



# **TLM Daily Devotions**

**September 2018**





## Foreword

September in The Leprosy Mission is traditionally the time of the most important meetings of the year: Members', the International Board's, country leaders', country chairs' meetings, discussions and workshops. All this will happen this year in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia along with the international meetings helping us to reach the final goal and purpose of our mission: to help people affected by leprosy to

**"LIFE IN ALL ITS FULLNESS".**

This can only happen with Christ. In Christ. In Christ alone. Without Him life is not complete, not full, not fitting to the creation-purpose.

In Him is everything together: joy, mercy, freedom, light, perspective, love.

This fragmented world needs Him. People affected by leprosy need Him. You and I need Him. Need Him, to achieve

**"LIFE IN ALL ITS FULLNESS".**

*Blessed reading!*

Marta



## Psalm 64

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

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



## Psalm 65

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

- <sup>1</sup> Praise awaits you, our God, in Zion; to you our vows will be fulfilled.  
<sup>2</sup> You who answer prayer, to you all people will come.  
<sup>3</sup> When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions.  
<sup>4</sup> 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.  
<sup>5</sup> 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,  
<sup>6</sup> who formed the mountains by your power,  
having armed yourself with strength,  
<sup>7</sup> who stilled the roaring of the seas,  
the roaring of their waves,  
and the turmoil of the nations.  
<sup>8</sup> The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders;  
where morning dawns, where evening fades,  
you call forth songs of joy.  
<sup>9</sup> 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.  
<sup>10</sup> You drench its furrows and level its ridges;  
you soften it with showers and bless its crops.  
<sup>11</sup> You crown the year with your bounty,  
and your carts overflow with abundance.  
<sup>12</sup> The grasslands of the wilderness overflow;  
the hills are clothed with gladness.  
<sup>13</sup> The meadows are covered with flocks  
and the valleys are mantled with grain;  
they shout for joy and sing.

## Floating



A few months ago, my youngest son started swimming lessons. One of the things that you are taught in the process of learning to swim is how to float, unaided. When done correctly, the person lies back, is relaxed and gently moves along with the rhythm of the water. To master this position and poise, is much harder than it looks! Week after week, my son tried, but often ended up under the water rather than on top of it. Floating requires strong core muscles and faith that the water will hold you and not overwhelm you. No amount of kicking or arm movement will help. In fact, this will make it worse! It is your core muscles (the muscles around your trunk and pelvis), alone that keep you afloat.

### **What (or who) is at your core, the centre of who you are?**

*Read John 1:1-5* The Bible teaches us that through Jesus all things were made. He is at the centre of all life. He is life. He is the core of human existence. As a rebellious and sinful people, we need to repent that so often we have 'our self' at the centre. We need to turn away from 'self' and towards Jesus, giving Him his rightful place at the core of our lives. *Read Matthew 22: 36-40 and Matthew 6: 21, 33*

### **How can you strengthen the lordship of Jesus in your life?**

Just as my son had to practice week after week, we too need to 'practice regularly' the rhythm and routine of giving everything to Jesus and living with Him, each day, as Lord and centre of our lives.

### **The result?**

The Bible promises us a peace that transcends all understanding (*Philippians 4:7*) and a yoke that is light (*Matthew 11:30*). Just as strong core muscles lead to better physical balance and stability so too we will discover better balance and greater stability in our daily lives as we deepen our faith and dependence upon Christ.

Next time you go swimming, try floating. It is an amazing feeling to lie back, rest and allow the waters to carry you. How much more in our daily lives as we rest in Christ, letting go of our 'self' and allowing His Spirit to carry us!



## Appointed and called by God

*"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service." 1 Timothy 1:12*

We are always thankful when someone trusts us and appoints us to a task or position, or if an organization or a church calls us into a responsibility. This is great and we try to do our best to live up to the expectations.

It's almost unbelievable and amazing when God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, calls us into service and trust us for a task in his Kingdom. The apostle Paul considered his calling as a grace from God, and it's in fact a wonderful grace when God calls us, you and me, to be his ambassadors and servants.

*"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." 2 Cor 5:20*

To realize that we are called by God is to begin to understand that he has a plan for us, and that there is a special purpose for our lives. In the beginning we cannot really see the whole picture and we do not know exactly the way forward. But we know that God is in charge and that he is the Lord who guides us.

In the Bible we are sometimes allowed to follow the interesting moment when God calls his servants and we can see that his calling is founded very early in their lives. The plan of God was ready even before their birth.

- Prophet Jeremiah: *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." Jer. 1:5*
- Prophet Isaiah: *"Before I was born the LORD called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name." Isa. 49:1*
- Apostle Paul: *"But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace" Gal. 1:15*
- King David: *"My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts God! How vast is the sum of them!" Ps.139:15-18*

What a privilege to know that the purpose of our lives is not a result of fate or coincidences but of the excellent plan of God! He is the author of the history of our lives and he has prepared everything in advance through his love and grace. *"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Eph. 2:10*

When we say "Yes" to his calling and accept his mastership over our lives, at the same time he says his "Yes" to us! He will be with us and he will go with us. He will guide us, protect us and give his strength and power. And through his presence he will be close to us every day of our lives, both good days and bad days. He will never forsake us or leave us alone.

*"The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Exodus 33:14 "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you." Ps 32:8*

*What a privilege and honor to be called by God himself! Of course we say "Yes" to him!*



## Life in all its Fullness – 1.

### Into your hand

*Psalm 31: 5 Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O LORD, the God of truth and faithfulness.*

Jammu\* was a person affected by leprosy whom we have known for many years.

He was one of the patients with the most severe disabilities and deformities because of leprosy that I have ever seen. When he first came to our hospital as a teenager, he could not walk for many months. The many ulcers on his limbs took a very long time to heal; repetitive infections made life difficult for him. He had to adapt to his disabilities and had limitations that would always have an effect in his physical functioning.

But Jammu's spirit was not to be broken by these setbacks. As soon as it was possible he continued his education; he eventually found a job; worked for many years in the city; later went back to his homestead in a rural area of South Africa and was a successful cattle farmer. Over all these years he constantly had to fight health problems, but Jammu was patient, and always bounced back, even if it meant prolonged periods in hospital.

When he was about 50 years old, he phoned me to come see him in hospital. This time he had sad news. He had cancer of his oesophagus. The prognosis was poor, he was in a lot of pain and discomfort.

On his own accord he shared with me that he felt God is calling him to his heavenly home. Spontaneously he talked about his surrender to God, that God could be trusted in all circumstances, that he had no regrets about his life and was grateful for having had a good life. I was inspired that this was his testimony regardless of the many health problems he had to face over many years. Jammu had a living faith and he knew God could be trusted.

Sometime later Jammu died. I discovered this verse from the book of Psalms, knowing very well, they were also the words of Jammu:

*“Into your hands I commit my spirit. You have redeemed me, O LORD, the God of truth and faithfulness.”*

Ever since, Jammu's life and faith are an inspiration to me.

\*Not his real name.

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



## The Resurrection – 1.

- Are you looking forward to eternity?
- Do you value life on earth more than eternity?
- Where we are going is far better than where we are now!

The apostle Paul focused on drawing people to Jesus the Christ

*1 Corinthians 15:1-8 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.*

This is Paul's message about salvation.

- Salvation means: Forgiveness of sin, being united to God for eternity.
- *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance*

What Paul is about to tell us is important!

1st Christ died for our sins!

- So that we don't have to die because of them!

2nd He was buried.

3rd He rose on the 3rd day!

- The proof of this is that after His resurrection Jesus appeared to over 500 people!

In Romans 1:16-17 Paul writes: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed – a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"*

Salvation is obtained through faith in what Jesus has done for us!

We activate our salvation both for now & eternity: *The righteous will live by faith!*

- My question today is: *Are you saved by faith in what Jesus has done for you?*
- We all are going to live as long as God, that is Forever!
- If you were to die today: Will you spend eternity in heaven?



Let's talk about - The Resurrection of the Dead – This is what Paul tells us:

*12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ... For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

The key to the understanding eternity is: The resurrection of Jesus!

- Our hope that this “Christian thing” is true is based on: The resurrection of Jesus and the 500 people at the same time.
- Our eternal future is based on: The resurrection of Jesus. This gives me hope & joy!
- I will see my father, my mother, my friends & loved ones in eternity and be with them for forever!

*Best of all I'll see Jesus!*

**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.



## The Resurrection – 2.

- Who are you waiting to see?

*20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.*

After Jesus was **crucified** His disciple were afraid, hiding from the Jews

😊 After Jesus was resurrected & ascended to heaven & when they were baptised in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost they paid the ultimate price of death for preaching the Gospel – the Good News!

The resurrection of Jesus does this:

Firstly

- The empty tomb authenticates the truth of the Bible.
- It means what the Bible says is true
- It means that what Jesus said is true - living, death defeating, undeniable proof.

*Romans 1:4 He was declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead*

*John 3:16 Whosoever believes in [Me] will not perish but will have eternal life*

Secondly

- This assures our future resurrection
- Jesus has died and has risen, so we know that our resurrected bodies will in some way resemble His resurrection body.

*Romans 8:11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.”*

- The resurrection of Christ gives us power to live the Christian life

Thirdly

The resurrection of Jesus is a proof of future judgment

- Because Jesus is who He said He was, the Son of God, then that means He was telling the truth when He said there is a heaven but there is also a hell

We love to believe there is heaven!

- Yet so often we don't want to hear or believe that the same Jesus that spoke of heaven also spoke of hell!
- Remember God never sends people to hell they have chosen to ignore His gift of eternal life through Jesus!

*Matt. 7:13-14 NIVUK Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."*

*Matt. 13:37-42 NIVUK He answered, 'The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. 'As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

When this world as we know it is wrapped up this is the final judgment

*Revelation 20:11-15 NIVUK Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire."*

- The resurrection of Jesus is proof that there is a heaven & a hell!
- The resurrection means that Jesus was telling the truth when He said there is only one way to God.
- There is no other religion that will lead to God.

*John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me*

For the last thing I want to say which is

- *...of first importance...*

*☺ With love in my heart: If you to die today do you know for sure that you will go to heaven?*

*If not please make right with Our Heavenly Father through Jesus the Christ, the Son of God,  
the saviour of mankind!*

**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.



## Psalm 66

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

- <sup>1</sup> Shout for joy to God, all the earth!  
<sup>2</sup> Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious.  
<sup>3</sup> Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds!  
So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you.  
<sup>4</sup> All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you,  
they sing the praises of your name.”<sup>[a]</sup>  
<sup>5</sup> Come and see what God has done, his awesome deeds for mankind!  
<sup>6</sup> He turned the sea into dry land, they passed through the waters on foot—  
come, let us rejoice in him.  
<sup>7</sup> He rules forever by his power his eyes watch the nations—  
let not the rebellious rise up against him.  
<sup>8</sup> Praise our God, all peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard;  
<sup>9</sup> he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping.  
<sup>10</sup> For you, God, tested us; you refined us like silver.  
<sup>11</sup> You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs.  
<sup>12</sup> You let people ride over our heads;  
we went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance.  
<sup>13</sup> I will come to your temple with burnt offerings  
and fulfill my vows to you—  
<sup>14</sup> vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke when I was in trouble.  
<sup>15</sup> I will sacrifice fat animals to you and an offering of rams;  
I will offer bulls and goats.  
<sup>16</sup> Come and hear, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.  
<sup>17</sup> I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue.  
<sup>18</sup> If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;  
<sup>19</sup> but God has surely listened and has heard my prayer.  
<sup>20</sup> Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer  
or withheld his love from me!



## Psalm 67

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

- <sup>1</sup> May God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make his face shine on us
- <sup>2</sup> so that your ways may be known on earth,  
your salvation among all nations.
- <sup>3</sup> May the peoples praise you, God;  
may all the peoples praise you.
- <sup>4</sup> May the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
for you rule the peoples with equity  
and guide the nations of the earth.
- <sup>5</sup> May the peoples praise you, God;  
may all the peoples praise you.
- <sup>6</sup> The land yields its harvest;  
God, our God, blesses us.
- <sup>7</sup> May God bless us still,  
so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.



## Remembering who we are in Christ

I'm sure you'll agree that life can sometimes be hard – no matter who we are, no matter where we live, from time to time life presents us with challenges.

And sometimes when we are faced with challenges we end up focusing so much on the problem that we forget who we are in Christ.

At times like this I find it helpful to remember some of Gods promises – to recite them to myself, to take time to reflect on them, to share them with others, to trust them and to 'stand' on them.

Today, let's join together in remembering some of Gods promises to us:

**Promise 1: We are forgiven**

*But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing. (1 John 1:9)*

**Promise 2: We need not fear**

*Jesus said: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)*

**Promise 3: We have access to the wisdom of God concerning the decisions we make**

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. (James 1:5)*

**Promise 4: We are Gods children**

*The Father has loved us so much that we are called children of God. And we really are his children! (1 John 3:1)*

**Promise 5: God delights in us**

*The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing. (Zephaniah 3:17)*

**Promise 6: God is with us**

*Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. (Deuteronomy 31:6)*

**Promise 7: God loves us**

*And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)*



## Boundaries That Bring Freedom

Imagine driving your car over a bridge that's suspended hundreds of feet up in the air. Suppose there are no guardrails on the sides of the bridge; where would you steer the car? Right down the middle of the road! Now imagine there are protective railings in place, and how much more comfortable you'd feel - even though you wouldn't plan to hit the railings, you'd just feel more secure knowing they were there.

It's the same with parenting children. They need to know the family rules, and also that they'll be enforced consistently. There are many clinical and psychological studies which show that children feel more secure and tend to flourish when they know what and where the boundaries are. As long as they stay within those reasonable, well-marked guardrails there's joy, freedom, and peace. Children may not admit that they want Mum or Dad to be the boss, but breathe more easily when they are.

When we tell Grace not to climb on a high wall, it's not because we're trying to deny her the view but because we're trying to protect her from the fall. When we stop Bea from eating whatever she's found on the floor, it's not to deny her a new experience but to protect her from illness. To take the analogy a step further, the fluff-covered sweetie which looks so very tempting to Bea will actually taste pretty disgusting if we let her eat it. She may not be happy when I take it from her hand, but she'd be even less happy if I let her eat it. Shame she doesn't realise that - it would save us a lot of tantrums.

And it's the same with us and God. Many people view the Ten Commandments, or the commands God lays out elsewhere in Scripture, as a nagging, joyless list of stuff we're not allowed to do because God's no fun. I see it as a Father saying to his children, "Please don't do these things. If you do, you'll be hurt or you'll hurt someone else, or both. Your life will be so much better if you can trust me and listen to me." God isn't an overbearing parent who gives us a load of impossible rules to limit our lives and deny us happiness - quite the opposite, in fact. True freedom comes from clear boundaries, not a lack of boundaries. God allows us free will to make whatever choices we want to make, but he also makes it clear to us which decisions will lead only to harm. Even better, he's given us an example, a pathfinder, a role model in Jesus - in him we find all we need to be fulfilled and to find purpose, meaning and joy.

If it feels like God is closing a door today, trust that it's better off closed.

*Deuteronomy 11:8-28 (NLT)<sup>8</sup> "Therefore, be careful to obey every command I am giving you today, so you may have strength to go in and take over the land you are about to enter.<sup>9</sup> If you obey, you will enjoy a long life in the land the Lord swore to give to your ancestors and to you, their descendants—a land flowing with milk and honey! <sup>10</sup> For the land you are about to enter and take over is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you planted your seed and made irrigation ditches with your foot as in a vegetable garden. <sup>11</sup> Rather, the land you will soon take over is a land of hills and valleys with plenty of rain— <sup>12</sup> a land that the Lord your God cares for. He watches over it through each season of the year!*

*<sup>13</sup> "If you carefully obey the commands I am giving you today, and if you love the Lord your God and serve him with all your heart and soul,<sup>14</sup> then he will send the rains in their proper seasons—the early and late rains—so you can bring in your harvests of grain, new wine, and olive oil. <sup>15</sup> He will give you lush pastureland for your livestock, and you yourselves will have all you want to eat.*

<sup>16</sup> “But be careful. Don’t let your heart be deceived so that you turn away from the Lord and serve and worship other gods. <sup>17</sup> If you do, the Lord’s anger will burn against you. He will shut up the sky and hold back the rain, and the ground will fail to produce its harvests. Then you will quickly die in that good land the Lord is giving you.

<sup>18</sup> “So commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these words of mine. Tie them to your hands and wear them on your forehead as reminders. <sup>19</sup> Teach them to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up. <sup>20</sup> Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, <sup>21</sup> so that as long as the sky remains above the earth, you and your children may flourish in the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors.

<sup>22</sup> “Be careful to obey all these commands I am giving you. Show love to the Lord your God by walking in his ways and holding tightly to him. <sup>23</sup> Then the Lord will drive out all the nations ahead of you, though they are much greater and stronger than you, and you will take over their land. <sup>24</sup> Wherever you set foot, that land will be yours. Your frontiers will stretch from the wilderness in the south to Lebanon in the north, and from the Euphrates River in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. <sup>25</sup> No one will be able to stand against you, for the Lord your God will cause the people to fear and dread you, as he promised, wherever you go in the whole land.

<sup>26</sup> “Look, today I am giving you the choice between a blessing and a curse! <sup>27</sup> You will be blessed if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today. <sup>28</sup> But you will be cursed if you reject the commands of the Lord your God and turn away from him and worship gods you have not known before.

**Becky Calcraft**, Programmes Funding Co-ordinator, TLMEW





## “...rejoicing in heaven...”

### Luke 15:7

Earlier in the summer the football world cup competition was dominating the thinking of many sports fans –at least in the countries that qualified! From an English point of view it was good to see that ‘our’ team’s progress was marked by an unusual level of positive support and affirmative comments, as they finished in 4<sup>th</sup> place. There wasn’t much of the usual negative cries and criticisms seen at times before; the manager was widely admired, as was his youthful team. The nation seemed to take them all to its heart.

But for me, another football team was in my heart and mind at the same time. It was the ‘Wild Boars’ junior team, from Mae Sai, Thailand, twelve of whom, with their coach, were trapped far underground for over a fortnight, before a daring rescue, and the death of one rescuer.

It’s hard to imagine the anxiety of the parents, the fear among those children, and the technical brilliance and selfless courage of the rescuers, to say nothing of the tireless efforts of hundreds of back-up workers, including those drilling ‘hopeful’ alternative shafts in case other plans failed.

They say there are very few story-plots in the world, and most tales fit one or another. One of the greatest might be called “loss and redemption”, or “loss and rescue”, -perhaps we can all think of such a story from our own different cultures. Exciting stories don’t come much more thrilling and dramatic than that one, through the submerged caves of Northern Thailand!

If you followed the developing news of those young Thai boys, perhaps, like me, you found your thoughts led irresistibly to our human predicament and the self-sacrificial ‘rescue mission’ of our loving God, through his only Son. The Christian gospel is that story, on a cosmic scale, in which we are the lost ones, and the Son of God is the rescuer finding his way into the darkness of the human predicament, and giving his life as the key part of a successful rescue venture, through which we can live again, as we trust him and are bound to him, as those boys trusted and were literally bound to their rescuers.

It was good to see the relief, joy and celebration as the youngsters emerged, somehow justifying the grief over the one rescuer lost. And Jesus spoke of similar rejoicing in heaven in the parallel spiritual scenario.

Forgive me for ‘using’ that recent event. I tried to think myself into the situation as it developed: the boys’ fear, the parents’ agony, the rescuers’ skill and courage, the doubts of the watching world. I felt that the allegory to the human condition, the fruitless alternative ‘rescue’ attempts, -and then the infinite love of God and the ultimate self-sacrifice of Christ were all too close a comparison to avoid.

And if I may add: -you, in any aspect of TLM’s work... are part of the mission-rescue team of God. He is the key rescuer, but you are part of that amazing back-up team, part of the Body of Christ.

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 chaired the Spiritual Ministry MAWG, and is also able to serve TLM by leading retreat days and other such things as opportunity allows. 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.



## Deaf?

Moored in the bay a short distance from where I live is a floating target. The navy uses this buoy to test the accuracy of its ammunition, by firing shells at it from their shore-based battery. Some years ago, I inadvertently sailed past the battery when they were conducting a live-fire exercise at a target being towed above me by an ancient aircraft. I have seldom been as thankful for the brisk winds of the Cape as I was that day!

Knowing how unpleasant it is to be in close proximity to fast-moving ammunition, I was astounded by the behaviour of two kayakers during a live-fire exercise. They rounded the point at the entrance to the bay on their kayaks and instead of turning back, I watched in disbelief as they steadily paddled towards the buoy, seemingly oblivious to the deafening blast from the canon [which thunders around the mountains] and the huge plumes of spray being thrown up by the exploding shells.

Were they about to be hit by shrapnel? Suddenly, the guns fell silent and a patrol craft intercepted the kayakers and escorted them out of the firing range. I don't think that I have every seen such wilful foolishness on the water. I've seen kayakers taunting whales and risking their lives in 50 knot gales, but this incident took reckless behaviour to a new level. [It was a day of pristine beauty in the Cape, with superb visibility].

The story of Balaam immediately came to mind. *"And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me."* [Numbers 22:32] If the sound and sight of canon-shells does not deter you, what will? Like Balaam, could they not see "the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand"? Commentators have debated the meaning of Balaam and his donkey and whilst there are a variety of interpretations, they all agree that you have come to a low place in your life when the only way the Lord can get through to you is through the voice of a donkey.

In 2011 there was a similar incident at my local beach when a man insisted on entering the water despite being repeatedly warned about the presence of a shark. His life was saved by two supporters of the Leprosy Mission, but he lost a leg in the process. "It's my life!" he insisted as he pushed the shark-spotters aside to enter the water. - Perhaps that's the explanation. "Hey, it's our lives – we're invincible and if something goes wrong, well, it's your fault."

It's easy for that sort of arrogance to seep into the Christian community. We probably don't set out to be as wilfully silly as the kayakers, but once we've started to move in the wrong direction, it becomes increasingly difficult to summon up to courage to admit that we have moved out of His will and that we are merely adding a veneer of spirituality to what is in fact the pathway to destruction.

*"Lord, from your perspective, there's probably so much in my life that looks like those paddlers determinedly heading towards the exploding shells. Help me to change course before you need to send a donkey to speak to me."*

[By the way, if you visit one of the beaches near me at night, you'd be forgiven for thinking that it is inhabited by donkeys – it's a penguin colony and they bray like asses!]

**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.



## Encouragement

### *Hebrews 10:23-25*

Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess because He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing but *let us encourage one another.*

The following story is a gentle example of the power of encouragement:

Two seriously ill men shared a hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back. They talked for hours on end speaking about their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, where they had been on vacation.

Every afternoon when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would spend time describing to his roommate all the things he could see out of his window. The man in the other bed began to live for those one hour periods where his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and colour of the world outside. The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water, children sailed their model boats, people walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every colour and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance. As the man by the window described all this in exquisite detail, the other man would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene. Days and weeks passed.

One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find that the man by the window had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away.

As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone. Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the real world outside. He strained to slowly turn to look out the window beside the bed. It faced a blank wall.

When the nurse returned he asked her what could have compelled his deceased roommate to have described such wonderful things outside the window. The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall.

"Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you," she said.

When we lift our vision away from our own challenging circumstances in order to encourage someone else we find that the encouragement we share brings encouragement and joy to ourselves as well.

*"Encourage one another and build each other up."  
1 Thessalonians 5:11*

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



## Psalm 68

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

- <sup>1</sup> May God arise, may his enemies be scattered;  
may his foes flee before him.
- <sup>2</sup> May you blow them away like smoke—  
as wax melts before the fire,  
may the wicked perish before God.
- <sup>3</sup> But may the righteous be glad  
and rejoice before God;  
may they be happy and joyful.
- <sup>4</sup> Sing to God, sing in praise of his name,  
extol him who rides on the clouds;  
rejoice before him—his name is the LORD.
- <sup>5</sup> A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,  
is God in his holy dwelling.
- <sup>6</sup> God sets the lonely in families,  
he leads out the prisoners with singing;  
but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.
- <sup>7</sup> When you, God, went out before your people,  
when you marched through the wilderness,
- <sup>8</sup> the earth shook, the heavens poured down rain,  
before God, the One of Sinai,  
before God, the God of Israel.
- <sup>9</sup> You gave abundant showers, O God;  
you refreshed your weary inheritance.
- <sup>10</sup> Your people settled in it,  
and from your bounty, God, you provided for the poor.
- <sup>11</sup> The Lord announces the word,  
and the women who proclaim it are a mighty throng:
- <sup>12</sup> “Kings and armies flee in haste;  
the women at home divide the plunder.
- <sup>13</sup> Even while you sleep among the sheep pens,  
the wings of my dove are sheathed with silver,  
its feathers with shining gold.”
- <sup>14</sup> When the Almighty<sup>[f]</sup> scattered the kings in the land,  
it was like snow fallen on Mount Zalmon.

<sup>15</sup> Mount Bashan, majestic mountain,  
Mount Bashan, rugged mountain,  
<sup>16</sup> why gaze in envy, you rugged mountain,  
at the mountain where God chooses to reign,  
where the LORD himself will dwell forever?  
<sup>17</sup> The chariots of God are tens of thousands  
and thousands of thousands;  
the Lord has come from Sinai into his sanctuary.  
<sup>18</sup> When you ascended on high,  
you took many captives;  
you received gifts from people,  
even from the rebellious—  
that you, LORD God, might dwell there.



## Psalm 68 - Part 2

<sup>19</sup> Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior,  
who daily bears our burdens.

<sup>20</sup> Our God is a God who saves;  
from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death.

<sup>21</sup> Surely God will crush the heads of his enemies,  
the hairy crowns of those who go on in their sins.

<sup>22</sup> The Lord says, "I will bring them from Bashan;  
I will bring them from the depths of the sea,

<sup>23</sup> that your feet may wade in the blood of your foes,  
while the tongues of your dogs have their share."

<sup>24</sup> Your procession, God, has come into view,  
the procession of my God and King into the sanctuary.

<sup>25</sup> In front are the singers, after them the musicians;  
with them are the young women playing the timbrels.

<sup>26</sup> Praise God in the great congregation;  
praise the LORD in the assembly of Israel.

<sup>27</sup> There is the little tribe of Benjamin, leading them,  
there the great throng of Judah's princes,  
and there the princes of Zebulun and of Naphtali.

<sup>28</sup> Summon your power, God  
show us your strength, our God, as you have done before.

<sup>29</sup> Because of your temple at Jerusalem  
kings will bring you gifts.

<sup>30</sup> Rebuke the beast among the reeds,  
the herd of bulls among the calves of the nations.

Humbled, may the beast bring bars of silver.  
Scatter the nations who delight in war.

<sup>31</sup> Envoys will come from Egypt;  
Cush will submit herself to God.

<sup>32</sup> Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth,  
sing praise to the Lord,

<sup>33</sup> to him who rides across the highest heavens, the ancient heavens,  
who thunders with mighty voice.

<sup>34</sup> Proclaim the power of God,  
whose majesty is over Israel,  
whose power is in the heavens.

<sup>35</sup> You, God, are awesome in your sanctuary;  
the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people.

*Praise be to God!*



## The Watchman

### Read PS 130

Ps 130 is a stripped back cry for help. A shout to God from someone desperate. Verse six stands out to me. *"I wait for the Lord: more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning"*. It's an evocative picture. Watchmen would guard the walls, alert to danger.

It is not a glamorous job. Many of us have lived in places, or currently live in places where we lived in compounds with watchmen at the gates. It is a job that alternates long periods of boredom with times of intense danger. People robbed every compound we lived in during eleven years in Kenya. The watchmen faced assault or even death. For not very much money.

It was not much different for the watchmen in this Psalm. They would have been alert to every sound. The temptation of falling asleep was ever present. Shifting shadows could have been a cloud. Or enemies crossing ground. How watchmen must wait for the morning!

It is no wonder the psalmist uses it as a metaphor. They are waiting for the Lord even more than a watchmen wants the morning sun to bring his shift to an end. The psalmist is hanging out for the Lord! They are in the middle of a dark night filled with shifting shadows. Surrounded by scary sounds and the ever present danger of falling asleep on the job.

This is a psalm crying for help. But like many of the Psalms it points us back to God as our source of help.

Sometimes it feels like we are in the dark night of a soul. We cannot wait for God to intervene. As Christians we live in the tension of the risen Jesus who is yet to come again.

Like the psalmist we are waiting for Jesus to come again. Even as we cry out with the psalmist *"I wait for the Lord: more than watchmen wait for the morning"*. Even then we can bring some daylight into the night.

The risen Jesus does hear us, and does give us rest. He showed us how to find it in a practical way. Luke 5:16 is one of many times we see Jesus withdrawing to pray, to refresh from the business of his day. If the watchmen's cry resonates with you, you can bring a little sunshine into your night by copying Jesus. If you have an office you can shut your door. Or you can duck out of the office. Or stop your car on the side of the road. Or retreat into a room in your house.

And then tell Jesus what worries you. What fears in the night are pressing on your heart. What shadows are scaring you. I find telling Jesus what is pressing on me brings relief. And having told Jesus, sit in silence for a minute or two. See what He lays on your heart. This whole process doesn't need to take more than five minutes. You may even invite a close friend to do this with you. Like the watchman, if you can't wait for the morning, remember Jesus is the morning star who signals day break. Spend time with him. Bring a little Sunshine into the night!



## God's extravagant grace

### *2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12*

The account of David and Bathsheba is well known. As he crumbled under the temptation to possess the beautiful Bathsheba, he broke the commands of do not covet, do not commit adultery and do not murder. It's a sad episode in a life that is otherwise held up as an example of integrity and devotion to God. The trouble is it's all too easy to put seemingly godly people on pedestals and we must all beware of this temptation. We need to accept that we are all flawed human beings – as Paul writes in **Romans 3:23** all have fallen short of the glory of God.

After the incident with Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan challenged David with a dramatic parable, and amazingly David's repentance was immediate and genuine as shown in his well known **Psalm 51**. But equally immediate is Nathan's declaration that God had forgiven David. What an incredible reminder of God's extravagant grace – after all David had broken three of the ten commandments and seriously abused his power as king.

### *2 Samuel chapters 14-19*

The account of David and his son Absalom is probably less well known but follows directly after the Bathsheba incident. In Absalom's rebellion he also broke a commandment – to honour your father and mother, and it's clear that the act of defiance against his father was pure treason, with the threat of civil war hanging over the whole country. These chapters give the account of how David prevailed over this rebellion, and how Absalom his son was killed (or we may even say murdered) in the ensuing fighting. This was in an age of brutality when kings had to rule by military might or run the risk of losing the throne.

But in spite of Absalom's rebellion and lack of respect for his father, David mourned deeply for him when he learned he was dead. He withdrew for all company to the point of offending the very men who fought so hard for him in order to keep him on the throne. It took some honest confrontation by his army general Joab before he realised he had an obligation to show gratitude to those who were loyal to him, and dishonour them by mourning those who had been disloyal.

Absalom was sinful and flawed like the rest of us. But it's clear that David never stopped loving him to the very end. Perhaps this show of love was influenced by events in the previous chapters when David was confronted with his own sinful and flawed nature. It was through David's experience of falling into sin, and receiving forgiveness that he came to fully understand the extravagant grace of God and the power of his renewing forgiveness in our lives. Although Psalm 130 is not attributed to David, it beautifully summarises these thoughts:

*<sup>3</sup> If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? <sup>4</sup> But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.*

So - no more pedestals! We all have fallen short of the glory of God, and we all can turn to him to receive his extravagant grace.





## What is christianity really all about???

A) It is about a SAVIOUR!

*Rom.5:8 – “But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

B) It is about a SPIRITUALITY!

*2 Tim.1:7 – “For God did not give us a spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control.”*

C) It is about a SOBRIETY!

*Rom.14:17 – “For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”*

D) It is about LORDSHIP!

*Rom.12:1,2 - “I appeal to you brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

☒ ABOUT DEVOTION and DISCERNMENT!!

E) It is about LIFE!

*Rom.12:3–8 – “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith*

*that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

*Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them:*

*If prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in his generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”*

☒ NOT ABOUT OUR RELIGION, BUT ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP/DEDICATION!!

F) It is about LOVE!

*Rom.12:9-21 – “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in honouring. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do*

*what is honourable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’*

*To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*

#### ☒ ABOUT DYING-TO-SELF AND DOING-FOR-OTHERS!!

##### Conclusion:-

*NOT ROM.13:13 – "Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarrelling and jealousy."*

*BUT 1 COR.13:13 – "So now faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."*

*AND Psalm 68:19,20 – "Blessed be the LORD, Who daily bears us up. Our God is a God of salvation,  
And to God, our Lord, belong deliverances from death." -Amen.*

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



## Statues and Images

I was watching a sporting documentary a few nights ago. It was looking at some controversial history and some of the greatest players from the past. I lost count of the number of times someone said “If we were ever going to erect a statue outside our stadium it would be of him”.

Statues have been in the news a lot recently. The violence at Charlottesville started around a protest about old statues. At Universities in different countries students have been protesting about statues of the great and the good from previous centuries whose attitudes to various social issues are no longer considered acceptable. It made me wonder about why we have these statues at all – what are they for?

When a statue is erected it is to draw attention to the person depicted. It is to remind people of their importance to give them honour publicly. They are glorified.

When a statue is defaced or torn down it is to challenge that reputation, it is a very deliberate act of dishonouring and belittling the person, of removing them from their place in history and from public recognition.

The treatment of the image is a statement about the person themselves.

In Genesis chapter 1 it says that God made mankind *“in his own image”*. We are “his likeness”. Every human being is a small depiction of God, in a sense, a living statue. Humans were created to be a reminder of God’s greatness and to increase His glory and honour – whether they know it or not. Each of us can choose to try to enhance that image or to deface it through every action we take and every word we speak.

Paul wrote the Corinthians *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”*

Let us choose today to live as images of God, that in our eating and drinking, our work, our conversations, our driving, our laughter, tears and every area of life we will increase the glory of God and enhance his reputation among those around us.

Statues don’t always have to be serious. In 2 Scottish cities there are prominent statues to favourite local cartoon characters and in Glasgow city centre the Duke of Wellington is rarely seen without a traffic cone on his head – there was a public protest when the council tried to stop this from happening.

*Joy, laughter and fun can also bring glory to God if we remember that even these are his gifts to us.*



## Love letter

Your life already counts for something!

When you say to yourself *"I've got to make my life count!"*

You are inferring that it does not count now – and, it has not counted thus far.

I tell you – YOUR LIFE ALREADY COUNTS – it always has, and it always will.

"I have counted all the hairs on your head – You don't think I already value and appreciate your life?"

"I MADE you! I created you. I knitted you together in your mother's womb."

"Don't insult Me, your Creator."

Your life counts. YOU count.

"I love you. You are EVERYTHING to me (I died for you!)"

Love others and yourself.

It all counts. You all count.

LOVE – as if your life counts on it – because it does...

You LOVE because I first LOVED and LOVE YOU!

I made you out of love, in love and I AM LOVE – and so are you!

Love (from),

LOVE





## Psalm 69

*For the director of music. To the tune of "Lilies." Of David.*

<sup>1</sup> Save me, O God,  
for the waters have come up to my neck.

<sup>2</sup> I sink in the miry depths,  
where there is no foothold.

I have come into the deep waters;  
the floods engulf me.

<sup>3</sup> I am worn out calling for help;  
my throat is parched.

My eyes fail,  
looking for my God.

<sup>4</sup> Those who hate me without reason  
outnumber the hairs of my head;  
many are my enemies without cause,  
those who seek to destroy me.

I am forced to restore  
what I did not steal.

<sup>5</sup> You, God, know my folly;  
my guilt is not hidden from you.

<sup>6</sup> Lord, the LORD Almighty,  
may those who hope in you  
not be disgraced because of me;  
God of Israel,

may those who seek you  
not be put to shame because of me.

<sup>7</sup> For I endure scorn for your sake,  
and shame covers my face.

<sup>8</sup> I am a foreigner to my own family,  
a stranger to my own mother's children;

<sup>9</sup> for zeal for your house consumes me,  
and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.

<sup>10</sup> When I weep and fast,  
I must endure scorn;

<sup>11</sup> when I put on sackcloth,  
people make sport of me.

<sup>12</sup> Those who sit at the gate mock me,  
and I am the song of the drunkards.

<sup>13</sup> But I pray to you, LORD,  
in the time of your favor;

in your great love, O God,  
answer me with your sure salvation.

<sup>14</sup> Rescue me from the mire,  
do not let me sink;  
deliver me from those who hate me,  
from the deep waters.

<sup>15</sup> Do not let the floodwaters engulf me  
or the depths swallow me up  
or the pit close its mouth over me.



## Psalm 69 – Part 2.

- <sup>16</sup> Answer me, LORD, out of the goodness of your love;  
in your great mercy turn to me.
- <sup>17</sup> Do not hide your face from your servant;  
answer me quickly, for I am in trouble.
- <sup>18</sup> Come near and rescue me;  
deliver me because of my foes.
- <sup>19</sup> You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed;  
all my enemies are before you.
- <sup>20</sup> Scorn has broken my heart  
and has left me helpless;  
I looked for sympathy, but there was none,  
for comforters, but I found none.
- <sup>21</sup> They put gall in my food  
and gave me vinegar for my thirst.
- <sup>22</sup> May the table set before them become a snare;  
may it become retribution and a trap.
- <sup>23</sup> May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see,  
and their backs be bent forever.
- <sup>24</sup> Pour out your wrath on them;  
let your fierce anger overtake them.
- <sup>25</sup> May their place be deserted;  
let there be no one to dwell in their tents.
- <sup>26</sup> For they persecute those you wound  
and talk about the pain of those you hurt.
- <sup>27</sup> Charge them with crime upon crime;  
do not let them share in your salvation.
- <sup>28</sup> May they be blotted out of the book of life  
and not be listed with the righteous.
- <sup>29</sup> But as for me, afflicted and in pain—  
may your salvation, God, protect me.
- <sup>30</sup> I will praise God's name in song  
and glorify him with thanksgiving.
- <sup>31</sup> This will please the LORD more than an ox,  
more than a bull with its horns and hooves.
- <sup>32</sup> The poor will see and be glad—  
you who seek God, may your hearts live!
- <sup>33</sup> The LORD hears the needy  
and does not despise his captive people.

<sup>34</sup> Let heaven and earth praise him,  
the seas and all that move in them,  
<sup>35</sup> for God will save Zion  
and rebuild the cities of Judah.  
Then people will settle there and possess it;  
<sup>36</sup> the children of his servants will inherit it,  
and those who love his name will dwell there.





## What Jesus really came for - 1.

*“He healed many who were sick with various diseases.” ..... And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, so that I may preach there also; for that is why I came out.” Mark 9:29-39*

PhD holders are causing confusion in Africa. People call them doctors and when simple village folks hear it, they flock to them with all their health problems. These “doctors” find themselves in a serious predicament as they try to explain that even though they are called doctors they do not cure the sick. Nobody seems to give a satisfactory answer to the question of the village folks: “If they do not cure the sick, why do people call them doctors?”

In today’s message, Jesus finds himself in a similar predicament. Jesus came as saviour of the world. *The prophet Isaiah had said of him that by his bruises we are healed and made whole (Isaiah 53:4)*. True to type, in the synagogue he heals a man with an unclean spirit. From the synagogue he goes to peter’s house and heals his mother in-law who has a fever. *“That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons .... And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons” (Mark 1:32-34)*. Then, very early in the morning he escapes to a quiet spot to pray. Before he could finish his morning prayers his disciples hunt him down and inform him that an even larger crowd has gathered with their sick and infirm and that everyone is looking for him. You would expect Jesus to say, “Great, now we are in business. Now they are coming. Our strategy is working.” But what does he say? He says no, *“Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do” (Mark 1:38)*.

Excuse me! Proclaim the message? What message is greater than healing the sick and restoring to them their human dignity that has been disfigured by sickness and poverty? Isn’t that essentially what Jesus came for? Well, not exactly. Jesus came to bring good news to the poor (Luke 4:18). This good news is spiritual and material just as the human person is soul and body. But when it comes to order of priority, the spiritual comes first, then the material. This order is brought out in Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount:

*“Seek you first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33)*.

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## What Jesus really came for – 2.

*“He healed many who were sick with various diseases.” ..... And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, so that I may preach there also; for that is why I came out.” Mark 9:29-39*

What Jesus came to do, in other words is to proclaim the Good News of the kingdom of God, to invite all humankind to let God reign as king in their hearts and in their lives, to reconcile us with God and with one another. Much of the sickness, poverty and suffering that exists in our world is traceable to the state of disharmony or sin that separates us from God and from one another. By healing this root cause of all our problems, we find ourselves in a position to receive God’s abundant blessings in all areas of our life, spiritual as well as physical, moral as well as material, social as well as psychological. But to try to seek physical healing and material well-being without first making peace with God is to miss the point. It is putting the cart before the horse. It does not work. This is probably what the people of Capernaum try to do with Jesus that morning. So Jesus boycotts them and continue to other cities of galilee to proclaim the message.

The big crowd that came looking for Jesus that morning went home disappointed. They did not find him. Why? Because they were looking for him for the wrong reasons. They were looking for Jesus simply to get what they wanted; they were not interested what Jesus came to give. Not that Jesus was not interested in our material welfare. He is. But the spiritual must come first. Like the people of Capernaum we come to church on Sunday looking for Jesus. We come with our various problems of soul and body. To avoid disappointment the first thing we need to do is to forget our personal problems and seek the kingdom of God that Jesus came to proclaim. When we find the kingdom of God then God himself will see to all our other needs of soul and body.

*We could pray thus: Lord, I seek your kingdom as it presents to me all the abundance of your promises.*

*Jesus, I trust in You.*

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## My purpose; my Spirit – Part 1.

### Why am I in this world?

Many people have 3 foundational life questions:

Who am I (Identity),

Why am I in this world (Purpose) and

How to fulfil my purpose (Process)?

Even after being saved through faith in Jesus Christ and made righteous in the sight of God, many believers struggle with the purpose and process questions.

I found my purpose in the Lord's Prayer. What He expects of me in this world.

Jesus taught us to pray *"your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10). I am here to further the expansion of God's Kingdom on the earth. I am on an assignment. It is not about me, but all about Him. I am the instrument commissioned to expand God's Kingdom through making disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). Those who inherit the Kingdom of God are to bear its fruit (John 15:16) so that Jesus is accepted as the Saviour King, worshipped as the one true living God and His rule of mercy and love is established. I have a responsibility in His kingdom.

When Jesus came, Kingdom of God was made available to us. Jesus said, *"The kingdom of God has come near to you"* (Luke 10:9), *"The kingdom of God is in the midst of you"* (Luke 17:21). It came in Christ: it is here. It is personal and spiritual. It is the person of Jesus Himself, His presence. Luke summarizes Jesus' ministry as *"proclaiming and bringing the good news of the Kingdom of God"* (Luke 8:1). Jesus Christ's mission was to announce God's kingdom. He is passing on His kingdom to us (*"Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them"* Matthew 13:11).

Jesus Christ's kingdom is a heavenly kingdom in this world (*"My kingdom is not of this world. .... But now my kingdom is from another place"* John 18:36). A spiritual world in a physical world. It is spirit driven with Jesus as the King. The only "narrow" path to enter and be part of the Kingdom of God is through spiritual rebirth in Christ (*"Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again"* John 3:3). Through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus (the one who saves/Saviour) Christ (the anointed/Messiah) on the cross, I enter His kingdom. When I receive Jesus in my heart and soul as my personal saviour, I am in the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, *"Remain in me, as I also remain in you"* (John 15:4). With Him, I am in His kingdom.

The kingdom of God is one of love and forgiveness (Matthew 6:12, Luke 17:3-4). Love is God's primary character (John 3:16).

A forgiving heart carries no burdens. It is free from strife, jealousy, regrets and hurts. A ripe ground for the love of God to take roots. In the spirit filled Kingdom of God I bear fruit in my attitudes and actions (*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law"* Galatians 5:22). The Kingdom where Jesus is worshipped as the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

My effort (seed) may be as small as a mustard seed; but God will grow into it into a huge tree where others (non-believers) come and make their home and are saved (*"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."* Matthew 13:31-32). I am not a passer-by in this world. But a significant citizen furthering God's Kingdom. To demonstrate to people that Jesus is the only Redeemer (*"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* John 14:6). The

effort (sowing the seed) is according to my will and the outcome (Kingdom of God) is as per His plan. God is interested in my effort and not the results.

The kingdom of God will come in its fulness at the second coming of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:24; Rev 12:10). Till then, I shall sow Him (as the seed) in people's souls for His kingdom to grow.

In gratitude; for His glory.

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



## My purpose; my Spirit – Part 2.

### How do I fulfil God's purpose?

Jesus said, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). I cannot fulfil His purpose for me on my own desire, accord and ability. I need to be attached and dependent on Him. Draw my energy, strength, knowledge, understanding and wisdom from Him. He gives, I receive. He sustains, I get nourished. I must in obedience humbly submit myself to His grace and listen to His voice through the Holy Spirit.

### How does God equip me for His purpose?

He equips me not by setting rules, regulations, laws, rituals etc., but through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. To sustain my faith in my salvation, the Holy Spirit is given as a gift to be my counsellor. (*"... And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever - the Spirit of truth....."* John 14:15-17; *"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth..... He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you"* John 16:13-14). The Person, Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit equips me for my purpose.

### The Person

The Holy Spirit is a person in the Triune God. He was personally involved in the creation (Genesis 1). "It is a fundamental revelation of Scripture that the Holy Spirit is a person in the same sense that God the Father is a person and the Lord Jesus Christ is a person" (John Walvoord). God inducted Jesus into His ministry after anointing Him with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit led Jesus to face Devil's temptations and overcome them (Luke Chapter 3 & 4). The Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus in His place to represent Him (John 16:7). The Holy Spirit being a person (not an inanimate thing) makes it possible for me to approach Him (just like Jesus) to communicate, converse and have fellowship.

He understands my struggles; person to person, spirit to spirit. It is through the person of Holy Spirit I hear Jesus' voice.

### The Presence

Since the Holy Spirit is present in me, He reminds me Jesus' teachings on kingdom of God (*"But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, .... will remind you of everything I have said to you"* John 14:26). He gives me the right words and works to speak and do, all at the right time. I shall never ever be alone (John 14:16). No more loneliness in this world. My fellowship with my Saviour is assured. At no point of time, me and my Saviour are separated. The joy of salvation resides/embedded in me. I am filled by God's grace. I bear fruit in God's kingdom because of His indwelling Spirit (*".... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..."* Galatians 5:22-23). His presence empowers me (Zacharia 4:6), gives me my identity (Romans 8:14), comforts me (John 14:18), gives me peace (John 14:27), convicts me of my sins (John 16:8), helps me to pray (Romans 8:26) and teaches me (John 16:13).

### The Power

To endure and overcome the challenges of building God's kingdom, I am given the power of Holy Spirit (*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses ..... to the ends of the earth"* Acts 1:8). The power Jesus had in defeating Satan is available to me now (*"I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you"* Luke 10:19). This power is meant for reclaiming the world (souls) to God from Satan, who stole it by deceiving man. It is for evicting Satan from the kingdom that rightfully belongs to God's people. We are powerless is a lie of the Devil. People of God are powerful people (*"For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline"* 2 Tim 1:7).

*I fulfil my God given purpose with the indwelling Spirit of God*

In gratitude; for His glory. **Dr PLN Raju** - Former Director (Resource Mobilization) The Leprosy Mission Trust India



## Michaelmas

**Revelation 12 7-12** The patient in the SIM hospital in Danja (Niger) who asked how many wives I have made me think about the distinctive and spiritual aspects of Christian Mission. That is a good theme for « Michaelmas day » (the feast of St Michael and all Angels on 29 September). We remember Michael because he is mentioned in the New Testament (Revelation 12:7 sqq.) Michael is also mentioned in the Quran (2.98,) which asks who is an enemy to Allah and His angels ...as well as to Gabriel and Michael. The Archangel Michael was a popular Saint and a legendary figure. He is a kind of patron of St Michael's Mount in Cornwall (UK) and the (grander) Mont St Michel in France. In the three monotheistic tradition we remember the warrior, who fought for what is good and right. For the Jews Michael is the Protector of Israel (Daniel 12:1-<sup>1</sup> « Michael the great prince, shall stand up,(for the children of thy people). There shall be a time of trouble ... and at that time your people shall be delivered.

A medical mission with a Christian foundation might be confused by a mixture of religions. The **Incarnation** when God became man in Christ, which is fundamental for us, is incomprehensible to the Jews and even more difficult in Islam. So Michael looks like a syncretistic renegade. Truth matters for its own sake. The amalgamation of religions does not work. Ecumenism, which does is different because our agreement about fundamental things helps us to define our convictions. A theologian, called Bernard Lonergan, proposed that we are converted intellectually, morally and spiritually. All three aspects are related and important because they work in two directions. Some people become Christian when they hear the Gospel. Really to be Christian demands that we live our religion too. So preaching is not quite complete in itself. Other people are converted because they discover the Holy Spirit, like St Paul on the Damascus Road or the disciples at Pentecost. As they become Christian they also need to think it out. St Paul was very good at that, but intellectual enough to be difficult as well. Other Christians are transformed by the love of God to do good. They are not worried about intellectual things, but they are eager to share God's love. In our Mission an example might be a medical academic who is not too worried about reading the Bible in Greek or Hebrew. God has the whole wide world in his hands.

God's love is without condition. We would deny that if we limited humanitarian work according to religious or conceptual criteria so we can avoid theological philosophy for the patients or the medical staff though we know is that there is only one God. The Jewish Bible writes YHWH in Hebrew - a kind of name that possibly means « he is. » That is all we can say because God and his name are as Holy as identity is mysterious. Jews who read the Bible in the synagogue say *Adonai for YHWH*. It means « my Lord. » Like the blessing in the Anglican Communion service it implies that the peace of God *passes all understanding*. Each of us is loved as well.

So Michael the Archangel fights against evil and belongs to the God of all the earth « on another shore and in a greater light. » The English mystic, Julian of Norwich, shared spiritual experience in a work called « The Cloud of Unknowing. » Jesus told Pontius Pilate that he had come into the world to bear witness to truth. Pilate asked « what is truth » for which the word ἀληθεια. It really means « what is unhidden. » Michael identified evil as we should stand for the good against all evil, including physical suffering. Our work is for all. Michael is an example because he belongs to everyone. So we serve our God of all the earth, present in Jerusalem and obviously in our Christian churches and homes, but not exactly absent from the House of Rimmon (II Kings 5:18).

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



## Psalm 70

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

<sup>1</sup>Hasten, O God, to save me;  
come quickly, LORD, to help me.

<sup>2</sup>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.

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

<sup>4</sup>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!"

<sup>5</sup>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 71

<sup>1</sup>In you, LORD, I have taken refuge;  
let me never be put to shame.

<sup>2</sup>In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me;  
turn your ear to me and save me.

<sup>3</sup>Be my rock of refuge,  
to which I can always go;  
give the command to save me,  
for you are my rock and my fortress.

<sup>4</sup>Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked,  
from the grasp of those who are evil and cruel.

<sup>5</sup>For you have been my hope, Sovereign LORD,  
my confidence since my youth.

<sup>6</sup>From birth I have relied on you;  
you brought me forth from my mother's womb.  
I will ever praise you.

<sup>7</sup>I have become a sign to many;  
you are my strong refuge.

<sup>8</sup>My mouth is filled with your praise,  
declaring your splendor all day long.

<sup>9</sup>Do not cast me away when I am old;  
do not forsake me when my strength is gone.

<sup>10</sup>For my enemies speak against me;  
those who wait to kill me conspire together.

<sup>11</sup>They say, "God has forsaken him;  
pursue him and seize him,  
for no one will rescue him."

<sup>12</sup>Do not be far from me, my God;  
come quickly, God, to help me.

<sup>13</sup>May my accusers perish in shame;  
may those who want to harm me  
be covered with scorn and disgrace.

<sup>14</sup>As for me, I will always have hope;  
I will praise you more and more.



<sup>15</sup> My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds,  
of your saving acts all day long—  
though I know not how to relate them all.

<sup>16</sup> I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, Sovereign LORD;  
I will proclaim your righteous deeds, yours alone.

<sup>17</sup> Since my youth, God, you have taught me,  
and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.

<sup>18</sup> Even when I am old and gray,  
do not forsake me, my God,  
till I declare your power to the next generation,  
your mighty acts to all who are to come.

<sup>19</sup> Your righteousness, God, reaches to the heavens,  
you who have done great things.  
Who is like you, God?

<sup>20</sup> Though you have made me see troubles,  
many and bitter,  
you will restore my life again;  
from the depths of the earth  
you will again bring me up.

<sup>21</sup> You will increase my honor  
and comfort me once more.

<sup>22</sup> I will praise you with the harp  
for your faithfulness, my God;  
I will sing praise to you with the lyre,  
Holy One of Israel.

<sup>23</sup> My lips will shout for joy  
when I sing praise to you—  
I whom you have delivered.

<sup>24</sup> My tongue will tell of your righteous acts  
all day long,  
for those who wanted to harm me  
have been put to shame and confusion.

## Authors in Alphabetical Order

## Textuarium

Allan Ekstedt	4 Sept		Numbers 22,32	13 Sept
Becky Calcraft	11 Sept		Deut 11,8-28	11 Sept
Belinda Pettman	21 Sept		2 Sam 11 and 12	18 Sept
Dan Izzett	6, 7 Sept		Psalm 31	5 Sept
David Beazley	12 Sept		Psalm 64	1 Sept
David, King of Israel	1, 2, 15, 22, 29 Sept		Psalm 65	2 Sept
James Barnett	28 Sept		Psalm 66	8 Sept
Jane Willcocks	10 Sept		Psalm 67	9 Sept
Joanne Briggs	3 Sept		Psalm 68	15, 16 Sept
Kathleen Gavin	14 Sept		Psalm 69	22, 23 Sept
Moses Onoh MD	24, 25 Sept		Psalm 70	29 Sept
Otto Kingsley	19 Sept		Psalm 71	30 Sept
Peter Laubscher	13 Sept		Psalm 130	17 Sept
Raju PLN Dr	26, 27 Sept		Matthew 6,10	26 Sept
Stuart McAra	20 Sept		Mark 9,29-39	24, 25 Sept
Tim Collison	17 Sept		Luke 15,7	12 Sept
Trevor Durston	18 Sept		John 1, 1-5	3 Sept
			John 15,5	27 Sept
			1 Cor 15	6,7 Sept
			Hebr 10,23-25	14 Sept
			1 Tim 1,12	4 Sept
			Rev 12,7-12	28 Sept

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**The Bridge** - TLM Daily Devotions

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