



TLM Daily Devotions

August 2018





The importance of the 'baptism' (fullness) of the Holy Spirit in our lives!

A) THE 'BAPTISM' CANDIDATES

Matth. 1:8 – "And Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah." Like these kings of old (2 Kings 12), some of God's 'Baptism' candidates to this day, are good, worse or both devious and unrepentant. Therefore, let's allow God to sober us up promptly for His best – read Ezek.18:19 – 29 !

B) THE 'BAPTISM' MESSENGER

John 1:8 – "He was not the Light, but came to bear witness of the Light."

John the Baptist was the first NT 'Baptism' messenger (read John 1:26 – 36). To this day, true 'Baptism' messengers proclaim a similar message.

Eph.4:18 – "Do not be drunk with wine, but rather keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit."

C) THE 'BAPTIZER' SUPREME

Mark 1:8 – "I have baptized you with water, but He (Jesus Christ – the 'Baptizer' Supreme) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Daily Jesus Christ offers to assuage our spiritual thirst with His life-giving 'Baptism'(John7:37ff).

Nobody else can ever usurp this Stewardship of His!

D) THE 'BAPTISM' EXPERIENCED

Acts 1:8 – " But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem...Judea...Samaria...and to the end of the earth."

This very real experience is unforgettable, life-changing and world shaking in a Gospel sense!

E) THE 'BAPTISM' LIFESTYLE

Luke 1:8–"Now while Zechariah was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty"

The 'Baptism' lifestyle is one of faithfulness – always in step with the will of God for your life!

It is pleasing to God, whether you get your own prayers answered or not (they longed for a child)!

It's all about God and not about self (1 Cor. 15:58)!

Bottom Line: You cannot live a fruitful Christian life without the 'Baptism' of the Holy Spirit! – Amen.



How do I prepare for God's Kingdom? – 1

The disciples of Jesus wanted to know what will be the sign of Jesus' coming back and the end of the age. He said that the day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor himself, but only the Father. To prepare the disciples for the Kingdom of God, He told them the *Parable of Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)*.

Aspects of God's Kingdom

Time (most perishable resource)

Jesus, the Master has gone on a long journey. He will be away for a long time. Time of his return is unknown. He is following God's schedule. As the Son, He does what the Father decides. No point in speculating the time and hour of his return. There will be no announcement of His coming. It can happen when we do not expect. *But He will return*. It's definite. It will be a surprise for all, those who truly know the Master as well as others.

Two faithful servants immediately went to work to increase their Master's riches. They had started putting it to use, to multiply. *They did not tarry*. As soon as they got the opportunity to respond to their Master's trust in them, they acted. Their countdown to fruitfully deploy the Master's money started as soon as he gave it to them. They realized the significance of time. They never asked how long the Master would be away. Time of his return was not important for them. *Every day counts in being stewards* of what was entrusted to them.

Money (resources) Talent was the coinage measure of money in the time of Jesus. It represented an incredible value of money. It's said that one talent was equivalent to 20 years' wages of a labourer. The Master was a rich man. He became a rich man working hard. It was his hard-earned money. The Master knew the value of money. He gave it *willingly and abundantly* (8 talents). While he was away, he did not want his money (resources) to be idle. Value of money is in its use, and not hidden away. Money is useful to meet needs of people. The money was "*entrusted*", given unilaterally in trust and not earned by the servants through their works. The Master decided what He wanted to give. It was *equitable* and not equal. Each servant had different abilities which the Master knew. The talents were distributed according to their abilities. The Master was thus justified in expecting from the servants only what they were capable of doing with his money.

Work (stewardship) Money serves its purpose only when one who controls it uses it. Two servants put their money to work. It's irrelevant how much money one has received; it's relevant what one has been done with it. Money does not go to work, but the workers do. They had a sense of *accountability* as stewards. Their grateful response was in recognition of the Master's generosity and faith in them. Their hands and feet have moved. Without work wealth is not created. The opportunity must not be wasted - unused, misused or used in any other manner but to add value to the riches of their Master.

In contrast, the third servant's excuses for inaction showed that he was in fact lazy – he didn't do any work. He didn't even let others (the bankers) go to work with the money. He neither worked nor permitted others to work with his Master's money. He stalled the process multiplication of the Master's riches. He had no responsibility to his Master's trust in him. He was self-centred and not Master (Christ) -centred. There was no true relationship with his Master.



How do I prepare for God's Kingdom? – 2

Fruitfulness (gain/profit)

Multiplication of resources is the fundamental principle in God's Kingdom. Everything must grow and add value. However small or big is one's control over God given resources, we must increase it. Being static does not please the Master. Value addition pleases Him. It is an aspect of stewardship. Two servants had returned to the Master double of what they had received. 100% increase. The Master never said to multiply the money. They implicitly understood what the Master wanted them to do. It showed their commitment to the expectation of the Master. Those who made a profit for their Master were rewarded for their faithfulness. The third servant made no profit, no gain. The root of the third servant's problem was his view of his Master as an unjust person; an untruth, a thought that was received from Satan.

Judgment (justice)

The Master had returned and sat down to settle the accounts with his servants. They knew that the Master would enquire what they did with his money. He wanted an account of what he gave according to their abilities, nothing more and nothing less. There is no escape from their accountability and his judgement. Justice demands accountability.

The Master takes pleasure in the profit gained by His servants in His absence. The diligent servants were rewarded well for their faithful service – the Master had commended them as being good and faithful. For them who had the mind of the Master, more was given. They were given even greater part in his affairs, invited to “enter into the joy of the Master”, the bliss of being in his presence. The excuses did not stop the Master meting out severe punishment to him. The evil and lazy servant, was forever removed from the Master's presence. He lost whatever was given to him earlier and more significantly the servanthood itself.

Some takeaways

A good steward (servant) knows what the Master expects him to do with His riches for His glory; multiply. He holds the Master's riches as a steward. God expects our works to be profitable. The Master is not unjust, nor does He require that we do the impossible (make a gain where He did not provide the means). When blessed abundantly, return more than the blessing. Justice would be meted out on the judgement day. Grace if not responded through gratitude, would make the Master condemn the offender. Be the soil which bears much fruit when the seed (Word) is sown.

In gratitude, for His glory.



Psalm 56

For the director of music. To the tune of "A Dove on Distant Oaks." Of David. A miktam. When the Philistines had seized him in Gath.

¹ Be merciful to me, my God,
for my enemies are in hot pursuit;
all day long they press their attack.

² My adversaries pursue me all day long;
in their pride many are attacking me.

³ When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

⁴ In God, whose word I praise—
in God I trust and am not afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?

⁵ All day long they twist my words;
all their schemes are for my ruin.

⁶ They conspire, they lurk,
they watch my steps,
hoping to take my life.

⁷ Because of their wickedness do not^[c] let them escape;
in your anger, God, bring the nations down.

⁸ Record my misery;
list my tears on your scroll
are they not in your record?

⁹ Then my enemies will turn back
when I call for help.

By this I will know that God is for me.

¹⁰ In God, whose word I praise,
in the LORD, whose word I praise—
¹¹ in God I trust and am not afraid.

What can man do to me?

¹² I am under vows to you, my God;
I will present my thank offerings to you.

¹³ For you have delivered me from death
and my feet from stumbling,
that I may walk before God
in the light of life.



Psalm 57

For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." Of David. A miktam.

When he had fled from Saul into the cave.

¹ Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me,
for in you I take refuge.

I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings
until the disaster has passed.

² I cry out to God Most High,
to God, who vindicates me.

³ He sends from heaven and saves me,
rebuking those who hotly pursue me
God sends forth his love and his faithfulness.

⁴ I am in the midst of lions;
I am forced to dwell among ravenous beasts—
men whose teeth are spears and arrows,
whose tongues are sharp swords.

⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
let your glory be over all the earth.

⁶ They spread a net for my feet—
I was bowed down in distress.

They dug a pit in my path—
but they have fallen into it themselves.

⁷ My heart, O God, is steadfast,
my heart is steadfast;

I will sing and make music.

⁸ Awake, my soul!

Awake, harp and lyre!

I will awaken the dawn.

⁹ I will praise you, Lord, among the nations;
I will sing of you among the peoples.

¹⁰ For great is your love, reaching to the heavens;
your faithfulness reaches to the skies.

¹¹ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
let your glory be over all the earth.



Transfiguration

I remember a person, born in the nineteenth century, who used to read the Bible in his summerhouse. That is a comfortable wooding structure in which people could relax. He enjoyed reading the Bible and trying to understand its insights, although he did not share all of them. His reading was not devotional, but it was discerning. On 6th August we shall celebrate the transfiguration of Jesus. Tourists or pilgrims are told that the event took place where there is a church at the top of a hill with no parapet. The taxis go alarmingly fast, and their drivers forget that visitors know the road less well than they. It is difficult to know how to interpret this reckless tourism with a devotional face, but it is possible that we share the the uncertainty with Jesus on that day long ago.

In a printed Bible there are similarities between the first three Gospels which we call synoptic because the word means that they can be seen together. They contain quite short stories almost certainly told by the first Christians and assembled by the Gospel writers to show who Jesus was. The material is carefully selected to show Jesus' mighty acts (the word miracle or *θαύμα* is never used, and to arrange events so as to transmit the living faith of the first Christians to later generations. We can use the perceptions of the evangelists to understand why they chose material and wrote as they did. Indeed, according to Papias, a Bishop in the early second century, Mark wrote down short stories about Jesus « not, however in order. »

Whatever that means, *Mark's Gospel* does tell a story. There is a dividing point at Caesarea Philippi in chapter 8: 27-30. Jesus has had some difficulties with the Jews and, quite naturally, he asks his closest followers who people think he is. « Who » he asks the disciples « do people say that I am ? » The rather hesitant answer includes Elijah or a prophet. So Jesus goes further when asks « who do **you** say that I am. » Peter, filled enthusiasm, perhaps more enthusiasm than judgement, announces rather brutally « You are the Christ the son of the living God. » Jesus immediately prophesies his own death and the Gospel begins to move towards its climax, not of joy or pleasure, but of the crucifixion. « The son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost and to give his life as a ransom for many. » From that point on there is a kind of foreboding, a shadow over subsequent events.

So the next story at the beginning of chapter 9 contains the story of the transfiguration. Jesus takes Peter, James and John - a kind of inner circle and goes up the « real » mount of the transfiguration - today's shrine after a long walk or another one perhaps nearby. It is as if Jesus needs some assurance. Te three disciples see the dazzling white of Jesus vraitment as well as Moses and Elijah caught up in authenticating events that lead inexorably to the Passion or suffering of Jesus. Jesus, truly God and truly man, needs reassurance. He is God incarnate - neither exempt from suffering nor a fortune teller. Jesus went obediently to his death, the people who were there noted that the unthinkable was going to happen.

The lesson still applies. More than half a century ago we were preparing for ordination. Robert Runcie, who would be Archbishop of Canterbury ten years later, said that on the night before ordination we might pray at our bedside and God might seem to be absent, silent We were not to worry because we would discover that God will not let us down. That was true when Elijah at Horeb heard the « still small voice » of God (I Rois 19). and is true in the lives of many of us who are alive today. In the early nineteenth century, Bishop Middleton left for his Diocese of Calcutta with a surprising injunction from Archbishop Manners Sutton. « Remember my Lord Bishop to put down enthusiasm and preach the Gospel.

We do not think quite like that now, but trust and faith are not built up by noise and enthusiasm. We need the confidence of the years, the prayers said or unsaid in ordinary language, and, perhaps above all, experience beyond language. So as Moses and Elijah appear and as Jesus is transfigured, we note that the Gospel writers had the imagination to arrange their material coherently and we, the readers, need the imagination to be realistic in ministry, serious in our prayer and quietly confident to do all to the glory of God, whose providence is more evident in retrospect than in prospect.

Think of this on 6 August, the Feast of the Transfiguration.

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“This is my story with - (TLM Sudan)” - 1

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

My name is John Badur Kuku; I am Sudanese from Nuba Mountain which is in Southern of Sudan, which is in South Kordofan state. I was born in 1961 and I grew up in a Christian family in small village called Kedber.

I am married and am a father of 10 children, 7 boys and 3 girls.

I want to tell how I came to join the leprosy mission Sudan. After finishing my secondary school in 1979, as my family were unable to support me to go to university and as I was also required to contribute financially, I decide to look for job in Khartoum, so by the help of God I was able to get a job with Hilton Hotel of Khartoum as a waiter, I was good in my work and my boss praised me very much. I spent six years working as a waiter and was promoted to supervisor of the section. Besides my work in the hotel, I was able to carry out various activities in my local Church. In our local Church there was a Sunday evening services which was conducted in English and many foreigners attend it. Among these Europeans there was a lady from Netherlands (Holland) her name is Haramke Viskher (I hope I, have spelled her name correctly). This lady used to work with leprosy Mission and her main job was to care for people affected by leprosy in Aburoff. She got to know me well as we attend the same service. She was a very devoted lady who loved the Lord.

My story goes back to 1989, when it all started with a vision I had.

In this dream, which happen around 04:00 am in the morning, I saw myself walking in the street, and I heard a voice calling me by my name. I stopped to see who it was, and I see my younger sister running after me. I paused, and when she reached me,

I said to her, “what is the matter?” She said: “Look at those people behind you. They sent me to call you”.

I looked at them, I saw some of them on wheel chairs, others with elbow or shoulder crutches, and because of their ulcers a bad odor from their bodies. I exclaimed “What you want me to do for you?”

One of persons affected by leprosy with an elbow crutch stepped forward and called me by name, saying “John we need you to be our doctor so that you can treat us and clean our wounds”.

“No! No! No!” I exclaimed, “I cannot do that, you do not look good you look unclean. NO, I cannot care of you”. He looked at me and said: “I know we are nasty and dirty, but the person who is standing behind us is the one who sent us to you, and who said that you will be suitable person to care for us”.

I told them: “I am working in Hilton International Hotel where I have responsibilities, I wear a suit and I am well respected, a supervisor giving orders to workers do this and they do, do that and they obey me, how can I leave such work and join you who are dirty and nasty people”. While I was speaking to them the rest were listening.

He concluded by saying, that the person who send us to you is still calling you for us.

I said to him go and tell that person I don't like to work with such people.

So they left.



“This is my story with - (TLM Sudan)” - 2

At this moment I heard a voice calling me 2 times “John!” And I did not answer, thinking it was the same people calling me, then again I heard the voice calling me the third time, “John do you love me?”

I answered “who are you?”

“I am Jesus Christ” he answered.

I said “Lord you know that I am a guitar player in the church, I preach very well I am a good composer of Christian songs I am well beloved among Christians”.

And Jesus said to me, “You don’t love me. I sent you people whom you called nasty and dirty and you sent them away, how can you said you love me.”

Then I started to confess my wrongs before Him.

Then I said “Jesus I am willing to care for them but give me love towards them”.

He said “Don’t worry I will be with you”.

Then the voice disappeared.

When I woke up I asked for my friend whom I always I share dreams. And I got him at the day time and explained the dream to him with my tears running from my eyes; I could not even finish the dream to him because of screaming. So he said let us go to the lady from News land and tell her the dream. We manage to see her in the evening time, in where she lives.

This old woman use to be a missionary in the Nuba Mountains, and I had known her for quite a long time, and her name is (Mourial Picworth) she had a medical back ground and treated people affected by leprosy in the Nuba Mountains. She had been in Khartoum helping leprosy patients at Aburof clinic, because (Haramke) the lady from Holland went for holidays.

When we met with her, my friend asked me to tell the dream to her, I could not, crying bitterly before her, she waited until I stopped crying , then she said to me “what happen John”, and I said to my friend “can you please tell her my dream?”

The dream was explained to her. Then with a loud voice she shouted “Halleluiah! my prayers are answered. For more than 20 years I have been praying for people from Nuba Mountains to be called for leprosy work in Sudan”. She prayed with me, and blessed me, by saying I will send a letter to the African director and explain your dream to him.

In the same year 1989 after 3 months 3 people came to Hilton hotel one day asking for me. I knew one of them and she was Haramke from Holland. Their faces were bright. The other two people introduced themselves to me. One girl from UK (London) was Gwen Idle, and the African director whose name was Dr. John Harris also from UK, although he was based in Congo (it was called Zaire that moment). Dr. Harris said to me, “John I have head your dream, but I will like to hear it from you once again, but finish your work”. At five o’clock come to Haramkes House so that we can have a tea together and listen to your dream. I managed to see them with my friend, and that moment God gave me strength and I explained the dream in a nice way, and they were very happy to hear it. Then the late Dr. John Harris promised to send me to study leprosy. And I agreed.

And he asked me to visit Aburof clinic once a week.

Now my dream came true. The first day I visited Aburof clinic, I met with the same leprosy affected person who spoke to me in the dream, the same person, with the same robe that he was wearing, the same elbow crutch, the same voice, the same shape, same eyes, and he called me by my name John!!! Have you come to us? Because he has seen the same dream that I saw. When I saw him I could not control myself, I cried

loudly and bitterly before the patients. Haramke the Dutch Lady stopped working and sat near me, placed her hand on me and prayed with me, and even she herself and Gwen Idle from UK wept with me. I stood up called him (the person with leprosy) and put him on my chest and wept. I started to feel Love towards him and rest of patients. For the first few months whenever I visited clinic I would cry, then I am okay. So by 1990 I resigned from the Hotel and joined the leprosy mission which at that time was called Church Leprosy Relief and was under Episcopal Church of the Sudan.

So this is my story with TLM Sudan

I want to thank and salute all those who were my mentors

1- Haramke Viskher from Netherlands

2- Gwen Idle from UK

3- Ruth Irvine from North Ireland

4- Late Dr. John Harris and his wife Mrs Harris from UK

5- Dr Peit Both the great missionary man of God from Netherlands

6- Dr. Henk Budding Netherlands

7- Dr. Dennis Biamungu from Congo

8- and Dr. Yousif Deng from South Sudan

I will not forget to thank and salute them for their effort, I learned a lot from them, physically and spiritually. These are the people I believed God called them as missionaries for TLM Sudan.

May almighty God bless them and lead them in everything they do.

John Kuku - TLM Sudan



Which does Jesus call us to be like?

I tell you that there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous people who do not need to repent. (Luke 15:1-10)

1 in 100 sheep lost. In business, this might be an acceptable loss of inventory. Supermarkets would be delighted if they only lost 1% of their stock to spoilage, pilfering and shoplifting.

1 in 10 coins lost. Desperate for the poor woman, but many suffer a 10% decline in their savings because of inflation or because of a stock market correction. These things happen, most people cope.

In heaven, they are more careful. There is more rejoicing in heaven over one new convert than over 99 righteous people.

Jesus knew very well that there was plenty of sin among the Pharisees and the teachers of the law; he often criticised them, and yet he described them as “righteous people who did not need to repent.” (v 7)

But then and now there are some people that polite religious society disapproves of. Not the sort of people we would welcome in church. For one thing they would not know how to behave properly; they might not show a proper respect. And if they did come to church, we would want them very quickly to become like us.

When Jesus mixed with tax collectors and prostitutes – Nicodemus and his friends, perhaps – the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law muttered “This man welcomes sinners, and eats with them.”

But by the time of the early church, James had to write that they should not give special treatment to the rich in church at the expense of the poor.

John Wesley was excluded from his church because his preaching attracted common people. Within fifty years, William Booth needed to found the Salvation Army to attract street people who were by then not welcome in Wesleyan churches.

We need to look beyond the comfortable social norms if we want to see people as Jesus sees them, if we want to reflect his own concerns for the outcast and the lost. No-one is beyond the range of his love, but he needs the church – and that means us – to reach out to them.

We know that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”. (Romans 3:23). We can all take encouragement that God is concerned about us as individuals; and that our personal decision to follow Jesus – however we came to it – was a cause of rejoicing in heaven.

Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and one a tax collector. The Pharisee said ‘God I thank you that I am not like other men. I go to church twice a week and give ten percent of my pre-tax earnings.’ But the tax collector said ‘God have mercy on me a sinner.’

Which does Jesus call us to be like?

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.



Ordinary people - with a great advantage

On a cold winter's night I arrived at a church to speak about people affected by leprosy. It's one of the aspects of my job I enjoy most. I like it because I get to meet faithful Christians who love people around the world. I also find it very encouraging for my personal faith. This church was no different. I always like to look around the churches I speak at, and try and learn a bit more about them.

This church named their journal 'The Next Step' and they had a wonderful sentence in it. 'We are just ordinary people with the great advantage that at some point in our lives we have come to know our God. We have worshipped Him and served Him and He has blessed us'. It is a powerful reminder: we are ordinary people with a great advantage.

It reminded me of Acts 1:8. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (NIV)

The disciples were ordinary people with normal lives. After Jesus' ascension they were huddling in a room in Jerusalem. Yes, they had received this promise. But they were waiting on it.

And then the Holy Spirit came! And they did receive power. Think of Peter's sermon, Lydia's household church and Priscilla and Aquilla. The Holy Spirit gave them power and they were witnesses in Jerusalem and to the ends of the earth! There are three reflections I want to draw from this:

1. We are ordinary people who have a great advantage. Our great advantage is that we know our God. Jesus came to give us relationship. We work for people who often experience rejection. But we offer the great advantage of relationship with our God.
2. We have received power. God's Holy Spirit is on us! Think of how God has used that for the Leprosy Mission. I'm sure you can think of people in the history of The Leprosy Mission who have done remarkable things. I'm sure you know people who God is using to do remarkable things today. We may be ordinary, but God transforms and enables us to do more than we can expect. The church I went to was small, but so active in their community. Their love for Jesus and others was encouraging. They are ordinary people doing remarkable things.
3. The Holy Spirit is with us at all times! What a great advantage. The Holy Spirit is with us for our day to day tasks as well. How often do we stop to ask for God's wisdom on the plans we put together? The decisions we need to make now? The programs we are creating? Which donors to call? The power of the Holy Spirit is with us for those decisions as well.

We are ordinary people with the great advantage of knowing God. Praise the Lord!



Psalm 58

For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." Of David. A miktam.[Ⓜ]

¹Do you rulers indeed speak justly?

Do you judge people with equity?

²No, in your heart you devise injustice,
and your hands mete out violence on the earth.

³Even from birth the wicked go astray;
from the womb they are wayward, spreading lies.

⁴Their venom is like the venom of a snake,
like that of a cobra that has stopped its ears,

⁵that will not heed the tune of the charmer,
however skillful the enchanter may be.

⁶Break the teeth in their mouths, O God;
LORD, tear out the fangs of those lions!

⁷Let them vanish like water that flows away;
when they draw the bow, let their arrows fall short.

⁸May they be like a slug that melts away as it moves along,
like a stillborn child that never sees the sun.

⁹Before your pots can feel the heat of the thorns—
whether they be green or dry—the wicked will be swept away.[Ⓜ]

¹⁰The righteous will be glad when they are avenged,
when they dip their feet in the blood of the wicked.

¹¹Then people will say,

“Surely the righteous still are rewarded;
surely there is a God who judges the earth.”



Psalm 59

For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." Of David. A miktam.

When Saul had sent men to watch David's house in order to kill him.

¹Deliver me from my enemies, O God;
be my fortress against those who are attacking me.

²Deliver me from evildoers
and save me from those who are after my blood.

³See how they lie in wait for me!
Fierce men conspire against me
for no offense or sin of mine, LORD.

⁴I have done no wrong, yet they are ready to attack me.
Arise to help me; look on my plight!

⁵You, LORD God Almighty,
you who are the God of Israel,
rouse yourself to punish all the nations;
show no mercy to wicked traitors.^{ld}

⁶They return at evening,
snarling like dogs,
and prowl about the city.

⁷See what they spew from their mouths—
the words from their lips are sharp as swords,
and they think, "Who can hear us?"

⁸But you laugh at them, LORD;
you scoff at all those nations.

⁹You are my strength, I watch for you;
you, God, are my fortress,

¹⁰ my God on whom I can rely.

God will go before me
and will let me gloat over those who slander me.

¹¹But do not kill them, Lord our shield,
or my people will forget.

In your might uproot them
and bring them down.

¹²For the sins of their mouths,

for the words of their lips,
let them be caught in their pride.
For the curses and lies they utter,
¹³ consume them in your wrath,
consume them till they are no more.
Then it will be known to the ends of the earth
that God rules over Jacob.
¹⁴They return at evening,
snarling like dogs,
and prowl about the city.
¹⁵They wander about for food
and howl if not satisfied.
¹⁶But I will sing of your strength,
in the morning I will sing of your love;
for you are my fortress,
my refuge in times of trouble.
¹⁷You are my strength, I sing praise to you;
you, God, are my fortress,
my God on whom I can rely.



Irrationality vs normalcy

The crowds were amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." But the Pharisees said, "He drives out demons by the prince of demons." Matthew 9:27-34

What a stark contrast we see in the reaction of the crowds compared to the reaction of the Pharisees. It's actually quite a sad contrast. The reaction of the crowds, meaning normal everyday people, was one of amazement. Their reaction reveals a simple and pure faith that accepts what it sees. What a blessing it is to have this form of faith.

The reaction of the Pharisees was one of judgment, irrationality, jealousy and harshness. Most especially, it is irrational. What would lead the Pharisees to conclude that Jesus "drives out demons by the prince of demons?" Certainly it was nothing that Jesus did that would lead them to this conclusion. Therefore, the only logical conclusion is that the Pharisees were filled with a certain jealousy and envy. And these sins led them to this ridiculous and irrational conclusion.

The lesson we should learn from this is that we must approach other people with humility and honesty rather than jealousy. By seeing those around us with humility and love, we will naturally arrive at genuine and honest conclusions about them. Humility and honest love will enable us to see the goodness of others and rejoice in that goodness. Sure, we will also be aware of sin, but humility will help us to avoid making rash and irrational judgments about others as a result of jealousy and envy.

Let us reflect on the way we normally think and speak about others. Do we tend to be more like the crowds who saw, believed and were amazed at the good things Jesus did? Or are we more like the Pharisees who tend to fabricate and exaggerate in their conclusions.

Commit yourself to the normalcy of the crowds so that you, too, can find joy and amazement in Christ.

We could pray thus:

Lord, I desire to have a simple, humble and pure faith.

Help me to also see You in others in a humble way.

Help me to see You and to be amazed at Your presence in the lives of those whom I encounter every day.

Jesus, I trust in You.

Moses Onoh, MD, is a former Country Leader of TLM Nigeria. He is currently with USAID/KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation Nigeria; serving as the Regional Director for South West Nigeria.



Do not underestimate your power!

Kevin Rudd, deputy, Australian Prime Minister between 2007 and 2010 and Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2010 till 2012 came to Switzerland at Caux, the organisation well known of moral rearmament. Now the name has changed. Its new name is initiative of change. This place offers a space of dialogue for people coming from the whole world to facilitate the forgiveness and the reconciliation. Rudd said this: "Do not underestimate your power which you have as a civil member of the society. the time you can lift up mountains."

Remember the example I wrote in 2016 in The Bridge of the sunflower seed in my garden which was able to lift up concrete plates. A weak plant found its way in a tiny space between the paving slabs. She grew up. The power of life was in it, a strength which I did not suspect. It became a beautiful plant of 2 meters high.

As Christians our strength comes from the Lord. The apostle Paul says *1 Cor 2,12: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made in weakness."*

Isaiah 40,31: "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Judges 6,14: "The Lord turn to him and said: 'Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midiam's hand. Am I not sending you?'"

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



The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

This is one of the most well-known of all the stories that Jesus told and it's easy to think we know all about it. However, together let's take a fresh look at it and see if God has something to teach us today.

In the early part of this summer I decided to clear a large portion of our back garden that had become crowded with old flowers, weeds, and stinging nettles. I wanted to grow more grass for our children to play on. As I cut down and cleared away the plants I found an old garden path that had been cemented deeply in to the ground. It turned into a huge job, and slowly but surely I was able to clear the ground. The next job was to break up the soil and get it ready for planting. I hired a rotavator and ploughed up the earth that had been hard baked by the sun. As I did so I needed to dig out and clear root systems for bushes and weeds, even for a small tree. I also had to stop every now and then and gather a bucket full of large stones. Finally I raked and flattened out the soil, and then added new top soil that I bought from a garden centre, raking this in too. At last it was ready to put the new grass lawn in.

In the parable of the sower, the best soil was the good soil, ready to receive the good news of Jesus and then to multiply. What does that multiplication actually involve? What does 30-fold, 60-fold or even a 100-fold look like in our lives? Maybe stop for a moment to think / talk about this... Excited? Challenged by this? Whichever, like with my garden, what do we need to do to prepare the good soil so that we are ready for growth? What weeds need to be killed off and their roots dug out from our lives? What stones need to be removed? What fertiliser can be added, what water? Again, individually now, think about what God might be pointing out to you to take action on...

One other point from this parable. You would think the farmer would only sow the seed in the best places, but actually we have a picture of a farmer scattering the seed indiscriminately; it's also going on the paths, amongst the rocks, the poor soil, amongst the weeds. Why would he do this? Well, I like to think that reflects the generous nature of our God. He sows generously, giving everyone a chance to hear the message. I like the picture of the farmer giving more and more and more just for the possibility that that little seed will find a patch of good soil. What a generous God we have.

My new lawn is growing well, helped by the watering I am giving it each evening. How exciting it is to see the growth that God is bringing in our lives. Let's do everything we can to be the good earth."

Pete Garratt - Head of Operations Support – TLMI



Language

Colossians 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

When I first returned to England after many years overseas, I was looking forward to being able to speak and be understood in my own language. I had worked in many different language areas and I was not good at learning languages, so sometimes it was a struggle.

I hadn't been back very long and based in the International Office, when a letter was put on my desk, and I noticed it had that days date on it, so when my PA came in I mentioned it to her. She said oh yes it's a fax! I said I know it's a fact - it's today's date! She finally realised I was quite ignorant about technology, and explained about fax machines and showed me the one in the office! I was amazed! Where I had been working postal runners were still being used!!

Then there was constant talk about hard ware and soft ware. Well I knew about hard ware. They were wonderful shops that sold everything useful for repairs around the house and garden! But whatever was soft ware? The only thing I could think of was an underwear shop. Why ever was the name changed? I didn't like to show my ignorance too much, after all I had landed this "big important job" in the International Office and was supposed to know everything. wasn't I?!! When I eventually found out I realised everything seemed to be associated with computers and technology.

One day I was driving along a quiet road when I came to a big notice, "Beware heavy plant crossing", so I slowed right down wondering what plant it could be! The only big plants I could think of were trees, so I thought maybe they were trying to move a fully grown oak tree, but why ever would anyone want to do that? I continued driving carefully and saw nothing moving but cars! I arrived a bit late to my destination and explained of the danger on the road, but I had seen nothing! There were looks of utter amazement and then they started laughing, and explained that a heavy plant meant a large machine and it was nothing to do with trees! I still can't understand why a machine should be called a plant. Machines can be ugly but plants are beautiful!

The next thing that caught my attention was that people were referring a lot to things or people as cool in very unlikely places, like the depth of winter or the height of summer. It seemed to be a favourite word for the younger generation especially. One of my nieces enlightened me on this! It was nothing to do with the temperature. It was what you felt about another person or an activity, a completely different use of the word! After this came Apple. I couldn't go wrong on this I thought! Everyone knew an apple was a very nice fruit we could enjoy most of the year round in UK? Wrong again! This is a company dealing with technology! Then it wasn't long before we heard about Blackberry! Well blackberry and apple pie was my favourite when I was young, but no, it was now some technological jargon!

One day I heard someone say they had made a wicked roast for Sunday lunch! All I could say was, thank goodness I wasn't invited!!

Not so long ago I heard about blue tooth, now I could not imagine anyone wanting blue teeth, even though some folk like blue hair! Then I find out this is some kind of wireless connection! English my language has changed very much, but however much languages change, we should always be wise and gentle in all are dealings with everyone, even if they are difficult to get on with. We need to learn the language of love. In

Luke 24:19 it says that Jesus was mighty in deed and in word, and we need to follow His example, to speak the truth in love.



'Be prepared (ready)'

'Sanctify the Lord in your hearts, and always be prepared (ready) to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. 1 Peter 3:15 NKJV

As believers in Christ, the world is always looking to us to give them hope and directions; this is centred on the truth that Jesus told us that we are the salt and light of the world. Our world is in chaos and people are hopeless, living in deep darkness and confusion; their souls are always crying for help. Therefore, in order to be able to meet the needs of people around us and make a positive impact into their lives, we need to 'be prepared'. We have the life of Christ, which the world desperately needs and we are His ambassador in this world, we need to always 'be prepared' to share with people about the hope we found in Christ.

Peter encourages us as believers to always be ready; this is a huge responsibility and we need to be sensitive to it. It is natural for us to get ourselves ready when going to attend important occasions like; wedding, job interview, board meetings, and international travel or an appointment with a very important person; we tend to prepare to appear in our best, because we want to leave a lasting impression on those with whom we will be making contact. We also get prepared when we know that we have people depending on us to meet their needs or when we are occupying a high position or status.

How do we get ready or prepare as a believer in Christ?

- We need to be enabled or empowered by the Holy Spirit; we should always be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and allow Him to guide and direct our lives. After our genuine encounter with Jesus; the evidence of our transformed life is shown by how much we allow His Spirit to lead us, and when we are truly led by the Holy Spirit we will bring out the fruits of the Spirit that the world will see and want to relate with. Those who live according to the Spirit always set their mind on the things of the Spirit and as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the true sons and daughters of God. Romans 8: 5, 14 (NKJV paraphrase).
- Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2-3). Jesus Christ has set a standard for us on how to be prepared; we need to study Jesus and follow His pattern; He is the originator, pioneer, and perfecter of faith. We need to look up to Him every day by setting our mind on Him (Col. 3:1-2).
- We need to lay aside every weight of sin that easily cling and ensnares us (Heb.12,1) Sin hinders us from getting ready and making progress. We need to identify, which sins seem to be clinging to us and are so peculiar to our lifestyle. This sin, if not dealt with, will hinder us from being prepared and will blunt our effort in reaching out and making a lasting impact in our world.
- We can get ready by being willing to accept the Lord's discipline with joy; we must endure His chastening and be willing to allow Him to strengthen our feeble hands and feet. We must be willing to take courage, be firm in our conviction and not allow fear to hinder us. Then we can boldly take steps as we are fully prepared.
- Finally, we must allow His words to saturate our heart and lives; you cannot give what you don't have; we must be prepared to study and understand the word of God and first let it work in our lives; then our life can become a testimony that we can share with the world.

Our prayer is that may the Lord always empower us through His Spirit and make us ready and bold to meet the spiritual, emotional and social need of our world.



Psalm 60

For the director of music. To the tune of "The Lily of the Covenant." A miktam of David. For teaching.

When he fought Aram Naharaim and Aram Zobah, and when Joab returned and struck down twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

- ¹You have rejected us, God, and burst upon us;
you have been angry—now restore us!
- ²You have shaken the land and torn it open;
mend its fractures, for it is quaking.
- ³You have shown your people desperate times;
you have given us wine that makes us stagger.
- ⁴But for those who fear you, you have raised a banner
to be unfurled against the bow.[Ⓜ]
- ⁵Save us and help us with your right hand,
that those you love may be delivered.
- ⁶God has spoken from his sanctuary:
"In triumph I will parcel out Shechem
and measure off the Valley of Sukkoth.
- ⁷Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine;
Ephraim is my helmet,
Judah is my scepter.
- ⁸Moab is my washbasin,
on Edom I toss my sandal;
over Philistia I shout in triumph."
- ⁹Who will bring me to the fortified city?
Who will lead me to Edom?
- ¹⁰Is it not you, God, you who have now rejected us
and no longer go out with our armies?
- ¹¹Give us aid against the enemy,
for human help is worthless.
- ¹²With God we will gain the victory,
and he will trample down our enemies.



Psalm 61

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. Of David.

¹ Hear my cry, O God;
listen to my prayer.

² From the ends of the earth I call to you,
I call as my heart grows faint;
lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

³ For you have been my refuge,
a strong tower against the foe.

⁴ I long to dwell in your tent forever
and take refuge in the shelter of your wings.

⁵ For you, God, have heard my vows;
you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name.

⁶ Increase the days of the king's life,
his years for many generations.

⁷ May he be enthroned in God's presence forever;
appoint your love and faithfulness to protect him.

⁸ Then I will ever sing in praise of your name
and fulfill my vows day after day.



A Light For My Path

I am due to go for my annual eye test tomorrow. I am always a bit apprehensive about this as for some 10 years now, my eyes have been very sensitive to light. It is unfortunate in a way that I live so close to the water as the horizon is so open and that intensifies my problem. The sunshine is streaming in my windows as I type and I have had to position my laptop to avoid the reflection. However, every year when I think about this eye test, my thoughts are drawn to what the Bible tells us about light – and it is amazing how often light, light that comes from God appears in scripture.

This year I have homed in to *Psalm 119:105* where the psalmist refers to God's light for his path. Over the last twelve months, I have been very aware of that light on my pathway for example as I chaired the committee searching for a new minister for our church and indeed God supplied that need and last October our new young, and enthusiastic minister came to be with us.

As I look along the walkway here at different times of the day – morning through to evening, the light is always different. Sometimes the light reflects the water as blue and at other times when the sunshine (or moonlight) is hidden by heavy cloud, the water appears black – but even then there is a sense of light. It is the same in our lives - sometimes our path through life is clear and smooth, and sometimes it is clouded and we struggle to see God's path for us. Yet even in those darker days God provides a light for our path – it may take time for the cloud to lift and the way become clear but He has promised us His presence with us even in those dark days.

The book of Genesis tells us that God provided the greater light for the day (the sun) and the lesser light for the night (the moon) [Genesis 1:16]. We need both of these for our wellbeing –both physically and spiritually as we develop and grow in Him.

But someday God will provide a different kind of light. John writes in Revelation (21:23) “the city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light”. Jesus himself tells us that He is the Light of the World.

He is our light today – let Him be the light for your path today, whatever your circumstance.

My eye test revealed that I have “lost” some more cells from the back of my eye (to me it is a mystery where they go!!) and so my reaction to the light in getting worse and as a result I am not able to drive out of the town as direct sunlight or headlights tend to blind me for too many seconds! Despite that my actual sight is much as it was last year (and the year before that!). I am so grateful to God for my sight and that I do not appear to have significant problems with my sight and I pray that as I focus on my path forward that God will continue to be that light on that path – I pray that for myself and as I write I pray that for each one who reads the Bridge.

Christine Osman - formerly Treasurer of TLMI



What do you see!!

I make no apology for bringing you another devotion about “eyes”.

As you sit and read this, please take a look around you and marvel at what you see. As I do that as I write, I see the beautiful scenery that surrounds me here, I see the green leaves on that trees, I see the mementoes around the room reminding me of many people I have met, and many places I have visited. All of these are things that are there every day and so often I don't even stop to look at them. Recently a visitor asked me to walk round my living room with her and tell me the story behind the different ornaments and trinkets. Within a few minutes I stopped (I could have gone on for hours) but I was suddenly conscious that it was a long time since I had said “Thank you” – not for the items as I had done that before when I had received them. No, it was a long time since I said “Thank you” to God for bringing these friends and places into my life and for the opportunity He had given me to remember them in prayer.

We often miss God's blessings in our lives because we are too “busy” to notice them. We are too occupied (or preoccupied) with “doing” to “see or hear” – the kind words, the simple beauty, the ready smile, the memory, the photo that recalls a happy experience, something that brightens our day.

However, that is only part of the seeing and hearing. Jesus saw Zacchaeus up the tree, He saw the grief and despair (for her future) – the tears of the widow whose only son had died (*Luke 7:11-16*), He heard the words of the thief dying on the cross. Samuel heard God calling him in the night. Do we see beyond the smiles and the responses that say “I'm fine, how are you?”? I am reminded of a friend who used to say “your words say you're fine but your eyes tell me something else”.

As you thank God for all the blessings he sends you – the small things and the bigger things too, thank Him too for those things that bring people and situations to your mind. At the same time ask Him to open your eyes to see beyond the obvious to see and respond to the needs, small and not so small, of the people you know and the people you meet. Recently we have been collecting “basics” for refugees and I overheard a conversation where someone asked “what do you mean by basics?” and was really startled when told that she should bring toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap. She thought they would be able to buy those for themselves. Sometimes the blessing God wants us to be is so simple and obvious that we don't think of it. Sometimes too the blessings he sends us are very simple too, “hello” from someone you meet, a lovely flower.

Thank God for the blessings He gives you and pray that He will show you the blessings He wants to give through you.

God bless you, everyone of you.

Christine Osman - (Scotland) formerly Treasurer of TLM



The Lord your God will be with you!

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

This verse from the book of Joshua is a well-known and often quoted portion of scripture, but have you ever wondered why it is Joshua should need such strong reassurance from God. After all, was he not the chosen successor to Moses? A number of factors might shed some light on Joshua’s need for comfort and exhortation:

- Moses, the great leader and miracle worker, was dead, and the Israelites were still in the wilderness.
- Joshua was leading a nomadic people numbering in the 100’s of 1,000’s. The new generation he inherited, like the old, were prone to rebellion, as Numbers 20 illustrates.
- Jericho, the city which the Israelites first attacked, was a double walled fortress, thought to be impregnable by the people of the ancient world.
- The provision of Manna – the Israelites daily bread from God, was about to end! After many years of being ‘handed it on a plate’, they faced the prospect of having to fend for themselves.

In summary, Joshua was stepping into the shoes of a spiritual giant, waging war against formidable foes, leading a mass of humanity in enemy territory, all the while having to find food to sustain them. No wonder the reassurance of God’s presence found in Joshua 1:9 is so often repeated throughout the book.

As you read on through Joshua, you find that he enjoyed remarkable success as a leader, defeating Jericho and many other cities, all the while finding provision for the people in a land flowing with milk and honey. The words that precede Joshua 1:9 should be carefully noted, as in them, we find the key to his success in this seemingly impossible job.

Joshua 1:7 and 8 read, “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”

Moses had given the people the 10 commandments, as well as many other laws recorded in Exodus and Deuteronomy. It was these that Joshua was commanded to focus on daily. Many years later, the book of Psalms opens with a similar call to listen to and obey God –

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers. Psalm 1,1-3

The message from both Joshua and Psalm 1 is clear - whatever challenge faces you, whatever God is calling you to conquer, in your work, in your home, in your church, in your life, make time for and invest in the study of God’s Word, so that you can be confident that, *‘the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go’*.



When life falls in...

*Listen to my words, LORD, consider my lament. Hear my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.
Psalm 5:1-2*

I was hit by a shower of toilet rolls this morning. Fortunately not the brand that has the puppy attached. Just ordinary toilet rolls. We buy them 16 at a time - toilet rolls, not puppies - because they're cheaper that way and there's no telling when emergencies happen, which is why they're called emergencies I suppose.

We store the rolls in a wall cupboard above the doors of the fitted wardrobe in our bedroom. But when I slid open the wardrobe door looking for a clean shirt, down came the toilet tissue on my head.

"Stuff happens", as the American politician said, most of it a lot more difficult to cope with than that, and we can't really prepare ourselves for it. My immediate reaction when something unpleasant happens is to ask, "Why me?" Sometimes there is a reason. In this case I was in a hurry and just threw the rolls into the cupboard without checking whether they were safe or not, and so, later on, down they came.

But more often we can't identify a reason, and there's no point in looking for one. You just pick up the loo rolls, or whatever it was that hit you, and try to find the strength to carry on. And usually, if we've sown the seeds of friendship beforehand, we'll find there's someone who will help us pick up the fallen debris.

*Lord, when life falls down on us,
thank you for the friends who help me pick up the pieces.*

Extract from Dabbling with Ducks, first published 2007.

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



Thoughts from seat 29 K

Some time ago I boarded BA 0058 for Heathrow. A nervous man parted the curtains separating me from the business-class section and spoke in anxious tones to the lady next to me. After he'd vanished behind the curtains, the lady said to me:

"That's my son – he's afraid of flying – he tried to fly to London last week, but he had to ask them to let him off the plane as he was overcome by nerves. He's trying again today – he hopes that by being seated in business class that he will feel less anxious."

Then, with a trace of an apology, she added:

"He's a pilot!"

"I understand – when he's in the pilot's seat, he feels in control – it's the sense of being out of control that makes people nervous about flying."

[I actually wanted to say, 'No-one is afraid of flying, we're all afraid of crashing,' but as she and I were going to share an armrest for the next twelve hours, I thought the better of it.]

Maybe that's the reason people complain so much about airline food – it's something they feel that they can control?

Happily, the business class seat did the trick and the lady, her son and the other 300 of us shuffled bleary-eyed through Terminal Three the next morning.

The incident got me thinking about how important that sense of control is. Controlling your destiny has become the mantra of our age. You only need to glance at the titles of the self-help books on offer at your next departure lounge to see how pervasive this idea is: "The brain that changes itself"; "The new science of personal achievement"; "How I raised myself from failure to success"; "Success Through A Positive Mental Attitude"; "How to Take Immediate Control of Your Mental, Emotional, Physical, and Financial Destiny"; "The proven mental programme to a life of wealth". I'm not gainsaying the importance of us taking responsibility for our lives, but this modern obsession with being in control, following our own desires, is at odds with the Bible:

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." [John 4:34]

But we've gone back to the age when:

"... Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes." [Judges 21:25]

There's often a part of our hearts that resists the idea of being surrendered to God and His purpose for our lives. It's a part of our being that our culture is only too keen to nourish. And yet it is the life that is surrendered to His purpose which is our only hope of joy. One reason for all those books at the departure lounge is that for so many people, life is bleak – as we strive to become perfect in our own sight, the gap between reality and fantasy becomes all the more evident. Life becomes a treadmill. Maybe the next book will give us the answer? My prayer for you is that this day and in all the days that lie before you, you will know that He is leading you and that you will experience abundant joy in living a life that is pleasing to Him. It does mean giving up so much of what the world holds dear, especially that sense of control, but what a joy it is to know that we are "finishing His work."

May that thought sustain and inspire you in whatever situation you face today.

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



Psalm 62

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

¹ Truly my soul finds rest in God;
my salvation comes from him.

² Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

³ How long will you assault me?
Would all of you throw me down—
this leaning wall, this tottering fence?

⁴ Surely they intend to topple me
from my lofty place;
they take delight in lies.

With their mouths they bless,
but in their hearts they curse.^[b]

⁵ Yes, my soul, find rest in God;
my hope comes from him.

⁶ Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

⁷ My salvation and my honor depend on God^[c];
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.

⁸ Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge.

⁹ Surely the lowborn are but a breath,
the highborn are but a lie.

If weighed on a balance, they are nothing;
together they are only a breath.

¹⁰ Do not trust in extortion
or put vain hope in stolen goods;
though your riches increase,
do not set your heart on them.

¹¹ One thing God has spoken,
two things I have heard:

“Power belongs to you, God,
¹² and with you, Lord, is unfailing love”;
and, “You reward everyone
according to what they have done.”



Psalm 63

A psalm of David. When he was in the Desert of Judah.

¹You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water.

²I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.

³Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.

⁴I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.

⁵I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

⁶On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night.

⁷Because you are my help,
I sing in the shadow of your wings.

⁸I cling to you;
your right hand upholds me.

⁹Those who want to kill me will be destroyed;
they will go down to the depths of the earth.

¹⁰They will be given over to the sword
and become food for jackals.

¹¹But the king will rejoice in God;
all who swear by God will glory in him,
while the mouths of liars will be silenced.



He leadeth me....

Psalm 23.... he leadeth me beside still waters, and he maketh me to lay down in green pastures.

Psalm 27... the Lord is my light and my salvation, the Lord is the strength of my life for whom shall I be afraid of.

My career began as a researcher in agriculture and development. I completed my PhD in 1996 at the University of the Philippines, Los Banos, (UPLB), through a special scholarship offered at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) also in Los Banos. I did a brief post-doc at the Wageningen Agricultural University in The Netherlands and then went back to work at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Nigeria. In 1999 I joined the Africa Rice Centre in Cote d'Ivoire.

I knew the work of NGOs by this time, and in fact my own brother was a medical doctor with the German Leprosy programme in Nigeria and I followed him to his work a couple of times. At about the year 2000-2001, the World Bank was concerned about the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa and worldwide. Research had showed that HIV will significantly affect Africa's food security (on one the hand) and the reciprocal impact of lack of adequate nutrition on disease progression and survivability (on the other hand like a double edge sword). So the World Bank asked Agricultural R&D organisations in Africa to intervene. My CEO stepped forward to this task and he then appointed me as the First Coordinator for HIV/AIDS and Food Security in Africa. My task was among others were to connect the dots, champion the mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS in the agriculture / food security sector, gather a body of evidence and develop a strategy. This work threw me neck deep into the intersection between public health, nutrition, food security, livelihood security, hygiene, and conflict and destitution. The work also sent me full time into the NGO circle, policy and advocacy and fundraising.

After war broke out in Cote d'Ivoire (about 2003-2004), an opportunity came for me to migrate to the UK, and I took it. In the UK my experience in HIV programming, agriculture and food and as a scientists with skills in scientific writing turned to be handy for me to find work. In some way, looking back now, I realise that Jehovah must have given me those difficult task to prepare me. In the UK, I was hired by Y-Care International UK as their Africa Programme Coordinator, then I joined Tearfund as Desk Officer for DR Congo and Central Africa Republic, then I joined Plan International UK as Head of Africa, then I went back to Tearfund as Programme Funding Manager for East and Southern Africa region. And Now I am here in the Leprosy Mission International.

My career has evolved. I realised that Food security (or food insecurity) cannot be solved on its own. I realised that human development is a holistic process - food security, livelihood security, health, water and sanitation and education they all go hand-in-hand. My education and background in research, coupled with complete understanding and appreciation of poverty (having been born and grown up in Africa) brought together a mix of passion, skills, and desire to want to help people from global south, utilising my experience and knowhow of the institutional donor funding environment in the global north.

I like to describe myself as a trail blazer, or bush-cutter (in African speak). Create path to institutional funding in the Global Fellowship. Champion the process of Institutional funding, leader from the front, not from the side or the back. Provide direct hands-on support where needed, and help to build the relationships within the global fellowship and externally with likeminded organisations. In the end, contribute in achieving zero transmission of leprosy by 2035.

I wish your prayers and Gods guidance. Before coming here I prayed and I asked God why? I asked Him why leprosy. The God showed me the images of the extremely poor women and men and their children I had seen when I had followed my brother to the leprosy communities in Nigeria. Those images immediately came back to my mind, and God said to me, Son Go, I am sending you there, your skills and experience and passion and energy are required. To any one reading this, I am here to serve, I do not know all, and I do not understand all. I am here to listen, learn and contribute as necessary. I need your prayers and your support. We need to join hands do what God has asked us to do and see an end to leprosy. God Bless.

Frank Abamu is the Global Institutional Funding Coordinator at TLM-I. Frank joined TLM in April 2018. He is a dual Nigerian and British Citizen, married and blessed with 2 daughters and a son between ages of 23-16. Frank and his family live in London



Wonderful Jesus – Part 1

Base, Athol

History is the story of Jesus; it's "**His-story**" Let's look at Jesus today - the author & finisher of our faith, the Alpha & Omega, the bookends of all we are & ever will be - Jesus!

*Isaiah 9:6 NIVU "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called **Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**"* *Isaiah 28:29 NIVUK "All this also comes from the LORD Almighty, whose plan is **wonderful**, whose wisdom is magnificent."*

Wonderful can mean:

- excellent; great; marvellous
- of a sort that causes or arouses wonder; amazing; astonishing, hard to be understood
- How that describes Jesus! *Philippians 2:9-11 "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and **given Him the name which is above every name**, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that **every tongue** should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God"*

The **wonder** of His **BIRTH**

☺ God became a man, born of a virgin,

- God became a foetus, hidden away in Mary's womb being knitted together by His Father, growing as any other human would,
- Jesus, God became what He created!

Psalms 139:13 | NIVUK For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Colossians 1:16-17 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

The **wonder** of His **LIFE**. After only 3 years of ministry in Israel 2000 years ago - we still know about Him today, so we worship, love & adore Him. His life consisted of:

- The **wisdom** of His **teachings**
- The **wonder** of His **works**

Mark 6:1-2 NIVUK Jesus left there and went to his home town, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. 'Where did this man get these things?' they asked. 'What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?'

The **challenge** of His **sayings** *Luke 9:23-26 Then he said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?'*

The **puzzle** of His **conduct** *Psalms 8:3-4 "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, **what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?**"*

- The **Intensity** of His **walk**
- The **Tenderness** of His **Love** *Ephesians 5:1-2 "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, **as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.**"*

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.



Wonderful Jesus – Part 2

The wonder of His **DEATH & RESURRECTION** 😊 He died & rose again never to die again!

John 11:49-52 “And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that **one man should die for the people**, and not that the whole nation should perish.” Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, **but also** that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.”

His death has given us forgiveness of sin & the promise of eternal life.

The **wonder** of His **ASCENSION**

He ascended to His Father in heaven.

The **wonder** of His **COMING AGAIN - HIS RETURN** Ready or not, Jesus is coming back again!

Jesus told us He'd return

Mark 13:26-27 NIVUK **At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.”** **The Angels told the disciples & let us know that He will return**

Acts 1:6-11 NIVUK ...After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, **will come back** in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.

Paul told us He will return

1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:4 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the **coming of the Lord**, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of god, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. We're to **encourage one another about the return of Jesus** - Until He comes back! **Therefore encourage each other** with these words. Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of **the Lord will come** like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. **But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.**

What are we to do in the mean time? We are to celebrate, proclaim & encourage one another that Jesus is returning!

- **Live like** He is coming back today!
- **Talk** about His return, tell others & get excited, live like you're excited...
- **Plan** like He'll only return in a 1 000 years from now!
- You may die before Jesus comes! **So what?** You will be in heaven with Him!
- **Hallelujah** - Jesus is coming back again!
- **Celebrate** His soon return

Revelation 1:7-8 He is coming with the clouds,’ and ‘every eye will see him, even those who pierced him’ (those who crucified Jesus, the Jews & the Romans); and all peoples on earth ‘will mourn because of him.’ So shall it be! Amen. ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, **‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.**

Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, **‘Yes, I am coming soon.’** Amen. ...Come, Lord Jesus.”

Jesus is coming soon maybe before noon ... “Come, Lord Jesus.”

How well do you know this wonderful Jesus? See John 11:49-52

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.



Positive attitude

Isaiah 6:8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Matthew 14:17 They replied, "We have nothing here except five loaves and two fish."

A positive attitude towards life does not need words

I attended an event for persons with disabilities. The campsite and the facilities were accessible for everybody's needs and there was a wonderful vibe of cheerfulness and a family feeling.

At the end there was an opportunity for participants to share their testimonies.

Daniel came forward to speak. I wondered how it will go because Daniel has a severe speech impairment. Through the weekend his wife was usually with him and she interpreted for him. But now he was standing in front of us without his wife.

He explained that for this occasion we will just have to listen carefully in order to follow his very different pronunciation of words. He wanted to 'speak for himself'. He shared two verses: Isaiah 6:8 and Mathew 14:17. Daniel explained that his speech impairment often made him to feel as having a very limited life. He cannot afford expensive devices to help him speak his own mind, and of course most people think that he has an intellectual disability.

Yet he came to understand that God is also calling him to be active in His Kingdom. God revealed to him that he also has five loaves and two fish to offer.

'Lord, what can I do, I cannot even speak'

'Show people my love', God answered him.

"So I started doing that, wherever I go. I merely try to make life better for people in whatever way they need help. I help other disabled people, I carry heavy bags for people in the shop, I drive someone to church who does not have transport, I sit listening to elderly people who are lonely. I bring love to those who feel rejected. For all these things I do not need the ability to speak clearly and perfectly. I simply bring my five loaves and two fish. This has become my lifestyle. I see it every day, living out a positive attitude towards life does not need words, it is merely an action. My speech is still so severely impaired, yet I see more people now relate to me freely, because everybody understands the language of love".

Daniel's life is an inspiration to me. I continue to offer my five loaves and two fish. It works!

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



Repentance..... The very first step

Mark 1 (4)..... John preached on baptism of Repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Mark 1 (15) "The time has come," Jesus said. "The kingdom of God is near, Repent and believe" The good news!

ACTS 3 (19).....Peter said Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that time of refreshing may come from the Lord.

Repentance was importance in the message of the forerunner, John the Baptist, in the preaching of Jesus and in the directions Jesus left to his disciples just before His ascension.

This shows that to follow Jesus and to become his disciple, the very first action we have to take, is to repent. This has to come from very inner heart and is a very serious decision of our personal life.

In simple way one can say repentance is feeling very sorry for our present, sinful life and having a strong desire to come out from this. Repentance is a change of mind and arises from sorrow for sins and leading to transformation of life, turning to God. In the strictest sense, repentance is turning from sin and believe is turning to God. *Acts 11 (18) Tells us, so then, God has granted even the gentiles repentance unto life.*

Repentance has to be very true in real sense. We need to examine our life style and assess what is sinful, what is against God. We must not get confused on the issue of small sins and big sins. Following teachings of Christ seriously in our day today life is the best scale to check our real commitment of Repentance. We have to check our behavior and actions, Are those as per the Christ teaching or against it? This means total turning away from the previous life style and not carrying those actions any more.

There is one more condition is attached to repentance. We have to turn to God and live a godly life as soon we repent. We cannot be happy just by repenting. While we say good bye to the old life style in repentance, we have to accept the teaching of Christ at the same time and follow them in our daily life.

Repentance and believing in God go together. There is no turning back to previous life style one we have repented. Therefore repentance as important and a serious decision also. We may not be able to leave the old habits in our own strength therefore we have to ask God to give us strength and also the gift & power of Holy Spirit to have real repentance. We will become strong to take this decision of repentance with the help of God & Holy Spirit and will not go back to the old life.

We learn from the New Testament that Peter repented and his repentance was accepted. It has to be from real heart and strong feeling, where as Judas also repented after taking money for the arrest of Jesus but his repentance was not accepted.

Authors in Alphabetical Order

Textuarium

Bunmi Oluloto	17 August		Joshua 1,9	22 August
Christine Osman	20, 21 August		Psal 5,1-2	23 August
Dan Izzett	28, 29 August		Psalms 23	27 August
David, King of Israel	4, 5, 11, 12, 18, 19, 25, 26 August		Psalms 27	27 August
Eddie Askew	23 August		Psalms 56	4 August
Eric Chollet	14 August		Psalms 57	5 August
Erna Möller	30 August		Psalms 58	11 August
Frank Abamu PhD	27 August		Psalms 59	12 August
James Barnett	6 August		Psalms 60	18 August
John Kuku	7, 8 August		Psalms 61	19 August
Mollie Clark	16 August		Psalms 62	25 August
Moses Onoh MD	13 August		Psalms 63	26 August
Otto Kingsley	1 August		Psalms 119,105	20 August
Paul MD and Niki Jakeman	9 August		Isaiah 6,8	30 August
Pete Garratt	15 August		Isaiah 9,6	28 August
Peter Hilton	22 August		Matthew 9,27-34	13 August
Peter Laubscher	24 August		Matthew 13,1-9, 18-23	15 August
Pradeep and Sarah Failbus	31 August		Matthew 25,14-30	2, 3 August
Raju PLN Dr	2, 3 August		Mark 1,4 and 15	31 August
Tim Collison	10 August		Mark 8,27-30	6 August
			Luke 7,11-16	21 August
			Luke 15,1-10	9 August
			John 4,34	24 August
			John 11,49-52	29 August
			Acts 1,8	1 and 10 August
			1 Cor 2,12	14 August
			Col 4,6	16 August
			1 Peter 3,15	17 August

The Bridge - TLM Daily Devotions

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