



TLM Daily Devotions

June 2017





Foreword

Veni Creator Spiritus! – Come, Holy Spirit!

This ancient hymn from the 9th century as a golden thread binds us together with our forefathers in faith, be it legions of anonymous monks in the holy silence of monasteries, convents and churches, either Ethiopian Copt, Roman Catholics or Greek, Slavic, or later the reformators as Luther, Calvin. Or all those componists who inspired by the Spirit, gave tune to it: in the Gregorian, J. S. Bach, Bruckner, Mahler, Pendereczki, Stockhausen – and others.

Anywhere, anytime, to anyone of us: is there anything of more importance than singing from heart:

“Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come from thy bright heav'nly throne;
come, take possession of our souls, and make them all thine own.

Thou who art called the Paraclete, best gift of God above,
the living spring, the living fire, sweet unction and true love.

Thou who art sevenfold in thy grace, finger of God's right hand;
his promise, teaching little ones to speak and understand.

O guide our minds with thy blest light, with love our hearts inflame;
and with thy strength, which ne'er decays, confirm our mortal frame.

Far from us drive our deadly foe; true peace unto us bring;
and through all perils lead us safe beneath thy sacred wing.

Through thee may we the Father know, through thee th'eternal Son,
and thee the Spirit of them both, thrice-blessed three in One. Amen.”

Blessed Pentecost and Spirit-led month to everyone, TLM!

Marta Risko



“What would Jesus do?”

Over recent years in UK -and no doubt elsewhere- there has been a fashion for wearing plastic wristbands with a slogan of some sort, usually in support or awareness of some cause: it could be anything from a particular organisation to your blood group! One often worn by Christian young people bears the letters ‘WWJD?’; it stands for ‘What Would Jesus Do?’. It’s a kind of nudge to the conscience in a world of temptations and forces; a call to think first and do right!

When we read the Gospels we find that ‘*What Jesus Did*’ gives us a moral guide that even non-Christians might want to follow. But Jesus also did all sorts of things that came as a surprise in his religious culture, especially to the pious and self-righteous, who often judged him for them! It was usually to do with who he spoke to, touched, or associated with: outcasts, the ‘low-lifers’ of society, ‘sinners’, people with illnesses like leprosy which were considered (*wrongly of course!*) to be the result of ‘sin’. Such people were thought to be under a curse, unclean; they were stigmatised, and so associating with them was regarded as a kind of deliberate self-contamination. So Jesus was criticised for hypocrisy, double standards, impurity... and worse.

But looking a little deeper we can see where Jesus was coming from. He wasn’t *condoning anything* that was wrong, but he wasn’t *condemning anyone* either. Jesus associated with the outcasts and the afflicted and stigmatised because he loved and cared for them; he modelled a life of non-judgmental friendship with personal purity, and by doing so won many over to a new, forgiven and restored life and dignity. For the man with leprosy in Luke 5, it wasn’t just that Jesus was able to make him well, -but that he was *willing* to make him *clean*. Perhaps for the first time in his disease-affected life someone had chosen to engage with him, someone who had the power and authority to make him acceptable again in society, -clean.

Such rejection and stigma remain an issue for many with whom TLM works, and for whom we try to model Jesus’ love and his refusal to label and reject people. For many in the work of this Mission the Kingdom of God in Christ has indeed come. There is a challenge in western cultures also, where morality is increasingly self-centred and relative. Truth -it has been said- is ‘under threat’ and prejudice is making unwelcome appearances. What would Jesus do? To live the ‘Jesus’ life -a ‘Kingdom of God’ life- is to show attitudes which are the same as those of our master and Lord (*Philippians 2:5*) -to reach out hands of unconditional friendship, loving one another without prejudice and judgement. I don’t wear a ‘WWJD?’ wristband... but it bears a question that concerns us all, a watchword to guard and guide in our different cultures.

With my good wishes and prayers,

David Beazley. David began involvement with The Leprosy Mission in 1992 when he came as Minister to a Church near the International Office in Brentford. He acted as an informal ‘chaplain’ to the Office, and served on the International General Council for some years. At the same time he became a member of TLM England and Wales Board, serving as Chairman for six years and on various committees. He now pastors a Church in South-West England part time, freeing time for TLM as a volunteer speaker and continuing on the E&W Board. He chaired the Spiritual Ministry MAWG, and is also able to serve TLM by leading retreat days and other such things as opportunity allows.



Easter Day

On Easter Sunday we had a wonderful service in our church. It was so full that extra seats had to be brought in for the many people who wanted to come. There was a great sense of love and joy, and ages ranged from babes in arms through to older people in their nineties, all rejoicing in the resurrection of the Lord. After Communion we sang the following song:

*Oh to see the dawn of the darkest day:
Christ on the road to Calvary.
Tried by sinful men, torn and beaten then
Nailed to a cross of wood.*

*Chorus: This the power of the cross, Christ became sin for us.
Took the blame, bore the wrath, we stand forgiven at the cross.*

*Oh to see the pain written on Your face
Bearing the awful weight of sin.
Every bitter thought, every evil deed
Crowning Your bloodstained brow.*

*Now the daylight flees, now the ground beneath
Quakes as its Maker bows His head.
Curtain torn in two, dead are raised to life,
"Finished" the victory cry.*

*Oh to see my name written in the wounds,
For through Your suffering I am free.
Death is crushed to death, life is mine to live,
Won through Your selfless love.*

*This, the power of the cross: Son of God - slain for us.
What a love! What a cost! We stand forgiven at the cross.*

As we sang the third verse I was suddenly hit by what we were singing, that the Lord the Creator of the whole universe, was being killed by those He had created. Not only that but the light He had also created, was darkened for 6 hours and the earth He had created quaked! Something I knew and believe, but it came home to me with great force that day. Our beloved Lord, loved us so much He was willing to carry our sins, bear such terrible sufferings all with a broken heart.

We read in Romans 8 from verse 18 about the whole of creation groaning in bondage, longing to be delivered, when Jesus comes again. Then of course after the cross came the glorious resurrection, where His disciples and others were able to talk with Him and eat with Him, and rejoice in His company. Then they watched as he, ascended into heaven. After this they prayed and waited for the promise of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, as we wait again now.

We Christians have so much to celebrate every year as we remember the birth, sufferings and death and resurrection of our Lord. We are very blessed as we wait now for His coming again.



The Day of the LORD

²⁸ “And afterward,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.
²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.
³⁰ I will show wonders in the heavens
and on the earth,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.
³¹ The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.
³² And everyone who calls
on the name of the LORD will be saved;
for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
there will be deliverance,
as the LORD has said,
even among the survivors
whom the LORD calls.

Joel 2,28-32



„...and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”

2 Cor 3,17

If Elvis Presley had lived he would be thinking about his pension now. The folk singer Bob Dylan said that hearing Elvis Presley playing rock and roll for the first time was „like busting out of jail”.

Elvis Presley isn't everyone's first choice when it comes to music but what Dylan meant was that he'd been liberated – he'd heard music played like he's never heard it played before. It had opened his mind to something new, offered him new ideas, given him a musical freedom he'd never had before.

It's easy to react to new ideas with a closed mind. To condemn without thinking, to seal ourselves off from all that makes life different. It's safer that way of course. You don't need to take risks, but it's less interesting.

Faith's meant to liberate, to free us from our hang-ups and fears, and give us something positive to live with. But, sad to say, we often try to protect our faith by closing our minds to new ideas. We pull what we know around us like a comfort blanket and refuse to listen.

Seeing a new church being built, an old aborigine asked: “If God loves everybody, why do people build walls?” I'm not suggesting that we don't need church buildings but his question says to me that rather than sheltering inside the walls we build – whether they're made of brick or just walls in our minds – we should be out in the world with everyone else.

We may have to take risks, we may be exposed to music we've never listened to before, but we might just hear something new, gain something worth having.

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)



The Fruit of the Spirit

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is*
love,
joy,
peace,
forbearance,
kindness,
goodness,
faithfulness,
²³ *gentleness and*
self-control.

Against such things there is no law.

²⁴ *Those who belong to Christ Jesus*
have crucified the flesh
with its passions and desires.

²⁵ *Since we live by the Spirit,*
let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5,22-25



Fulfilling Scripture

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour ... Jesus rolled up the scroll... and began by saying to them "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4¹⁸⁻²¹

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord came upon Jesus at his baptism, for the ministry he was about to enter into. This statement perfectly sums up his ministry, and later the ministry he was to pass onto the disciples. Jesus quoted Isaiah 61, but in this the statement Jesus left out the phrase, "and day of vengeance of our God". I have been pondering that. We often do not like to talk about God's judgement and "vengeance", however I believe it is necessary, because Jesus is also our sin bearer. Jesus came to rescue a fallen world from the power of Satan and God's vengeance is directed towards all that is evil, so that we can be free from all that oppresses and enslaves us, wounds can be bound up, and the blind can have sight restored.

Recently on TV a programme documentary was shown about an eleven year old boy who had been shot and killed by a gang of thugs who terrorised the local community. He had not been the intended target, but had unfortunately had been in the way of the bullet. The story portrayed the agony and distress which the parents faced both before, during and after the trial. It also showed the callous disregard which the perpetrators of the crime showed for the grieving parents, the court and police, as they thought they had cleverly covered up all evidence against them. However, one person bravely gave evidence against them, and the police detective leading the case was fully committed to ensuring that all the people involved would come to justice. It took a lot of commitment and courage, but finally justice was served. The parents of the boy took a long time to recover their relationships with each other, and the police detective was also adversely affected. It's at times like this that we understand the need for justice, but also for binding up and restoring broken lives.

Back to the passage. The Gospels tell us how Jesus fulfilled that prophecy, in physical, psychological and spiritual healing. Before Jesus ascended to the Father, he instructed the disciples not to leave Jerusalem but to "wait for the gift my Father has promised" (Acts 1⁴). The gift of the Spirit was given at Pentecost, first to the disciples, later to the Gentiles and the church has been proclaiming the good news ever since, and will continue to do so until Jesus returns. The work of The Leprosy Mission was described as a Christ-like ministry too, and this continues today as it did when the Mission first started, seeking to bind up the broken hearted and to set "captives" free.

What a wonderful message we have to proclaim. How grateful we are that we have been set free from the accusation of the evil one, and we can say "in Christ alone my hope is found". I believe that day vengeance came when Jesus robbed Satan of his power, through his death and resurrection but the completion of that day of vengeance will be when Jesus returns again and every knee will bow.

May we be encouraged to keep on going, fulfilling Christ's ministry until He comes again.

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



Holy Spirit our help in time of Weakness

'Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weakness....the Spirit Himself make intercession for us with groaning's which we cannot uttered. (Romans 8:26 NKJV)

With all the challenges that becloud me daily, I need the strength of the Holy Spirit to handle my life. I recognise my weakness and my failures; I do not trust myself to take me far, therefore to excel in life I will always need the Holy Spirit.

- I need His help to live and maintain a godly life
- I need His help to read and understand the word of God
- I need His help in the place of prayer
- I need His help to maintain my daily work with God so that I will not stumble
- God has a plan for my life, but I cannot figure it out without the help of Holy Spirit
- I need His help to share the gospel in love with unbelievers
- I need His help to lead my family especially as a father
- I need His help in The Leprosy Mission as I reach out in the name of Christ to People and community of people affected by Leprosy.
- I cannot survive in Niger with over 45 degree centigrade heat every day and unstable electricity without the help of the Holy Spirit

I thank God that the joy of the Holy Spirit is there for us when we seek Him with all our heart (*Jer 29:13-14*).

We will do ourselves a great blessing as we set our heart and mind to the leading of the Spirit, to see Him as essential to our spiritual identity and to trust him to lead us in all our ways.

This is God's great gift to us after our redemption; His presence in our lives gives us hope and assurance of the future even beyond this earth.

May we allow the Spirit to continue to work in us and guide us in all our ways so that we can become more like Jesus.

Amen

Bunmi Oluloto - TLM Country Leader Niger & Chad



The many journeys to Life

Jesus said "Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven." Luke 6,37

I remember a few years ago, my husband had been asked to give some lectures in a small European town. He planned his journey, flying to a major airport in that region, from where he could catch a train, and would then be collected by car from a place nearer his final destination. He had to allow an extra day at each end for all this travel. Not very long after that, one wet summer in the UK, we took a short flight to spend a few days in a popular holiday destination to enjoy some warmer and drier weather. It dawned on me that the place that my husband had gone to, to give lectures was just a couple of hours by road from where our chartered flight had landed. He could have had a much quicker, more straightforward journey if he had flown straight there. But somehow, being a holiday destination, and with our patchy geographical knowledge of that area, it didn't come to mind as a flight destination for attending a professional conference.

Similarly, many's the time I have driven around a place I'm not totally familiar with, only to come to a road that I usually approach from a different direction, and to suddenly recognise that I am in known territory after all. And I had not known it was so close to the new area I'd just come from!

Life is often compared to a journey. In many ways it is a helpful comparison, and it can be a reassurance to think that we are on a path that many have trod before, or that things do move on: if we are having a hard time, we look forward to when the journey becomes smoother. Sometimes we look back, and reflecting on how much we've accomplished or learned, or how our views and attitudes may have changed, we say "I've come a long way". And as humans, we often look for things we have in common with others. We enjoy sharing experiences, each contributing how things felt for us, and where these experiences led. I wonder perhaps, though, whether we grasp sometimes, how very different from our own, life's journey can be for other people, even for those whose lives may not seem on the surface, to be so different from ours. Perhaps, even for a moment, in our expectations of others, we lose sight of the fact that there are as many different paths to meet our Risen, Living Lord, as there are people on this earth, as each one's journey starts from a different place and has different landmarks along the way. "The vehicle" that each of us travels in is unique too!

E. Stanley Jones said "Men went out in those early days and preached Jesus and the resurrection – a risen Jesus. But just as a stream takes on the colouring of the soil over which it flows, so Christianity, in its flowing through the soil of different racial and national (*and personal*) outlooks took on colouring from them. We have added a good deal to the central message: Jesus".

As we journey on with Christ, let us resolve to stay close to Him, for He is our source of Love and Wisdom as we travel, and that is how we can best reflect His light for each other's journeys.

"A truthful witness saves lives, but a false witness is deceitful" Proverbs 14,25

Kirsteen Dutton (née Thompson)

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



The parable of the sower

Matt 13: 1-9 and 18-23

Seed scattered by hand. Not a precise technology, needing no expensive machines. The word of God is spread by all of us, living our lives, talking to friends, gossiping the Gospel. No clever techniques, just us doing what God has called us to do.

The seed, of course, is the same wherever it falls. The word of God does not change, it is the same whoever talks about it, and whoever hears it. Our joy as Christians is to do the scattering, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Some of the seed falls on the path. Rock hard, beaten down by passing feet. Not only is the ground hard, but the birds come and help themselves. Jesus explains that this is what happens when people reject the Gospel. Satan takes the opportunity to stop the Word of God reaching them, he snatches it away. No seed can possibly grow.

Do we have a role in breaking up hard ground for the gospel?

Some seed fell on the rocky places. We used to grow vegetables on a hillside in Bhutan. The soil looks all right on the surface, but there was rock just under the surface. Plants would sprout nicely, but some simply shrivelled away when the sun beat down. And there are people like that: they seem to be convinced by the gospel message, and come along to meetings and services. Then they begin to lose interest. Their roots don't go down deep. The gospel was just a passing interest. They soon move on to some other thing.

Do we know someone whose enthusiasm is flagging and needs some loving encouragement today?

Weeds are a problem. They seem so healthy, they grow so quickly. There are people who hear the word, Jesus says, but get choked by worldly things. They are more concerned about treasure on earth than treasure in heaven. They can't get to church because they are busy. They can't help a neighbour because they have pressing problems of their own.

Do we show in our own lives that the gospel is more important to us than our possessions?

But remember, despite the path, the rocks and the weeds, some seed does reach the good soil. The ground has been cultivated. People are prepared by the Holy Spirit to hear the good news.

Will we take the opportunity to share our faith if it arises today?

Farmers hope the majority of the seed will go on the fertile ground. But in God's world that often doesn't happen. The church is always in a minority. The important thing is the fruitfulness of those who do flourish. This may be in evangelism or it may be in doing other things for God or for his people.

In what ways will we be productive as Christians today?

We are here to produce a crop, to make a difference in God's world!

Dr. 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.



Mother Teresa wrote this poem:

Life

Life is an opportunity, benefit from it.

Life is beauty, admire it.

Life is bliss, taste it.

Life is a dream, realize it.

Life is a challenge, meet it.

Life is a duty, complete it.

Life is a game, play it.

Life is costly, care for it.

Life is wealth, keep it.

Life is love, enjoy it.

Life is mystery, know it.

Life is a promise, fulfill it.

Life is sorrow, overcome it.

Life is a song, sing it.

Life is a struggle, accept it.

Life is tragedy, confront it.

Life is an adventure, dare it.

Life is luck, make it.

Life is too precious, do not destroy it.

Life is life, fight for it



Trinity

Philippians 2: 1-11 (and perhaps John 1:1-17) The liturgical calendar moves from Easter to the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and then to Trinity Sunday, on 11 June this year. In the Anglican and Scandinavian churches Trinity Sunday is traditionally important before we settle down to something like « ordinary time. » Passionate debate about the Trinity in its affirmation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit was largely settled only in 451 with the Chalcedonian definition. The incarnation in the Word made flesh is a central and defining tenet of Christianity. - The debate was shaped by Greek philosophy with its view that flesh and human nature are flawed. God the Father is perfect. The needs of the flesh, like hunger and fatigue are signs of imperfection. So there was deep division in the first centuries of the Christian church. In fact, by looking at some complicated philosophy in an accessible way, we can understand God's love for his creation and for humanity. In particular there is humour, because it is often a source of reconciliation. By laughing at ourselves at our vagaries or, indeed, at those of other people, we may avoid conflict or anger. Though it does not always work and it often expresses the kind of affection that avoids difficulty or reconciles difference.

Of course, there is a bit of a problem, because funny things are almost necessarily often imperfect because humour compromises absolute standards. It actually allows people to be a bit naughty. Do we want that or do we prefer earnest Christians who smile rarely because they have a developed sense of sin ? That is a dilemma because there are some difficult implicit questions in the Bible and in Christian doctrine too. St John's Gospel opens with « in the beginning was the Word » and the Word is Jesus. Jesus is also the light of humanity (or men in older language.) In *John 1:14 the Word became flesh ... and we saw his glory as of the only Son of God.*

The « Word » is a philosophical term. IN the first place it is related to the importance of language and the words that enable us to know other people. Perhaps we get closer to people by words than by touch, though the debate remains open. Nevertheless, John's Gospel does say that the Word became flesh, there is flesh with its all its little failings. In the context of the primitive church, one dissident group, called the docetists, from the Greek word *δοκεω* « I seem » believed that Jesus only seemed to die on the cross because the mortality of the Word made Flesh would be unthinkable. The New Testament, though, is absolutely clear that Jesus died on the cross

As we think carefully about what we believe and the Incarnation, we can also look at St. Paul's letter to the Philippians. He writes : « *let this be your common mind in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not set out to be equal with God. He emptied himself and took the form of a servant (slave), and came to be in the likeness of men, and being found in the form of a man, humbled himself and was obedient as far as death, death on a cross. That is why God raised him up, and gave him the name above every name, in order that every knee should bow in the name of Jesus, in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should proclaim (agree) that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father.* »

That is not quite the definition realised at Chalcedon some four centuries later and it looks as though the passage may have been an early Christian hymn or poem. The important thing is that Christians of the first generation were aware of Jesus' very particular relation to his heavenly Father. So what about the humour ?

It is important because God loves his creation and humanity within it. I do a lot of work in the field of human rights. It is not religious but we do affirm that every human being is unique and that is certainly a Christian point of view. Nevertheless, if we think that a person is perfect, we do not know him or her ! People who think that they are marrying perfect partners are disillusioned. Alas, they are often not very good at loving other people either. So the doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation are an expression of God's love for us. It is not all one way. God wants us to know him too and prayer is understood as a relationship. Because no one is perfect relationships or just being friends will enrich us. Redemption involves divine love reciprocated by us, knowledge of our heavenly father, the power of the Word and recognition. - As for humour, English young people have a very good expression when they say that something is a « mob up. » It is about adolescents being funny - they can be very funny, and usually it is not malicious. All the same, good teachers need have repartee with a lightness of touch. It is not just a game though, because people learn best when they enjoy things and situations. So celebrating the Trinity Sunday is being glad that God loves us in Jesus Christ and expresses that love in the Trinity, not just the Incarnation but also in his spirit that gives us life. Loving a little imperfection means that we can laugh and that we are not too concerned about peccadilloes. Meditate on that. Share the Gospel interestingly. Be comprehensibly simple but never propose what is unreflected, shallow or just repetitive.

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.



Being pruned

John 15 -1 -17

Vs 1-2 My father is the gardener. Heprunes every branch that does not bear fruit .”

It was on a Wednesday staff cottage prayer meeting, that this verse jumped at me. My mind strayed from what the speaker was saying to the debridements. I had done that afternoon on our ulcer patients. The analogy struck me, the dead skin and slough had been excised, dead bone was removed, thickened callous skin on the soles were pared, to be able to make the limb functional . The limb would heal again with dressings and medicines. Wasn't it a type of pruning?

Christ is the vine and we who follow Him are the branches . We can become diseased by sin. Our hearts might become calloused, insensitive to His Word and to our fellow beings. Some of our mental faculties die because of worldliness and disuse. Bearing fruit for Christ becomes impossible.

But yet our loving God is not ready to cut us off. He will prune us, remove the callouses and give us a heart of flesh, he will excised the dead areas , put a healing balm on the diseased souls and do His best to enable us to bear fruit. The discipline hurts but strengthens our character.

I remember our patients unwilling for debridement, when told of the consequences of losing a limb, they reluctantly agree, then complain about the hospital stay and painful dressings. But years later, they come smilingDidi (Elder sister) , you saved my leg !

God is constantly at work in us, we are unaware, but He knows. He calls us to remain in him, attached to Him, in close communion and nourishing from Him. And that will bring out the best fruit, the kind that will last forever.

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



Learning from amputations

John 15 : 1 -16

In a leprosy hospital, amputations are quite common, sometimes toes, fingers or even a whole limb. The reason is almost always ulcers and beyond restoration. As easy as it sounds as a procedure, (it actually is) , it's a difficult decision, for the patient and even more for the doctor. No one likes destructive surgeries. We try our best to salvage the body part. But then we do have cut the diseased part sometimes, so that the leg or life is saved!

In John 15 Jesus speaks about The Father cutting every branch that bears no fruit Vs 2. It sounds so easy, doesn't it? But I assure you my friends, its not. Our loving Father faces a real problem when it comes to a decision to cut off someone who was a part of the body of Jesus. I am sure He doesn't like it! His love would want to give so many chances to allow bearing of fruit. We treat the diseased limbs with antibiotics, dressings and debridement, hoping that the infection will be arrested and the limb will be whole again.

Our Father in heaven treats the unfruitful by speaking through His Word, His Saints, through corrections and discipline, through trials, just so that the sinner's heart be made whole again and bear fruit . But the word of God says that The father has to cut off the branch when it finally bears no fruit. It is no use for the Vine.

Surgeries are conducted under anesthesia, but the spiritual amputation has no anesthesia, I am afraid! The pain has to be suffered, pain of separation from Christ, pain of being cut off from Spiritual fellowship and the pain of destruction. The separated limb is of no use and is disposed for destruction.

It's a call to be vigilant. To introspect. To bear fruit for Him! Let no one be amputated from the Body of Christ! It will be possible only if we remain in Him.

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



Don't be afraid!

There was the young Mary in the town of Nazareth. She was already promised in marriage to a man named Joseph. But now this - an angel came to visit her. The angel told her a very strange thing! She was to become pregnant and give birth to a son! The angel even told her how to name the child.

Mary was deeply troubled and afraid, of course, but the angel said: *Don't be afraid, Mary!* Mary knew she was a virgin so she said to the angel: How, then, can this be? And then Mary got this wonderful answer and promise from the angel: *For nothing is impossible with God.*

It is now more than two thousand years since Mary got those greetings and special words from the angel. They are still true today and we can allow them to have an impact on our lives!

There are a lot of reasons for being afraid today. We live in a world where violence and difficult things happens every day; the daily news tells us that. Sometimes things happen in our families or among our close friends. Relationships get destroyed or our beloved ones become seriously ill. It is easy to become afraid in such situations.

Sometimes God calls you or me for a special mission and you are afraid of the great commitment. You are asking yourself: How can this be? I'm not qualified enough! I'm not spiritual enough!

The greetings for Mary then, can be ours today in such situations because there is a promise related to this: For there is nothing that God cannot do!

In my hometown in Sweden where I grew up, there is a beautiful park with a lot of flowers in the summer. There is also a big work of art, made of stone. The stone has been made into a very big hand and in that big hand stands a small person. The name of this work of art is *God's hand*. It reminds me always of God's protection and concern. It is a wonderful image of how we can be in the hand of the Lord, protected by His divine hands!

Mary trusted what the angel said to her. It was like she gave her whole life into the hands of the Lord! She said: I'm the Lord's servant!

My prayer for you is that you can take the angel's words to your heart and make them yours! I wish for you to be able to trust in Him that you dare to say: I'm your servant whatever your command will be! For, there is nothing that God cannot do. Still these wonderful words are true.

But the angel said to her: Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus Luke 1: 30 – 31

"For nothing is impossible with God." "I'm the Lord's servant," Mary answered." May it be to me as you have said." And the angel left her. Luke 1: 37-38



This is my Story – 14.

Isaiah 6:1-8

“How do I know what God wants me to do?” is often a crucial question in our Christian life, and I think the answer varies enormously. It may be as simple as “use your own best judgement with the wisdom God has given”; it may be a gentle leading with input from several sources; or it may be something much more dramatic as we read in this passage from Isaiah.

In October 1979, I helped organise a mission event in a local church with a well known speaker who had served for many years as a mission partner in Calcutta (as it was then known). Although he was an experienced preacher and speaker, the feedback I received after the meeting was that most people struggled to stay awake during his talk! He had made the mistake of filling two carousels with slides – probably nearly a hundred in total, and went into far too much detail describing the individual people in each photo – names that meant nothing to us. It was definitely a lesson in how not to present mission work!

Except for me that is – he had my full attention! From very early on in his talk I had an all-consuming feeling that this kind of work is what God wanted me to be involved in. The feeling just would not go away – in spite of my best efforts! I was then in my early 30s; I had recently gained full qualifications as a Chartered Engineer and was about to qualify as a Lay Preacher in the Methodist Church. I had gained several years experience in the local church in all sorts of work including youth and Sunday school. It was like God was saying “Now you’ve finished your apprenticeship, go and put it to use – in another country”

This marked the beginning of the process which saw me and my family step on a plane in January 1982 to start on mission service with the United Mission to Nepal. I have always been very grateful to God for this very distinct “call” to serve in mission – there were many times in subsequent years when, without such a landmark to look back on, I would have been tempted to give up. Out of all the times I have felt led by God to do something, this one was definitely the most dramatic – probably because God knew that I would need its powerful conviction in the years to come. Maybe the same was true for Isaiah – maybe the same has been true for some of you reading this.

But while it’s good to hold on to such memories and share them when appropriate, I also reflect on the many other times I have felt God speak or lead me in much less dramatic ways – using my own God-given wisdom; or responding to a gentle leading with input from several trusted Christian friends. But the beauty of it all is that God does speak to us, and he does lead us in the big decisions of life, as well as in the in small.

Trevor Durston - General Director from 1993-2006. Now retired and working as a volunteer speaker for TLM.



Through loving gifts God is honoured

Our friends, we want you to know what God's grace has accomplished in the churches in Macedonia. They have been severely tested by the troubles they went through; but their joy was so great that they were extremely generous in their giving, even though they are very poor...Of their own free will they begged us and pleaded for the privilege of having a part in helping God's people in Judea...First they gave themselves to the Lord; and then, by God's will they gave themselves to us as well...

You are so rich in all you have: in faith, speech, and knowledge, in your eagerness to help and in your love for us. And so we want you to be generous also in this service of love...

I am not laying down any rules. But by showing how eager others are to help, I am trying to find out how real your own love is. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; rich as he was, he made himself poor for your sake, in order to make you rich by means of his poverty. 2 Corinthians 8: 1 - 15 Good News Translation

If you can, please read the full passage. In it the apostle Paul describes how the grace of God has worked in the church in Macedonia which led to a joyful and over-generous sharing in the needs of the church in Judea. Paul sets this as a great example for the church in Corinth and elsewhere to follow. It reads like a practical guide to God honouring giving and fundraising. We read about generosity (vs2), purpose (vs4), information sharing (vs4), commitment (vs5), enthusiasm (vs7,8,11), equality (vs13,14), perseverance (18-22), honesty and integrity (vs. 21) and much more. If you are raising resources for Gods kingdom, I encourage you to study this passage!

In all our efforts in The Leprosy Mission to encourage people to support our ministry we mostly appeal to urgent needs in our projects, to people's sense of responsibility and generosity and for them to be part of Gods work. Paul is doing that! As a result supporters give, each out of their own motivation. Some might even give out of a sense of guilt.

What is not often emphasised though is that giving is a service of love to God, to our brothers and sisters and to our neighbour. Paul in vs 8 even calls it a test to show how real our love is. How can we encourage supporters to give more out of love? To be enthusiastic and grow in commitment? In a meeting with long time supporters we found that their commitment often came from a personal encounter or relationship with an overseas worker. Their gifts became much more than a transaction. Their gifts were personal and an act of love to the person they met. The church is about relationships and so is good fundraising!

What can you take from this today? Pray and reflect about the motivation of giving:

- Today when you give of your time, your attention or your money, how can you consciously give out of joy and love? Test how real your love is!
- Today in what way could you raise or collect money for a project, appealing to your supporters to give with a joyful heart and to be generous in their service of love.

Through loving gifts God is honoured!



Psalm 27 – 1.

Of David.

¹The LORD is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?

²When the wicked advance against me
to devour^[a] me,
it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.

³Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.

⁴One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

⁵For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.

⁶Then my head will be exalted
above the enemies who surround me;
at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the LORD.

**Psalm 27 – 2.***Of David.*

- ⁷ Hear my voice when I call, LORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.
- ⁸ My heart says of you, “Seek his face!”
Your face, LORD, I will seek.
- ⁹ Do not hide your face from me,
do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper.
Do not reject me or forsake me,
God my Savior.
- ¹⁰ Though my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will receive me.
- ¹¹ Teach me your way, LORD;
lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.
- ¹² Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
spouting malicious accusations.
- ¹³ I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.
- ¹⁴ Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD



“Then, who is my neighbor?” - 1.

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ Luke 10: 27-37

Henri Nouwen asks us some very important questions in his book about Fundraising and Spirituality:

- “Those of us who ask for money need to look carefully at ourselves. The question is not how to get money. Rather, the question is about our relationship with money. We will never be able to ask for money if we do not know how we ourselves relate to money. **What is the place of money in our lives?**”
- “Money and power go together. There is also a real relationship between power and a sense of self-worth. **Do we ever use money to control people or events?**”
- “**What is our security base?** Money has something to do with that intimate place in our heart where we need security, and we do not want to reveal our need or give away our security to someone who might betray us.”

I think it’s important for each one of us to ask our self those questions. What is my relationship with money? What is the place of money in my life? What is my security base?

Before challenging others to give, we should challenge ourselves and look into our own hearts.

There is a story in the Bible that we all know since our Sunday school where Jesus tells us the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10: 27-37:

- “Then, who is my neighbour?”
- **The priest** saw the poor man and had a conversation within himself: What will be the price for me in terms of time, comfort and money if I help him? He calculated with himself and the price was too high.
- **The Levite** had the same conversation: What will be the consequences for me? What will be the price?
- **The Samaritan** saw the situation as well but there was a difference: “Took pity on him” “Was filled with compassion”
- Filled with compassion he acted in a very practical way and took care of the man. The next day he took out two denarii. One denarii was the salary for one day’s labour. To compare the value of two denarii you may exchange that amount into Pounds, SEK, Euros, Naira or Rupees, your salary for two days.
- No limit to his effort:” I will pay you for any extra expense you may have”. He was ready to help with a current account
- **Go and do likewise.....**
- Question for me personally? Who is my neighbour? The beggar at the supermarket? The refugee family (we have many of them in Europe right now), the young drug addict.... Am I ready to sacrifice for someone like the man in the story? How can I let people see and understand the situation for people affected by leprosy and their families? How can I create and transfer the compassion for people affected by leprosy?



“Then, who is my neighbor?” - 2.

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ Luke 10: 27-37

There was a man named Oskar Schindler, a wealthy Austrian industrialist who during World War II used almost his entire fortune to save the life of thousands of Jews from Hitler's gas chambers. The famous movie Schindler's List tells us about this. At the end of the film there is a very touching scene that sums up the real message of the film.

Schindler who had spent almost everything he had to save others from death was considering his remaining possessions. He looked at his diamond ring, his car and his watch and started to count and think of how many more people he could have saved if he had sacrificed those things. He estimated the value of his most precious belongings with how many he could have saved if he had sacrificed those as well. He came to the point when he began to calculate the value of the material things of how many people he could save by giving his belongings.

This is God's heart. *“God so loved the world that he gave...”* God's secret was to give the most precious gift to us, his only Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus gave everything to save us *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich”* “2 Cor. 8:9

This is the secret also for us: not to accumulate but to sacrifice. Not to calculate but to give! It is about looking at everything from a different perspective, an eternal perspective. From God's perspective everything is different and more real.

It's a question of using the right currency. We all know that we have to exchange money when we arrive to a new country. My domestic money is worthless in a foreign country and has to be exchanged in order to be useful. Jesus said: *“I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.”* (Luke 16:9).

May God help us to be Good Samaritans and to be ready to help a poor and needy person and someone who doesn't know Christ. That includes often paying “two denarii” as in the story of the Good Samaritan and sometimes being ready to pay more without a fixed limit.

Oscar Schindler made his choice and transformed his belongings into means to save people from a sure death. May God help us to transform our belongings and money into possibilities to do good and to preach the Gospel.

Allan Ekstedt, country leader TLM Sweden

Morning devotion held on the Fundraising Workshop of TLM, March 2017



Let the Kingdom grow! - 1.

- Money and finances in Scripture –

“Your Kingdom come as it is in heaven....” Matthew 6,10

Jesus was not an ascetic. He did not condemn such worldly things as money, funds, finances. Differing from John the Baptist, he ate and drank, as anybody else, he had fun at a wedding, was regarded by his enemies as a great eater and drinker. He was not ascetic at all!

He never called money either to be something evil, to be neglected, regarded as wrong to a believer. When he had been asked about paying taxes or not, Jesus clearly expressed that taxes should be honestly paid.

„Give to Caesar....”

Jesus was not a mystic either, regarding money as unnecessary. He never spoke in a mystic way about anything, neglecting this world and its duties, doing nothing. The disciples had a treasurer, Judas, what presupposes that they each had money, too! They, like self-help groups in TLM do, saved it collectively! Probably Jesus as well had money!

Jesus lived on this earth. He agreed with the existence of rules and laws, with the necessity of money, finances and all related to that. He expressed that all these are belonging to this world, to the life of men, to the Kingdom of Men (taxes). In this approach, Jesus was realistic all the time. He regarded this world as a given reality.

BUT: Jesus never followed the rules of the given reality, as He stood on the basis of verity/truth. Reality: the in Greek “phaenomenon”, in Latin “realitas” is an empirical term: what we see, experience, hear, etc. But Jesus declared himself to be the “truth”, which is equivalent of “aletheia - veritas”. An ontological term: the existing truth, even if it is not seen or experienced. Jesus called Himself “veritas”, and His truth is existing, even if not seen. But it should be sought, we should have a desire to achieve them! For Jesus, this world with its phaenomenon-realitas is a world turned upside down. For Him the world with aletheia-veritas-truth is that of God, where He reigns. The Kingdom of God. This is what He taught to pray for: *“Your Kingdom come as it is in heaven....”*

So Jesus exchanged the environment and placed money, funds, etc. into a different dominion: from the “realities” of the Kingdom of Men into the “veritas” of the Kingdom of God. This means a much larger context, than earthly relations, as it is His Infinite Kingdom, His power and His laws. This was His way of reacting all the time. Has he been asked for bread? He started to preach about the bread of life. Asked about water? He started to teach about the drink of eternal life.

Even the question of finances Jesus has expanded into transcendent dimensions!

This is absolutely amazing! That this purely, sharply realistic and immanent material principle as money, finances, can be given transcendent dimensions!

Doing this the Lord did not annul money or finances, but He integrated in into the area of the Holy. If funds are under the dominion of the Kingdom of God, they can become part of the Kingdom of God, having also holy aspects and characteristics. Money is not holy in itself. But becoming part of the Holy, can be sanctified.

What does it mean in detail? We will hear about it tomorrow!

Marta Risko – country leader TLM Hungary

Morning devotion held on the Fundraising Workshop of TLM, March 2017



Let the Kingdom grow! - 2.

- Money and finances in the Scripture –

“Your Kingdom come as it is in heaven...” Matthew 6,10

In the “Kingdom of Men” context money has ABSOLUTE power, with a concrete value, convertibility.

1. Jesus relativized it by placing it into the “Kingdom of God” environment where other principles are much more important! The poor widow’s coins of immense love were of more worth... - Each one of us has stories in our fundraising experience: “my husband died, but I will not give up TLM.” Sunday-school kids collecting their pocket money for kids affected by leprosy... ALL they have, with immense love, they gave.

2. Jesus also changed the status of money. In the “Kingdom of Men” money is a GOAL. Satan wants to make a goal of it all the time. *“Money makes the world go round!”*

In the “Kingdom of God” context it arrives as BLESSING! Jesus also drew attention to the obligation of sharing it, do good with it, use it for the benefit of others: *“how hard is it for the rich to get into the Kingdom of God!”* , or the story of the rich young man: *“sell all what you have...”*

3. In the “Kingdom of Men” context everything related to money, funds, finances creates DEPENDENCE.

As a “Kingdom of God” issue, God replaces dependence on funds by dependence on Him only. *“Do not worry about what to eat and what to drink, but seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these other things will be given you as well!”* *“Do not worry about tomorrow, tomorrow will take care of itself!”*

What about reserves? What are they needed for? We all know well the story on the manna. Clear, straight teaching about reserves. What happened to the manna they had put aside, as “reserve”, for “security purposes”? It went sour, could not be used anymore. - *“Give us this day our daily bread.”* Not “today the one for tomorrow”! But daily, each day the sufficient portion! - What about sincere confidence in God’s providence, if reserves are so important at the same time? In the “Kingdom of Men” reserves are a professional question, in the Kingdom of God it is a spiritual question. Which one has priority for us?

4. Placing monetary issues into the “Kingdom of God” context: Jesus wants to change OUR ENTIRE BEHAVIOUR, OUR APPROACH, OUR VIEWS and THINKING about money/funds, fundraising. This is the greatest challenge. How?

The all-time greatest Christian fundraisers raised funds on their knees. Their “strategy” was to trust in God all the time, in all and above all on God. Their “action plan” was to pray and pray more and pray even more. Read their stories:

Francesco d’Assisi raised huge sums – purely by prayer! Martin Luther, the reformer said: *“It is never a good advice to talk much about money. Pray, and money will escape like a hungry dog...”* - Georges Muller – founder of the orphans’ home in Bristol fed thousands of children, sometimes not knowing in the evening what they would put on the table the next day at noon... - Wellesley Bailey, founder of TLM: *„This Mission has been born and cradled in prayer. It has been brought up on prayer; it has been nourished on prayer; and prayer has been at the bottom of its success since the first moments of its life.”* - Or Hudson Taylor: *“God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supplies”.*

Jesus lifted up this purely, sharply rational, materialistic and immanent principle: the whole problematics of finances, into irrational and transcendent dimensions.

“What is impossible for men, is possible for God!”



O Lord, Open the eyes of my heart, so I can see the way

Sometime especially when we go through the difficult time, we see that our prayers are not answered. We struggle and keep asking God, where is He in this distress situation of mine? Actually we get so occupied with the problems and situations that we are not able to see properly what is around us and what is actually God is doing for us. We struggle and struggle and at times we blame God also for not opening way out. Sometimes the problem looks so big that we even forget to pray to God for His help. Bible gives us many illustrations where People were distressed badly and too much engaged with the situation, that they could not see how God has already answered their prayers or has sent help to them. The main reason for this hopeless situation is that they were looking from their own eyes and could not think that God was able to do much bigger things for them, beyond their prayer request.

Genesis 21(14-19) Hagar was running here and there in the desert to find water for her boy and did not find any water. She did not pray to God for the help. She became very upset as she thought the boy may die because there was no water to drink. God heard the cry of the boy. God also opened her eyes and she saw a well of water and gave the water to the boy to drink.

Number 22(28-31) Balaam was annoyed with her donkey and already beaten her three times and almost wanted to kill her. Balaam could not see the Angel of the Lord with a drawn sword but this donkey saw the Angle three times and wanted to save Balaam. The Lord opened the donkey's mouth. Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes and he saw the angle of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low & fell facedown and asked for forgiveness. Finally the angel guided him.

2 King 6 9(15-17) Forces came to kill Elisha and others. They were surrounded by enemies. He was in the tent and he could see what is coming next, regarding the action of enemies. His servant also saw in the morning that an army of horses and chariots had surrounded the City. The servant asked, "What shall we do?" And Elisha prayed "O, Lord opens his eyes so he may see". Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes. He looked and saw that the hill is full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha to protect them and to fight against the enemies.

Psalms 119: 18 David also says, "*Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law*".

Act 16 (14-15) Lydia became a Christian. She heard the gospel, the Lord opened her heart to heed the things she heard, and she was baptized.

These illustrations of Bible encourage us that we must keep praying to God and focusing on Him during our time of trails and difficulties. We must not be carried by the burden of problems so much that we even forget to pray and ask God to be with us during this critical times. God will surely open eyes of our heart and show us the way during these difficult times. Sometimes God has already answered our prayers and opened way out for us but we are not able to see those with our own eyes. Therefore we have to ask God to open the eyes of my heart. Finally these verses reassure us: **Ephesians 1 (18-19) Paul says:**

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened"



Psalm 28 -1.

Of David.

¹To you, LORD, I call;
you are my Rock,
do not turn a deaf ear to me.
For if you remain silent,
I will be like those who go down to the pit.

²Hear my cry for mercy
as I call to you for help,
as I lift up my hands
toward your Most Holy Place.

³Do not drag me away with the wicked,
with those who do evil,
who speak cordially with their neighbors
but harbor malice in their hearts.

⁴Repay them for their deeds
and for their evil work;
repay them for what their hands have done
and bring back on them what they deserve.

⁵Because they have no regard for the deeds of the LORD
and what his hands have done,
he will tear them down
and never build them up again.



Psalm 28 -2.

Of David.

⁶ Praise be to the LORD,
for he has heard my cry for mercy.
⁷ The LORD is my strength and my shield;
my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.
My heart leaps for joy,
and with my song I praise him.

⁸ The LORD is the strength of his people,
a fortress of salvation for his anointed one.
⁹ Save your people and bless your inheritance;
be their shepherd and carry them forever.



Embrace the Process

'He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters' Psalm 23:2 (ESV)

I've found myself so many times quoting the phrase 'Embrace the Process' to people in my life. I first heard this phrase when listening to a podcast a few years ago. It is a phrase that has followed me. It is a phrase that may seem obvious to you or may not. Let me explain a little.

I have had many conversations with people who have said something like:

'I can't wait for this to happen it's going to be great, if only it wasn't so far away...'

'I know God has great plans for me, why can't they happen now, why do I have to wait...'

'Why do I have to go through this pain...'

The problem is; if we are in this place, we may feel tired, impatient, discouraged and we aren't experiencing God's best. The truth is God wants us to 'Embrace the Process' God wants us to be patient,

He wants us to wait on Him. He wants us to not rush past our circumstances and listen to Him. He doesn't want us to miss out on what He is saying to us.

God wants to speak to us through whatever we are going through. He wants us to follow Him to be beside still waters. When we embrace what we are going through, we are in a place to hear from God. We have an attitude of 'God I may not understand, but what can I learn from you?'

I'm currently in a season where I'm preparing to get married (this month in fact!), much of the organising has been done. If I'm honest I have found myself thinking the very same thing I've heard from others; 'I can't wait to get married'. I've found myself asking myself the same type of question: 'Am I embracing the process, and getting the most out of this season?'. The truth is probably not enough.

I am reminded through Psalm 23 though, that in the midst of the waiting, in the midst of being impatient, in the midst of the process, He is there. God wants to lead us to a place of rest, beside still waters. He wants us to find stillness. He wants to reach out to us, to speak to, guide and teach us in whatever circumstance we find ourselves in.

So, my question to you today is, where do you need to 'Embrace the Process'? Where do you need to make the most of the current circumstances you face? We should ask ourselves what is God trying to speak to me about or teach me? Where do I need to allow God to lead me to a place of stillness?



Anandaban, a royal residence

1 Peter 2, 9. "... you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation, and a people claimed by God for His own, to proclaim the triumphs of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. You are now the people of God, who once were not His People..." (New English Bible)

Princesses visit a royal residence disguised as a health care centre!

In 1993, Her Royal Highness The Princess Diana visited Anandaban leprosy hospital. She came as daughter-in-law of the ruling monarch of the United Kingdom, in a way she represented the royal family of Great Britain, although she may have seen it as a personal visit to one of the charities of which she was pleased to be patron. The patients and staff of the hospital felt honoured by her coming: it was a privilege to entertain her, and her gracious visit brought the hospital into a higher standing in the eyes of local people. When someone perceived as high-born or important chooses to visit a place, it is understood that that place must have something of value.

In 1999, Her Royal Highness Princess Shruti visited Anandaban leprosy hospital. She came as daughter of the sovereign of Nepal, as a representative of the Royal Family of Nepal. Everyone at Anandaban was delighted to welcome such an honourable guest. Members of the government of the country accompanied her, out of respect for the chief guest, and their coming also raised the profile of the hospital. People admitted to the hospital were proud to be visited by someone such as Princess Shruti, who might have been expected to consider folk like them not important enough to notice.

Nepali television and newspapers enthusiastically covered both events, publicising the work the hospital was doing in the interests of leprosy-affected people. English reporters travelled to Nepal to observe and write about the day an English princess visited a leprosy hospital. Ten years after her death, I was asked to appear in British television programme (Songs of Praise) simply because I had met The Princess Diana when she came to Anandaban. Such is the public reaction to a half-day visit of a royal personage to a hospital.

But Anandaban is not just any hospital. It is a place where the ways of the Kingdom of God are promoted and demonstrated. It is a place where Christians honour and serve their King. It is a place where, through His Spirit, Jesus our King resides. It is a place where many meet & worship the Lord, the high king of heaven. In a metaphorical sense it might be called a palace (home of a king), or an Embassy (domain of the king's ambassador), or a temple (place of worship where God meets His people) and if it is a place where the greatest king of all resides, why should earthly rulers not send their representatives to visit? Why should royal families not feel honoured to send their daughters to visit?

What is true of Anandaban is as true of other leprosy mission hospitals, where the King's servants are building outposts of heaven. We are delighted if royalty chooses to visit one of our hospitals but in every visitor we can see someone of value, someone of importance, whether that person visits for treatment, to see a relative or friend, to observe the work, to be trained, to seek employment, or to give support. TLM staff represent their Lord and King when they welcome visitors into His hospitals.

C Ruth Butlin Dr - British (63). My service with TLM is as follows: 1981- 1982: sponsored by TLM for 1 academic year at All Nations Christian College in Hertfordshire, UK. 6 weeks of linguistics course. 1982- 1991: Medical officer at Richardson Leprosy Hospital Miraj, in India, under Dr PD Samson. 1991- 2001: medical superintendent at Anandaban Leprosy hospital in Nepal. March - June 2001: Furlough. June 2001- 2003: Superintendent Purulia leprosy hospital and homes, West Bengal in India. 2003- 2007: Medical advisor at DBLM (hospital and field programme), Nilphamari, Bangladesh (then ended my time as expatriate staff). 2007-now Voluntary speaker for TLMEW. 2013- now, skilled volunteer, sponsored by TLMEW, mainly working for DBLM hospital and rural health programmes in Bangladesh (also some work for TLMNepal)



Share a laugh with God

Ecclesiastes 3:4 – A time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance

Proverbs 15:13 – A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

Philippians 4:4 – Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice

On a field trip to Rigo district in the Central Province of Papua New Guinea our team had to guess our way on this three hour ride. All three of us were new to the area. We eventually arrived at our destination and were glad to be welcomed warmly.

Our task completed and we had only one community to visit the next day. We took a wrong turn and arrived at a village where we were kindly redirected and soon we were on our way. After about half an hour we arrived at the crossroads and still not sure we reversed to ask a bystander on the road.

Our bystander was very helpful but we didn't get any spoken words out of him. His head movements and smiles indicated he understood us and we soon realized who was talking to us.

As we turned into the village I giggled a little and shared with my colleagues, "our God surely has a humorous way of reminding us of our purpose. He sent a person without the ability to speak to meet us."

How often do we take things for granted and how often do we take things so seriously?

I remember once many years ago as part of my task on a job was to witness village birth attendants help deliver babies. I just couldn't bring myself close to a woman in labor and as I took one slow reluctant step at a time into the labor ward I kept whispering to myself, "God this is not funny."

In less than five minutes this village birth attendant pulled me to her side and quickly held her hand down to welcome the miracle of life that was emerging before us. As I walked out the labor ward an hour later I smiled and said, thank you for the experience.

I realized later I was being pulled out of my fear and was given the honor of witnessing precious life as it enters this world. I was also given the honor to appreciate those women, the village birth attendants, who make themselves available to welcome - God's helpers in their communities.

It is those moments that we realize yes, in whatever situation we are often reminded of our purpose here on earth. Life becomes meaningful as we realize God as our partner in service. He sends us to the field, but he always comes along in case we needed encouragement or a laugh.

Rosa Koian has been a community development worker in Papua New Guinea for many years. She recently joined The Leprosy Mission PNG in 2017, as Project Manager.



More thoughts on The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6: 9-13

I am working through the book *The Good and Beautiful God (Falling in love with the God Jesus knows)* by James Bryan Smith. He discussed the Lord's Prayer in a way that made it so simple and easy to see the qualities and nature of God (Ch 3, p 60-63). I want to share it with you all.

The prayer starts by addressing God as 'Father', and the author explained how the fatherhood of God is defined by Jesus prayer as follows – with 6 'P's:

Our Father in heaven

1. *God is Present* – according to Jewish knowledge of the time, heaven was not a far-away place. It referred to the surrounding atmosphere, the very air they breathed.

Hallowed (holy) be your name

2. *God is Pure* – holiness has to do with purity. There is nothing bad about God. He cannot sin or participate in evil.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

3. *God is Powerful* – God is the King who rules heaven and earth. Kings have power over others, and God is the King of kings.

Give us this day our daily bread

4. *God Provides* – We have a God who made the earth, the rain and sunshine, and its produce - a great bounty of grains, vegetables and fruit for all of his creatures (even birds of the air).

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors

5. *God Pardons* – God is the one who forgives our sins/trespasses. He loves to forgive, even more than we long to be forgiven.

Do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one

6. *God Protects* – God rescues us from trials and evils. He is present and powerful, and he longs to protect us. Though we will suffer from problems, accidents or trials, God gets the last word. Nothing can happen to us that God cannot redeem.

Jesus' prayer reveals attributes that provide strong images of and reflects who God is and what fatherhood means. Not the imperfect earthly fatherhood that we have all experienced in our own fathers (good or bad). This prayer gives us the measure of what true parenthood ought to be. A good parent (father or mother) or parent figure (aunts, uncles, guardians, teachers etc) ought to possess these 6 characteristics. God's fatherhood is what defines what human fatherhood (parenthood) ought to look like, and not the reverse.

We can read the guidebooks on how to be a good parent, aunt, uncle or teacher. But we would do a lot better to draw near to our heavenly father, and allow Him to shape our hearts into His image.

This is my version of the Lord's prayer from what I learnt from this explanation:

*My God who is present
 You are holy and pure
 You are more powerful than any other king
 You are my daily provider
 You forgive me, pardon my sins, and help me to pardon others
 You protect me from trouble (nothing can happen to me that God cannot redeem)
 My God is nearby, holy, powerful, caring, forgiving and my protector.*



Bear each other's burdens

“ Carry each other's burdens, in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Gal 6:2

Recently I have accompanied friends who have come as patients to the large teaching hospital where I used to work till my retirement. I now have a different perspective of sickness and the search for healing – a worm's eye view in some ways. One of the strongest impressions I have received is of the effectiveness of small acts of kindness.

Waiting in a long, rather silent queue to make an appointment with a doctor, I saw a man who had almost reached the counter after a long wait, give up his place to a pregnant woman who was trying to get an appointment for her husband. She was grateful but also upset to deprive him of his turn. In an unexpected domino effect, everyone stepped back and allowed the man to return to his place in the queue. Suddenly, everyone changed from strangers to friends, asking about each other's problems, offering sympathy and advice.

We are sometimes reluctant to get involved with the problems of others, afraid that it will involve expenditure of time, money or perhaps a loss of our privacy. Often, we can make a difference with very little cost to ourselves, just a smile, a kind word or a simple gesture. May God enable us to respond spontaneously to those in need.

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



Authors in Alphabetical Order

Textuarium

Allan Ekstedt	19-20 June		Psalm 23,3	26 June
Bunmi Oluloto Dr	7 June		Psalm 27	17, 18 June
David Beazley	1 June		Psalm 28	24, 25 June
David, King of Israel	17, 18, 24, 25 June		Psalm 119,18	23 June
Eddie Askew	4 June		Ecclesiast 3,4	28 June
Gunnel Ericson	14 June		Proverbs 15,13	28 June
Henno Couprie	16 June		Isaiah 6,1-8	15 June
James Barnett	11 June		Joel 2,28-32	3 June
Joyce Missing	6 June		Matthew 6,10	21, 22 June
Joyce Ponnaiya Dr	30 June		Matthew 6,9-13	29 June
Joydeepa Darlong Dr	12-13 June		Matthew 13,1-9 and 18-23	9 June
Kirsteen Dutton Dr	8 June		Luke 1,37-38	14 June
Marta Risko	21-22 June		Luke 4,18-21	6 June
Mollie Clark	2 June		Luke 6,37	8 June
Mother Teresa	10 June		Luke 10,27-39	19-20 June
Natalie Smith	29 June		John 15,1-16	12-13 June
Paul Dr and Niki Jakeman	9 June		Romans 8,26	7 June
Pradeep and Sarah Failbus	23 June		2 Cor 3,17	4 June
Rosa Koian	28 June		2 Cor 8,1-15	16 June
Ruth Butlin Dr	27 June		Phil 2,5	1 June
Stuart Towell	26 June		Phil 2,1-11	11 June
Trevor Durston	15 June		Phil 4,4	28 June
			Gal 5,22-25	5 June
			Gal 6,2	30 June
			1 Peter 2,9	30 June

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