



# **TLM Daily Devotions**

**November 2017**





## **Celebrating two years!**

How rapidly.... but indeed: The Bridge turns this month two! The first devotional was that of the first Sunday of Advent in 2015: the 29th November!

Praise to God, Who started it by a definitive call, and Who is faithfully completing what He started!

Thanks to everyone contributing to the “construction” of our common bridge in any way: by writing devotionals, by correcting the language, by lecturing theological appropriateness, by distributing, by inviting others to read it or to write into it, or by faithfully praying for the cause!

Let us go forth towards many more years “bridging” in thanksgiving and joyful ministering!

**Marta Risko**



## Changing your clothes

The Bible uses many metaphors to describe the Christian life. A common metaphor is the picture of taking off old clothes and putting on new clothes.

In *John 11v1-44*, Jesus performs a miracle illustrating the spiritual truth of taking off the old clothes and putting on the new. It's the story of Lazarus being brought back from the dead. Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, sent word for Jesus to come when Lazarus was sick. Jesus delayed for several days, and Lazarus died. The disciples were baffled by this, and when Jesus finally arrived in Bethany, both sisters said to Him, "*Master if you had been here my brother wouldn't have died.*" When Jesus saw their grief, and the grief of others who loved Lazarus, the Bible says Jesus wept with them.

With his eyes filled with tears, Jesus approached Lazarus' tomb and gave instructions for the stone to be removed. Martha objected saying, "Lord, by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been dead four days." I always preferred the KJV phrasing, "He stinketh." Jesus said, "Did I not tell you if you believed you would see the glory of God?" They rolled the stone away and Jesus spoke in a voice loud enough to raise the dead: "**LAZARUS, COME FORTH!**"

At the sound of Jesus' summons, Lazarus comes stumbling and hopping out of the tomb. In those days, corpses were wrapped in long pieces of cloth soaked in spices. When Lazarus came out of the tomb, he was still wrapped in those stinking grave clothes. He couldn't talk, and he couldn't walk. He had received life, but he still had a problem—those pesky grave clothes!

I've studied this story for years but there is a powerful truth in this story I never noticed before. The Bible says in John 11:44: "*The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."* Can you sense how frustrated Lazarus was when he was all wrapped up in those old sticky, stinking grave clothes?

We all struggle with those old urges and bad attitudes from our sinful nature. We need help. We can no more help ourselves than Lazarus could have extricated himself from his grave clothes.

Jesus could have exercised His divine power and Boom! The grave clothes would have disappeared miraculously. But I think He wanted to involve the other people in what He was doing. He said to those bystanders, "*Loose him, and let him go!*" And fortunately, there were people there who cared enough to get their hands dirty and obey the words of Jesus and help Lazarus remove those old grave clothes. And I'm quite certain there was someone standing by who quickly found a clean garment to put around Lazarus as well.

We need to learn the Lazarus Lesson: We all need help getting rid of our grave clothes—and God calls us to help free others and show them how to dress. So, if you're struggling with your old nature, then you need to get rid of those old clothes so you can put on those new Christlike thoughts and actions. But you can't get rid of those grave clothes alone.

That's why the church is so important. It's our job to do what those bystanders did to Lazarus—help you get rid of those old clothes so you can put on the new. If you are struggling, find someone to help you. Find a trusted friend to pray with you and to hold you accountable.

**Gordon Brown** - Scotland - 2008-2011 Vice Chair of TLM Scotland, 2011-2015 Honorary Treasurer of TLM International. Kindly sending his good wishes to the TLM family!



## The program of Jesus - Part 1

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Luke 4:18-19*

Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written in Isaiah 61:1-2 and he read the prophetic words from 700 years earlier.

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

It was a historical moment in the synagogue of Nazareth. Jesus pronounced his first official preaching which was noted down by Luke. The text from Isaiah had been read many, many times and each time the people thought “When will the Scripture be fulfilled?” This very time the Scripture became reality!

The two verses from the prophet Isaiah were in fact his program, a presentation of the God given task of Jesus and his life. Three years later Jesus will summarize his short life on earth with the words in John 17:4 “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do”. Mission accomplished!

So what was the program of Jesus? His program became later the program of his disciples and is still the program of his church and of The Leprosy Mission.

It all started with the Spirit of the Lord on Jesus and the anointment of the Holy Spirit!

- Jesus was born through the Holy Spirit: Luke 1:35
- Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit: Luke 3: 21-22
- Jesus was led by the Spirit: Luke 4: 1
- Jesus returned from the temptations in the desert in the power of the Spirit: Luke 4:14

In the Old Testament there were three specific ministries that were anointed by oil and by the Holy Spirit. Jesus was anointed to enter all those ministries to fulfill his task on earth.

- **The kings** were anointed and Jesus was anointed as “the King of Kings”: 1 Tim. 6:15
- **The prophets** were anointed and Jesus was anointed as prophet: Matt. 21:11
- **The priests** were anointed and Jesus was anointed as a priest in “a permanent priesthood” and as High Priest: Hebr. 7:24

The Spirit of the Lord was on Jesus and he was anointed to proclaim good news for the poor, he was sent to proclaim freedom and set the oppressed free! What a wonderful program Jesus presented and what a wonderful program we still have!



## Forgiveness

*Matthew 6:9-15      Philippians 2:12-13*

Working closely with many older folk in our age-care work we sadly see how many are finishing life with broken relationships with their family. People are split apart by old issues and actions. Bricks of bitterness have been added to the wall of unforgiveness year by year until the wall is insurmountable.

This morning in staff devotions we read in Matthew 6 Jesus' reply to the disciples question about how to pray. Jesus gave them a framework for prayer, but He particularly emphasized the relevance of forgiveness in verses 14 and 15.

*“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins”.*

I was impressed by the meaning which came through clearly in the Thai...If you want to forgive...if you choose to forgive...if you choose to decide to forgive. Had my older friends and their family members made that choice many years ago, what a different end of life they might be experiencing today. How many years of hardening bitterness and estrangement and loneliness might have been avoided.

One man, forbidding us to allow access to visit their mother to the children who were flying across the world, said “ I know I should forgive them, but I can't. I am not like you Christians”.

We are so privileged to have help available when we choose to act in obedience to God's word and will in our lives, including the command to forgive. In Philippians 2:12-3 we read *“Therefore my dear friends,...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for It is God who works in you both to will and to act according to his good purpose.”*

God certainly understands the cost of forgiveness. Jesus agonized over it and was able to choose to do God's will. He is certainly able to understand and to help us in our struggles. Forgiveness does not start with the other person having to change. Forgiveness starts with my choice.

So, what choice do I need to make today, to set my life on a path of obedience, and wholeness, *“to will and to act according to His good pleasure”?*

**Heather Smith** is working at McKean Center, Chiang Mai Thailand, under the national church.



## Above Law!

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is

love,

joy,

peace,

forbearance,

kindness,

goodness,

faithfulness,<sup>23</sup>

gentleness and

self-control.

Against such things there is no law.

*Galatians 5:22-23 New International Version (NIV)*



## Psalm 91

- <sup>1</sup> Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.<sup>[a]</sup>
- <sup>2</sup> I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress,  
my God, in whom I trust."
- <sup>3</sup> Surely he will save you  
from the fowler's snare  
and from the deadly pestilence.
- <sup>4</sup> He will cover you with his feathers,  
and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
- <sup>5</sup> You will not fear the terror of night,  
nor the arrow that flies by day,  
<sup>6</sup> nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,  
nor the plague that destroys at midday.
- <sup>7</sup> A thousand may fall at your side,  
ten thousand at your right hand,  
but it will not come near you.
- <sup>8</sup> You will only observe with your eyes  
and see the punishment of the wicked.
- <sup>9</sup> If you say, "The LORD is my refuge,"  
and you make the Most High your dwelling,  
<sup>10</sup> no harm will overtake you,  
no disaster will come near your tent.
- <sup>11</sup> For he will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you in all your ways;  
<sup>12</sup> they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
- <sup>13</sup> You will tread on the lion and the cobra;  
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.
- <sup>14</sup> "Because he<sup>[b]</sup> loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him;  
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
- <sup>15</sup> He will call on me, and I will answer him;  
I will be with him in trouble,  
I will deliver him and honor him.
- <sup>16</sup> With long life I will satisfy him  
and show him my salvation."



## Walking with Jesus – Part 3

### *Matt 17:1-7*

I want you to try to visualise this walk through the mind of Peter. It is very early in the morning and you are wakened by John telling you that Jesus wants you to go with him. The sun was not yet up and Peter (and maybe you too) did not want to be up either! He could see James and Jesus moving about but everyone else was sound asleep. Soon they were walking out of the camp, walking in silence not knowing where they were going. After 3 years with Jesus, Peter knew He would not tell them even if they asked. The camp was near the base of Mount Hermon, the highest peak in Palestine towering more than 9,000 feet above the Sea of Galilee. The sheer majesty of the mountain dominated the route of their walk and it quickly became obvious that Jesus was leading them up the mountain – at least part of the way to the top.

In Peter's shoes you have hiked for several hours, picking your way up through the dry, rocky terrain with the sun growing warmer all the time – now you are glad that you left so early before the sun was up. You have reached your destination, tired, soaked with sweat, puffing and panting. The view from the ridge is magnificent making the journey seem worthwhile. You sit down on the ground with James and John just marvelling at what you can see. Jesus stands at your side. It is not long before you and the others fall asleep in the warmth and quiet.

Suddenly you are awake but you are not sure what woke you: the noise, the light. You are aware that although the sun is still shining it seems pale compared with the light around you. Just a few feet away you see Jesus standing, talking with two other men. Jesus is different, it is as if he is clothed in light, not a light shining on Him but rather a radiance shining from Him, rather like the white-hot light shining from iron in the furnace, but without the heat or any fear of being injured by the light. You sit for a few minutes trying to take in the scene and listening to the conversation between Jesus and the two men who are also glowing with light and whom He addresses as Moses and Elijah!

Imagine sitting there, listening? Perhaps you feel like a child listening but not able to take part in the conversation of the adults around you. Suddenly it is over, the two men depart and Jesus is alone and all around is silence.

As we read the Gospels we realise that Peter is a man who does not “do” silence and so he babbles about building three temples. Suddenly there is a cloud, blotting out the sun but at the same time blinding you with light so that you cannot see anyone else. Terrifying and thrilling and as you drop to the ground there is another voice, the voice of thunder right there beside you, causing the ground to shake under your feet. The voice of God Himself ‘This is my beloved Son, my chosen one; listen to Him!’ Then in an instant it is all gone, the silence and the ordinary light are back but now you are speechless.

What an experience, it cannot but have changed the lives of those three disciples. An experience that showed them that despite their human frailties, they were of some incomprehensible value to God.

Entrance into the presence of God, the living God, is the most humbling and yet the most important experience of anyone's life.

*Take time today to stop and just let Jesus “be” in your life, take that mountain top experience with you.*





## “Who has believed our message?”

*Isaiah 53: 1-6 and Mark 1: 40-45 (the quotes are from the New Living Translation)*

We live in Rijnsburg, an affluent village with prospering businesses. “*We flower the world*” is the slogan of the village, and indeed, we import billions of flowers and sell these across Europe. Rijnsburg has a few supermarkets, shops in which you can choose between dozens of types of cheese, bread, washing powder etc. But when we walk around in the shop it feels as if we are part of a wardround. Next to the butter ladies talk about mr X and the cancer in his throat. Near the chips others stop and block the narrow path between the shelves; they talk about an old neighbour who broke his hip. Near the washing powder the complications after the birth of a little girl are discussed. The same happens in Church at the time of announcements and intercessions; it’s all about people who are ill. You can easily understand how important our illnesses and our physical well-being are!

In Isaiah 53 the Bible talks about ‘My servant’. The Church widely agrees that this servant must refer to Jesus, the Messiah. Vers 3 says that my servant was *“a man of sorrows and acquainted with deepest grief.”* The word ‘grief’ signifies deadly wound, sickness, disease, grief.

For us, used to meet with persons who live with the consequences of leprosy, Isaiah 53 sounds familiar when it says that the servant “was despised and rejected” and that “we turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised and we did not care.” I thank God for knowing TLM colleagues who do care for people who come to them.

I was reminded to Isaiah 53, when a pastor read Mark 1: 40-45. His words about leprosy were quite correct. He drew our attention to the fact that the person who had been healed ended up in the towns (where he had not been welcome when still suffering of leprosy). Jesus ended up outside the towns (because the man who was healed kept talking about what Jesus had done). The pastor reminded us: Jesus was not just a great Healer, a Man of miracles, *“but he was beaten so we could be whole”* and he *“laid on him the sins of us all”*, or the consequences of the sin of mankind.

Many young people like to become a doctor. I would not be surprised if many of them would have that quiet desire to be able to pray and say: *“you are healed, in Jesus name”*. I wonder how many of them, when older and burdened by their own and family troubles, would want to carry the disease of the person for whom they would like to pray. Would we want to carry the disease?

Jesus carried our weaknesses. That is an incredible beautiful message! It was our sorrows that weighed him down. Thank Him, praise Him for that precious love for us, for every person whom we meet with when reaching out as a TLM staff.



## Maintains the 'missionary line'

### Matthew ch.9 –

Good morning dear colleague!

I recall, how verses from this chapter helped 'push' me into the ministry long ago:-

#### A) Matth.9:1-34 – THE MEN MISSIONARIES PURSUE !

(vs 1-8) - A Paralytic (healed and sins forgiven)

(vs 9-13) – A Money-grubber(dis/honest Matthew Levi)

(vs 14-17) - A bunch of Hypocrites ('we never did it that way before')

(vs 18,19,23-26) - A sick-to-death child (note the parents' role)

(vs 20-22) - An Unclean Person (physically/ceremonially)

(vs 27-31) - Two Blind Men (physically/spiritually)

(vs 32-34) - A Demon-oppressed Person (mute man spoke)

Missionaries pursue all kinds of people, anywhere and everywhere!

#### B) Matth.9:35-38 – THE METHODS MISSIONARIES EMPLOY !

(vs 35,36a) - Crowds preferably (cities...villages...synagogues...)

(vs 36b) - Compassion definitely (like sheep without a Shepherd)

(vs 37) - Co-workers constantly (labourers are few; goers/givers)

(vs 38) - Cry to God 24/7 (intercessors - for what's on God's Heart)

*Missionaries must remain part of the solution throughout their lives!*

*In conclusion, read Romans 8:28-30.*

Amen.

**Otto Kingsley** has been a TLM SA Regional Director for over 35 years – by the grace of God!



## Big hearted Barnabus

*“Joseph a Levite from Cyprus whom the apostles called Barnabus (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet.” (Acts 4<sup>36</sup>)*

I really appreciated the articles submitted by Elizabeth Allen in the September Bridge, entitled “Released to make mistakes”. It reminded me of one of my favourite Bible characters, Barnabus the Son of Encouragement.

We see here an act of great generosity, which gains Joseph the lovely nick-name Son of Encouragement; in the subsequent chapters of Acts we see how he lives up to that nick-name. How brave Ananias was as he listened to what God was asking him to do in helping Saul (the persecutor) become Paul the evangelist preacher. But I wonder what would have been the outcome if Barnabus hadn’t taken him under his wing, and helped him to become accepted into the Christian community in Jerusalem?

*Is there a person with whom we have contact who needs our loving support or insight into what the Lord sees for their future? How can we engage with them to help them grow in faith and confidence?*

After persecution broke out, following the stoning of Stephen, many disciples were scattered (Acts 11<sup>19</sup>). The apostles appointed Barnabus to go to Antioch where a real move of God’s spirit had occurred, *“He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.” (11<sup>24</sup>)* However, Barnabus needed help, so he went to look for Saul and together they taught many people about how to follow Jesus.

*Are we willing to share our ministry with others who could help the Kingdom of God to grow?*

The next chapters of Acts recount the amazing story of these men of God, and leadership moves from Barnabus and Saul (15<sup>25</sup>) to Paul and Barnabus (15<sup>35</sup>). Then Barnabus sees another young person with potential (15<sup>37-39</sup>). It’s really encouraging to see how these men used their God given gifts to further his kingdom. How important it is to respect our different gifts and to free up people to use them.

*There may be a time when another person comes to take over our leadership in order to fulfil God’s purposes better, are we willing to let go?*

Barnabus sees another opportunity in John Mark to encourage and support him grow in faith and courage, which later Paul acknowledges.

*May the Lord give us eyes to see from His view point, and the ability to encourage someone today.*

**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



## Transplant surgery: “I will put my Spirit in you”

*Ezekiel 36:27*

I was touched recently by the story of a 13-year-old girl in UK whose organ donations, after her unexpected death in 2012, helped or saved the lives of eight other people. In TLM England and Wales we have a friend and former colleague whose life was saved by a liver transplant, which not only transformed his health but seemed to enhance his outlook and the radiance of his personality too! No doubt all of us can empathise with the sorrow-and-joy mix involved in such a death-and-new-life story.

Having been on the donor register for over 40 years, I’m not sure my various organs would be of much use to anyone now! Rather, as the years go by, I begin to feel the need for a bit of spare-part surgery here and there myself! But thinking about this I wondered what aspects, not so much of my body, but of my *character*, could benefit from a transplant! Wouldn’t it be great if we could have an ‘anger-ectomy’? -A longer fuse instead of my short one! Or maybe I could get a patience transplant, or a transfusion of kindness, or a new self-control gland!

As God’s children, being “*in Christ*”, we believe that God offers exactly that kind of ‘replacement surgery’ for those who turn to him with the things that the doctor or surgeon (or the priest or preacher!) cannot ‘fix’. It was the hero-king David who, after getting into a deep moral mess prayed, “*Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me*” (*Psalm 51:10*). For those who will receive his loving, reconciling, justifying grace, that is what God offers; -he says, “*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you...*” (*Ezekiel 36:26-7*).

Many people -even of different faiths- admire the teaching and example of Jesus, but he offers far more than that, -he gives us his very self; he *pours himself out*, symbolised in the elements of Holy Communion. St. Paul wrote that God “*...saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ...*” (*Titus 3:5-6*)

So Jesus was -and still is, for anyone who comes to him- a self-sacrificing spiritual-life donor! And that affects not only our ‘status’, -children of God, with new life and eternal hope, but it alters our character, - we are “*a new creation*”, the reality of which now works its way through our being, our behaviour, even our *appearance* -as we let him grow in us by his Holy Spirit. As the old hymn says, “*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me...*”

So the old is washed away, God’s Spirit and his character and lifestyle are poured in. I’m up for an ongoing transplant! With my good wishes and prayers,

**David Beazley** 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.



## Psalm 92

*A psalm. A song. For the Sabbath day.*

<sup>1</sup> It is good to praise the LORD  
and make music to your name, O Most High,  
<sup>2</sup> proclaiming your love in the morning  
and your faithfulness at night,  
<sup>3</sup> to the music of the ten-stringed lyre  
and the melody of the harp.

<sup>4</sup> For you make me glad by your deeds, LORD;  
I sing for joy at what your hands have done.

<sup>5</sup> How great are your works, LORD,  
how profound your thoughts!

<sup>6</sup> Senseless people do not know,  
fools do not understand,  
<sup>7</sup> that though the wicked spring up like grass  
and all evildoers flourish,  
they will be destroyed forever.

<sup>8</sup> But you, LORD, are forever exalted.

<sup>9</sup> For surely your enemies, LORD,  
surely your enemies will perish;  
all evildoers will be scattered.

<sup>10</sup> You have exalted my horn<sup>[b]</sup> like that of a wild ox;  
fine oils have been poured on me.

<sup>11</sup> My eyes have seen the defeat of my adversaries;  
my ears have heard the rout of my wicked foes.

<sup>12</sup> The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,  
they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;  
<sup>13</sup> planted in the house of the LORD,  
they will flourish in the courts of our God.

<sup>14</sup> They will still bear fruit in old age,  
they will stay fresh and green,

<sup>15</sup> proclaiming, "The LORD is upright;  
he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him."



## Psalm 93

<sup>1</sup>The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty;  
the LORD is robed in majesty and armed with strength;  
indeed, the world is established, firm and secure.

<sup>2</sup>Your throne was established long ago;  
you are from all eternity.

<sup>3</sup>The seas have lifted up, LORD,  
the seas have lifted up their voice;  
the seas have lifted up their pounding waves.

<sup>4</sup>Mightier than the thunder of the great waters,  
mightier than the breakers of the sea—  
the LORD on high is mighty.

<sup>5</sup>Your statutes, LORD, stand firm;  
holiness adorns your house  
for endless days.



## Lord, if you are willing!

I was imagining a leprosy affected person in the medieval times. They lived outside the city away from families and loved ones. It was incurable and resulted in disfigurement with complete loss of dignity. The diagnosis meant death sentence.

If I were in that situation, the only thing that I would hope desperately was of a cure. And if I had a chance encounter with Jesus, I would beg of Him ... "please, please, Jesus, heal me". I would not let go. I find it strange that this man is saying: "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." What was the man thinking? Suppose Jesus said no? I wouldn't be able to take no for an answer. Even now, for matters much trivial, I beg and cry and wrestle with God. I cannot take a "no". I sulk and pout if He is silent.

But Prayer in the spiritual realm is altogether different. Our needs may be enormous, even life threatening, but our prayer should be: Lord if you are willing! We have to be mature enough to let go of our will and trust Him. We cannot demand answers.

I find this scary! Do you? I have to understand that if He wants me to live with leprosy ... Praise the Lord! *Matt 8 : 2 "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."* This man showed great spiritual maturity, though desperately in need of healing, he commended himself to His pity, made himself lowly and humble.

Jesus too modeled the same. *Luke 22 :42 .....not my will but yours be done.*

*Let us learn to pray : Lord If you are willing ...!*

**Joydeepa 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.



## Land of hope and meteors

In a few days, Elizabeth and I head for the Karoo, an arid region that lies beyond the mountains separating Cape Town from the interior of the country. We'll be joining a group of astronomers for a week of star watching from this pristine site, where the absence of light pollution and clouds allows the Milky Way to glow brightly every night and details, hidden from view in our light polluted cities, leap into view. During the day we attend lectures – I've just been told I need to choose between the "LaCaille programme" and "What's up with a telescope" – and you thought you had problems. Anoraks, hey?

As a bonus, the week coincides with a period of heightened meteor activity. At this time of the year, you'll always find me out-doors at night, no matter how horrible the wind, scanning the sky for meteor activity. On a few occasions, I've been rewarded with good sightings and on one memorable night, many years ago, I was privileged to witness the Karoo sky lit with meteors from sunset to sunrise. Unfortunately, such nights are rare, and whilst you'll see more meteors from this dark site than are visible from the city, the results can still be a huge flop. Despite countless disappointments, my hopefulness levels start to rise as summer approaches – 'maybe this will be the year' I tell myself, as I fight off the relentless wind and biting cold – and I watch the skies, willing the meteors to burst into view.

Hope is such an important part of being human. Without hope, we'd probably do just the bare basics to stay alive – we'd never try anything new or aspire to improve. Life would be nothing more than drudgery.

Hope is an integral part of the Christian life:

*"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1* closely linked to faith: *"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love". 1 Corinthians 13:13* *"For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?" Romans 8:24* [I often think of this verse when I'm outside at midnight, looking at an empty sky... indeed *"the things that are seen are transient."* 2 Corinthians 4:18]

Do a word study on "hope" – you'll be amazed at the results.

Biblically infused hope is so different from our human understanding of hope – "I hope for a meteor shower, but the skies may be quiet." Biblically based hope assures us that it will be so – it will be according to His promise and His purpose. It is a certainty [Hebrews 6:18-19]. May that hope undergird your work though this day. The letters you write, the phone calls you make, the proposals you submit, the lectures you present, the pills you offer, the sermon you preach ... do it all with hope, that there will be fruit, that income will increase, wounds will be healed and souls will be saved – *"Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven."* Colossians 1:5

[... and do come back next month to find out whether my trip to the Karoo was a success]

**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.





## Why did god create me?

*Ephesians 2:10(NIV) " For we God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

Apostle Paul wrote the epistle of Ephesians to the saints in Ephesus. The same epistle is addressed to the saints in The Leprosy Mission.

*"We are God's handiwork..."*

God used His hands to mould, form, shape, format, design and trim us. We should therefore never under rate ourselves since we are God's handiwork. He intentionally made us into what we currently are. We should celebrate, rejoice and be glad that we are His craftsmanship. What a privilege!

*"Created in Christ Jesus"*

God created, sanctified, sanitized and certified us by the blood of Jesus which was shed at Calvary.

*"To do good works..."*

We were not saved only to go to heaven but so that we will do good works which arise out of true faith, in conformity to God's law and done to the glory of God. Doing unto others as we will have them do unto us.

*"Which God prepared in advance for us to do."* God had predestined that we will perform the tasks He has committed into our hands. As members of The Leprosy Mission, how faithful are we at performing the Master's assignment?

**Dr. Shem Zagbayi Nuhu** – chairman, TLM Nigeria. Trustee, TLMI



## Imaginary Perception is harmful

I am always impressed the way Bible teaches us many principles of good management. Above all, these teachings of Bible are very helpful and teach us how to keep good relationship with family members, friends, neighbors & church members and colleagues in the work place and how to manage an organization. The Bible gives us a long list of qualities to become effective & efficient leader, manager and steward. Basically Bible teaches us how to be a good worker.

Recently the senior officer of our organization shared the story from the Old Testament that how imaginary perception is very harmful for our personality, attitude. How this finally brings very bad impact in our total performance where ever we are, in the family, church or in work place.

Moses sends (*Number 13*) 12 selected people to explore the land of Canaan which God had promised to Israelites. Moses gave very specific instructions to them that they were to report on - what kind of land? Whether people live there are weak or strong?, what kind of towns?, how is the soil ( poor or fertile)? Are there threes or not? He also told them to bring back some of the fruits of the land.

They gave very positive report of the land.... It does flow with milk & honey and reported that the people who live there are powerful. We also know that Caleb encouraged the Israelites by his report and motivated the people to go up and to take possession of the land. But other people who went with him said that we cannot attack those people as they are stronger. They also reported that the people of that land are very powerful and huge in size in comparison to them. It is very interesting to note the last sentence of the chapter( of their report) that we seems *like grasshoppers next to them in our own eyes and we looked the same to them.*

We know that the perception of their report ..... looked like grasshopper in the eye of people of that land was imaginary, and was not true. These people did not really crossed the border to visit the promised land and did not meet & spent time with the people there, so how could they know what are their ( people of Canaan) views about Israelites? This was all imagination only. The impact of the imaginary perception was really bad and negative. We see in chapter 14 that in the same night all the Israelites grumbled and rebelled against Moses. They wanted to choose another leader and go back to Egypt. Then Moses and Aaron fell face down in front of the whole Israelites Assembly gathered there. The whole assembly talked about stoning Caleb and Joshua. We also read in verse 11 & 12, (this made sad and upset the Lord) the lord said *"how long these people treat me with contempt?"* I will strike them down with plague and destroy them. - So we see that imaginary and untrue perception is very harmful and bring all negative things. The final impact or result is also depressing and damaging.

Let us learn, such situation also comes in our personal, family life, neighborhood relationship (friends), and dealing with church members and also at work place. Many times we develop and live in the imaginary perception of us by other, which is never true. It is our imagination that he/she does not like me..... He /she said something bad about me or against me. In result we also develop wrong and harmful attitude and relationship towards them. This leads in making our relationship very bitter. Finally it damages our attitude, performance and behavior. We know very well that that these perceptions are not true but imagined by us only. We must be very careful that we must not develop and live in imaginary perception which is negative and harmful.

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## Leading with a Limp

*So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with human beings and have overcome." Genesis 32:24-28 (TNIV)*

Many of our friends with leprosy are limping. This is not usually because of pain, but the result of the hidden lack of pain – ulcers, amputations, plasters. We all have our limps, our scars of battles in life.

Sometimes we are tempted to hide them very deeply. But our limping can also humble us and help us to be the people that our teams and our patients and our Lord needs.

Jacob had an uncomfortable, nocturnal encounter with God. He had wrestled, he had persevered, he had overcome many difficulties, and he came out limping. Perhaps Esau was moved by the limping of his brother Jacob, more than all his gifts and flattering words at their difficult reunion.

We too face nights of struggle, wrestling with God, difficult reunions, cultural challenges, physical pain, disappointment, failures in our personal and family lives, and in our leadership. We are often leading with a limp. Jacob knew all of these. But God was with him. God's power is made perfect in weakness, and God's grace is sufficient for us, for our teams, for our families, for our ministry.

My wife and I were out walking one evening in the humid, fertile countryside of rural Bangladesh. Tired and feeling low after a challenging day in the hospital, balancing different staff concerns, attempting to resolve conflicts, wrestling with budgets, praying for security issues, we walked slowly. We caught up with an elderly Muslim man who limped along painstakingly with crutches, a stranger to us, but someone we greeted regularly on our walks. As we joined him on the road he suddenly declared how happy he was to see us, how he had been praying for God's blessing on us, and how he perceived how greatly God had blessed us as a couple. From this complete stranger we felt God's encouragement, God's voice, God's blessing, and God's strength to keep going.

Sometimes, as with Peter in John 21, Christian leaders get asked hard questions by Jesus and we are led where we don't want to go. And in the face of the hard repeated questions whether we love him enough to follow in this hard path the only honest answer, like Peter, is "Lord, you know." And then he calls us to keep following, to stay with him on the road.

*Limping step by limping step.*

**Steve Withington** worked with TLM in Bangladesh from 1997 to 2004, and was on the TLM New Zealand Board until 2012 when he and his wife Juan returned to a mission role in Bangladesh for 3 years. Steve currently works part time as a doctor and has a leadership role in the South West Baptist Church in Christchurch, New Zealand.



## Isaiah's Commission 1

### Isaiah 6

<sup>1</sup> In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. <sup>3</sup> And they were calling to one another:

*“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;  
the whole earth is full of his glory.”*

<sup>4</sup> At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

<sup>5</sup> “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”

<sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup> With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

<sup>8</sup> Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Amen.



## Isaiah's Commission 2

<sup>9</sup> He said, "Go and tell this people:

"Be ever hearing, but never understanding;  
be ever seeing, but never perceiving.'

<sup>10</sup> Make the heart of this people calloused;  
make their ears dull  
and close their eyes.<sup>[a]</sup>

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,  
hear with their ears,  
understand with their hearts,  
and turn and be healed."

<sup>11</sup> Then I said, "For how long, Lord?"

And he answered:

"Until the cities lie ruined  
and without inhabitant,  
until the houses are left deserted  
and the fields ruined and ravaged,  
<sup>12</sup> until the LORD has sent everyone far away  
and the land is utterly forsaken.

<sup>13</sup> And though a tenth remains in the land,  
it will again be laid waste.  
But as the terebinth and oak  
leave stumps when they are cut down,  
so the holy seed will be the stump in the land."



## Jesus - My Leader Extraordinaire – Part 1

*Colossians 3:23-24* Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

What does Jesus teach us on leadership for expansion of His kingdom? There are many leadership models that emphasize different characteristics of a leader such as servant leader, transformational leader, inspirational leader, situational leader etc. Jesus can't be type cast into any single category of leadership styles; because he embodies them all. When Jesus is our role model, it is beneficial to reflect explore some of his leadership attributes.

### Clarity of Purpose and Personal Commitment

A true leader is abundantly clear of his purpose in the organizational context. Rooted in this purpose, he provides vision for others and sets the goals and direction. The leader inspires his team with future possibilities and dreams. He cares deeply about the outcomes of the organization. Steadfast belief in purpose and its clarity enables the leader to commit himself "personally" to his role. Jesus came to this world to show us the path of salvation. He was continually in touch with his purpose and its source. He repeatedly stated his purpose and personal accountability to fulfill it.

Some scriptures to reflect upon are:

- *John 10:10. "... I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*
- *John 4:34. "My food, said Jesus, is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."*
- *John 6:38-39. "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day."*
- *Luke 5:32. "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."*
- *Luke 4:43. But he said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."*

What Jesus has said about his purpose clearly demonstrates his strong emotional bond with God. He took personal ownership for showing the right path for sinners in this world. He aligned himself fully to his purpose in this world and its completion. The purpose and driving force for his leadership were embedded in his soul.

*For His glory*



## Jesus - My Leader Extraordinaire – Part 2

### Leading with Authority in Humility

Jesus was clear about his status on the earth. He said, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.” Even then, Jesus was always very demanding on himself first, then on his disciples and others around him. He went through Satan’s temptations of this world and overcame them. Thus, he confirmed his authority over Satan. For a leader to lead with authority, he must first go through the test of fire himself. He knew what the world would demand from his followers after he is no longer with them; because he experienced it himself first. He humbled himself to receive the authority.

When truth must be spoken and shared, Jesus was very firm in his language and actions. Many times, he said to those around him “I tell you the truth”. He spoke the truth without an apology, but with authority. He used his authority for the good of people and not for his personal gain. He exercised his authority over Satan for the benefit of sinners. He confronted and cast out evil spirits in people. It was used for alleviating suffering and pain of people in need.

Some scriptures to reflect upon are:

- *Matthew 4:19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."*
- *John 14:6-7. Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*
- *Mark 4:39 "He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!". Then the wind died down and it was completely calm."*
- *John 4:49-50. The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." "Go," Jesus replied, "your son will live."*
- *Philippians 2:6-7 "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."*

A person with authority (in power) can easily lose his humility and become a ruthless ruler as Lord Acton has said, “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely”. But, Jesus used his divine authority (over man and nature) as Son of God with humility for leading and showing the path of salvation to the lost souls.

*For His glory*



## Jesus - My Leader Extraordinaire – Part 3

### Challenge the Redundant Practices and Conventional Wisdom

A true leader accepts that leadership is taking risks in making decisions and not being afraid of failure. At his time Jesus was a revolutionary. He revolutionized the understanding of relationship between God and Man, to go beyond the Law. This was offensive to the Jews who made the Law into a ritual. Jesus challenged those around him to realign themselves to God's purpose, face the eternal truth and take the gospel lands unknown.

Jesus showed that tough situations need tough decisions and drastic (dramatic) measures to achieve the purpose of his Ministry. Jesus fearlessly faced physical danger and frontal attacks on his divinity at times when people for their selfish ends have circumvented the holy law and used places of worship for personal gain. Jesus took the world's standards and turned them upside down, saying, that the leader is one who serves others and is not served. Jesus did not go about setting things right (efficiency) but doing the right things (effectiveness). *Some scriptures to reflect upon are:*

- *Matthew 21:12-13 "Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. "It is written," he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it 'a den of robbers.'"*
- *John 13:5-8. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."*
- *Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*
- *Matthew 23:11-12. The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

Once again, we see that challenging existing structures and systems needs courage and conviction driven by a strong desire to do the right thing. To make an impact, people's thoughts must be challenged and changed. Without change, new paths and directions will not emerge.

### Selecting, Enabling and Empowering the Disciples (Team)

That a leader cannot achieve his purpose all by himself is evident in the work of Jesus, even though he is the Son of God. He carefully chose his disciples, not by his own will but after much prayer, seeking Almighty God's guidance. The choice is not based on their (disciples') social or economic standing in the society; theological or scholastic excellence but on their commitment to obey and learn from him. Jesus selected a diverse group of individuals who possessed a variety of skills and personalities. They all had first hand field experience.

Jesus spent a great deal of time with this group, training them both individually and as a team. He would give them significant responsibilities, patiently and continuously coaching them and providing performance feedback – encouragement and correction. Learning by doing (experiential learning), was the process of enabling his disciples, which Jesus adopted. Jesus equipped his disciples through teaching, which is practical, based on stories and examples that are related to the person's physical and social environment. -

*For His glory*





## Jesus - My Leader Extraordinaire – Part 4

When Jesus urges his followers that through faith they can receive the knowledge and skills to spread the message of love, he focused on the attitudinal change. (Modern management is increasingly emphasizing criticality of positive attitude towards work for effective performance). He taught his disciples taking them along with him. He made them see what he does (the miracles) so that they believe and have faith in him. After enabling them, they became his friends and not followers, truly a team of equally competent people.

*Some scriptures to reflect upon are:*

- *Mark 3:13-16. Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.*
- *Mark 6:7. Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.*
- *Matthew 17:19-20. Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*
- *John 6:5-6. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.*
- *John 15:15. I no longer call you servants, because servants do not know their master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*
- *John 14:12. Very truly I tell you, all who have faith in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.*

Empowering is more than giving knowledge and skills is what Jesus showed when he promised the Holy Spirit as a comforter and friend for those who believe in him after he departs from this world. The spiritual nurturing and presence of the Holy Spirit is central to Jesus' discipleship process.

*For His glory*



## Jesus - My Leader Extraordinaire – Part 5

### Set Exemplary Personal Examples

The fact that God, the creator himself came in human flesh and blood as Jesus to go through the trials and tribulations a sinner in this world goes through, is sufficient testimony for God's concern to set exemplary personal examples. A leader is someone who the followers look up to. This puts enormous burden on the leader to set exemplary personal standards for others to follow. The followers draw their inspiration from such a leader. Jesus truly practiced what he preached. Jesus' works spoke louder than his words. He led by example and it was his actions as much as his words that earned the respect of others. He died on the cross for others' sins, yet sought forgiveness for those who nailed him to the cross. There can be no greater testimony of forgiveness than this.

Setting examples as a human being was what Jesus did. In a way, he humbled himself among his co-workers. Not many leaders can do this and still be respected by others.

*Some scriptures to reflect upon are:*

- *Matthew 4:1-2, 11. Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.... Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.*
- *John 13: 4. So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*
- *Luke 23:34. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*
- *Luke 19:5 "When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.""*
- *Mark 1:35. Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*

### Accessible to All in Need

By being easily accessible, Jesus encouraged people from all walks of life and background to interact with him freely. He welcomed people to come to him and if they could not, he went to them. Traveling extensively to various places- towns and villages- Jesus drew close to the people who needed his healing touch, words of wisdom, relief from sorrow of a lost one; and most significantly spread the message of God's love.

Being aloof from his followers was not part of Jesus' leadership orientation. He openly showed his emotions. This made people to approach him without hesitation. He also reached out and touched those who needed his touch. There is something electrifying in his touch. Grace and power were transferred through his touch. He even washed the feet of all his disciples to make them part of himself. None was insignificant to Jesus. Jesus was indignant with the disciples when they prevented children coming to him. Personal touch was an integral part of Jesus' method of leading, it made him accessible.

*Some scriptures to reflect upon are:*

- *Mark 10:13-14. People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these".*
- *Mark 10:46-52. Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he*

*heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So, they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.*

- *Matthew 8:3 "Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy."*
- *John 11:35 "Jesus wept".*

*For His glory*

**Dr PLN Raju** - Former Director (Resource Mobilization) The Leprosy Mission Trust India New Delhi - 9971002766



## Jesus - My Leader Extraordinaire – Part 6

### Accomplish the Task Amidst Challenges

No mission a leader sets out to accomplish is ever a cake walk. It is a process which has many challenges. The path the leader treads can be very lonely. He sticks his neck out. He may be subject to much ridicule and pessimism. - The task for Jesus to accomplish i.e., the death on a Roman cross was not a pleasant one by any stretch of imagination. It was carrying his own cross to which he was crucified. Jesus always kept his eyes on the task on hand. He shared it with others around him as well. He had to undergo a process to accomplish the task. There was great temptation to abandon the task. Jesus had to face that ultimate challenge. The task was not completed miraculously, but through much pain, agony and prayer. He could complete his task only after he was strengthened by the spirit of God and not by his own strength.

*Some scriptures to reflect upon are:*

- *Luke 22:41-44 "He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done. An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."*
- *John 6:66. From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.*
- *John 19:30 "When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."*

### A few concluding thoughts

I admire Jesus for the "passion" he packs into his leadership. A passionate person is easily moved by strong emotions. Jesus didn't try to be more than an ordinary human. He was not immune from joy, grief and pain; the vulnerabilities which are not much admired by worldly leaders. His passion to obey and fulfil his Father's perfect will led him to the cross. The same also propelled him to equip the disciples to take the Good News to far corners of the world.

Some management theorists argue that in managerial decisions, there should be no room for feelings and emotions. The task and relationship dimensions should not be mixed; otherwise the leader cannot take "tough" decisions. A leader should keep himself slightly aloof from others in the organization. But if effectiveness is the outcome that a leader wants, emotions have a strong role in inspiring and leading others. "Passions are morally good when they contribute to a good action, evil in the opposite case." Emotions are to be used to glorify God's goodness, as amply demonstrated by Jesus. To grow into his likeness, we must follow the same rich passionate life.

*Lastly, how did Jesus get his passion?*

*Through submitting his soul to God and receiving the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit was his driver from within.*



## Sunday : churchday!

Anyone who is to find Christ must first find the church.  
How could anyone know where Christ is and what faith is in him  
unless he knew where his believers are?

**Prof Dr Martin Luther** - reformator (1483-1546)



## Preparation for Life - in Nazareth

*Jesus returned to Galilee ... He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up ... (Luke 4:14, 16)*

Our journey really began in Nazareth. We stayed at St Margaret's Guest House, a legacy of the high days of missionary activity in Palestine. Centre-piece of the city is the modern Church of the Annunciation, built over the site where Mary was told she was to bear a son. Pilgrims file slowly past the altar said to cover the site where the mystery of the incarnation was translated into the immaculate conception. The focus is understandably on Mary. But Joseph is also acknowledged in a separate church that bears his name. Both parents would have had a hand in rearing their son. Incarnation is God coming to share our humanity, but the institution into which he chose to come was that of the family. That's where learning begins; there we learn to build relationships. That learning continues in formal education.

Up the hill stands the Church of the Adolescent Jesus, and adjoining it, a Don Bosco school for boys. Our guide praises the mission schools, and especially for the way they helped preserve Palestinian identity during the Ottoman era. But he also explains current difficulties as the state of Israel tries to forge greater national identity.

I wish we could have visited the synagogue in Nazareth to which Jesus returned after his baptism and temptation in the wilderness. There he read from the book of Isaiah. 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. (Luke 4:18-19)

That passage announced his mission. It continues to have relevance for Christian mission today. And that's true for Palestinian Christians, as it is for those ministering 'as followers of Jesus, working to break the chains of leprosy, and empowering people to attain healing, dignity and life in all its fullness.'

To stand with the alienated and rejected poor is to emulate what Jesus did. Building and nurturing relationships is the essence of Christian ministry. That is the essential bridge to build. It needs to happen in Nazareth, but also wherever we find ourselves.

The people of Nazareth were so disturbed by his announcement that they threw him out of the city. They rejected him and his message. Sadly that happens even today.

In November 2016 **Dr Paul du Plessis** joined the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva on a pilgrimage to Israel-Palestine, principally to 'journey with Palestinian Christians'. He reflects on aspects of the visit and aspects of Christ's life and ministry and its relevance today.



## Mount of Olives

*'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.'* (Matthew 6:10)

Just below the crest of the hill, and overlooking Jerusalem, is the Church of Pater Noster, commemorating the Lord's Prayer – *'Our Father... Your kingdom come, your will be done ....'* Of course I had to see the English and Afrikaans versions of the prayer, but also those in Telugu and Zambian Tonga, the languages of people with whom we've worked. And there's opportunity to pause, recognising the role of prayer, as Wellesley Bailey did, that:

*'The 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.'*

Prayer remains for all of us, and that includes TLM, the principle way of connecting with God.

At the bottom of the Mount of Olives is Gethsemane, with ancient olive trees dating back to the first century, with a series of churches to mark the spot. We joined others in praying round 'the rock of the agony'. This is where our Lord himself prayed the words:

*'Not my will, but yours be done!'*

But my 'special moment' is to spot a few stones in the garden itself, arranged to spell 'peace'. Surely that's what his will for all of us is. 'Please, Lord,' I say quietly; 'Let it be so; may your kingdom come.' But then I ask myself: 'What do I need to do to contribute to building that peace? What relationships do I need to forge? What bridges do you want me to build?'

Located on the crest of the Mount of Olives, is the Augusta Victoria Hospital, owned and managed by the Lutheran Church. It was built by the German Kaiser in the early 20th century as a pilgrims' rest house, then it became headquarters for General Allenby during the First World War and administrative headquarters during the British mandate period that followed. Now it is a tertiary level unit as part of a series of hospitals providing services to the Palestinian people. The 118 inpatient beds are especially to provide renal dialysis and oncology. Patients are generally bussed in from the Palestinian areas, carers with them. This is a clear expression of meaningful relationships.

Funds are supplemented by international support and local enterprises, including the yield from several hundred olive trees just below the hospital. What fun and laughter we had during the afternoon as we made our contribution to the olive harvest. We filled large bags with the produce. I ended up with large olive oil marks on the knees of my jeans – this time not from praying, just from kneeling on the tarpaulins sorting out twigs from fruit! We were making a contribution to the funds of the hospital, and to help subsidise the care of Palestinian patients and their families.

*'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth.'*

In November 2016 **Dr Paul du Plessis** joined the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva on a pilgrimage to Israel-Palestine, principally to 'journey with Palestinian Christians'. He reflects on aspects of the visit and the relevance of Christ's life and ministry today.



## The Wall that Divides

*Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place (Nehemiah 3:1)*

Walls are nothing new in the Holy Land, many of them dating back to before the Christian Era. Joshua saw walls collapse; Nehemiah supervised the rebuilding of others. In a land where conflict has been the order of the day for centuries, successive occupants have built and rebuilt these symbols of defence against enemies and separation of one from another.

There have been numerous attempts to ensure security for the state of Israel since its establishment in 1948. The most recent, and perhaps most controversial, has been the construction of the 700-kilometer-long and nine metre high wall (at a cost of a million dollars a kilometre). This is often well camouflaged by rubble and recently planted trees, with watchtowers here and there. But it's a wall, nevertheless. We pass some of it as we travel south on the Yitsak Rabin Highway - by the way of Samaria towards Jerusalem.

We see more of it on the Jericho road just east of Jerusalem, with graffiti expressing the deep sense of injustice experienced by the Palestinian people as the wall has encroached on land they regard as theirs. The list of their grievances is endless. One can understand how their anger could reach boiling point and lead to protest, radicalisation and violence. Instead we hear beautiful stories of creative projects that *Grass Roots Jerusalem* has fostered, with communities organising themselves. They try to find a way round the obstacles.

Then we head south to Hebron, We met them in the middle of the Old City. They're there for a rotating three month assignment under the auspices of the World Council of Churches' EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel). The one (I'd guess in her late 70s), from Chicago; the other (again a guess in her early 20s) a Norwegian. They tell about their work, 'accompanying the Palestinian people.' To get to school, many teachers and children have to cross gates in the wall or checkpoints in the city. The same is true for agricultural workers. EAPPI are authorised to monitor the Israeli military at these points and to report any human rights violations to their respective missions.

Work with any group of people who feel alienated or excluded, (including those with leprosy) needs to concentrate on both the excluders and the excluded. Like Eliashib, we need to concentrate on gates, not walls. It can become a meeting point for cultivating understanding and even friendship.

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## Finding Peace Together in Jerusalem

*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May those who love you be secure. (Psalm 122:6)*

We were invited to meet him in his headquarters alongside the Church of the Redeemer in the Old City of Jerusalem and just round the corner from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. He's Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. He explains a little of his diocese and its work, giving great emphasis to education as their principal 'mission'. He sketches a vision of helping young people to develop 'constructive nationalism' and to become better Christians if that's their background, or better Muslims if it's that. But for all, the aim is to cultivate a moderate form of their religion and to be respectful of others.

He movingly describes something of the life of Palestinians in the occupied territories, explaining their essential lack of freedom, from that of movement to land ownership, the daily detentions, the threat of the settlements and more. He's clearly committed to justice for all, and to the 'two state solution' back to the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem, a city giving full rights to three religions and two nations.

He works at local level with churches and church programmes; he needs to speak to the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government. But he also moves in the international, ecumenical and intergovernmental circles, working for his people and for the peace of Jerusalem.

We met another two men in the basement of our hotel at the end of a warm day. And there they were - the one Israeli, the other Palestinian – together!

The Israeli had fought in the army but became disillusioned as he'd seen his land and his comrades lost in the conflict. He is a graphics designer, his wife a professor. But then their 14-year-old daughter dies in a suicide bomb-blast at a Jerusalem bus-station. It takes him a year to glimpse the beginning of some healing. He was encouraged to join the *Parents Circle Family Forum*. In this group that straddles the divide of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Holy Land, some are Israelis, others Palestinians. They've all lost a child.

It was in that forum that he found the other speaker, the Palestinian. He had spent seven years in jail for throwing a hand grenade in a demonstration. But worse was to come when an Israeli border-guard shot and killed his twelve-year-old daughter at a check-point.

They speak together of their commitment to each other, of encouraging all in this land to realise that the price to be paid for violence is far too high. They conclude by saying they're not trying to get people to be pro-Israeli, or pro-Palestinian, but simply to recognise our common humanity, and to work for peace with justice. Their bridge-building has emerged from their own experience of pain and loss. They do so with compassion, integrity and humility as they work for that justice and peace.

Some build bridges at the international level; others nationally; most of us build them locally. The same is true for those working in the field of leprosy, where the values of compassion, integrity, and humility must prevail as we work for justice and inclusion.

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## Who wait for Him

### *Isaiah 64:4*

We read in this verse that God is a God Who works for those who wait for Him. In the Bible there is so much about waiting on God and waiting for Him, and it is not always an easy thing to do.

When I first went to Bhutan, God put these words on my heart, and I felt it was His promise to work in the lives and hearts of people there. It was a matter of waiting and believing He would do what He promised. Over the years we saw this happen with people healed and lives changed, although it sometimes seemed a slow process, but God is always faithful. When you watch God at work in the lives of people, it feels as if you are standing on holy ground.

We do a lot of waiting during our lives. Waiting in queues - something we British are known for! We wait for buses, trains, planes, for workmen to arrive, for appointments at doctors surgeries and hospitals. It makes many people very impatient. Being quite a lazy character, and because I like people watching, I don't mind waiting too much!

A few weeks ago Joyce and I spent many hours over a few days at the doctors surgery and the hospital. She had fallen in the garden and injured her arm which needed some expert care. We certainly had major waits for minor injuries!

Waiting for God is different He works in His own time which is not the same as ours! We sometimes think He is not listening but then become aware that He is at work. Waiting for God and waiting on Him is a discipline. We want to hear what He wants to tell us, or how He wants to guide us, or how He wants to direct our prayers. Then when I have started waiting, I get bombarded by thoughts that are completely irrelevant. The only way I find to overcome this is by meditating on Gods word. Psalm 1: 1-3 tells us the godly person meditates on God's law day and night. Psalm 119:130 says *the entrance of your Word gives light..*

*We all need light for the way, and as we follow the Light of the world we need not fear any darkness.*

**Mollie Clark**, worked in India, Bhutan and the International Office.



## Privilege...

### To be translated onto spirituality!

"I have often said to the orchestra, especially to the younger players,  
'Do your best, and love what you are doing, because you are allowed to do this thing.'  
By this I mean, they can do what millions of people cannot do.  
Many people cannot think of playing music or listening to it until six o'clock in the evening.  
To be involved professionally in a thing as creative as this  
is a great **privilege**  
and we have a duty to make it in such a way  
that we can help bring pleasure and a sense of fulfillment  
to those who are not so fortunate."

**Herbert von Karajan** – Austrian, 1908-1989, one of the greatest conductors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Principal of the Berlin Philharmonic for 35 years,



## 'Born in the City of David'.

Coming from all corners of the global journey  
The queue edges forward in a quest for light  
In a darkness quelled only by energy-savers  
Dangling baubles and chandeliers under scaffolding  
That clads a building under the crane's renovation  
With a ring-a-ring of roses towards the altar  
Adorned by the holy family that is not yet one  
In the waiting game of an over-crowded town  
Making the most of expectant visitors  
Whose existence needs to be registered  
In a land occupied by the unwanted  
Waiting for someone who'll make life better  
Yet rejecting the one bathed in frankincense  
Because he wasn't quite who we thought he was.

**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 dating back to his work at TLM Field Representative for Zambia in the 1970s when based at Chikankata Hospital



## Authors in Alphabetical Order

## Textuarium

Allan Ekstedt	2 November		Genesis 32,24-28	17 November
Apostle Paul	4 November		Number 13	16 November
Christine Osman	6 November		Nehemiah 3,1	29 November
David Beazley	10 November		Psalms 91	5 November
Gordon Brown	1 November		Psalms 92	11 November
Heather Smith	3 November		Psalms 93	12 November
Herbert von Karajan	2 December		Psalms 122,6	30 November
Isaiah, prophet	18 November		Isaiah 6,1-8	18 November
Isaiah, prophet	19 November		Isaiah 6,9-13	19 November
Joyce Missing	9 November		Isaiah 53,1-6	7 November
Joydeepa Darlong Dr	13 November		Isaiah 64,4	1 December
Martin Luther Prof Dr	26 November		Ezekiel 36,27	10 November
Mollie Clark	1 December		Matthew 6,10	28 November
Otto Kingsley	8 November		Matthew 6,9-15	3 November
Paul du Plessis Dr	27, 28, 29,30 November and 3 December		Matthew 8,2	13 November
Peter Laubscher	14 November		Matthew 9	8 November
Piet Both Dr	7 November		Matthew 17,1-7	6 November
Pradeep and Sarah Failbus	16 November		Luke 4,14 and 16	27 November
Raju PLN Dr	20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 November		Luke 4,18-19	2 November
Shem Nuhu Dr	15 November		John 11,1-44	1 November
Steve Withington Dr	17 November		Acts 4,36	9 November
			Gal 6,22-23	4 November
			Ephesians 2,10	15 November
			Col 3,23-24	20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 November
			Hebrew 11,1	14 November

**The Bridge** - TLM Daily Devotions

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