also his past experiences as a Christian, both the successes and failures, triumphs and miseries which came to him as an apostle. It is forgetting in the sense of not glancing back (like Landy did), not to be concerned about what was behind him!

Secondly, he was determined to keep on straining (another present participle) towards the goal or finish line, showing intense desire, focus and perseverance. The picture is of an athlete with his/her eyes fixed on the goal, his/her hands stretching out to it, and his/her body leaning forward to the finish line. It is the longing to finish well!

The goal or prize in ancient Greek games would be a laurel wreath as an award for the achievement of winning the race. To each believer finishing the race it means winning the prize of God’s call to eternal life in Jesus Christ – knowing Him fully and Him completing the good work He started in us (Phil 1:6). God’s enabling call and persevering grace are required before the race can be completed. See also 1 Cor 9:24-25, 2 Tim 4:8 and Heb 12:1-3.

Our faith journey is more like a marathon, than a sprint!



Overwhelmed?

Scripture Reading: Matthew 14:15-21 (NIV)

What an unreasonable request! “You give them something to eat.” There were easily well over 10,000 people that had come out, hungry to listen to the words of Jesus. Hungry for His words of eternal life. But as the day was setting, their stomachs started to become hungry too. In a remote place. No cell phone coverage. No pizza express. And if there had been—even a modern day catering service would have struggled to feed such a multitude ad hoc.

All that Jesus’ disciples had were five loaves of bread and two fish. They were overwhelmed by the need, and their inadequacy to meet it. And not just in this situation. Their whole life and ministry was overwhelming. As Jesus was leaving this world He gave them a mission: “Go and make disciples of all nations.” (Matthew 28:19, NIV) Up to that point the disciples had barely been beyond their own home town! These were people with very little education. Maybe some struggled to even read and write.

What about us?

When we look around us, don’t we feel overwhelmed when we see so many great needs? Great poverty. Inequality. Severe leprosy stigma. Inner and outer wounds that don’t want to heal. Not to mention the greatest need of people needing to know the greatest love of all—the love of God. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, NIV)

So many great needs. And Jesus tells us: “You give them something to eat.” “You meet their need.” “You reach out and help them.” “You carry my light into this world.” And we feel completely overwhelmed and inadequate.

Even if we were the brightest, the most gifted, the best educated. Granted, we might have even six loaves and three fish. But what is that in light of the overwhelming need around us.

There is something that applies to all followers of Jesus of all times, just as it applied to Jesus’ disciples back then. As Bill Lawrence puts it: “Jesus calls us to do what we cannot do, with what we do not have, for the rest of our lives.”

Does Jesus not realize that the task is too big for us? Of course He does! And yet He gives us the task. Not because we are so capable and great. But because He is. Because He is so merciful. Because He loves us so much. Because He wants us to be part of what He is doing in this world, part of His miracle. He wants to reach people through us. He wants us to look to Him, come to Him with our own need and inadequacy. To give Him the little that we have, give Him our lives, our everything, and ask Him to use us. To be available to Him so that He may work His miracle through our feeble hands—for the blessing and salvation of the people around us. And for His glory.



Cast your bread upon the waters, For you will find it after many days.

Ecclesiastes 11:1 New King James Version: Cast your bread upon the waters, For you will find it after many days.

Amplified Bible: Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, [be diligently active, make thoughtful decisions], for you will find it after many days.

In the 1960's I was 10 years old in a little coastal town near Cape Town, South Africa. Uncle Bill McDougal spoke at our church about the work of the Leprosy Mission. Our family started saving and every so often my mother sent donation for the work amongst 'the lepers'. My mother urged us to contribute sacrificially. She quoted a verse about 'casting your bread on the waters'. I had no idea what it meant.

In 1987 I started working as a social worker with TLM Southern Africa. For ten years I was based at the then Westfort Leprosy Hospital in Pretoria. I had the privilege of sharing in the stories of a few hundred leprosy patients. The hospital was closed in 1997. Then followed a period of intense community work. My colleagues and I travelled to all the communities where people affected by leprosy lived, doing contact screening, raising awareness in the community, attending to spiritual needs, helping people to find peace in their difficult circumstances. There were sad experiences in their lives, but more often we saw happy days of breakthroughs – people smiling again, not only being cured of leprosy but also experiencing 'new life'. Later on our work expanded to general disability work, promoting the inclusion of persons with disability in churches, implying even more travel and involvement in (poor) rural communities.

In the past 28 years I have often thought of the people that make this work possible. Those that send their donations every so often, ensuring that we have funding available to travel, to engage with people affected by leprosy and disability so their voice is heard.

I have often wondered how is it possible that someone who has never met a leprosy patient is faithful in supporting this work with finances and prayer. One day I was busy at the fax machine in the office. A fax came in: a proof of payment to the TLM bank account: a HUGE amount of money, I had to check it again to understand it! I was so touched by the generosity of people unknown to me but allowing me to do my work. On another day I received a short letter from a teacher at a school for children with intellectual disabilities – with a financial contribution from the children – and a picture of the children. Lord, how is this possible that people can be so generous?

A while ago I attended a conference. A doctor unknown to me came to tell me that he knows me well, from reading about my work in TLM newsletters. For the past 20 years he supports our work financially and in prayer. All I could do was to hold his hand and thank him sincerely for keeping my colleagues and I on the move for all these years.

For a moment we reflected on the word of Ecclesiastes 11:1 **Give generously, for your gifts will return to you later (The Living Bible)**. Be generous: Invest in acts of charity. Charity yields high returns (The Message). May we all be inspired to keep casting our bread on the waters and to give generously.

Since 1987 **Erna Möller** is the programme manager for Psycho-social Rehabilitation with TLM Southern Africa. She started as the social worker at Westfort hospital in Pretoria. After that she was involved in TLM SA's community work, caring for the rehabilitation needs of people affected by leprosy. For the past 8 years Erna is also the project leader of the RampUp programme, sensitising churches to actively include persons with disabilities.



Praising the Lord Always as He is Steadfast

Psalm 68:4 *Sing to God, sing in praise of his name, and extol him who rides on the clouds; rejoice before him—his name is the Lord. (NIV)*

Psalm 66:1-2 *shout for joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious. (NIV)*

Psalm 136:1 *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His Love endures forever. (NIV)*

One of the most important things we do to honour people is to praise them. When we praise and thank them, we share their goodness with others. We show to others who they are. We do also confirm their qualities that we want each one to embrace. This is exactly what we do to our Lord our God when we praise him and thank him. Let us reflect on this to encourage others to see the qualities of our Lord.

We have good and bad days. Let us think of good things that has happened to us and let reflect and find ways to praise God. How was God involved and who else was involved? Let together praise, worship and sing joyfully to Our God and Our Lord. Our God never changes, he is the same forever and ever! He is steadfast! We thank you Lord because you are all the time good and your love is everlasting.

What difference does it make in our lives because the love of God is everlasting?

Wilson Lado Santo

Operation Manager TLM in South Sudan



Nehemiah 3

At first glance, today's reading is merely a list of those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. However, when you realise this city wall was rebuilt in 52 days (Nehemiah 6v15), we realise that this was something special. So what can we learn from this amazing feat of construction? Well, let me suggest four principles.

Firstly, burdens are lighter when everyone works together. Many studies of organisations reveal that 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people. Can you imagine what could be achieved if we all worked together to achieve the goal of eradicating leprosy and transforming lives?

Secondly, work goes faster when everyone works together. When we labour in unity for our Saviour, that work will go quickly and be wondrously beneficial to all the world. We need to ensure we are acting like grease in the axles, and not glue in the gears.

Thirdly, each person's work is important. I am sure most of us would rather be working on the Fountain Gate than the Dung Gate. However, when you look at it from a construction and strategic standpoint there is no gate or wall that is more or less important. The fact of the matter is, if every one of the gates and walls were rebuilt with the exception of one, the city of Jerusalem would be vulnerable.

The same is true in the service of God. So, whether you work in a TLM office, or in the field directly working with those affected with leprosy, or a supporting country volunteer, or in a governance role, your work is equally important.

Fourthly, each person is recognised for their work. I suspect they worked a little harder when they realised that when someone read the pages of the account of the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem their names would be seen. So, let me urge you to encourage and cheer on everyone you can, when the work of God is being done. Every ministry needs cheerleaders, not to inflate our egos, but to encourage one another.

Whenever I read Nehemiah 3, I always think of geese. Have you ever seen geese flying in a V formation. Did you know that by flying as they do, the members of the flock create an upward air current for one another. By flying in a V formation, the whole flock gets 70% greater flying range than if each goose flew on its own. And if one of the geese gets sick or wounded, two fall out of formation with it and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with the struggler until it is able to fly again.

Also, the geese in the rear of the formation are the ones who do the honking. It is their way of announcing that they are following and everything is going well. The repeated honks encourage those in front to stay at it. So, whether its flying in formation, or caring for one another, or encouraging each other, it is their natural instinct.

May we all work together in unity, caring for, and encouraging one another.



Jesus Onboard

He (Jesus) got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. Luke 5:3-6

Even the things we do every day can go wrong. Some days are idyllic with calm seas, just enough breeze to fill our sails and a healthy catch of fish to meet our daily needs. Most days are harder, with challenging seas, strong winds and not as many fish as we'd hoped for. On a daily basis we all face different challenges. Finding work, facing loneliness, coping with illness, broken relationships. Even when life is overflowing with blessing, we often carry with us a sense of disappointment or failure at the same time.

Simon was having a bad day, after labouring hard, he had caught nothing. No money earned, no food for the family, just tiredness and nets to repair.

In the midst of Simon's bad day, something extraordinary was happening around him. Crowds were flooding the water's edge to listen to Jesus. In order to be heard, Jesus asks to use Simon's boat as a platform, and Simon takes him out in the boat close to the shore. Jesus clearly wanted to connect with Simon and the simple request to borrow his boat meant that Simon would have a great seat beside Jesus as he taught from the boat.

There are times when simple invitations position us close to Jesus. We can hear those invitations and respond, or be the ones who reach out and invite others to allow Jesus into their lives.

After spending time beside Jesus, Simon is willing to follow his leading, and is prepared to try fishing again. When struggling with difficulties, failure and disappointment place your trust in Jesus and spend time in his presence. When feeling weak, gather with other followers of Jesus to be encouraged and supported.

Prayer

Lord, thank you that you are at work in my life and that I can move through difficult times, with assurance that comes from your leading and comfort.



SAT BEFORE THE LORD

“Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and he said:” who am I, O sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?” 2 Samuel 7: 18

Who am I, that God has brought me this far? Praise the Lord for let me become a student again, and continue to be blessed by His love and faithfulness. Now came to the end of the Fall Term in Regent Bible College, I have decided to continue my study for Winter Term until next Spring. It has been an excited and fruitful time to enrich my knowledge of the Bible and fulfill my desire to knowing God better.

During this Fall Term study, I have chosen the Book “First and Second Samuel” as one of my subjects, with the good teaching of the College Professor; I realized how much I have learnt about following God through the life of David. The verses above reminded me to sit before God and prayed as David did. David sat before God, that action put him out of action, got himself out of the driver’s seat, and deliberately placed himself before God his King. It was entering into the presence of God becoming aware of God’s word, trading in his plans for God’s plans, letting his enthusiasm for being a King with the authority and strength to do something for God be replaces with the willingness to become a king who would represent truly the sovereignty of God the high King, His prayer show how well he had listened to God’s word preached to him by Nathan. (2 Samuel 7:18 – 29)

I love what Eugene Peterson said about David’s inaction – to sit down; “the real action started; not David making God a house but God making David a house. There is no danger in such inaction that we will end up with nothing to do. David did much before he sat down, and he did much afterward; God commands and we obey; God send and we go.”

During last twenty-two years with The Leprosy Mission, my Christian life is a gloriously active life as the Holy Spirit does the work in and through me. I am always afraid of being caught out doing too little for God, let alone nothing. But there are moments; I am so easy to be caught up in my God-plans that I forget all about God. I have an intention to work out my best whatever job I am in, and whatever course I study, but I often unaware of God’s action due to my activities and noise around, until I sit down before God and pray, I become aware of the real world, God’s world.

The poem from Joyce Rupp reminds me to think about resting before my next step:

“Resting-----on a narrow leaf-blade, sharpening perception, Maintaining balance, all this And more before I risk another giant leap into the unknown.”

I think all of us are always caught up in a hurry and busy world, forget to sit down before our Lord and rest on Him before another giant leap into the unknown.

Yuek Ming Poon (Hong Kong) 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. Left TLM June 2015 and now studying in Vancouver Regent Bible College.



Trust in Him

Mark 4: 35-41 NIV and Today's English version

One evening Jesus and the disciples got into a boat and headed for the other side of the lake. Jesus went to sleep in the back of the boat. Suddenly a strong wind blew up, a storm. Many of the disciples were used to the lake, but now they were terribly afraid. They did not understand how Jesus could sleep! The Gospel of Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us this story.

The disciples woke Jesus up. He commanded the wind and it became completely calm. Then Jesus said to His disciples: *“Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”*

The disciples were afraid, just like we are sometimes. Unexpected incidents that turn our lives upside down; the death of a relative or of a dear friend, unemployment etc; these are circumstances that can make us fearful and worried. We can also meet people we don't trust for some reason and we feel very insecure when we talk to them. Fear and trouble can make us shut ourselves off - even paralyze us.

Where is your faith? In this story in the Gospels, Jesus relates fear to faith. Jesus says: *“Do you still have no faith?”* It is as if Jesus was saying: “Don't you still trust me? Don't you know who I am?” Faith in our relationship with God is about trusting Him because we know who He is. It's about leaning completely towards God because we know Him. Of course we are allowed to have doubts in life, but this is about a very conscious decision to believe in God; to trust Him because of who He is. We can come to God just as a child trusts his father, without reservation.

Trust each other. In society today, independence is very much valued. You are supposed to manage your life on your own and focus on yourself all the time. At the same time competition is so strong that many people have no chance at all to succeed. They are losers from the very beginning.

Trust grows in an atmosphere of love. As human beings we need each other and we need to trust each other as well. The church is the body of Christ and as Christians we are the different parts of that body, called to depend on each other and trust each other. This is contrary to the way society expects us to act, but very significant for the church and our faith. We need to practice trust towards each other if we want to grow in our faith in Jesus Christ!

Who is this man? When this happened to the disciples, they didn't yet know Jesus very well. This happened before Easter, before His Resurrection. Probably they didn't understand that God was there in the boat, sleeping on the pillow! Maybe however, they sensed it? This is still a very important question: Who is Jesus for me? Do I know Him as the One who has risen from death? Do I trust Him, even if I don't understand everything?

Jesus did not actually blame the disciples for their lack of faith. Instead He calmed the storm and helped them out of their difficult and dangerous situation. He was there for them!

For 2016 I do wish that we may all grow in our trust in Jesus Christ as we come to know Him more every day; that we will dare to lean towards Him completely, because we trust Him!

Gunnel Ericson, TLM Sweden. Former National director TLM Sweden 2003-2010; member of PRG since 2011



Grace in Action

Leprosy Sunday Devotion

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. Mark 1:40-42 (NIV)

Many of us approach our Lord Jesus Christ with supplications at different points of time in our lives. The Word of God shows us how we should approach Jesus with our needs. In the text under reference, a person affected by leprosy had multiple needs in his life. His needs included physical, social and psychological. It was not only cure from the disease that he sought, but also inclusion in the society. He faced stigma and discrimination from his fellow human beings. He was sad and burdened. He came with a heavy heart looking for relief from Jesus. He must have heard a lot from others about the power of Jesus. His needs and what he heard about Jesus made him take the bold step to approach Jesus and break the barriers of law. He knelt before Jesus and presented his need for cleansing. Many around him must have raised their eyebrows because those affected by leprosy were considered to be unclean and they should keep their distance from others.

The person affected by leprosy was full of hope when he approached Jesus. He expected and believed that Jesus could heal him. He came to Jesus with reverential respect, humility and submitted himself at His feet. He was eager to receive the grace of Jesus!

Jesus responded to his submission by releasing His grace. Jesus was moved by the faith of the person. He reached out and touched him and thus showed his compassion to the person. Jesus broke all the legal barriers by touching the person affected by leprosy. What an act of love and magnanimity! Grace responded to humility and the response was instantaneous! Jesus gave what the person affected by leprosy sought. The needs and the response matched.

What we learn here is that we are free to come to Jesus irrespective of who we are and what our condition is. He is interested in us as we are. We have to come to Him in complete submission of our will to His Will. We have the assurance that if we take our problems to Him, He will meet our needs. Where humility abounds, grace also abounds. Grace is available freely; we have to reach out and receive it. It is our dependency on Jesus that releases his grace. Jesus has opened the door for us to approach Him. Let us enter His presence with humility and hope.

Dr PLN Raju

Deputy Director (Resource Mobilisation)
The Leprosy Mission Trust India



Authors in Alphabetical Order

Textuarium

Afliana Nona Lishnahan	18 January		2 Samuel 7,18	29 January
Alan Gray	4 January		2 Kings 6,14-21	2 January
Alison McDonald	22 January		Nehemiah 3	27 January
Allan Ekstedt	28 December		Psalms 51	15 January
Anne-Claude Jonah	9 January		Psalms 66,1-2	26 January
Arie de Kruijff	16 January		Psalms 68,4	26 January
Brent Morgan	8 January		Psalms 136,1	26 January
Dan Izzett	7 January		Psalms 139	31 December
Erna Möller	25 January		Proverbs 3,5-6	16 January
Gert Visscher	3 January		Ecclesiastes 11,1	25 January
Gordon Brown	27 January		Isaiah 50,4	22 January
Gunnel Ericson	30 January		Jeremiah 6,16	16 January
Jamie McIntosh	13 January		Daniel 6,1-28	18 January
Joyce Ponnaiya	12 January		Zechariah 3,1-5	20 January
Joydeepa Darlong	15 January		Matthew 2,1-12	29 December
Kirsteen Dutton	11 January		Matthew 2,9	28 December
Marta Risko	31 December		Matthew 2,16-18	30 December
Mhairi Dawson	6 January		Matthew 14,15-21	24 January
Mo Lewis	1 January		Matthew 27,27 ff	14 January
mzf	24 January		Mark 1,40-42	31 January
Nalini Abraham Dr	30 December		Mark 4,35-41	9 and 30 January
Niki Jakeman	17 January		Mark 10,46-end	17 January
Otto Kingsley	14 January		Luke 2,25-32	3 January
Paul Jakeman	17 January		Luke 5,3-6	28 January
Peter Hilton	20 January		Luke 5,12-13	13 January
Peter Hilton	21 January		Luke 7,36-50	5 January
Pradeep Failbus	10 January		John 2,1-11	10 January
Raju PLN Dr	31 January		John 11,35	12 January
Salomon S. Halder	2 January		Acts 8,26-40	8 January
Sarah Failbus	10 January		1 Cor 13,12	11 January
Shyamala Anand Dr	5 January		2 Cor 11,30	4 January
Susan Maiava	19 January		2 Cor 12,9-11	6 January
Tanny Hagens	29 December		2 Cor 12,9-10	7 January
Theo de Villiers	23 January		Gal 5,22	19 January
Tim Reed	28 January		Phil 3,12-14	23 January
Wilson Lado Santo	26 January		Col 3,12-15	21 January
Yuek Ming Poon	29 January		Hebr 11,1	1 January
			James 3,2	22 January