



# **TLM Daily Devotions**

**September 2016**





## Facing an extremely busy month

A song of ascents

<sup>1</sup>We lift up our eyes to the mountains—  
where does our help come from?

<sup>2</sup>Our help comes from the LORD,  
the Maker of heaven and earth.

<sup>3</sup>He will not let our foot slip—  
he who watches over us will not slumber;

<sup>4</sup>indeed, he who watches over Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.

<sup>5</sup>The LORD watches over us—  
the LORD is our shade at our right hand;

<sup>6</sup>the sun will not harm us by day,  
nor the moon by night.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD will keep us from all harm—  
he will watch over our life;

<sup>8</sup>the LORD will watch over our coming and going  
both now and forevermore.

*(Adaptation of Psalm 121 (NIV) on The Leprosy Mission, facing September.)*

With thanks to each author and lector! May the Lord bless you all!

Blessed reading!

Marta Risko



## How beautiful on the mountains...

*Isaiah 52 verse 7* How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good tidings of peace. We often looked at our feet walking on the mountains of Bhutan, and laughed. There was nothing very beautiful about them! In the wet season they would be very wet and muddy, and often covered in leeches, and when they came off they would leave sores that itched. Sometimes there would be blisters and bruises, they were often a topic of conversation! We were though, carrying good tidings of peace, healing and wholeness.

Feet, or a foot, my dropped left foot has been in my thoughts constantly since it occurred 10 months or so ago. At present I am waiting for an appointment to get an electrical stimulus, which may help. I think it must be something like jump starting a car! I am hoping for a miracle, and in the meantime walking with two sticks and doing what I can to keep mobile

There are many references in the Bible to feet. First of all in Exodus 3 verses 2-5 when Moses sees the burning bush, and stops to look at it.

The Lord calls to him and tells him not to draw near. "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." Then God tells him what He wants him to do. We can find ourselves standing on holy ground sometimes. Going into a very ancient church as you think of countless generations of believers, down through the corridors of time, praying and praising God there you realise with awe that this is indeed holy ground. Other times for me is when I have been listening and praying with someone to try to help them, and I have been aware of Gods presence and see Him at work in the persons life. Then it feels that I am standing on holy ground.

John 13 verses 1-17 we read about Jesus washing His disciples feet. He Who is the Lord of lords, the Holy One, the Redeemer, was willing to take on the lowliest job of all, even washing the feet of Judas who would soon betray Him. Verse 1 tells us He loved them to the end. His love is so amazing and so wonderful. Ephesians 6 verses 10-20 Paul talks about the whole armour of God, and encourages us to put it on, so that we can stand firm against the powers of wickedness. As well as the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness, we have to put on our feet the shoes of the gospel of peace as well as the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith, so that we are fully armed.

Finally in Revelation 1 John has a vision of the Lord in all His glory. He says His feet were like fine brass as if refined in a furnace, showing strength and stability, Someone you can trust your life with. John when he saw Him fell at His feet as dead, he was completely overcome by the glory and magnificence. Jesus touched him and said those wonderful words, "do not be afraid". He is still saying this to each of us today, and showing us how we can live in love and humility as He did.

**Mollie Clark** - Purulia. Bhutan and International Office.



## The strength of a weak plant!

In my garden, a sunflower seed germinated between concrete slabs which I had carefully tightened one next to the others. A weak plant found its way in a tiny space between the paving slabs.

She grew up. I would have been able to take it away easily with two fingers. The power of the life was in it, a strength which I did not suspect. From day to day, it created its space. It was able to push back paving stones, what I would not have been able to do with my all strength. Today, at the top of its two meters high, a beautiful flower turns to the sun.

Jesus liked speaking in parables to those who surrounded him to make them understand realities, sometimes difficult to understand. One day, he tells them: " the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade (Mark 4:30-35). Jesus himself is compared to a weak plant. The prophet *Isaiah (53:1-4)* tells us these surprising words:

*" Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed ? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of a dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows."*

We feel often very weak, swamped by heavy burdens. Let us trust to this tender shoot who become the Saviour of the world. His strength poured in us will allow us to find unexpected resources.

### Eric Chollet

I'm retired since three 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.



## Sometimes Praying Is “Selah” 1.

In some of the Bible translations you sometimes see the word "Selah" & may have wondered what it means?

**Selah** means to pause & wait!

- \* That is so hard in a pressurised life where everything seems to rush at us & then rush past us!
- \* To say we're busy is an understatement!
- \* We're busy because of life & because we make ourselves busy or think we're busy!

Jesus was a busy person, hunted down by multitudes, scorned by the religious community, did things differently & had a task to complete & only had 3 years to do it! Yet often withdrew Himself from the crowds & prayed.

*Psalm 40.1-4 (NIV)<sup>1</sup> I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. <sup>2</sup> He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. <sup>3</sup> He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD. <sup>4</sup> Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods.*

**Waiting?!** This must be one of the hardest things to do in life. There is always a need to get things done in a hurry!... pressure & more pressure! When it comes to God He often seems to take His time & makes us wait!

*<sup>1</sup> I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.*

Waiting patiently is a Godlike quality. *Romans 2:4: Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realising that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?*

Because of the constant pressure of life we have got very used to speaking to God in a “shopping list” manner rather than waiting to get instruction from Him. That’s why the call goes out “Selah” – stop, listen, think & rest

- o Do you do this? Can you do this?

The result of waiting patiently is that God will turn & then hear my cry!

- Do we try to rush God sometimes?
- Do we think He is here to jump when we ask?

*Proverbs 19:11: A man's wisdom gives him patience*

- Be wise in the way we present ourselves to God
- Give God a chance to work with you

*James 1.2-4: Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

I have a sneaky feeling that God will hold back answers from us to train us to wait to get His answers for us! ...so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

**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.



## Sometimes Praying Is “Selah” 2.

### Waiting gives God a chance to act on our behalf!

*Psalm 40.1-4 (NIV) He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.*

When God rescues us, He sure pulls us out of a mess – after: I waited patiently for the LORD;

- It seems like the rescue plan kicks in after waiting!

He lifts & He places me on a rock!

- He brings stability to me

Are you in an uncertain place in your life?

- Continually wanting something different – dissatisfied with life – continued unanswered prayer...
- Try some Selah

Waiting should focus us on Jesus & gives us peace & stability

<sup>3</sup> *He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD.*

How do we know when we are at a place of stability & rest?

### Our speech will give us away!

- You'll be a joy to listen too & too live with!
- You'll be a voice of encouragement & hope!
- You'll see life through God's ways

### Praise will be the order of the day!

- **Selah** keeps you in touch with God & away from false gods
- **Selah** keeps you real
- **Selah** keeps you stable in life
- **Selah** brings you the God-kind of life

### Try some Selah!

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## ?!sdrawkcab gnivl

*“Where can I flee from your presence?” (Psalm 139:7b) “One thing I do: forgetting what is behind, and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:14)*

Advancing ahead in my shortening lifetime, more and more often I wonder: how nice it would be to live this life backwards! Starting from 80 towards 18, or from 60 to 16...! As if seated facing backwards in the train, seeing what is already behind but only becoming visible when we have already passed it by. Have you felt this too?

Along with these thoughts I so often ask myself, what would I do differently? A lot!! Looking around the globe I could easily find countries in which my life would have been much easier than being born and growing up in a colonialized communist country, in a stigmatised resistant Christian family... feeling for decades the daily consequences of being regarded as ideologically dangerous and “second class”. As adults, we work just as hard, but earn much less; we live much shorter lives, and in worse health, than in many situations elsewhere. If I had the opportunity, who should I ‘keep’, and who should I ‘drop’? On an imaginary chessboard I could set up the right composition! Which players to replace, which ones to neglect, which ones to pick up? With the accumulated experience and knowledge I have now, I could avoid a lot of my life’s mistakes, naiveties, disappointments and wounds – backwards! What would I do totally differently, what would I re-think, re-decide, re-make, or follow? In five minutes I could make a list of hundreds... creating a ‘heaven’ for myself -in theory! Looking over decades, all these thoughts culminate in a discovery of forever-gone-away times, forever-missed opportunities, forever-unchangeable decisions. Have you ever felt like this?

I am surely not alone with this desire. Pagan and semi-pagan mythologies reflect the same genuine wish of mankind: for instance the semi-gods of Norse mythology; Valhalla and the finally collapsed symbol of deified man (man as his own god!). This way is not possible alongside the revelation of the omnipotent and loving God, my Father. It must collapse as Valhalla did, not worth playing with, - even just in thought! In itself it is a wrong and ungodly idea!

There is just one sense of living our life; - one way: straight ahead! But the incredible blessing is that we may see all in the assurance of the glorious end! Yes, we can think backwards and get regularly back and back, not to our own failures and sins, but with the firm promise and decision of our loving Father as our starting point, and this will enlighten our whole path ahead! My own failures are not the best indicators and teachers for a better future, but the Lord’s Eternal Word and Guiding Spirit, by which He protects me, stoops down to me, pardons me and leads me on by His grace till the end! *“Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home!”*



## The Father's Love Letter

My Precious Child,

You may not know me, but I know everything about you.

Psalm 139:1

I know when you sit down and when you rise up.

Psalm 130:2

I am familiar with all your ways.

Psalm 139:3

Even the very hairs on your head are numbered.

Matthew 10:29-31

For you were made in my image.

Genesis 1:27

In me you live and move and have your being.

Acts 17:28

I knew you even before you were conceived.

Jeremiah 1:4-5

I chose you when I planned creation.

Ephesians 1:11-12

You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in my book.

Psalm 139:15-16

I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live.

Acts 17:26

You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Psalm 139:13

I knit you together in your mother's womb

Psalm 139:13

And brought you forth on the day you were born.

Psalm 71:6

I have been misrepresented by those who don't know me.

John 8:41-44

I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love.

1 John 4:16

And it is my desire to lavish my love on you. Simply because you are my child and I am your Father.

1 John 3:1

**Love. Your Dad, Almighty God.**

**Author unknown.** With thanks to Marie Arnachellum, TLM England and Wales.





## The Father's Love Letter 2.

My Precious Child,

I offer you more than your earthly father ever could.

Matthew 7:11

For I am the perfect father.

Matthew 5:48

Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand.

James 1:17

For I am your provider and I meet all your needs.

Matthew 6:31-33

My plan for your future has always been filled with hope.

Jeremiah 29:11

Because I love you with an everlasting love.

Jeremiah 31:3

My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore.

Psalms 139:17-18

And I rejoice over you with singing.

Zephaniah 3:17

I will never stop doing good to you.

Jeremiah 32:40

For you are my treasured possession.

Exodus 19:5

I desire to establish you with all my heart and all my soul.

Jeremiah 32:41

And I want to show you great and marvellous things.

Jeremiah 33:3

If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me.

Deuteronomy 4:29

Delight in me and I will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalms 37:4

For it is I who have given you those desires.

Philippians 2:12

I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine.

Ephesians 3:20

For I am your greatest encourager.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

I am also the Father who comforts you in all your troubles.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

When you are broken hearted, I am close to you.

Psalms 34:18

As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to my heart.

Isaiah 40:11

**Love. Your Dad, Almighty God**

**Author unknown.** With thanks to Marie Arnachellum, TLM England and Wales.



### The Father's Love Letter 3.

My Precious Child,

One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes. Revelation 21:3-4

And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth. Revelation 21:3-4

I am your Father, and I love you even as I love my son, Jesus. John 17:23

For in Jesus, my love for you is revealed. John 17:26

He is the exact representation of my being. Hebrews 1:3

He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against you. Romans 8:31

And to tell you that I am not counting your sins. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

His death was the ultimate expression of my love for you. 1 John 4:10

I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your love. Romans 8:31-32

If you receive the gift of my son Jesus, you receive me. 1 John 2:23

And nothing will ever separate you from my love again. Romans 8:38-39

Come home and I'll throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen. Luke 15:7

I have always been Father, and will always be Father. Ephesians 3:14-15

My question is... Will you be my child? John 1:12-13

I am waiting for you. Luke 15:11-32

**Love. Your Dad, Almighty God**

**Author unknown.** With thanks to Marie Arnachellum, TLM England and Wales.



## Caring men, caring fathers

*“People were bringing little children to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them ...” Mark 10:13,14 (NIV).*

Very few of us, men and women, will disagree with why and how Jesus rebukes his disciples. Many of us, men among us too, are touched when we spend time with (our) children, when they ran to us when we come home. Who of us would say to his wife, after having spent 5 minutes with the kids: “O, by the way, I have some work to do!” We wouldn’t, won’t we? Our laptops, the TV, the newspaper, football, an interesting or important guest, a nap, all of this can wait isn’t it! - A few weeks ago I met with the editorial board meeting of TussenRuimte, a Dutch Mission magazine. The theme of the next issue will be Men, Manhood and Mission (role models; men and the absence of men in mission; what it is or what it means to be a man in different cultures). Among other things we talked about absent fathers. With some imagination we could talk about absent uncles too or about having no time for the kids in Church or in our neighbourhood. Too busy to see children.

Years ago our newspaper published a few articles about children of pastors. It is not unusual for these men to become absent fathers. Many children of pastors and elders seem to say goodbye to the Church. When I came home I shared the discussions of the day with Margriet, my wife. She reminded me to the words of the wife of a pastor. Her husband died just after he retired. The widow spoke bitterly about the fact that, although he had been a much respected man among the people of the congregation, she hardly ever saw him when he was still the pastor.

Not only pastors and elders are at risk of becoming absent fathers. Artists, businessmen, oilrig workers, doctors, to name a few professionals, run the same risk. Some may even actively pursue the absent father status. The same can happen with people working in control programmes, who work the night shift, or who spend days in and with communities. What about men among us, retired Mission employees and current TLM colleagues? What do we know about ourselves? Do we think we ‘see’ the kids, but actually don’t? How do our wives see us in this regard? How do our children look at us? We might be heroes to them, but absent heroes. What do organisations know about the men they employ, about how their work consumes them? Does leadership know the wives and the children of the hard working successful men? Are the sacrifices of the people at home known and respected? Do we make attempts to expect and demand less of such sacrifices?

There is nothing wrong with working hard. We live in a world in which there is much competition in the area of funding. There is pressure on us to account for what we receive. There are many people in need of our support. Other people in the real world are hard workers; we in the ‘soft sector’ cannot stay behind. How otherwise would we attract businessmen to donate? You see! Plenty reason to stay behind our laptops, travel widely, spend many hours in meetings and go out for a meal with colleagues. My favourite book is written by C.S. Lewis: ‘Till we have faces’. In that story the wife of the top general blames the queen for wearing him out. He is a hero at her court, her right hand and has to make long days. At home the wife knows him as a wreck; each time he comes home she has to tinker him up and each morning she needs to motivate him to leave his bed, to be ready to serve the queen. And the queen, she had not been aware of this.

It’s a challenging theme. Since I started writing this devotion I interviewed a missionary couple at Papua. It is fascinating to hear them talk about a culture in transition, adjusting to modern times and internet and globalisation. Worrysome also to hear how, increasingly, the men are away from home.

So, where do I stand as a man in my family, as a father, an uncle, a man in the neighbourhood?

**Piet Both**



## “Caring comes first”

*“You watched me as I was being formed ... You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. ... How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. ... And when I wake up, you are still with me!” Psalm 139: 15-18 (New Living Translation)*

What an invitation to resemble God in this regard. We are made into His image. To let our light shine as one who ‘watches’, who ‘sees’, who ‘thinks’, who ‘is with’, the children around us. ‘Caring comes first’.

No, we will not go back to ‘caring for’, Doctor for patient, Rehabilitation worker for community. We are there to support people to make their choices, to turn these into actions, to practise self-care and take care, if possible jointly, for family and community and to stand up when oppressed.

There was “an Irishman in search of a future”. He ended up “busy teaching 400 children during the day”. Soon after, he was invited to come and meet with people living in “beggars’ huts”. There he saw something worse than what he remembered from Sunday school. Between the older people affected by leprosy he saw the kids who “seemed perfectly normal”. He had found his future and felt “if there was ever a Christ-like work in the world it was to go amongst these poor sufferers and bring to them the consolation of the gospel”. This is said in “Caring comes first”, about Wellesley Bailey, the founder of The Leprosy Mission.

“Caring comes first” is the title of one of TLM’s history books, written by Cyril Davey. I quote:

*“TLM cared when almost nobody else cared for leprosy sufferers. The first part of its ‘objects’ was ‘to minister in the name of Jesus Christ to the physical, mental and spiritual needs of leprosy sufferers’ – and for more than a century (this was 1987) TLM has never failed to put caring first.”*

I will never forget what Rev Andries van der Beek, former Director of TLM Netherlands, shared with me several times. He knew a professor in theology who would not go to the pulpit with a message if he was not able to share the message at home and get that message across. If we talk at home about “Caring comes first” in our work with people affected by leprosy, and if we do not spend time and effort to care for wife, kids and home, how can we care for others?

I have been blessed to visit and stay in homes of colleagues. They have put me up, offered me a bed and a meal and much love. There were often children around the table. I have met with lovely families and I wonder: does the fact that we are together in a caring ministry contribute to become better carers at home? Or did the Mission select family men?

Nonetheless, it can happen to us too. We can become absent fathers or absent minded when at home. It would be good practise to reflect about this and to support one another to be or become and remain great fathers and spouses. And when there isn’t a spouse at home or when there are no kids to hug (yet), we can encourage one another to be good uncles and aunts and be a man or a woman with firm feeds in our own community too.

**Piet Both**, really grateful for the love I received in the homes of so many colleagues.



## What God requires? - what will please the Lord?

It is important & good for us to check with our present life and action to assess..... Is God pleased with my present life? We can also ask what I shall do in my life which will please God. *Micah 6(6-8)* summaries, *"What shall I bring to God to make him please"*. Best calf to burn as offering, thousand of sheep and endless stream of olive oil? No, God does not require these things, material and worldly things do not please God. Hebrew 11:5 says Enoch was taken up by God... because he had pleased God. The purpose of our life and of our daily work & actions must be, to please God. We need to know and follow what God requires from us. 2 Corith.5:9 say-our goal is to please God and Eph 4 summaries... try to learn what please God. What God requires from us is that:

- To do what is just in the eyes of God.
- To show constant love to God and mankind.
- To live in the humble fellowship with God.
- To follow His teachings

Eph 5:10 says- find out what is pleasing to God and Hebrew 11:6 says that *"No one can please God without faith"* and then James tells us that our action (works) must go together with our faith. A humble person, who has true & clean heart and regular in his worship, will please God. Prayer of the proud man does not please God but He is please with sincere prayer of sinner. God is pleased when:

- We love Him completely & His commands are obeyed.
- Repenting from our sins.
- Practical help provided to needy.
- Efforts are made to make peace.
- Love is given to those who hate us.
- Forgiveness to people who have done wrong to us.
- Support to falling brothers/sisters.

God is not pleased with:

- Sinful nature.
- Hypocrites.
- Self righteous.
- Dishonest scale
- judgmental people

Let us ask God today to grant us strength & wisdom to attain all which will please God and get rid of those which does not please God. Whatever we do in our life, our purpose must be to please God.

**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



## EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE WITH GOD – 1.

*“Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” Marc 10:27*

There are many things possible for us human beings. It’s amazing how many things that are possible today, but were impossible yesterday. If you could tell your father’s grandfather about modern cellphones and computers, he would not be able to understand. By television we can instantly follow what’s happening all over the world. Our excellent medical doctors can even change a person’s heart. We know that it has been possible to send a team to the moon, and they could find their way back! It’s amazing!

In spite of that, quite soon we reach the limit of our abilities and we have to admit: “I’m sorry, I cannot help you. I want to help, but it’s beyond my limits”. Even very skilled doctors and scientists sometimes have to confess their limitations.

Jesus said: “With man this is impossible” and this is true in our personal lives, in our churches and in our organizations. The situation can be too difficult and we see no solution and no way forward.

Jesus wants to remind us that with God everything is possible! God is the God of miracles and possibilities. He is without limits, he is the God of no impossibilities, no failures!

Apostle Paul had discovered this truth: *“I can do all this through him who gives me strength”*

It seems that God loves impossible situations because there he can really show his power and his ability.

*“and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me” Ps 50:15*

We can find this special expression “with God all things are possible” at two very special impossible occasions, in connection with the birth of two sons:

1. The birth of the promised son: **Isaac**: *Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son.” Genesis 18:13-14*

Sara was too old. A 90 years old women couldn’t believe the promise of giving birth to a son. It was an impossible situation. But is anything too hard for God?

2. The birth of the promised son **Jesus**: *“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.” Luke 1:34-37*

Mary was too young and she had no husband. How can the promise be true? Nothing is impossible with God!

Never forget: With God all things are possible in our situation and in our problems!



## **“It was counted to him as righteousness.”**

On 30<sup>th</sup> July 2016, 25 000 feet above Big Sky Ranch in California, Luke Aikins jumped from a plane – without a parachute. Two minutes later, a double-layered net broke his fall and Luke, a safety and training adviser for the United States Parachute Association, calmly clambered out of the net to embrace his family.

It’s an amazing story, but the intriguing part is that whilst he had been planning this stunt for two years, at the last minute, his union wanted him to don a parachute. With seconds to go before leaping from the plane, he was given permission to jump without it.

Why did the union want him to jump with a chute? After all, he had made it clear that the purpose of his jump was to be the first person to deliberately leap from a plane without a chute, entrusting his safety to a net and his ability to steer himself towards it.

What if the union had won the day and Luke had jumped with a chute? Would the temptation to grab the ripcord have overwhelmed him during the descent, or would he have stuck to his plan? One thing is for sure, once he left the safety of that plane, without a parachute, his future lay squarely, irreversibly with that net. Terrifying seems an utterly banal word to describe his decision.

I hope you will not be too cross with me if I call it a leap of faith.

As I watched the video of his jump, I thought of Isaac as he turned to his father Abraham and said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is my parachute?” Well not exactly, but when Isaac caught sight of that ram, he must have been as wildly, deliriously ecstatic as Luke Aikins was when he felt the soft embrace of the net at the end of his fall.

*Paul says: “He delivered us from such a deadly peril ... on him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again”. [2 Cor 1:10]*

Such is faith. To the world we appear to be in free fall without a parachute. But our hope rests squarely in Jesus and in Him alone. We reject the false security offered by the world that wants to thrust a parachute upon us.

We “walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had” writes Paul. At times the “walk of faith” may feel more like leaping from a great height, but we have the unshakable assurance of scripture that this is not a leap in the dark – blind faith – but faith that is brightly illuminated by His unfailing love, based on the unshakable promises of His Word.

“Father, at times I feel like I’m in free-fall and I yearn to tug the ripcord. Help me to understand afresh that security and hope is found in You alone.”

**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.



## Eternal life and the Kingdom of God.

1 John 1 v 1b-2 *this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared, and we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.*

I wonder how often we think about eternal life? A friend was visiting us recently and said “I have just realised that I will not die because I have eternal life. The body will die but I, Helen, the real me will not because Jesus came to give me eternal life.” It reminded me of a booklet I read when I was in my teens/twenties which showed a man rising out of his coffin saying “Hey, what’s happening I’m dead!”

It made me realise that we don’t seem to talk very much about heaven these days perhaps it’s because we are too busy thinking about this life, what we are going to have for lunch/dinner, what I have to accomplish before the day is out etc. Strange, when it’s our eternal home and the life which will be permanent!

Then in my daily devotions I became more aware of the number of times that eternal life and the kingdom of God are mentioned as I read the Luke’s Gospel. I won’t do your study for you; I’m planning that for the home group I lead! However, Luke 17<sup>20-37</sup> is a key passage where Jesus talks to the Pharisees about the coming of the kingdom of God. Jesus said, *“You won’t find the answer by careful observation (trying to figure it out) because the kingdom of God is within you”*. We are to accept the kingdom of God like a little child. (Luke 18<sup>17</sup>) It seems to me the clearest explanation is when Jesus was crucified, the rulers sneered, “If he is the Christ of God let him save him”; and this was taken up by one of the criminals who cynically hurled insults “aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself **and us!**” The other one saw the truth, “Don’t you fear God, we are here because our actions have deserved it. This man has done nothing wrong... *Jesus* (meaning Saviour, Matthew 1<sup>21</sup>) *remember me when you come into your kingdom*”. He simply pleads Christ’s mercy. Jesus’s wonderful reply *“Today you will be with me in paradise”*. Hope to a dying man. This is the contrast between those who will humble themselves and accept the truth of their inability to save themselves and the fact that the Son of God can, and those who won’t accept the free gift of grace.

Following the resurrection the Lord Jesus appeared to his followers and spoke about the kingdom of God. (Acts 1<sup>3</sup>) He told his disciples it was not for them to know the times and dates (which can become an obsession) but to receive power to be his witnesses. Let’s be ready for when Jesus does return, and be filled with that hope and expectation. May the Holy Spirit fill us afresh to be his witnesses in a world which so desperately needs his love.

**Joyce Missing** - Living in retirement in the south of England. Formerly a staff member. I worked in Bhutan from 1973 – 1991 [nurse/administrator]; then at the International Office 1991-2006





## The Unequal Covenant

*Luke 14<sup>12</sup> Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbours; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. <sup>13</sup> But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, <sup>14</sup> and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."*

If I mention the 'car', you immediately understand what I am talking about. You can visualise it and even describe it (at least in general). But if I mention the 'covenant', because it is not a word we use in everyday language, it is harder to understand. Yet to old and new testament Jews, the word 'covenant' would conjure up as many images as 'car' does for us.

We understand a covenant to be an agreement; a handshake, or perhaps more formally a contract between to agreeing parties, or even a life-long commitment, as in a marriage relationship. Typically 'covenants' are made between equal partners, both giving and receiving in equal measure.

Yet in the Biblical Jewish setting they understood covenant with God to be something much more profound.

My Greek is very limited, and mainly restricted to food items such as 'kebab' and 'moussaka'. But I have learned another word 'diatheke'.

Diatheke, the Biblical description of our covenant with God, is a covenant of unequal partners. There are many expressions covenant; having a meal together, an exchange of goods or property, a treaty such that my enemy is your enemy, and many more. Think how these things apply (unequally) to our covenant relationship with God.

Perhaps one of the most significant expressions of being in covenant with someone is the exchange of coats. Our diatheke covenant with God is shown here, we exchange our garment of sin for a robe of righteousness (Zechariah 3:4), hardly an equal transaction.

We are the recipients of this amazing covenant of unequal partners with God. It is all of Him and nothing of us. That is what Jesus refers to in the passage above.

Isn't that what we do is serving those people suffering from leprosy? We are in a diatheke covenant relationship with God, and demonstrate that by serving 'the least of these' who cannot equally give back.



## Arrest, betrayal, courtmartial of Jesus

*John's Gospel Chapter 18* teaches us the following:

It's all about the ARREST-, BETRAYAL-, and COURTMARTIAL of JESUS!

A) During the ARREST of Jesus, the question asked a few times was: **"Whom do you seek?"** The temple militia reply, "We seek Jesus of Nazareth!" What a pity that they did not seek Him as Jesus the King of kings, and Lord of lords. For that is really who He is – albeit from the regions of Nazareth! In the ranks of this militia was Malchus (his name means 'great king'). In the ensuing rumpus of Jesus' arrest, it takes the love and compassion of the Great King to heal the right ear of the 'great king'!? Is Jesus your Great King and Lord of all of your life today? (Please read Philp.2:8-11)

B) During the BETRAYAL of Jesus in the Jerusalem courtyard, the question asked a few times was: **"Aren't you part of His following?"** Three times Peter (his name means Rock) denies this challenge. When the cock crows, this Rock of a man crumbles into a thousand pieces of grit before the appealing eyes of Jesus. Today, are you resolved to stand firm in all matters of life, in your Christian persuasion? (Please read Matth. 16:16-19).

C) During the COURTMARTIAL of Jesus the question asked a few times was: **"Are you a king?"** Jesus does not deny this fact. In fact, He lovingly baits Pontius Pilate (one of the cruellest Roman governors) into spiritual Truth and reality. However, Pilate washes his hands of this 'golden opportunity' to come clean before God! Pilate instead, releases into the baying crowd, Barabbas (his name means 'son of the father'). With glee and menace Barabbas plunges himself back into the mainstream – lost in the crowd forever!

Today, as co-heirs and true sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father, let us go with Jesus into the waiting throng – with renewed love and compassion! *(Please read 1Peter2:9-12)*

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



## Hebrews 10, 11 – 25

We don't know with certainty who wrote the book of Hebrews but we do know that it was written to people who were tempted to give up on Jesus. One of the writer's aims is to show the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus. The writer gives us a new enlarged vision of Christ, reminding us that Jesus is higher than the angels; superior to Moses and his work is superior to the work of the Aaronic priesthood.

Verse 11 tells us that the priest stands day after day offering sacrifices that would never be good enough, sacrifices that have to be repeated again and again whereas Christ made one single offering and sat down as his work was complete.

We see in many other faiths sacrifices made again and again each year but by Christ's one sacrifice he made perfect those being made holy – us! That sacrifice never needs to be repeated it was once and for all and all we have to do is accept it. Through Christ's sacrifice of his own life we have been made perfect. We have the status of Christ but not yet the character of Christ.

Accepting God's gift is only the beginning of the journey we now have our part to play in developing the character of Christ and we do that with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 16 tells us we enter into a covenant with God. A covenant is a mutual agreement between two sides and this covenant is between God and us and God never backs down on his side of the covenant. The laws of the old covenant were written on tablets of stone but the laws of the new covenant are written in our hearts and minds as the Holy Spirit gives us understanding.

We have a faith based on love, grace and compassion and that should change us and change how we live. And like any important change, the change should come from within. The Pharisees lived by a strict set of external rules but our rules should not just be external but internal. External rules are a necessary part of life and they keep us safe. Scripture reveals God's rules; scripture shows us how to be more like Jesus and how to develop a more Christ like character. However whether or not we read our bibles doesn't influence our security with God, but it influences our intimacy with God. We are secure in God through Christ not through our own efforts but with God's laws written in our hearts and minds that will help us become more like Jesus.

In the Old Testament only the High Priest could enter into God's presence in the Holy of Holies, but when Christ died on the cross, the curtain into the Holy of Holies was torn. The High Priest took animal blood, we enter God's presence through Christ's blood and we enter in confidence. We can confidently enter the presence of our Father who loves us, whether or not we feel worthy of that love.

Whatever we may be facing today, be it good or not so good, we can remember the sacrifice that was made for us and remember the love with which we are loved.

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



## Fear not, little flock!

### Luke 12: 22-34

At the beginning of this chapter, Jesus told his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. He knows that they declared him the war and they will not rest until they have killed Him. At the same time, he reassures his disciples, his friends (v 4) "do not fear those who kill the body and after that can do no more ... *fear the one who after killing has the power to cast into hell.* "

What does this mean for us in today's context?

**Sell what you own!** The possession of material goods cannot assure us true security. Jesus invites us to radically change our vision of the world and life. If already two thousand years ago its revolutionary approach, how much more today. The attachment to material goods and the pursuit of profit has become a true madness nowadays. With friends, we watched this week a documentary film entitled "Tomorrow" which invites to reflect about money, the more and more, which leads our society into the wall. The most surprising is that today people who do not know the teachings of Jesus have to tell us these truths which we are supposed to know for over two thousand years.

Rather than raise property that can only increase our concerns and fears, Jesus suggests us to think about those who do not have enough food, clothing or medicine. When, a few days before this episode, at the beginning of Chapter 12, a man came to ask Jesus to tell his brother to share the inheritance they deserve, He bluntly replied that it is not for this kind of concerns that He came to earth. Already, Jesus cautioned his listeners against thirst to possess. He told them "the life of a man is not dependent on his property, was there in abundance." The teaching of Jesus invites us to worry, not to our own needs, but for that of others. And it is through our actions, our possessions that He comes to the aid of those in distress. At the end of His Ministry He even says that it is our behavior towards those who are lonely, despised, imprisoned or sick that He recognizes as his family (Matt. 25: 31-46).

Make yourselves purses which do not wear out. Why take the risk of entrusting our goods to the banks? They can certainly help us manage our daily lives, but the banking systems have amply demonstrated that they do not work for us but at our expense. Accumulate property in itself is not safer. Thieves will eventually find what we seek to hide them and who knows what will our heirs if the robbers did not come to use and if our bankers have left some assets on our accounts. Few heirs are smart enough not to argue when sharing and sometimes get angry to death. So, yes, Jesus out due to propose a different security where nor thieves, nor the vagaries of life can affect our treasure. We are called to practice good works that God prepared in advance for us. *(See Ephesians 2: 10 and Colossians 1: 10).*

How do we understand Jesus' teaching? Are we still attached to our possessions and our falsely reassuring sedentary habits? So that even people who do not know these words tell us that the way of life of our society is foolish, are we going to do as if we did not understand the words of Jesus. Do we fear His requests? We should not! Jesus told us, "*Do not be afraid!* " (v. 32). Throughout His Ministry, as for instance when the disciples were in the boat facing the storm, Jesus invited His Disciples not to be afraid. He is there with us and nothing will happen to us that He has allowed. Even the death of our body should not frighten us. What can the fools of the Islamic State and other brigands against us? *"Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies" (John 11: 25)*



## Hebrews 11

It is not difficult to see that the chapter is about **faith** because the word is used thirty times in forty verses! Nevertheless the passage is not repetitive, because the unknown writer defines faith as the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things unseen. The text is not a simple call to believe all the articles of Christianity. Indeed, we need to distinguish faith and belief. Because our churches have somewhat different beliefs, for example about Biblical authority, sacraments or Priests and Pastors, beliefs seem sometimes to divide us. It is by faith that we are united and that is as it should be.

At first sight, it is interesting that the substance of the chapter is almost disconcertingly uncertain. The writer refers to about ten leaders and recounts things associated with great events. The text « adds » many other people, like those who crossed the Red Sea, or those involved in the capture of Jericho. These very different achievements, realised « by faith » and mentioned nineteen times in forty verses relate to many people.

You can look for the stories in the Bible, perhaps with help from a concordance. Be careful about how you read them. They are not accounts of carefully planned events, scrupulously prepared to avoid failure. If those mentioned in the chapter undertook risky or unlikely projects, it was because they were inspired by the substance of things hoped for and by the evidence of things unseen. Faith inspires us, it relates to our intuition, it is not about certainty. Its effect becomes substantive reality, based on hope and related to inspiration. That word (inspiration) is about breathing in like God's breathing into Adam's nostrils so that he became a living being, in the second and greater account of the creation (Genesis 2 : 4b ff.)

So there is no faith where there is certainty. Divine inspiration underpins trust and a concomitant faith inspires us to undertake activities or projects, the end of which we may not live to see. That is like Moses at the Red Sea. He was not to know that he would not live to cross into the promised land but he hoped for a fulfillment that he would not see. As for the immediate venture was, it more probable than an epic film with walls of water on either side. In Hebrew the escaped slaves crossed « the sea of reeds, » מ' סרפ. The probably quite shallow water was driven back by a great East wind. That is why the Egyptians who followed « drove heavily » in their chariots.

So there are two lessons. First, united in faith and inspired by our concomitant trust, we are made confident by the substance of our hope. As for our doctrinal differences, if they duped us into division, we would have missed the point. Truth matters for its own sake, but in the Anglican Prayer Book, the peace of God passes all understanding. Let us try, in our meditation, to plumb the depths always remembering that the mystery of spiritual knowledge is founded on the evidence for what we do not see.

**James Barnett** is an Anglican priest. He was involved in syllabus development and theological education in secondary schools and in preparing men and women for Christian ministry. He was Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative at the European Institutions and currently represents the Intereuropean Commission on Church and School at the Council of Europe. With his wife Elisabeth, he is secretary of the Mission Lèpre France.



## Preaching and Healing Bridged

*'As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.'* (Matth 10:7-8 NIV)

The annual week of revival meetings is a feature of church life for many in India. The congregation would prepare by erecting the tent-like *shamiana*, hire the amplifier and keyboard. They would set up the coloured lights. Guests received colourful rosettes on arrival. It often seemed more like Christmas or a wedding than an evangelistic rally. Occasionally there'd be a generator competing with the guest preacher as he poured out heart and soul.

My own style was typically western, aiming to get the message across in as few words as possible.

'Not long enough, sir,' was the remark. 'We like it longer.'

'How long'? I asked.

'About an hour, sir,' came the reply.

I did my best to comply. I was proclaiming truths of the kingdom, and they need to be clear. So why not reinforce them over and over again? The aim was always to lead the congregation to a deeper understanding of those truths, and to discover a meaningful relationship with Jesus, the centre of our faith.

The climax of the meeting came with a call to commitment. People were invited to come forward, either as a sign of that commitment, or for special prayer. Counsellors were available, but inevitably I would be asked to add my own prayer.

If I was hoping that there would be people wanting to confirm faith in Christ I would be disappointed. These were requests expressing a deeply felt need: 'I have headaches,' 'I want to bear a child.' 'I need a job.' 'Our buffaloes are dry and there's no milk.' 'I am troubled by evil spirits in my dreams.' If the sermon took an hour, it was often another hour to engage in prayer with those in the long queue that had formed.

If the sermon gave opportunity for proclaiming the kingdom, then this time of prayer turned into an opportunity to meet people in the reality of life. Jesus might also have recognised this as 'healing'. Here was an opportunity to follow his commission to the first disciples -- preach and heal. The message was about him; now it was with him we spoke about their concerns as we prayed. The word needs to become flesh. Christ makes this one united ministry. He is the bridge of integral mission.

I don't ever recall someone saying to me: 'Please pray for me -- I have leprosy.' But I was glad to know there were health programmes available to them if they did.

**Paul du Plessis Dr** - After a lifetime of service with The Salvation Army, including India, South African born Dr Paul du Plessis and his wife, Margaret, have retired in the UK. Paul has had a number of honorary roles with TLM dating back to his work at TLM Field Representative for TLM for Zambia in the 1970s. He is a former vice-president of TLM.



## The Kingdom of Heaven 1.

In Matthew 20 it says: <sup>1</sup>*For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.* <sup>2</sup>*When he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard.* <sup>3</sup>*And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place;* <sup>4</sup>*and to those he said, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.'* *And so they went.* <sup>5</sup>*Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing.* <sup>6</sup>*And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day long?'* <sup>7</sup>*They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.'* *He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'* <sup>8</sup>*When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group to the first.'* <sup>9</sup>*When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius.* <sup>10</sup>*When those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius.* <sup>11</sup>*When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner,* <sup>12</sup>*saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.'* <sup>13</sup>*But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?'* <sup>14</sup>*Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.* <sup>15</sup>*Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?'* <sup>16</sup>*So the last shall be first, and the first last."*

Jesus our Lord often talks and tells about the Kingdom - the Kingdom of heaven! Jesus tells this story here to his disciples who wondered what it would be like in heaven for them! They had already discussed that often. Apparently, it was important to them which of them might rule with Jesus. The friends of Jesus had listened to the people who are the spiritual leaders of Israel: the Pharisees and Scribes. They had been reading, learning and thinking a lot about God, and how you can do good in the eyes of God and how you can go to Heaven when you die ... And they had it about figured out that you have to live a good life living up to the law of Moses. It depends on how well you do it all, whether God is pleased with you or not.

But Jesus tells a very different story to them. They had to understand that to live with God the Father and to live with Him, Jesus the Son, would be very different from anything they had ever learned. What does He teach them? - Speaking in parables was characteristic of his style of learning. The Gospel of Mark says, that after Jesus had just begun his ministry, it is even said that: "He 'only spoke in parables' to them." I even think that, when we want to understand Jesus' way of thinking, we can't find a better object of study than these parables.

In this section of Matthew 20, we see that it looks as if Jesus comes back to a question we see earlier in chapter 19. He had already said that the ways of his Kingdom often were just the opposite of the ways of the world: "Those who are last shall be first", He said (in John 19:30) when answering Peter's question about the reward that those, who had left everything in order to follow Jesus, would receive! That question Peter had asked in response to the conversation that Jesus had had with the rich young ruler. 'If it is that difficult, then who can be saved?' they wondered! Here Jesus says: 'Truly I say to you, in the new age [the Messianic rebirth of the world], when the Son of Man shall sit down on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel.'<sup>29</sup> And anyone and everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for My name's sake will receive many times more and will inherit eternal life.'<sup>30</sup> But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.' Here he talks about the time when the New Jerusalem will come to the earth, as it is written in the book of Revelation.

*Question for exploring: Are you prepared to surrender completely to this King even though in your eyes things might look strange, different, the opposite of your feelings? And what do you do with those thoughts and feelings? (Maybe you should look at Psalm 73)*



## The Kingdom of Heaven 2.

So ... the kingdom of heaven is the kingdom where He is King! It is the Kingdom that is already.... and, not yet. Jesus Christ our King, wants the best for all people in the world! Right? But not everyone always understands, not everyone listens, not everyone obeys!

And our King can't just do it all by himself, this King can't do it all. Or rather He chooses not to do it (all) by himself. He gives us and all people their freedom, freedom of choice. And He gives, those who want to listen to and obey Him, the commandment to participate, listen, obey, and help. We are co-workers, fellow workers in the ways of loving kindness! (1 Corinthians 3:9 and Deut. 6:4, 5)

So the Lord Jesus tells this story about his Kingdom .... Where He is King ... and in that kingdom of the Lord Jesus things go often just the other way around as we think it should. Like: 'You want to be a great man or woman in that kingdom?' He says: 'become as little children'. Also: 'Do you want to receive much? Then give away much!'

And here, in the parable in John 20, we see that those who are the last to start working after all get the same reward (amount) as those who might have been working all day! 'The last will be the first!' Jesus says.

What can we learn here? The Lord Jesus is good for everyone, and gives the best to everyone! Whether you already have been working in his Kingdom a long time or you just started! Whether you already live a long time with God and have really accomplished a lot, or maybe you're sick and maybe you (feel like you) have not much to give, the Lord Jesus wants the best for everyone. Healthy or sick, rich or poor, child or adult, one with many talents and chances or those who feel they do not have much talents or chances. And that is the way in which we may try to follow after Him too!

Questions for exploring further:

1. What stands in the way, what is blocking, for you to freely work in this wonderful Kingdom? (Also look at Matt. 8:18 ff)
3. In Matt . 6:33 Jesus says "*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God*" ... How are we going to do that? How much I am are we prepared to give: in time, energy, prayer, (even suffering?)? How am I, are we going to shape that into our life, in our work, in our team, in our policy and in performing our ministry?





## Consider Jesus

*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:2-3, NIV)*

When the early Christians first read Hebrews 12, they were facing difficult times. As the Gospel of Jesus was spreading like a wildfire across the then-known world, so did opposition. Not just to the message, but also to its messengers, and all those who had come to believe. Not just in the form of a little inconvenience now and then, but as fierce persecution. And not just as isolated incidents. But widespread, ongoing, and increasingly so. With a prospect of these early believers even having to lay down their lives for the truth. Facing such relentless and increasing pressure, the believers were in danger of growing weary and giving up.

Into such troubled times come the words: "Consider Jesus." Consider what He endured. Consider His death on the cross that brought you life. Consider His glorious resurrection. Consider who Jesus is: The Son of God, the King of Kings. Consider His reality. Consider His power. Consider that He will be with you always. Consider His love for you!

These words also apply to us today. Some of our readers might live in places where persecution for being a Christian is a serious possibility or even a grave reality. And with it the danger of growing weary.

Many of us might enjoy relative safety. And yet there also is that potential for weariness. It might overtake us in very different guises. We might be facing serious challenges of health, in our work, or financially. Maybe the devastating effects of leprosy. Or maybe the pressures of responsibility, for TLM, for projects, for staff, in financially or politically volatile times. Then it might not be big challenges. Maybe just series of small, nagging annoyances. Cultural differences in working overseas. A leaking roof. A difficult colleague. Or maybe not any problems at all really. But just the monotonous, uneventful routine of everyday life. Going to work and expecting the day to turn out just as every other. All these things can lead to weariness, and as the weariness increases, it leads to losing heart. We become tired of it all.

Also into our troubled times come the words: "Consider Jesus."

Apart from simply physical tiredness, weariness generally has a spiritual dimension. Weariness starts where we stop considering Him. Where our eyes are no longer fixed on Jesus. Where He no longer is the center and the joy of our life. When we consider Him, it does not mean all will be smooth. Jesus already predicted "In this world you will have trouble." However, He continued: "But be of good cheer! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33). With Jesus at the center, the early Christians could face even the fiercest persecution. With Him as our all, we don't have to grow weary as life's storms beat at us.

No matter how insignificant our day may seem, we can look to Him to use us, to make a difference for eternity. In our most troubled hour we can know that He is with us. That nothing can separate us from His love. And that He has the power to turn any situation for good and for His glory.



## My Times are in Your Hands

Recently I was reading again *Psalm 39* and I thought just how much the psalmist put his trust in God, a theme we find in others psalms too. But these words 'My Times are in Your hands' made me think down a different track – about God's hands. So it is about God's hands that I want to think briefly and I want to do that from some of the insights we are given into the different aspects and uses Jesus made of His hands:

- Hands that were nailed to the cross
- Rough hands of the master carpenter
- Healing hands touching the untouchable people
- Praying hands so many times we are told of Jesus in prayer, think of those times and especially in the Garden of Gethsemane
- Washing hands as He washed the feet of the disciples
- Welcoming hands as they were placed on the children
- Blessing hands as they blessed the bread and fishes, and the bread and wine
- Cooking hands as the risen Jesus prepared breakfast for the disciples
- Reading hands as he held the Scriptures to read in the synagogue.

These are just some incidents and I am sure that as you think about God's hands you can come up with many more.

But we often say that we are God's hands in the world today so what do your hands do and what do people see in the work of your hands. Recently I have been making "Worry Muffs" for people with dementia who need to be always doing something with their hands [a worry muff has all sorts of things attached to it with different textures, different shapes, things to keep hands exploring].

Scripture tells us many things about our hands as well for example in Proverbs 10:4 we are told that lazy hands make a man poor; in Proverbs 31:13 we are told about the wife who works with eager hands and later in verse 20 we are told she extends her hands to the needy.

Hands have always had a special significance in the work of The Leprosy Mission whether they be the hands of the surgeon, the hands affected by Leprosy or just simply the hands extended in love to the Leprosy sufferer. I always remember a missionary telling me of a man who came into the hospital, he was dirty, in a poor condition and as the staff there helped to wash him, give him clean clothes and food to eat. She told me that he just sat and wept because that was the first time anyone had touched him for 20 years. Hands that were extended in love, hands that carried the love of God to that man. Isaiah chapter 35 and verse 3 tells us that we should strengthen the hands that are feeble – we should be an encouragement to those who need that today.

Think today of what you will do with your hands as you go about your daily tasks, as you meet people, even as you make the tea or wash the dishes and remember that you are God's hands in the world today.

I want to return to the initial thoughts about God's hands and leave a final word of encouragement to us all, again using words from Isaiah. In chapter 49:16 we read that God has engraved our names on the palms of His hands. He won't forget us and He will be the love and the strength for our hands as we serve Him.



## Inclusion in The Leprosy Mission

*Mathew 4: 18-22: While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him.*

As a person with a disability, the issue of inclusion has always been close to my heart and in my time with TLM I have been inspired and challenged regarding my understanding of true inclusion. As a Christian organisation, TLM believes that participation is an integral part of God's purpose for human beings. In order to ensure true participation for all people we believe we must be inclusive. We must address and remove physical, institutional and attitudinal barriers so that the most marginalised groups can be active participants and decision makers and feel valued and able to live with dignity. Jesus coming to earth was a participatory act in God's redemptive plan, to bring people to be involved in his kingdom. Jesus himself was a model of inclusion – he chose the people that society shunned and undervalued and he embraced and empowered them. Jesus chose fishermen not scholars as his disciples – people from the communities he wanted to reach who had a lived and experienced the issues he was tackling. - One of TLMs Global Values is 'Inclusion' and across the world TLM champions the inclusion of people affected by leprosy and with disabilities. Inclusion is also linked to our value of 'Integrity' – the legitimacy of our work rests on our ability to understand and reflect the needs of the communities we serve. TLM also has policies on gender equality, human rights and participation, a position paper on diversity and non-discriminatory recruitment processes. So when we ask ourselves 'how inclusive are we as an organisation' what do we see?

In TLM Timor Leste (TLMTL) 73% of staff (30 people) are people with disabilities and/or affected by leprosy and TLMTL has been very proactive in building an inclusive workforce. Through their local networks and connections TLMTL has actively identified and recruited people with disabilities and/or affected by leprosy who they feel have potential and passion and then built their skills on the job. Many staff had limited formal skills (literacy, numeracy etc.) before joining TLM and did not have many 'skills' which we see on job descriptions but they did have a lived experience of the issues TLM is working to tackle. As well as proactively identifying and recruiting people with potential TLMTL also adapted their office to make it an inclusive and accessible environment for all staff. The adaptations that TLMTL implemented were practical and cost effective (not high tech or expensive) proving that ensuring environments are inclusive does not need to be expensive. TLMTL has seen the benefits of building an inclusive workforce. Staff very loyal to TLM (who has 'built them up'), leading to a low turnover of staff, and there is power in the experience of staff. Nelson da Silva (part of the senior leadership team) is a TLMTL staff member with a disability who uses a prosthetic leg. On a community visit Nelson was encouraging community members with disabilities to proactively take action to improve their lives. The community members replied that they were 'unable' because of their disabilities and said this is something Nelson could never understand. Nelson reached down and lifted up his trouser to reveal his prosthetic leg. The community members were stunned. Nelson said, 'If I can do it, so can you'.

In my time with TLM I have seen examples of true inclusion. I have seen practical changes happen at different levels which have broken barriers and enabled staff and beneficiaries to achieve successes they earlier thought were impossible. I have seen the benefit of inclusion and the cost of exclusion and learned that inclusion is not an option but a necessity. I have learned more about Jesus's heart for inclusion and participation which TLM emulates. TLM has made huge progress in becoming disability orientated in our programmes and an active voice for disability rights in some countries and TLM has made this progress by continually challenging ourselves and asking ourselves tough questions to push the boundaries of our success. So we continue to ask ourselves tough questions – how does our global workforce reflect our commitment to inclusion, what does true inclusion look like in TLM and how do we want TLM to look in the future? In this way we can ensure that we, as an organisation, truly reflect our value of Inclusion.

**Jocelyn Williams** - Programme Advisor with The Leprosy Mission International June 2012 – September 2016



## Spiritual Self-Care - 1.

It can be said that we are all broken people living in a broken world and, although God has provided the way of salvation for us in Jesus Christ, he also calls us to wisely take care how we live; *“Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” Ephesians 5:15-16*

When I was teaching self-care to patients and students during my time on the field key words were inspect, soak, scrape, oil, exercise, and protect. These basic steps are essential for those whose hands and feet are affected by nerve damage caused by leprosy in order to prevent further damage. They can also be applied to us in our spiritual lives:

**Inspect:** Look carefully for any sign of damage – *“Search me O God and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me.”* (Psalm 139:23-24)

**Soak:** A person with leprosy nerve damage needs to soak his/her hands and feet in water to re-hydrate and soften dry, hard skin. We need to soak our lives in the Word of God and in His Presence in order to combat the hardening effects of living in a broken world – *“be still and know that I am God”* (Psalm 46:10); *“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly”* (Colossians 3:16) It is so easy to become caught up in busy activity and the many demands placed upon us in our everyday lives. Taking time to be still in God’s presence and meditate on His Word keeps us fresh and prevents us becoming spiritually dehydrated.

**Scrape:** Scraping off hard dry skin helps to prevent cracks which can lead to infection and ulceration. 1 John 1:9 says, *“If we confess our sins God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* Confession releases us into God’s forgiveness and removes the hard layers that can so easily build up in our lives.

After a time of reflection you may like to pray this prayer of confession from ‘A New Zealand Prayer Book’ (make it personal by changing the pronouns from plural to singular)

*Merciful God, we have sinned in what we have thought and said, in the wrong we have done and in the good we have not done. We have sinned in ignorance: we have sinned in weakness: we have sinned through our own deliberate fault. We are truly sorry. We repent and turn to you. Forgive us for our Saviour Christ’s sake, and renew our lives to the glory of your name. Amen*

**Kathleen Gavin** (nee Finlay)

New Zealand Physiotherapist with TLM in India, Nepal & Bangladesh 1981-1996. Now an ordained Anglican Priest and Spiritual Director living in Raglan, NZ and member of the Leprosy Mission NZ Board.



## Spiritual Self-Care - 2.

*Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me! Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me.*

*Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. Daniel Iverson*

This short song has greatly blessed many people in many countries. In its simplicity it is a prayer of deep meaning acknowledging that we cannot live our lives as God intends us to live without the help of the Holy Spirit.

The fourth aspect of self-care is **Oil**. Oil is applied to the skin after soaking and scraping in order to help retain the moisture and keep the skin soft. We speak about being anointed with the Holy Spirit – the Spirit is poured over us as a seal guaranteeing the work of God in our lives. *“You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance”* (Ephesians 1:13-14). Paul also exhorted the Ephesians to *“keep on being filled with the Spirit”* (Ephesians 5:18 Complete Jewish Bible). This is to be an on-going process in our lives.

**Exercise:** Exercise keeps the joints mobile and maintains/strengthens muscles. The saying, “use it or lose it,” applies in our spiritual lives just as much as it does in our physical lives. God has blessed us all with gifts, talents and abilities (e.g. see 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4) to use in building up the body of Christ and reaching out to others. The more we utilise the gifts we have been given the stronger we become in Christ and the better we will be able to be a blessing to those around us. *“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.”* (Ephesians 2:10)

**Protection:** For people with insensitive skin due to nerve damage being aware of possible dangers and using appropriate protective measures is vitally important. Living in a world tainted by the effects of sin – “a crooked and perverse generation” according to Philippians 2:15 – exposes us to temptation and danger. God has given us armour to protect us (Ephesians 6:10-17) and has promised to help us when we are tempted (1 Corinthians 10:13). However, these measures in themselves will not protect us unless we apply them daily with prayer just as protective footwear will not protect the feet of a person affected by leprosy unless the footwear is worn.

*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, **according to his power that is at work within us**, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.* (Ephesians 3:20-21)

**Kathleen Gavin** (nee Finlay)

New Zealand Physiotherapist with TLM in India, Nepal & Bangladesh 1981-1996. Now an ordained Anglican Priest and Spiritual Director living in Raglan, NZ and member of the Leprosy Mission NZ Board.



## Job Description

Job description, a very common and well used term in our modern world. JD in brief is now used in almost every working environment whether it is corporate, social, welfare based organization. It is a list of activities that any employee is supposed to follow according to his designation. The performance of that person is evaluated periodically based on the JD and further action is taken. As leaders or managers, we also engage ourselves to monitor the performance of our team as per their Job Description. And this is how it should be and my point is not to change this system.

Rather I was thinking of our job description for His Kingdom. How much I/we know our JD for spiritual life or do we want to define one since we knew our role. We may not try to find one from the Bible.

Now we might ask ourselves whether we all would have the same JD. Some might argue it is not. But while it was thinking on them and went through the scripture the following verses tell me something:

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.  
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.  
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.  
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.  
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”*

*Matthew 5:3-9 (NIV)*

These verses require some action and I consider them as set of Job Description for His Kingdom.

What I wanted to highlight is a question basically “Do we have a Job Description for His Kingdom”. If yes, let follow it and we would be the best person to justify before Him how much we have achieved. It would mostly be a self appraisal and the result would be seen through the blessings from God. If we don't know yet, let us go through His words and His spirit will guide us.

God bless.



## “in his light”

*Psalm 89:15 Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, LORD.*

Like many others in the English-speaking world, I am an admirer of the writings of C.S. Lewis. He was one of the foremost Christian thinkers and communicators of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, having become a Christian in later life after much thought, struggle and heart-searching. He became a brilliant apologist for (defender/explainer of) Christianity, and his many works on this and other subjects are still widely read. As a ‘non-theologian’, he had a wonderful ability to put Christian truths into simple but powerful images. One such thought-provoking idea Lewis gave us is this:

*“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”*

We cannot look at the sun; even if our eyes would allow it there would be danger in doing so. As it sets and can be watched with unprotected eyes, it is bright, mysterious and beautiful; greater than we can imagine and well beyond even the latest scientific understanding. Maybe we find God dazzling and mysterious; as for Isaiah, it would be fearful to behold him (Isaiah 6:5). And perhaps we find Christianity too complex to understand, especially in the bewildering variety of its expressions across the world. Yet the presence of God -and human trust in him- pervades the world like the life-giving, light-shedding sun. And by it, as Christians, in Lewis’s words, *we see everything else.*

He puts his finger here on something unique and challenging about Christianity, and about God: that apart from all the mystery and infinite wonder of gazing *at* him, there is a sense in which only with him above us, the “*Father of heavenly lights*” (James 1:17), do we ‘see’ everything else in the right perspective, in true colours and shades, *...in his light.*

So the things that dazzled may become dim in that light; things that attracted and took time and attention, things that seemed big and impressive, frightening or fascinating, are shown as they truly are in the light of God. Some will become more beautiful, others will no longer seem so.

Perhaps Psalm 89:15 sums up this spiritual principle: *“Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, Lord.”* It is as we gaze on God and *learn* to acclaim him that our life’s journey increasingly is illuminated by his light. And by that light we will see the firm rock and level path on which to place each step, -and the shifting sands and rough places will be revealed as treacherous.

Such paths and perspectives, leadings and life-choices, may not seem wise in the world’s eyes, but as St. Paul put it: *“...the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7)*

By God’s illuminating grace may we find it so.

**David Beazley** - David is the minister of Sainthill Baptist Church, in SW England. A former member of the Board of TLM England and Wales, he remains involved as a volunteer speaker for the Mission, and after long involvement with TLM International, he chairs one of the International Working Groups.



## Psalm 121

We have been looking at the Psalms in the Bible Book Club (BBC) for a few months. Last month we looked at Psalm 121. Most of you I am sure will know it particularly in the King James Version. It is beautiful with some wonderful promises.

We did wonder though if there was a touch of the “prosperity” Gospel in it. What does our help mean? It can't be an avoidance of trouble, since you only ask for help when you are in trouble. I believe the comfort of the psalm is that God is always there with us. We are never alone. He is just waiting for us to call for help. As I thought about it I wanted to get to the essence of the psalm and so I did a little paraphrase which I share with you. It is not as poetic as the original but still I found plenty of food for thought.

### **Psalm 121**

*I look to the hills and the mountains; those high and eternal mountains that have always been there. Can I find my help in them? No.*

*My help comes from the One who made them; the creator of those mountains looks after me.*

*He won't even let me trip up let alone fall over. He is not going to be asleep on the job. He looks after the whole nation and is not going to doze or snore!*

*The Lord watches over you. He has got his eye on you all the time. There is no escaping His care. He is like an umbrella, providing shade and shelter. During the day, in the bright light, He will protect you and at night, under the moonlight, He will protect you from all evil.*

*The Lord is utterly reliable; He will keep you from all harm. Even if bad things happen they will not have the power to damage who you really are. Your pathway, your walk with God, you're going in and coming out will be safe because He is there; now and forever.*

### **June Nash**

I have worked for the Leprosy Mission for 35 years. At first I was on the mission field in Papua New Guinea and then Ethiopia. In the beginning I did leprosy control but then moved into the training of health workers. It was a privilege to serve overseas with TLM for 20 years. I returned to be part of the team in Brentford, firstly as global training adviser, then HR Director and lastly as Knowledge Management Director. I am now retired but being a part of the Leprosy Mission never really leaves you. I continue to hold the work in my heart through prayer and visits to Brentford.





## Authors in Alphabetical Order

## Textuarium

Alison Mcdonald	17 Sept		Psalms 39	24 Sept
Allan Ekstedt	12 Sept		Psalms 40,1-4	3 Sept
Author unknown	6,7,8 Sept		Psalms 89,15	29 Sept
Christine Osman	24 Sept		Psalms 121	30 Sept
Dan Izzett	3,4 Sept		Psalms 139,7/b	5 Sept
David Beazley	29 Sept		Psalms 139,15-18	10 Sept
Eddie Askew	25 Sept		Isa 52,7	1 Sept
Eric Chollet	2 Sept		Isa 53,1-4	2 Sept
Gert Visscher	21,22 Sept		Micah 6,6-8	11 Sept
James Barnett	19 Sept		Matth 4,18-22	25 Sept
Jocelyn Williams	25 Sept		Matth 5,3-9	28 Sept
Joyce Missing	14 Sept		Matth 10,7-8	20 Sept
June Nash	30 Sept		Matthew 20,1-16	21,22 Sept
Kathleen Gavin	26, 26 Sept		Mark 10,13-14	9 Sept
Marie Arnachellum	6 ,7, 8 Sept		Mark 10,27	12 Sept
Marta Risko	5 Sept		Luke 12,22-34	18 Sept
Mollie Clark	1 Sept		Luke 14,12-14	15 Sept
mzf	23 Sept		John 18	16 Sept
Otto Kingsley	16 Sept		2 Cor 1,10	13 Sept
Paul du Plessis Dr	20 Sept		Eph 5,15-16	26 Sept
Peter Laubscher	13 Sept		Phil 3,14	5 Sept
Peter Walker	15 Sept		Hebr 10,11-25	17 Sept
Pierre Geiser	18 Sept		Hebr 11	19 Sept
Piet Both Dr	9,10 Sept		Hebr 12,2-3	23 Sept
Pradeep and Sarah Failbus	11 Sept		1 John 1-2	14 Sept
Salamon S. Halder	28 Sept			