



TLM Daily Devotions

July 2017





Intro to the Month

July... lovely July... summer holiday, burning sun, restoring the crop of the meadows for the bread of next year, relaxing before accumulating reserves for the next working year... all this and much more is July for us up in the Northern hemisphere. In the South? It is as Erna writes from Southern Africa: "At the moment winter is really showing here in the South. Wish I could share a picture of the heaps of leaves in my garden. It's cold and dry, with no bright colours." This is also July. And still there could be many more descriptions.

One thing is the same: His faithfulness. It is great, it knows no South or North, no East or West. Either in burning sunshine, or amidst faded colours and dry leaves: let us accumulate from His faithfulness!

Will you join singing one of our TLM-favourites please:

1. Great is Thy faithfulness," O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

*Refrain: "Great is Thy faithfulness!"
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
"Great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!*

2. Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

*Refrain: "Great is Thy faithfulness!"
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
"Great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!*

3. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

*Refrain: "Great is Thy faithfulness!"
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
"Great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!*

Blessed July, TLMers!



Transforming Solitude - even in winter

Psalm 46:10: Be still and know that I am God

I continue my journey in leaning the richness of solitude.

At the moment winter is really showing here in the South. Wish I could share a picture of the heaps of leaves in my garden. It's cold and dry, with no bright colours. Yet I sat in the winter sun and contemplated the following prayer. And once more the inner silence that came to me was a deep blessing.

May you grow still enough to hear
the small noises earth makes
in preparing for the long sleep of winter,
so that you yourself may grow calm
and grounded deep with-in.

May you grow still enough to hear
the trickling of water seeping into the ground,
so that your soul may be softened and healed,
and guided in its flow.

May you grow still enough to hear
the splintering of starlight in the winter sky
and the roar at earth's fiery core.

May you grow still enough to hear
the stir of a single snowflake in the air,
so that your inner silence may turn into hushed expectation.

- Brother David Steindl-Rast -



Psalm 65

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

- ¹ Praise awaits you, our God, in Zion;
to you our vows will be fulfilled.
- ² You who answer prayer,
to you all people will come.
- ³ When we were overwhelmed by sins,
you forgave our transgressions.
- ⁴ Blessed are those you choose
and bring near to live in your courts!
We are filled with the good things of your house,
of your holy temple.
- ⁵ You answer us with awesome and righteous deeds,
God our Savior,
the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas,
- ⁶ who formed the mountains by your power,
having armed yourself with strength,
- ⁷ who stilled the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
and the turmoil of the nations.
- ⁸ The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders;
where morning dawns, where evening fades,
you call forth songs of joy.
- ⁹ You care for the land and water it;
you enrich it abundantly.
The streams of God are filled with water
to provide the people with grain,
for so you have ordained it.
- ¹⁰ You drench its furrows and level its ridges;
you soften it with showers and bless its crops.
- ¹¹ You crown the year with your bounty,
and your carts overflow with abundance.
- ¹² The grasslands of the wilderness overflow;
the hills are clothed with gladness.
- ¹³ The meadows are covered with flocks
and the valleys are mantled with grain;
they shout for joy and sing.



We need to Laugh More Often

Life's situations and circumstances often rob us of our joy but Nehemiah even in very difficult time had another idea: *Nehemiah 8:10* Nehemiah said... *"Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."* There is a very valuable place to engage the attitude of joy, especially when accompanied with laughter.

Did you that our Heavenly Father laughs?

Psalm 37:13 *The Lord laughs at him, For He sees his day is coming.* What about us?

Proverbs 17:22 ESV *A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones*

Proverbs 15:13 ESV *A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed.*

Psalm 126:2 ESV *Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with joyful shouting; Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."*

Psalm 37:13 ESV *You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.*

The key: Allow God to minister joy and laughter to you! Make a choice.

Choice 1 Just Smile

Even if you're not happy. Even if it's the most depressing day you've had all month. If you smile at something that's slightly uplifting (a cute animal, for example) you are training your body and mind to laugh more.

Choice 2 Be Thankful

It's easy to develop a habit of being thankful once you've thought of all the things you have to be thankful for in the first place. The more thankful you are, the less you think about yourself and the happier you become. This brings you closer to a place where you can laugh more frequently.

Choice 3 Practice Laughing

Try to laugh more for no reason at all. This might be difficult if you are incredibly depressed, but faking a laugh can even cause us to laugh more. Make silly laughter sounds - maybe mimic the funniest laugh you have ever heard. It will be hard not to REALLY laugh more.

Choice 4 Find funny Entertainment

Find uplifting sitcoms, cartoons, and live comedy shows are great at helping you laugh more. If you don't know what type of humour suits you best, try watching all types

Choice 5 Surround Yourself With Fun/Funny People

Even if you don't feel like leaving the house, force yourself to spend more time with people who laugh a lot. Since laughter is contagious, just being around them will cause you to laugh more.

Choice 6 Be Playful

If you've ever seen a bunch of children playing, you've probably heard them laugh more than most adults you know. This is because they haven't harnessed their inner playfulness. Go into a department store with a friend, find some hideous outfits and try them on in a dressing room. Show each other what you've chosen and try to stifle laughter. The act of trying not to laugh makes us laugh more.

Choice 7 Invite Laughter

Encourage your loved ones to laugh more by talking about funny things that happen in their lives. Maybe they haven't laughed enough today either. Exchange funny stories until tears come pouring out your eyes. Many years ago there was a song that topped the charts: "Don't worry be happy", could the Bible version be: "Cast all your cares on Me because I care for you"?

Let "The Son" on your life today!

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.



Take Nothing for the Journey

I recently read about a book called *A Philosophy of Walking* by a man called Frederic Gros – no I have not read it yet. In this book he writes about the art of packing a rucksack for a week's walking trip. One question keeps coming up as he packs: "Is *this* item really necessary?"

That's a question many of us ask when we are packing for a journey of any sort – we ask usually because of the weight of the luggage because either we have to carry it or we are restricted by airlines.

But as I read about the book, I thought about our walk through life, our walk with the Lord. I wondered what I carry with me for that walk that I really don't need. What weighs me down and what keeps me from that walk with the Lord?

What about our walk with the Lord? I am writing this during Lent so have been thinking about the events that we remember during those weeks leading up to Easter. Many of those events involve Jesus going on a walk – a walk in the desert, a walk to Jerusalem, a walk to the crucifixion. Sometimes those walks were for Jesus lonely walks, sometimes He had the companionship of the disciples, but always He had the presence of His Father supporting and encouraging Him giving the strength and the courage for what lay ahead.

Only once do we read of Jesus carrying anything as He walked – He carried the cross. It was a heavy weight on Him yet it was the burden He could not, He would not lay down for that was the burden He carried for us – for me and for you. When the burden we carry on our walk through life becomes heavy we are invited to lay down that burden, leave it behind and walk with Jesus – He is ready to carry that burden for us.

As we think of other walks Jesus took, walks alone to spend time alone with God – we read that often these walks were in the very early morning (eg *Mark 1:35*). I am sure He carried nothing with Him, nothing to distract Him from the time He wanted to spend with His Father. I wonder what we carry when we want to spend time with God. I know it is hard to spend prime time with God – alone without any "baggage". I know how often, when I do retreat to my corner planning just to be quiet before God, thoughts of others, thoughts of things I need to do creep into my mind and come between me and that precious time with God. At other times, especially after a busy few days, I struggle with the blank times – the times I should spend with God and yet that momentum of busy-ness leaves me thinking of the next task rather than just resting with God from my tiring walk.

As I walk along the prom where I live, I have particular places where I remember to pray for specific people or ministries. So many people these days seem to have phones glued either to their ears or to their fingers as they walk along. I was really surprised one day when I met two young people (one of whom I knew) and they stopped what they were doing to speak to me – to discover that even though they were walking side by side, they were actually sending each other messages rather than talking. That can be a bit like us when we are walking with God – are we talking with Him – talking to Him but also being quiet to hear what He has to say to us. Let us spend time with God when we have taken nothing with us for the journey.

"When we walk with the Lord, what a glory He sheds on our Way"

Today let us leave our baggage behind and walk with our Lord, remembering to take time to spend just with our companion – to talk to Him and to listen to Him.

Christine Osman, formerly Treasurer of TLMI



When Jenny sang

In November 2015, the BBC's Graham Norton invited eight Adele Tribute Act performers to a theatre in London to perform in his "My Adele" show.

The final performer to take to the stage, Jenny [a nanny by profession] was nervous and missed the introduction to her song. Jenny regained her composure and twirling her hands and kicking off her shoes, the sound of "When the rain is blowing in your face," the opening line to "Make you feel my love," washed over the auditorium as she opened her mouth, at which point the camera panned across the faces of the other performers, seated at the front of the theatre.

It's a priceless moment to see their expressions. Surprise. Bewilderment. Astonishment. Disbelief. Confusion. Happiness. Joy. As one contestant said: "I've heard that voice too many times ... the minute she opened her mouth ... you can't mimic like that." Jenny was no nanny but a heavily disguised Adele. Except for her voice.

The show ends with the performers joining 'Jenny' on stage, thrilled to be performing with the real Adele. It's a scene of unconstrained delight.

I thought of Matthew, sitting in his tax booth, hearing Jesus say to him *"Follow me."* [Matt 9: 9]

There was no camera in place to record the emotions on Matthew's face, but I don't think his reaction would have been all that different to that of Adele's co-stars. Me? and that transformation as perplexity yields to delight. The day's takings forgotten. Receipts and summonses unfinished. The life of ridicule and ostracism ended in an instant.

Commentators believe that Matthew turned to the scriptures and immersed himself in them because of his loneliness, his work as a tax collector on behalf of the Romans having alienated him from his people. Soaked in God's Word, he had no difficulty recognising His voice the instant He spoke.

Did he also think, "I've heard that voice too many times..."?

Do you remember the day that you first heard His voice?

It is an exceedingly precious thing when Jesus speaks our name.

This world tries all it can to shut out His voice. Busy-ness, pleasure – it's a long list, but still He calls and still people obey, joy in their hearts and gladness on their faces, longing for that Day when He will call us for one last time.

"Lord, when those performers recognised Jenny for who she was, they were speechless with joy. Let my life speak of someone who is overcome with gladness at having heard you. Let me quench those things that would quench Your voice."

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.



Lights off!? ... Lights on!?

Good morning dear colleague!

Let's see if our Old Testament friend, Isaiah, can preach an acceptable 3-point Gospel sermon for us today!

Point One: IS YOUR LIGHT STILL OFF/GONE OUT?

Is.59:1-3 "Behold the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save but your iniquities have made separation between you and your God and your sins have hidden His Face from you..... For your hands are defiled..... your lips have spoken lies..."

Point Two: IS YOUR LIGHT COMING ON/ AGAIN?

Is.60:1-3 "Arise, shine, for your Light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

For behold, darkness shall cover....the peoples;

But the LORD will rise upon you, and His glory will be seen upon you.

And nations will come to your light....."

Point Three: IS YOUR LIGHT CONSTANT AND CLEAR?

Is.61:1-3 "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor, He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives.....

to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour... to comfort all who mourn;...

to give them....the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;...

the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."

I believe, that our New Testament apostles would concur with our brother Isaiah!

Paul says in Eph.5 *"Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them."*

And further along "But when anything is exposed by the Light, it becomes visible... Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

John sums it up as follows. *Rev.22:5 "And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their Light, and they will reign forever and ever."*

Lord Jesus, please help me to walk in Your Light every day – Amen!



Rejoice with me

Luke 15:6 and 9, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found ...'

You might want to read at least Luke 15:1-7

Recently Margriet and I attended a meeting organised by our Church' Mission task group. A presentation was given by the visiting Prof Dr Stefan Paas. He talked with us about his book: 'Foreigners and Priests', about Christian mission in a post-Christian environment.

He encouraged us to rejoice in finding the 'one', the one person, which of course sounds to be in big contrast to what happened in Europe in earlier centuries, when all and everyone were baptised.

Yesterday morning our pastor visited us, pastor of our local church, Lennart H.

Lennart wanted to talk with us about what the local church and we could be for each other. We live here now a bit more than a year. When we talked together about the home-catechism group and about the immediate neighbourhood, about the needs in this village, once a very Christian village, his eyes lit up. His eyes are like those most shining eyes you hardly ever see. *'Rejoice with me'*, that was the message of his eyes, rejoice about what God can do and might do.

There are three stories in Luke 15, all about finding the 'one', about rejoicing about finding the lost.

The interesting thing is that in each story that 'one' isn't a thing or an animal or a person found unexpectedly. No, the father, the woman and the owner of the sheep knew exactly what to look for: the lost sheep, the lost silver coin and that naughty, selfish boy who once believed that the world was waiting for him and that he could do without his father.

What am I looking for, who am I looking for? Will it be something, someone God can help me find, wants to help me find? What joy is waiting around the corner?

Pray with me that, when we 'associate' (*see Luke 15: 2*) with no matter what person in our neighbourhood, God will bring joy in our lives, because we will find ...!

Piet Both, living in Rijnsburg, The Netherlands, with Margriet since one year, after retiring from TLM



Psalm 64

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

- ¹ Hear me, my God, as I voice my complaint;
protect my life from the threat of the enemy.
- ² Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked,
from the plots of evildoers.
- ³ They sharpen their tongues like swords
and aim cruel words like deadly arrows.
- ⁴ They shoot from ambush at the innocent;
they shoot suddenly, without fear.
- ⁵ They encourage each other in evil plans,
they talk about hiding their snares;
they say, "Who will see it?"
- ⁶ They plot injustice and say,
"We have devised a perfect plan!"
Surely the human mind and heart are cunning.
- ⁷ But God will shoot them with his arrows;
they will suddenly be struck down.
- ⁸ He will turn their own tongues against them
and bring them to ruin;
all who see them will shake their heads in scorn.
- ⁹ All people will fear;
they will proclaim the works of God
and ponder what he has done.
- ¹⁰ The righteous will rejoice in the LORD
and take refuge in him;
all the upright in heart will glory in him!



Psalm 67

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

¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face shine on us—
² so that your ways may be known on earth,
your salvation among all nations.

³ May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.
⁴ May the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you rule the peoples with equity
and guide the nations of the earth.
⁵ May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.

⁶ The land yields its harvest;
God, our God, blesses us.

⁷ May God bless us still,
so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.



This is eternal life – 1.

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” John 10:10:

Three gates lead into the magnificent cathedral of Milan. Over one gate is an inscription which says: “The things that please are temporary.” Over the second gate is the inscription: “The things that disturb are temporary.” And over the central gate is a big inscription which says: “Eternal are the important ones.” We tend to understand eternal life as meaning life without end.

But eternal life as used in John’s Gospel implies not just a superlative quantity or duration of life but also a superlative quality. Eternal life differs from everlasting life which is merely quantitative. The devil and his angels have everlasting life in that they never die. But they do not enjoy eternal life which is a life of perfect happiness and peace in union with God. What the human soul desires is not just everlasting, life but eternal life, a life of perfect union with God which cannot be diminished neither in duration nor in satisfaction. This is the life that Jesus gives, as he says in John 10:10: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” To have eternal life is to be fully alive.

In the present season, Jesus points out the way to eternal life. *“And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3).* Some people are surprised that John talks about “knowing” rather than “believing in” God. But knowing is used here in a typically Hebrew sense, as something that happens between two people, not as something that takes place in one’s head. You know somebody in this sense when you have a personal, intimate relationship with that person. The word describes two people united in an intimate relationship of love, e.g. *“Adam knew his wife Eve” (Genesis 4:1).*

The knowledge of God that leads to eternal life is not intellectual but relational. Eternal life demands that “they may know you, the only true God.” To understand this better we need to insert the adverb as “as” between the two parts of the statement. The statement would then read, that they may know you AS the only true God. It is a statement that has meaning in a context where there are many competing claims to divinity. At the time of Jesus the Roman Emperors claimed to be gods and were worshiped as such. But Jesus maintains that eternal life lies in recognizing that there is one, only true God, the God that Jesus calls his Father, and that every other person or thing claiming to be God is false.

Moses Onoh is the Country Leader of TLM Nigeria



This is eternal life – 2.

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” John 10:10

To identify the many Gods of our time we need only ask ourselves, “what persons, ideologies, or institutions today demand of us an unquestioning allegiance.” Several answers come to mind: (1) Secret cults and movements such as Heaven’s Gate. (2) The worship of the self in which the good life is understood as the ability to indulge in self gratification. (3) Unmitigated capitalism in which human values are rated according to their monetary value. (4) Blind nationalism which believes that everything is justified in the name of national security and that might is right. The list goes on. Jesus invites those who seek eternal life to give absolute allegiance to the God of Jesus Christ as the only true God. Every other idea or institution is to be evaluated by how they stand in relation to the values of the kingdom of God.

Eternal life demand knowledge of two things: they may know you, *“the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”* Here again we need to insert the adverb “as” to clarify the meaning. So the statement will read, they may know you AS the only true God, and Jesus AS the Messiah/Christ “whom you have sent.” The basic Christian faith of the early church was the faith in Jesus as the Messiah. The important significance of this confession is that the one true God who in Himself is invisible and unknowable have made Himself visible and knowable in the person of Jesus. Jesus is the revelation of God. He is Emmanuel, God with us. The life and teachings of Jesus, therefore become for us who are on the way to eternal life, the standard by which the words of any person or institution in this world are to be judged. We know the only true God and we know him through the one he has sent to make Him know, the Messiah Jesus.

Everyone is looking for long life and the good life. Eternal life is unending good life. This is what we all seek. Jesus today tells us how to attain this all-important goal of life. We need to cultivate an intimate, personal relationship with God and with Jesus the Messiah whom He has sent to make Him know to all humankind.

Moses Onoh is the Country Leader of TLM Nigeria



I will not leave you Orphaned

John 14, 18-21: 18 'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. 19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21 They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'

I will not leave you orphaned This phrase took on a different meaning for me after seeing a triptych featuring Mary the Mother of our Lord in Paris a few weeks ago. It was very different to any other paintings I had seen. The Son, Jesus Christ was sitting embracing his Mother on his lap, with her head on his shoulder, he, Jesus is looking down into her face, as if she was the one who had been orphaned. The word orphan conjures up a picture of a child left desolate; this painting made me rethink the feeling of being left an orphan, and the text *'I will not leave you orphaned;*

It can refer to any of us when we feel bereft or desolate over a separation, a loss of someone very dear to us; maybe someone who has supported us when we have moved or changed job. I like the French idea of losing one's compass, a more literal translation of déboussole is un-compassed; perhaps the equivalent to the English phrase being 'all at sea', but I think it is more powerful.

These words of Jesus to his disciples *'I will not leave you orphaned* are as relevant to us today, as they were to the disciples when they realised, Jesus their Lord was not going to be with them in a physical sense for evermore.

We, will not be left orphans as this is the gift we will receive *John 14v16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. 17 This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.*

It reminds me of this line from the English translation of the hymn written in the 14th century by Bianco de Siena "Come down O love divine"

O comforter draw near, within my heart appear, and kindle it thy holy flame bestowing;

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



I will not leave you Orphaned - 2.

The disciples are promised the gift of the Paraclete a word translated in many ways. In v 17 the gift is described as the Spirit of truth. In other translations or places in St John's gospel it is translated as counselor, comforter, helper and the Advocate. Comforter had or has two meanings in English; the first person who gives support and the second found in the text on the Bayeux tapestry, recording the battle of Hastings in 1066. The Bishop is recorded "comforting his troops," and there he is prodding them with something like a lance to go forward into battle. We don't think of that sense today, but it is encouragement. We sometimes need to be pushed to do new things. The first time one dives in to water is terrifying; but the feeling of success afterwards is wonderful, often having been given a push.

Returning to the meaning of Advocate, there is a sense of testifying, or defending and supporting; the prisoner's friend in court.

The gift which Jesus will send from the Father, is something wide and broad. The Holy Spirit cannot be confined between 4 walls. It is there to support us when we like the disciples have questions, doubts or feeling of desolation. We are not left without resources. We are not left orphans.

Kitteridge in her *Conversions with Scripture*, The Gospel of John has a list of questions that the community might ask, and the comforter will address. The questions are just as pertinent for us today.

- Who will be with us
- who will take care of Mother and Father
- how will traditions be passed down and taught
- who will teach us and remind us
- who will give us peace
- who will testify to Jesus
- who will advocate for us in a hostile world
- who will tell us what to do /how to be now. Check
- who will speak

The answer is **John 14 v18 I will not leave you orphans** because we will and have the Holy Spirit with us ; we are not left with out resources, we are not left to battle our way through the world alone.

Lord Jesus you do not leave us desolate ; pour out your Spirit to strengthen, comfort and advise us that the world may know you live in us and we in you; Amen (from John the People's Bible Commentary, by Richard Burridge publisher the Bible Reading Fellowship page 177)

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What is the point?

Eccl 1,14 „I have seen all the things that are done under the sun, all of them are meaningless, a chasing the wind...”

Eccl 6,7 „All man’s efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.”

The Book of Ecclesiastes brushes for us a picture, without indulgence, of the human condition.

„Everyone reaches the same end: the same fate for the righteous and the wicked, for the one who is pure, and for the one who is impure.”

Then it is no worth, you will tell me, to make efforts if it is hopeless? We are all capable of the best as well as the worst.

Let us question simply our thoughts to be convinced of it. How many times I have to fight not to feed bad feelings or to be critical towards such or such person. And I have to admit that I do not win all the battles! The hope exists, but definitively, it is not to be looked for in the heart of man. It is the conclusion of Solomon’s analysis. It is based on his own experience; not only was he able to get everything he wanted, he was also endowed with an exceptional wisdom. His statement is irrevocable. *„The heart of the man is full of wickedness”* however he says that although the sinner does hundred times bad things and although he perseveres there for a long time, I also know that the happiness is for those who fear God. “

Our hope is based on God’s forgiveness. King David quotes these fine words in the psalm 130:3 *„ O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?*

My „what’s the point” of the beginning of my comment has now moved to:

The point is to trust in such a God, full of love for us.

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 TLM, 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.



Psalm 70

For the director of music. Of David. A petition.

¹ Hasten, O God, to save me;
come quickly, LORD, to help me.

² May those who want to take my life
be put to shame and confusion;
may all who desire my ruin
be turned back in disgrace.

³ May those who say to me, "Aha! Aha!"
turn back because of their shame.

⁴ But may all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who long for your saving help always say,
"The LORD is great!"

⁵ But as for me, I am poor and needy;
come quickly to me, O God.

You are my help and my deliverer;
LORD, do not delay.



Psalm 75

For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." A psalm of Asaph. A song.

¹ We praise you, God,
we praise you, for your Name is near;
people tell of your wonderful deeds.

² You say, "I choose the appointed time;
it is I who judge with equity.

³ When the earth and all its people quake,
it is I who hold its pillars firm.

⁴ To the arrogant I say, 'Boast no more,'
and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horns.

⁵ Do not lift your horns against heaven;
do not speak so defiantly.'"

⁶ No one from the east or the west
or from the desert can exalt themselves.

⁷ It is God who judges:
He brings one down, he exalts another.

⁸ In the hand of the LORD is a cup
full of foaming wine mixed with spices;
he pours it out, and all the wicked of the earth
drink it down to its very dregs.

⁹ As for me, I will declare this forever;
I will sing praise to the God of Jacob,

¹⁰ who says, "I will cut off the horns of all the wicked,
but the horns of the righteous will be lifted up."



The Father's house

In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. John 14.2-3

- Jesus comforts his disciples.

Jesus will leave soon. He communicates his last recommendations, as he writes his will.

He knows that the disciples will have to go through difficult times. He doesn't hide the reality but he gives them a key: Trust in God, trust also in me. As a good shepherd the Lord will be always by their side, leading them.

- Jesus reveals the Father's house

When we read this passage, we think – the Father's house is Heaven. Jesus went back to his Father to prepare a place for you and for me. Praise the Lord, when Jesus will come back I will be at God's home.

But for John this passage is not only for the future: the eternal realities start in present time, furthermore the end of verse 3 is written in present: *"That where I am, you also may be"*. What does it mean?

In verse 23 (still in John 14) it's said: We will come to him and make our home with him – Jesus and the Father will make their home in those who love and obey them.

Imagine the revolution for the disciples (and for us) – the conversion of the understanding. God from Heaven, present in the Most Holy Place - the heart of the Temple, will make his home in me! Wherever I go I am in God's presence, I am at his home.

- Jesus prepares a place.

It is finished (John 19.30); Jesus accomplished everything so that a new space is opened, the communion space. It's a space to live in my new family. As a daughter of God I can freely grow in my relation with my Father.

I don't know about you, but I want to make more room in me for God my Father!

The Bridge

Greetings from Northern Ireland. In homage to 'The Bridge' devotional, I thought I'd share some thoughts on bridges today!

First up, its quiz time. Take a guess at how much you think it cost to construct these bridges?

A) Tsing Ma Bridge, China £ _____



B) Great Belt Fixed Link, Denmark
£ _____



C) Carrick-a-rede rope bridge, Northern Ireland £ _____



Now, take a look at the bottom of the page for the answers to see how you have done!

It is staggering to consider the complex engineering feats that are involved in building a bridge. Even the most simple ones, like Carrick-a-rede, made with wood and ropes, costs an awful lot of money because of the effort and the time involved in the making of it.

The work of Jesus on the Cross acts like a bridge. Jesus' sacrifice means the sin that distances us from God is completely removed. The Cross connects us with God, something that no man-made structure or effort could ever do, no matter how much time, effort or money we put into it.

The role of the Cross as a bridge is particularly apt at a time when division, separation and extremism is growing across the globe. The power of the Cross to overcome all things is captured by Paul when he writes in Romans,

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38, 39

When faced with evil that rips apart families, communities, cities and even countries we can look to this scripture to be reminded of the great and powerful love of God which we find in Jesus. Jesus calls us to pick up our Cross, and today this may well mean we are called to be bridge builders, connecting people to God's great love, found in the bridge that has been made by Jesus on the Cross. This is no easy thing, and it may be very costly.

What does being a bridge builder mean for you in your work for The Leprosy Mission, and in your local community?

Quiz answers:

- A) Tsing Ma Bridge, China, £1.4 billion,**
- B) Great Belt Fixed Link, Denmark, £4.4 billion,**
- C) Carrick-a-rede Rope Bridge, £16,000**

Peter Hilton - Church and School Engagement Officer, TLM Northern Ireland



Remain in me

John 15: 1 -17

April and May are hot summer months in Northern India and we get blessed with sudden heavy rains and strong winds called nor'westers . It's a fascinating experience to watch them . The branches sway dangerously even to the point of creaking dangerously. There will be loud thunders and flashing lightnings with rain , sometimes hail ! Only recently did I notice , amidst a thunderstorm in all its glory, the swaying branches which struck me as the storms we experience in our lives Sudden , strong , and with full intention to break us away from our Vine !

Jesus call us to remain in Him as a branch on a vine . It is during those storms that our remaining in Him is tested . We get swayed and thrashed , some bones break , some hearts are hurt , yet we persist. Why? Because Jesus told us to . He said , "Remain in Me ".

Remain is a simple word that requires no explanation . The dictionary defines Remain as "continue to exist especially after other similar people or things have ceased to do so!" Not must or should remain or will have to remain or had remained , just Remain. Do it and don't stop ! There is no resting from remaining.

It's not easy . It is an effort , to cling on , trust and depend . When the world is crying out loads of easy , attractive options , I confess , remaining in Him becomes difficult .

*I need Thy presence every passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.*

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



The anchor that won't drag

This confidence is like a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain of heaven to God's inner sanctuary. Jesus has already gone in there for us Hebrews 6:19-20

My father owns a launch, a motor boat around 11 metres long, which was built by his father in the 1940s. Among the great pleasures of my life have been some relaxing days aboard the *Marline* in the sunshine, enjoying cruising the Bay of Islands in the north of New Zealand, fishing, swimming, talking over tea, or just being together doing nothing at all.

Six people can sleep on board. On one memorable night we were anchored a few metres offshore in what seemed a sheltered bay. It was calm and still, but quite a strong wind started blowing after midnight. Were we concerned? No. We slept well. But imagine our shock when we woke up at dawn to find we were no longer in that bay, but outside it and now several hundred metres offshore. We had thought the anchor was embedded firmly in the sea-bed, but we were wrong. During the night the anchor had dragged and we had steadily drifted away. We were fortunate indeed not to be wrecked on the rocks at the entrance to the bay – we must just have drifted past. My father soon got rid of that anchor and bought a much stronger one. We have not had a repeat of the problem – and he no longer sleeps so soundly on board the *Marline*!

Hebrews 6 describes our confidence – the confidence we have in our salvation and our adoption into God's family – as an anchor. Unlike the anchor on the *Marline*, this anchor is described as strong and trustworthy. But how can we be so sure?

The writer to the Hebrews gives two reasons. The first is location. The anchor for our souls is embedded not in doubtful sand on the seabed but in God's inner sanctuary, where it cannot be moved. Our confidence, in other words, is based in God's word and his promises which are totally safe and sure. Verse 13 reminds us that God has given his promise and his oath, and these two things are unchangeable.

The second reason for our strong and trustworthy confidence is that it is based not on stories or theories, or on feelings that may come and go. It is based on facts, on what Jesus has done. Jesus has already gone in there before us (verse 20). Paul, writing to the Romans, explains that Jesus Christ – the Son of God who became man – is sitting in the place of honour at God's right hand, and there he is pleading (or interceding) for us. He is the one who goes before us, on whom our faith depends from start to finish (Hebrews 12:2).

The chorus of an old hymn so well expresses this firm confidence that can be shared by all of us who know Jesus.

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll
Fastened to the Rock that cannot move
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.*



The Seed

Mark 4:30-32

Preparing to speak at the service celebrating 50 years of service of ChiangMai Christian Clinic, my mind went back to the early days and humble beginnings of this now thriving ministry. Had we evaluated this clinic at the end of year one, using KPIs related to total numbers, or income, or impressiveness of venue, there would have been no year two. But the goal was to provide leprosy patients with an easily accessible venue for competent leprosy treatment in the town, stigma free as they attended along with other dermatology patients.

It must have been surprising to his hearers when Jesus, asking “With what shall we compare the Kingdom of God”, selected a tiny seed! We rarely value small. Sometimes we can be almost even offended by smallness.....of a gift, a responsibility, a role. As I read Zechariah, I was impressed by three points.

Zechariah 4:10 Don't despise the day of small things” As with the mustard seed, the life within the small seed God has placed in my hands today may become widespread growth, and a blessing to many if I faithfully tend to it. I must be careful not to discard any God-seed as unworthy of my time and attention.

In Zechariah 4.6 God has reminded us “you will succeed not by might, nor by your own strength, but by my spirit”. It is His spirit alive and well within which ensures the growth, and the blessing to many.

The angel reminded Joshua in *Zechariah 3.6 “Obey my laws and perform the duties I have assigned you.”* That is the part I play today, and the following promise is the same. “And I will hear your prayers.” I am not responsible for the size of the seed given to my care, but must be faithful to play my part day by day.

Today we celebrated that ChiangMai Christian Clinic has blessed the lives of three thousand leprosy patients, along with tens of thousands of other patients. And today there's another small seed needing planting and nurturing.

Heather Smith

Working, along with TLM, under the national church in Thailand.



Psalm 4 – Part 1

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

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

² How long will you people turn my glory into shame?
How long will you love delusions and seek false gods^[b]?^[c]

³ Know that the LORD has set apart his faithful servant for himself;

the LORD hears when I call to him.



Psalm 4 – Part 2

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

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

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

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

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

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



'He's Deaf, You Know.'

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. (Isaiah 35:5 NIV)

If Scottish poet, Robert Burns, had been sitting behind me in our worship service on most Sunday mornings and seen me putting my hand behind my ears he might have wondered if I had the same problem as the lady sitting in front of him did. He noticed a head louse roaming over the bows and ribbons of her hat, and her hair. Poor woman - little did she know that she would, with her head companion, be the subject of one of Burns' poems, on how we see ourselves, and how we think other people see us.

But no, I don't have head lice, and I'm not even scratching my head. I'm simply adjusting my hearing aids to pick up the loop system so that I can hear what's being said. They tell me I suffer from *presbycusis*, which in plain English just means I'm getting old and can't hear as well as I did. The hearing aids help, but don't restore the full range of hearing of earlier years.

This disability – deafness – has been my opportunity to learn just a little of the lessons of social exclusion that many people with the physical impairments, including those caused by leprosy, experience. I can't quite hear what was said. Those who know me well understand the blank look that results, or the silence that ensues, or worst of all the wrong answer given in reply. If not laughter, there's embarrassment all round. Then some try to shout, making one feel even worse. And yet others must conclude there's something wrong with my brain. I shouldn't blame them.

Accepting my own condition has been an important part of my coming to terms with it. Trying to understand how others regard me has also been important. That doesn't remove the hope that things would be better. I can say with Burns: *O would some Power the gift to give us, To see ourselves as others see us.* But I can also change the wording slightly and say: *O would some Power the gift to give us, To hear as others do, and I once did.*

But the prophet Isaiah, as part of the promise of total restoration, offers something even better in the life to come. *'Then will ... the ears of the deaf be unstopped!'*

I look forward to that day.

Paul du Plessis - After a lifetime of service with The Salvation Army, South African born Paul and his wife, Margaret, have retired in the UK. Paul has had a number of honorary roles with TLM.



'Please Just Listen to Me'

'You are worthless physicians, all of you! If only you would be altogether silent! For you, that would be wisdom.' (Job 13: 4-5 NIV)

It's a cry of exasperation from a man desperately wanting to feel better. He'd obviously been given explanations for his illness which didn't help, or even made him feel worse, so he strikes out in self-defence. *'My eyes have seen all this, my ears have heard and understood it. What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you.'* (vv 1-2)

'Please keep silent – just listen to me!' he's saying.

Is there a lesson in this little exchange in the book of Job for us physicians and other health workers, often trained for an action-oriented approach? We need to examine the skin, look for the anaesthetic patch, palpate the nerves, look at the eyes, check the hands and feet, then get out the scalpel for skin smears and rush them off to the laboratory to check for m.leprae. We confirm the diagnosis and prescribe the drug regimen. 'Next patient, please!'

'But please sir,' came the question from a young teenager when I told him he had leprosy, 'Can I ask you a question?' It came as something of a shock to me, but I stopped. He wanted an explanation of how and why he'd contracted the disease. So I gave it to him, as best I could, and that helped him more than anything else I'd done for him that afternoon.

That short conversation changed the way I conducted consultations. Even with the problems of language and the pressures of work I focussed increasingly on taking the history and made sure everyone had the opportunity to ask the questions that were on their mind. I got to know them better; they probably felt better valued as people.

Years later in dealing with end of life issues in palliative care I found that listening is probably the most important skill to develop. But by then I was starting to have trouble hearing. Did it matter? I could keep silent. That would be wisdom.

Perhaps they, like Job, just wanted to hear what God had to say about it. *'I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case with God.'* (v 3) I could certainly encourage that.

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With the Emphasis on 'As If'

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2 NIV)

In the early 1980s I was appointed medical adviser at The Salvation Army's international headquarters. So who was I supposed to advise, I wondered – senior leaders, international staff, administrators of Salvation Army health programmes across the globe? And how was I to do this?

I saw a short course advertised: *Introduction to Counselling* If I couldn't get someone to teach me how to 'advise' perhaps I could glean ideas from the principles of counselling? So along I went to join with a dozen or so other health professionals. It would be part of my continuing professional development. Yes, I did get a certificate at the end of the week, but more importantly, learned a few basic rules which have stood me in good stead over subsequent years.

We listened to presentations from the tutor. He gave us a definition of counselling: *'the act of listening to the problem so that you understand it as if it were your own, with the emphasis on 'as if'*. It must never become your own.

We worked in small groups and in pairs. 'You listen very well,' said my partner for the week, 'but I never know whether you're really listening or not,' she said. 'You just sit there like a zombie! Please show me somehow that you're listening. I need to know I'm getting through to you. A nod, or even a frown would help.'

One of us needed to volunteer to be counselled by the tutor. Although this was to be a demonstration it had to be a real problem we were facing. Nobody was keen; nor was I. Anyhow I decided to expose the difficulty I was experiencing over the need for me to become British, in order better to travel internationally (as part of my work) at a time when there were severe restrictions for South Africans. I shan't forget the discomfort I experienced as the counsellor prodded me and exposed some of the deep feelings that lay beneath the surface. Nor shall I forget the group telling the counsellor that they felt he was completely unsympathetic. 'But I'm not trying to carry his burden,' was the response.

In the years since I've tried to listen in the spirit of 'carrying the other's burden', if only for a while, and once the time of listening is over, to pass it to the one who said: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and you will find rest for your souls.* (Matthew 11: 28-29) That way I can be quick to listen, and slow to give advice. It's not my problem; it becomes his.

Paul du Plessis - After a lifetime of service with The Salvation Army, South African born Paul and his wife, Margaret, have retired in the UK. Paul has had a number of honorary roles with TLM.



Keep on Listening

'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' (Isaiah 6:9 NIV)

Isaiah has a dramatic vision of God; his lips are cleansed ready for good communication; he responds and says he's willing. Then comes the bombshell. 'They will hear, but they won't understand.' Jesus repeats the warning to his disciples when he tells them the parable of the sower. That remains a challenge for all involved in Christian communication. But there are other settings where communication is difficult.

Her dementia had increased to the advanced stage, with its impact on numerous parts of the nervous system. It had left her with deficient visual fields and unable to walk or stand; memories seemed to have disappeared and speech was non-existent. Most of the day she would be sleeping. We struggled to find ways of communicating.

So we were delighted when world-renowned percussionist, Dame Evelyn Glennie, herself profoundly deaf from childhood, felt she might be able to 'get through' to those unable to communicate because of advanced dementia. 'I try my way of listening, including watching the body language,' she explained. 'Listening is love.'

She arrived with her drums and xylophone, but for us she chose the *mbira*, the African finger-piano. 'Speech results in sound waves,' I thought, 'so perhaps the vibrations will communicate.' We watched expectantly. She tried again, and again. Sadly nothing happened. There was no response.

So what to do now? Give up, stop trying? No!

'Words don't work; music no longer has an effect; vibrations have failed. Just be there. Your presence makes a difference,' was the advice I received. 'And keep watching her reactions, however small they may be.'

Isaiah was asked to go! '*Here am I, send me,*' was his response. I need to do the same. I may not say much, but I can offer a hand to be held. And I'll certainly watch body-language. That's part of listening.

Paul du Plessis - After a lifetime of service with The Salvation Army, South African born Paul and his wife, Margaret, have retired in the UK. Paul has had a number of honorary roles with TLM.



Different kinds of . . .

On the wall behind my computer is an enormous map of the region I cover – the South and South West of the UK. There are hundreds of towns, thousands of churches and millions of people represented on this map, and sometimes it feels overwhelming. But then I look at the New Forest and think ‘I have a wonderful volunteer who lives there’. Or I look at Brighton and think of another volunteer who used to work for TLM overseas and knows far more about leprosy than I do. I have 20 incredible people in my Volunteer Team who all have different strengths and experiences to bring to our Mission. And then I know – I only have to play my part. God called me to this job, but it doesn’t mean I have to single-handedly fund the work of TLM! I am part of an amazing team of people who God has called together for this work, regionally, nationally and internationally.

‘There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.’ 1 Corinthians 12: 4-6

And then I think how tiny that part of the UK actually is, compared with the whole of God’s creation. He holds us in our hand and He knows us all intimately, and He is working in people and places in ways that we can’t even imagine. When I think of God’s hand superimposed over that wall map, I am at peace, knowing that it is God’s region, they are God’s volunteers, this is God’s work.

‘You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.’ 1 Corinthians 12:27

Jenny Foster, Regional Manager at TLMEW for six months



The greatest disease

“The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy;
it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for.

We can cure physical diseases with medicine,
but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love.

There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread
but there are many more dying for a little love.

The poverty in the West is a different kind of poverty –
it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality.

There's a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God.”

Mother Teresa of Kolkata



Silence

"We need to find God, and He cannot be found in noise and restlessness.

God is the friend of silence.

See how nature – trees, flowers, grass – grow in silence.

See the stars, the moon, the sun, how they move in silence.

We need silence to be able to touch souls."

Mother Teresa of Kolkata



His eye is on the sparrow

²⁸ Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹ So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. Matthew 10:28-31

There have been a number of horrific events in the UK in recent months leading to death and destruction. There have been terrorist attacks in London and Manchester, the devastating Grenfell Tower fire, and very recently another terrorist attack on worshippers at a London mosque. People of all ages and all nationalities who were peacefully going about their daily lives have been struck down with stabbings, explosions, fire or intentionally run down by those intent on destruction. The tragedy is not of course confined to the UK. Across the world conflict slaughters innocent people, terrorism snatches lives and futures, and violence destroys precious men, women and children.

It is all too easy for fear to creep in.

But today, in 2017, the voice of Jesus Christ speaks into this our world. He says to you and I *'even the hairs of your head are counted'*. He tells us that a sparrow will not fall to the ground apart from our Father and we are worth more than many sparrows. His voice of love says *'do not be afraid'*. If the very hairs of our heads are counted by God he really must know everything about us! If he knows every detail of our lives then he must be very, very close – all the time.

We often see God through our own human lens. We wonder how we can get God's attention when we need him, not realising he is already in our future, present and past, closer than the very cells of our bodies are to us.

Our Father God watches us, accompanies us, goes ahead of us and is constantly with us. As we realise this a peace falls over us that causes fear to melt away. Fear constrains us, Jesus releases us. Fear makes us feel small and vulnerable, Jesus gives us a spirit of boldness. Fear eats away at our happiness and joy, Jesus gives us fullness of life.

I love to watch the birds in my garden at home, especially in spring and summer as the tiny fledglings emerge. Some are so small and vulnerable, still working out how to use their wings as they flutter from branch to branch. Jesus tells us that God's eye is on these tiny birds, so how much more is his eye on us, his children?



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