



# **TLM Daily Devotions**

**November 2018**





## All Saints

The first day of November is the feast of All Saints. In a good Protestant medical Mission saints may not be the highlight of the year! They were a contentious issue at the Reformation because the Protestant watchword was « justification by faith. » In other traditions, like the Catholic one, Christians still ask the Saints to pray for them. Some, but by no means all Anglicans, do so as well. The tradition existed because medieval Christians worried about “the devil and all his works.” The devil was renounced, along with “all the sinful lusts of the flesh” in the Anglican catechism until only forty years ago.

Sometimes wall paintings in old churches include lurid pictures of Satan or the devil, or indeed of demons together with the fires of eternal punishment. Satan is the Hebrew for an “adversary” and not a name. In this case, the adversary is one who opposes God’s will. So Jesus’ death on the cross and *his resurrection includes our liberation from the cosmic or universal powers of darkness - Ephesians 6:12.*

God is on our side and he makes that real by the word made flesh who shares our nature. As for us, we are sinners, but sin is quite a difficult concept. At the time of the Reformation Christians were worried about transgressions. That means being bad or naughty. The word is used in the new testament, but the more usual word for “sin” is about falling short - αμαρτια rather than παραπτωμα which means transgression. None of us is complete: we are imperfect or we fall ill and we need God’s love.

Because making a mistake or being imperfect is not culpable, asking the Saints to pray for us is not very logical as mistakes or imperfection are less blameworthy than transgression.. The New Testament seems to agree because it says relatively little about forgiveness just as St. Paul writes about reconciliation. The word is καταλλαγω (katallago). It refers to the other with whom we hope to be “make our peace.” The word for forgiveness, αφιημι refers to taking something away, as if it had never happened. We may be tempted by the idea because it is simple. Unfortunately the removal of responsibility and the concomitant non-responsibility also diminished our dignity because we were not responsible for what we do or have done.

The overwhelming majority of human beings are pretty immune from leprosy. It is not a person’s fault that he or she has the disease and it is certainly not punishment by a vengeful god with a small g. It might be a weakness, but then Jesus died to make us more complete, to reconcile and redeem or save us (σωτηρια means salvation). The work of a medical mission is to take part in that process.

Let’s go back to those saints. In Greek they are called the hagioi, which is used for saints but means “holy” as well. That is arguably the real meaning in the best Greek. So, who are all the saints. Well, we are among them. We may not be as good as some of the official ones, but our medicine is better. Veronica tended Jesus on his way to Calvary and in tending the ill or handicapped we do likewise.

So, whether we like Saints who pray for us or not, we are part of that “multitude whom no man has numbered, whose hope was in the word made flesh.” As for being a saint, Veronica tended Jesus on his way to the cross and we should meet human need wherever and whenever we find it. As for the prayers of saints, that is a more open question than sharing the love of God towards those whose failings are not culpable or in sharing his reconciling love to the culpable. We care for people who experience the simple injustice of disease which no one deserves.

### 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.



## 'The Repair Shop'

*Psalm 103:1-14 and Psalm 23:3      "...He restores my soul..."*

There's a series of programmes on British TV called 'The Repair Shop', set in an old barn. People bring in items badly in need of repair, and always there are precious memories attached to them, -long-gone relatives, childhood gifts, personal family histories. There are broken vases, beautiful old clocks, mechanical toys, well-loved teddy-bears, antique furniture, damaged paintings, ...the list goes on and on.

In the Repair Shop, the commentator tells us, are "*some of the country's leading crafts-people*": a clock-maker, leatherworker, blacksmith, stained-glass maker, ceramics artist, art repairer, furniture restorer, seamstress, and so on! They get to work on the projects brought in, some in a very poor state of neglect or damage. At the end of each programme the owners return to find their treasured possessions transformed, working perfectly, sometimes shining like new, sometimes restored but with something of the wear and tear of the ages left as a sensitive tribute to history and memory.

The delight and disbelief, tears and gratitude of the owners, seeing their possessions rejuvenated, touch something deeply in me; maybe I can empathise from my own history!

What makes the programme special for me is the craftsmen and women. They ask about the history and memories attached to the items; what they mean to their owners. These experts have a gentle, understanding manner; their expertise and skill are enhanced by a sensitive respect for things, and an empathy for the owners.

But there's another thing that strikes me about the programme: the introduction ends with the phrase: "*...they will resurrect, revive and rejuvenate...*". I'm reminded of the hymn based on *Psalm 103*: "*Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven, to his feet thy tribute bring.. ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven...*" So every time I watch this programme, I think "*That's what God does!*" I think of the familiar words of *Psalm 23*, "*He restores my soul*". It is what our heavenly Father *does*, through the gift and sacrifice of his precious Son and the ongoing work of his Holy Spirit.

But that's not where the comparisons with this TV programme end. The lead craftsman says, "*Everybody has something that means too much to be thrown away...*" I am amazed to think that I mean too much to God to be thrown away. So he redeems, restores, revives, rejuvenates, ...resurrects!

And one more thing about this programme: the crafts-people don't just polish things up! They take them apart, they deep-clean, they unpick every stitch, replace broken and rotten parts to look like new, they make repairs invisible. But the process looks alarming, messy... broken! I thank God that he doesn't do a superficial clean-up on me. As the pilgrim-journey of life continues he breaks, melts, restores, repairs, -he goes deep. It can be messy, painful, heart-and-life-breaking, but the result is transformation, -to be completed when my owner comes to collect me! "*If anyone is in Christ, she or he is a new creation!*"

Praise God for the ultimate 'repair shop' of his kingdom, the all-sufficiency of his redeeming work, and his perfect love, by which you and I "*mean too much to be thrown away*". It's the love that drew salvation's plan.

*May God bless each of us in the restorative process!*

**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.



## Psalm 79

*A psalm of Asaph.*

- <sup>1</sup> O God, the nations have invaded your inheritance;  
they have defiled your holy temple,  
they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble.
- <sup>2</sup> They have left the dead bodies of your servants  
as food for the birds of the sky,  
the flesh of your own people for the animals of the wild.
- <sup>3</sup> They have poured out blood like water all around Jerusalem,  
and there is no one to bury the dead.
- <sup>4</sup> We are objects of contempt to our neighbors,  
of scorn and derision to those around us.
- <sup>5</sup> How long, LORD? Will you be angry forever?  
How long will your jealousy burn like fire?
- <sup>6</sup> Pour out your wrath on the nations  
that do not acknowledge you,  
on the kingdoms that do not call on your name;
- <sup>7</sup> for they have devoured Jacob  
and devastated his homeland.
- <sup>8</sup> Do not hold against us the sins of past generations;  
may your mercy come quickly to meet us, for we are in desperate need.
- <sup>9</sup> Help us, God our Savior,  
for the glory of your name;  
deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake.
- <sup>10</sup> Why should the nations say,  
"Where is their God?"  
Before our eyes, make known among the nations  
that you avenge the outpoured blood of your servants.
- <sup>11</sup> May the groans of the prisoners come before you;  
with your strong arm preserve those condemned to die.
- <sup>12</sup> Pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven times  
the contempt they have hurled at you, Lord.
- <sup>13</sup> Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture,  
will praise you forever;  
from generation to generation  
we will proclaim your praise.



## Psalm 80

*For the director of music. To the tune of "The Lilies of the Covenant." Of Asaph. A psalm.*

<sup>1</sup> Hear us, Shepherd of Israel,  
you who lead Joseph like a flock.

You who sit enthroned between the cherubim,  
shine forth <sup>2</sup> before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.

Awaken your might;  
come and save us.

<sup>3</sup> Restore us, O God;  
make your face shine on us,  
that we may be saved.

<sup>4</sup> How long, LORD God Almighty,  
will your anger smolder  
against the prayers of your people?

<sup>5</sup> You have fed them with the bread of tears;  
you have made them drink tears by the bowlful.

<sup>6</sup> You have made us an object of derision to our neighbors,  
and our enemies mock us.

<sup>7</sup> Restore us, God Almighty;  
make your face shine on us,  
that we may be saved.

<sup>8</sup> You transplanted a vine from Egypt;  
you drove out the nations and planted it.

<sup>9</sup> You cleared the ground for it,  
and it took root and filled the land.

<sup>10</sup> The mountains were covered with its shade,  
the mighty cedars with its branches.

<sup>11</sup> Its branches reached as far as the Sea,  
its shoots as far as the River.

<sup>12</sup> Why have you broken down its walls  
so that all who pass by pick its grapes?

<sup>13</sup> Boars from the forest ravage it,  
and insects from the fields feed on it.

<sup>14</sup> Return to us, God Almighty!

Look down from heaven and see!

Watch over this vine,

<sup>15</sup> the root your right hand has planted,  
the son you have raised up for yourself.

<sup>16</sup> Your vine is cut down, it is burned with fire;  
at your rebuke your people perish.

<sup>17</sup> Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand,  
the son of man you have raised up for yourself.

<sup>18</sup> Then we will not turn away from you;  
revive us, and we will call on your name.

<sup>19</sup> Restore us, LORD God Almighty;  
make your face shine on us,  
that we may be saved.



## Let Go - Move On or Letting go of the past - Welcoming the future – 1.

1 Samuel 15 v 34 -16 v 13

### I. Letting go of the past

*16. 1 The Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul?'*

It is not easy to let someone go. I guess it is a feeling parents experience when their children move on a stage in life. As well as needing to let go of people there are times when we move on, or we should move on and yet are reluctant to do so. The past is comfortable and we know what to expect, the moving on has aspects on the unknown, and can be frightening; In Samuel's case there was a definite risk.

In 1 Samuel 15 v 36 to 16 v 13, Samuel is put in an impossible situation by the Lord. *"Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."* Isn't this treason? I am sure Saul would think so if he heard of it

There are 2 questions *How long will you grieve over Saul?* the Let Go in the title and *'How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.'* the moving on despite the danger.

Samuel is instructed to let go and move on. I spent a long time grieving for India, I left thinking I would return, left without saying goodbye to friends who were going to come and see me off. This was followed by a year of uncertainty wondering where I would go or what I would do next. Things were out of my control. It took me time to move on. Samuel was taking time to realise the young man he had anointed was not to be the founder of the dynasty of Israel's kings. There was a replacement.

When the people had come and asked him for a king Samuel had warned them that it would not all be happiness.

Samuel's grief at Saul's departure from the way of the Lord is understandable. The young man he had anointed, returned home. Then when Samuel calls the people to choose their king at Mizpah, Saul has disappeared, finally he is found *hiding in the baggage*, See 1 Samuel 11

Was he reluctant to take up the task? Maybe he knew he couldn't cope. We don't know. Samuel had encouraged him, and then watches it go wrong; very wrong. No wonder he is grieving the young promising lad who has gone wayward, and latterly is unstable. The relationship between Samuel and Saul can't have been easy the man of God feeling that the people had rejected God when they asked for a king to be like the countries round about. The people had also rejected Samuel who was a Judge.

We mourn unfilled hopes as Samuel did. He clings to a dying order, maybe still hoping for the return to the system of Judges. But he does let go, he does move forward as we need to do.

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



## Let Go - Move On or Letting go of the past - Welcoming the future – 2.

1 Samuel 15 v 34 -16 v 13

### II - Welcoming the future

*34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. 35 Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the Lord was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel. 16 The Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.' 2 Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.' And the Lord said, 'Take a heifer with you, and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the Lord." 3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.' 4 Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?' 5 He said, 'Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.' And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.*

*6 When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord.' 7 But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.' 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' 9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' 10 Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, 'The Lord has not chosen any of these.' 11 Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.' 12 He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, 'Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.' 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah 1 Samuel 15 v 34-16v 13*

The moving on for Samuel, is pretty terrifying; the Lord instructs him to anoint a replacement for the reigning King, the erratic Saul. Saul who is full of his own ideas, has times of fury, depressions and jealousy; he, Samuel needed courage to move on, to go to Bethlehem. Some reading this may be at this moment or have been in situations where moving on is a real risk, for others moving on is difficult, and leads us to have doubts about where we should go what we should do. We need courage to look forward, and not look back; it is so easy to think that everything was easy long ago.

It is difficult letting go; it is not the same as forgetting. It is a movement; having a new look a new aim, as Samuel lets go of Saul he finds David. Samuel needs to focus on the future 15 v 34 -16 v 1. Anointing a new king when the post is filled is dangerous. Indeed the quest is not only perilous, it becomes puzzling, when Samuel can find no inner conviction about any of the candidates, the 7 sons of Jesse. Had Jesse just forgotten that not all his sons were present. David is the youngest, maybe he was not considered a man, or just someone needed to keep an eye on the sheep, so why bother to send someone to find him.

David is the youngest of 8 brothers is called and *13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.*

Samuel and David change in this passage. We mourn unfilled hopes as Samuel did as he clings to a dying order, maybe still hoping for the return to the system of Judges. We don't have much of a life if we live in the past. David the youngish son in a large family anointed to be King. Both begin a new stage in their life.

David became the father of a dynasty that would, despite the dreadful ups and downs held on for about 400 years. Much longer than many of the surrounding powers. Each new morning is never the same as we are reminded in John Keeble's hymn:

*New every morning is the love our waking and uprising prove,  
through sleep and darkness safely brought, restored to life and power and thought.*

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## Bringing your offerings to God

What are the offerings you bring to God? Here are some reflections on the form our offerings might take.

**Money** The obvious offering is money. Many churches call the time in the service when we give the church money, 'the offering'. There is a church in Northern Ireland called the *Free Presbyterian Church*. Some irregular churchgoers I know decided to try it out, hoping that because of its title, they'd not have to part with any cash. Imagine their shock and disappointment when the offertory hymn was announced and the collection plate passed around!

**Time and Talents** Both the Church and The Leprosy Mission rely a great deal on volunteers. Hours upon hours are poured into the building of God's Kingdom each week, by many a faithful servant, doing many a varied task, often using their gifts and talents to serve God. It makes sense that the tasks we spend time on for God over the long term are aligned to our talents. A good question to ask is this: 'Is the majority of time I offer to God spent doing a task that I'm good at?'

**'Living sacrifices'** Paul encourages us in Romans 12 to offer ourselves as 'living sacrifices'. We might have to think hard to picture what a living sacrifice might look like, but for members of the Roman church, the picture would have been all too vivid! They would have the mental image of a sacrifice indelibly imprinted in their minds. Sacrifice was not just part of the Jewish religious system. Sheep, goats and bulls were offered to the Roman gods on a very regular basis. For part of the ceremony at least, the animal was alive, on the alter – a living sacrifice.

As we seek to follow the exhortation of Paul, and offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God, we might follow the example of Hannah. In *1 Samuel 1:24-28*, we read that Hannah offered a number of things to God, *After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. When the bull had been sacrificed, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, "Pardon me, my lord. As surely as you live, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord." And he worshiped the Lord there.*

A three year old bull was a very expensive offering in itself. Add to it a skin of wine, and 22 litres of flour, and you have a costly offering to God. But Hannah didn't stop there. She also offered her son, Samuel, to God. How gut wrenching and heart breaking this must have been for her. Samuel grew to be a great man of God, serving God as a prophet and priest. Hannah must have watched on with joy in her heart, as she saw how God used her sacrifice to such great effect.

**Our offering to God** Take a moment now to offer afresh your time, your wealth, your talents and yourself to God. Consider praying a courageous prayer, a little like the one Hannah did –

*'Lord, I offer to you all I have, use this offering as you see fit!'*



## Burdens

In this life everyone has burdens.... Burdens are always 'heavy weights' - but all burdens are not always necessarily bad...

### 1) BURDENS GOD WANTS TO RELIEVE US OF.

- (a) Worry burdens (cf Matth.6:25-34)
- (b) Satan-induced burdens (Matth.4:ff-Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness; Matth.8:16-Jesus delivered all; Matth.8:32-Jesus heals 2 Gadarenes with demons)
- (c) Ministry burdens (Exodus 18-Moses chooses able men; Eph.4:11-16-NT body life)
- (d) Sin burdens : *Psalm 38:4,5,18 – "For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness..... I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin."* (cf Psalm 51)

### 2) WHAT BURDENS DOES GOD ALLOW US TO HAVE?

- (a) Times of Testing and Turbulence : *John 15:1,2 – "I am the True Vine, and my Father is the Vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."*
- (b) Daily challenges (John 16:33-"In this life you will have trouble/burdens....")  
1 Chron.4:10(Jabez-born in pain)"*Oh that You would bless me and enlarge my border and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm/evil, so that it might not bring me pain!*" And God granted what he asked."
- (c) Concern for certain lost people (Luke 15:1ff)( eg TLM concerned for all leprosy folk)
- (d) Carry one another's burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ ( Gal. 6:2)
- (e) Carry your own cross daily (Gal.6:5-self-responsibility; Luke 14:27-self-denial)

### 3) HOW DOES GOD HELP US IN COPING WITH BURDENS?

- (a) God never gives us more than we can bear!(2Cor.12:9-'My grace is sufficient for you')
- (b) God actually carries us, our burdens and the whole universe, all at the same time!  
*Matth.11:28ff-"Come to Me, all who labour + are heavy laden, + I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, And you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."*
- (c) God sovereignly relieves us of certain burdens from time-to-time!  
Exodus3:7-11 "Let My people go!" / The New South Africa?!  
*Is.43:18,19-"Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."*

CONCLUSION: *Ps.55:22-"Cast your burden on the LORD, and He will sustain you.*

*He will never permit the righteous to be moved."*

*1Pet.5:6,7-"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your burdens on Him, because He cares for you."* - Amen.



## Sheep and Shepherd

I rang Jeff (not his real name) to speak to him, as I was given his name as a possible contact to hold an event. As soon as he picked up the phone, I knew this would not be the case. Jeff's voice was quivery, and his breathing laboured. He was older than our database had indicated. Nonetheless, Jeff's love for Jesus shone out. His desire to see Jesus known was crystal clear.

In the Gospel of John, the apostle draws word pictures. One he uses is that of sheep and shepherds. Jesus sees himself as the loving shepherd (*John 10*), and also calls us to love and feed his sheep (*John 21*). We are all sheep called to be shepherds.

Jeff was living this out. He told me he was in a nursing home. Jeff saw this as an opportunity to share about Jesus with all the different staff he was meeting. Jeff had met people affected by leprosy. He was inspired to hear their stories. He wanted them to know Jesus' love for them.

Jeff lived an abundant life – his life story is rich and varied. But at the heart of his abundance is someone who loves Jesus, and who wants to love like Jesus. Both sheep and shepherd. Wherever there were people to love. In his nursing home, or far way; Jeff sought to love them as his shepherd had taught him to. He tells people about Jesus. He prays constantly. He gives financially. Jeff had finds ways to be a shepherd. We are both sheep and shepherd. It leaves me with a challenge, for myself and for us.

*Are we remembering that we are sheep Jesus loves?  
And are we remembering to seek opportunities to be shepherds?*



## Psalm 81

*For the director of music. According to gittith.<sup>Ⓜ</sup> Of Asaph.*

<sup>1</sup>Sing for joy to God our strength;  
shout aloud to the God of Jacob!  
<sup>2</sup>Begin the music, strike the timbrel,  
play the melodious harp and lyre.  
<sup>3</sup>Sound the ram's horn at the New Moon,  
and when the moon is full, on the day of our festival;  
<sup>4</sup>this is a decree for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob.  
<sup>5</sup>When God went out against Egypt,  
he established it as a statute for Joseph.  
I heard an unknown voice say:  
<sup>6</sup>"I removed the burden from their shoulders;  
their hands were set free from the basket.  
<sup>7</sup>In your distress you called and I rescued you,  
I answered you out of a thundercloud;  
I tested you at the waters of Meribah.<sup>Ⓜ</sup>  
<sup>8</sup>Hear me, my people, and I will warn you—  
if you would only listen to me, Israel!  
<sup>9</sup>You shall have no foreign god among you;  
you shall not worship any god other than me.  
<sup>10</sup>I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt.  
Open wide your mouth and I will fill it.  
<sup>11</sup>"But my people would not listen to me;  
Israel would not submit to me.  
<sup>12</sup>So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts  
to follow their own devices.  
<sup>13</sup>"If my people would only listen to me,  
if Israel would only follow my ways,  
<sup>14</sup>how quickly I would subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes!  
<sup>15</sup>Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him,  
and their punishment would last forever.  
<sup>16</sup>But you would be fed with the finest of wheat;  
with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."



## Psalm 82

*A psalm of Asaph*

<sup>1</sup>God presides in the great assembly;  
he renders judgment among the “gods”:  
<sup>2</sup>“How long will you<sup>a</sup> defend the unjust  
and show partiality to the wicked?<sup>b</sup>  
<sup>3</sup>Defend the weak and the fatherless;  
uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.  
<sup>4</sup>Rescue the weak and the needy;  
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.  
<sup>5</sup>“The ‘gods’ know nothing, they understand nothing.  
They walk about in darkness;  
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.  
<sup>6</sup>“I said, ‘You are “gods”;  
you are all sons of the Most High.’  
<sup>7</sup>But you will die like mere mortals;  
you will fall like every other ruler.”  
<sup>8</sup>Rise up, O God, judge the earth,  
for all the nations are your inheritance.



## The shopping bag

In your bag, you have vegetables, fruits, pastas, spices, washing powder and even more! Products are not all comparable. It reminded me maxims which teach us some truths. I leave it to you some of them for your thought for today and the following days:

- ❖ The faith, it is not something that you hold, but Somebody who holds you. - Anonymous author
- ❖ God is invisible obvious - Victor Hugo
- ❖ YESTERDAY it is the history. TOMORROW it is still a mystery. TODAY is a present, it is moreover why it is called the present - Anonymous author
- ❖ The constraint makes the men walk, the interest makes them run; only love gives them wings - Anonymous author
- ❖ We can face situations which are over our resources, but never those of God - Anonymous author
- ❖ To judge, it is necessary to understand. When we have understood, we don't want anymore to judge. - André Malraux
- ❖ I cannot show you God, but I can show you his works. St-Augustin
- ❖ The nature forms us, the school informs us, the life deforms us, but only Jesus Christ transforms us. Anonymous author

At the end I give you a promise drawn from the Bible which makes discover a God full of love for us.

*1 John 4:9 This is how God showed his love among us. He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.*

**Eric Chollet** - I'm retired since four years. I used to work with TLM Switzerland for 32 years. During that time, I have had the privilege to stand in different committees (e.g. executive committee - directorate) with TLMI, which has been very rewarding. All along these years of service, I have met a lot of wonderful and dedicated people. May God continue to bless the mission for His glory.

## Le sac à provisions

Dans votre sac, vous avez des légumes, des fruits, des pâtes, des épices, des produits de lessive et plus encore ! Le tout va vous servir un certain temps. Les produits ne sont pas tous comparables. Certains sont

à des usages différents.

Cela m'a fait penser à des maximes qui nous enseignent quelques vérités. Je vous en laisse quelques unes à votre réflexion pour aujourd'hui et pour les jours suivants.

- ❖ "La foi, ce n'est pas quelque chose que vous tenez, mais Quelqu'un qui vous tient." Auteur anonyme
- ❖ "Dieu est l'invisible évident." Victor Hugo
- ❖ "HIER c'est de l'histoire. DEMAIN, c'est du mystère. AUJOURD'HUI est un cadeau, c'est d'ailleurs pourquoi on l'appelle le présent." Auteur anonyme
- ❖ "La contrainte fait marcher les hommes, l'intérêt les fait courir; seul l'amour leur donne des ailes." Auteur anonyme
- ❖ "Nous pouvons affronter des situations qui dépassent nos ressources, mais jamais celles de Dieu." Auteur anonyme
- ❖ "Je ne peux te montrer Dieu, mais je te montre ses œuvres." St-Augustin
- ❖ "Pour juger, il faut comprendre, et quand on a compris, on n'a plus envie de juger." André Malraux
- ❖ "La nature nous forme, l'école nous informe, la vie nous déforme, mais seul Jésus-Christ nous transforme." Auteur anonyme

Je termine par une promesse tirée de la Bible qui nous fait découvrir un Dieu plein d'amour pour nous.

*1 Jean 4 :9 « L'amour de Dieu a été manifesté envers nous en ce que Dieu a envoyé son Fils unique dans le monde afin que nous vivions par lui. »*

Eric Chollet



## Grains of Wheat

*"Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. John 12:24*

In the late 1970's while visiting the Congo, I was invited to preach in a church in the North-East. It was a big congregation of a major evangelical denomination celebrating the centenary of mission work in the country.

The whole town was taking part in the celebration with banners, choirs, orchestras, singing, parades ..... a kaleidoscope of colours and a cacophony of sounds. Long before the service started, hundreds of people packed the building and thousands filled up the space around it.

Aiming for a moment of quiet prayer, I went a little way into the jungle behind the building, found an overgrown path which I followed to a spot that had been used as a cemetery.

Looking at the crosses and reading the simple inscriptions carved on planks, I made a startling discovery. "...arrived for Jesus 1880, went to be with Jesus 1883". "....born 1881, went home 1882". In a period of less than 20 years, over 15 men, women and children had died of malaria, fevers, dysentery, snake bites, out of love for Christ and His gospel. Each year, facing rejection, persecution, sickness, death, they kept on coming, seeing very little fruit for their labour but motivated by His love.

One hundred years later, thousands were celebrating and rejoicing in Christ as Saviour. Instead of bringing the message I had prepared, we read the above passage, prayed the prayer "Lord help me to understand what it means to die to self that I may bring forth fruit and give me enough love for you to do it." Then we walked silently past the graves ..... and prayed the same prayer again.

*Where do I stand today?*

### **Silvano Perotti**

Secretary for Europe then Deputy International Director and Director for Support and Development TLMI

Born in Italy - retired in Switzerland.

Worked with TLMI until 1990.





## Unless someone guides me – Part 1

*“Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.” 1 Samuel 3:1-10*

The Bible Society has assumed the mission of placing the Bible in the hands of any who would read. Behind this impressive Bible distribution project is the belief that if people would read the Bible, they would hear the word of God as it applies to their lives. There is a case in one African city where people wanted copies of the New Testament not because they wanted to read them but because the Bible paper was great for wrapping and smoking tobacco and other stuff. When the missionaries discovered this they were very upset. But determined to sustain the project they reached an agreement with the youths that they could continue to use the pages of the Bible for their smoking on the condition that they would read each page before the smoke it. Within a few weeks many of these youths were beginning to ask questions about the pages they had read. Some of them eventually turned to the Lord, got baptized and gave up smoking. God works in strange ways! Nevertheless, when we ask the question whether people, alone without any spiritual guidance, are generally able to recognize the word of God when they hear it, we find that the answer is no. The message today show the need for spiritual guidance to help the people discern the word of God that they hear or read.

The fist example is Samuel. Samuel grew up literally in the presence of God. As soon as he was weaned his mother Hannah took him to Eli, priest of the sanctuary in Shiloh. There he was raised by the priest himself. He assisted daily at the altar, he was familiar with the sacred writings, and he got the best religious formation available. Yet when the word of god came to him personally he could not recognize it. Each time God called he thought that it was Eli. It was not until Eli directed him on what to do that he finally succeeded in establishing a connection with God who was trying to reach him. Why didn't God just come to Samuel and say: "Samuel! Samuel! It is I the Lord your God. Now listen up?" Why did God have to speak to Samuel in a voice that could be mistaken for Eli's? God normally works through the ordinary channels that he has established. That is why we need the church and need priests. These are the normal channels of God's word and God's grace in our lives (Hebrews 5:1). God can, of course, always go beyond these channels, but that is not for us to presume or take for granted.

**Moses Onoh, MD**, is a former Country Leader of TLM Nigeria. He is currently with USAID/KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation; serving as the Regional Director for South West Nigeria.



## Unless someone guides me – Part 2

*<sup>35</sup> The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup> When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" <sup>39</sup> "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. <sup>40</sup> Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. <sup>41</sup> The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). <sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter). John 1,35-42 NIV*

Something similar also happens in the gospel. Andrew and John's other disciple had followed John as a way of preparing for the One who is to come. For years they had prayed and fasted and waited for the joy of meeting the Messiah. Yet when they finally came face to face with the Messiah Himself, they could not recognize Him. And they said to him, "*Rabbi*" (which means *Teacher*), "*where are you staying?*" (John 1: 38). Again it took the guidance of their spiritual master, John for them to recognize the messiah. These disciple of John had a divine call to become disciples of Jesus. But they could not discover what divine Providence had in store for them until a spiritual director pointed it to them. There will always be the need for priests like Eli and prophets like John to point out Christ to us and to help us discern what God is saying to us in our lives as individuals and as a people.

The practice of spiritual direction where people go to priests to help them discern what God is saying to them regarding the direction their lives should take has declined greatly in our time. Today we expect professional counsellors who may or may not share our faith and vision as Christians to fulfil this role. But only a consecrated leader who is in sync with the spirit of God can help to discern the presence of God and the import of God's word in our lives. Christianity is not a do-it-yourself religion. Our model today is the Ethiopian finance minister who was reading the Bible and the deacon Philip asked him, "*Do you understand what you are reading?*" What did he answer? "*How can I, unless someone guides me?*" (Acts 8:30-31).

We could pray thus:

*Lord, as I begin to take stock of achievements this year and marshal out plans for the coming, I seek your divine guidance through your anointed messengers to reap from your bounty. Jesus, I trust in You.*

**Moses Onoh, MD**, is a former Country Leader of TLM Nigeria. He is currently with USAID/KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation; serving as the Regional Director for South West Nigeria.



## My mother

### Faith in tough times

There is a particular Wednesday in 2012 that I will never forget. My 87-year old mother had been to a meeting at her church, and was walking with her zimmer frame up the road to her hairdresser's when she had a fall and badly hurt her right arm and shoulder. But being my mum, she continued to the hairdressers, and only after her hair had been cut and dressed did I get the phone call to pick her up and take her to the hospital!

To cut a long story short, after an extremely long, painful wait an x-ray confirmed that the bone in her upper arm was badly broken, and I gave her the news. She was badly frightened by the implications of what this would mean to her independence, but her immediate response was to pray these words aloud from her favourite hymn:

*Father, hear the prayer we offer,  
Not for ease that prayer should be,  
But for strength that we might ever  
Live our lives courageously.*

*Be our strength in hours of weakness,  
In our wanderings be our guide,  
Through endeavour, failure, danger,  
Father, be Thou at our side.*

Mum had never really talked about her faith, and until that moment I had not appreciated the depth of her trust in God. It was a clear reminder that it is in the times when we are at the end of our tether that our faith will most clearly shine out to those around us.

That hymn has become so precious to me, and I hope it continues to stand the test of time.

**Glynis Forbes**—retired member of TLMI



## Psalm 83

*A song. A psalm of Asaph.*

- <sup>1</sup> O God, do not remain silent;  
do not turn a deaf ear,  
do not stand aloof, O God.
- <sup>2</sup> See how your enemies growl,  
how your foes rear their heads.
- <sup>3</sup> With cunning they conspire against your people;  
they plot against those you cherish.
- <sup>4</sup> “Come,” they say, “let us destroy them as a nation,  
so that Israel’s name is remembered no more.”
- <sup>5</sup> With one mind they plot together;  
they form an alliance against you—
- <sup>6</sup> the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites,  
of Moab and the Hagrites,  
<sup>7</sup> Byblos, Ammon and Amalek,  
Philistia, with the people of Tyre.
- <sup>8</sup> Even Assyria has joined them  
to reinforce Lot’s descendants.
- <sup>9</sup> Do to them as you did to Midian,  
as you did to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon,  
<sup>10</sup> who perished at Endor and became like dung on the ground.
- <sup>11</sup> Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb,  
all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,  
<sup>12</sup> who said, “Let us take possession of the pasturelands of God.”
- <sup>13</sup> Make them like tumbleweed, my God,  
like chaff before the wind.
- <sup>14</sup> As fire consumes the forest  
or a flame sets the mountains ablaze,  
<sup>15</sup> so pursue them with your tempest  
and terrify them with your storm.
- <sup>16</sup> Cover their faces with shame, LORD, so that they will seek your name.
- <sup>17</sup> May they ever be ashamed and dismayed; may they perish in disgrace.
- <sup>18</sup> Let them know that you, whose name is the LORD—  
that you alone are the Most High over all the earth.



## Psalm 84

*For the director of music. According to gittith Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm.*

<sup>1</sup>How lovely is your dwelling place,  
LORD Almighty!

<sup>2</sup>My soul yearns, even faints,  
for the courts of the LORD;  
my heart and my flesh cry out  
for the living God.

<sup>3</sup>Even the sparrow has found a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may have her young—  
a place near your altar,  
LORD Almighty, my King and my God.

<sup>4</sup>Blessed are those who dwell in your house;  
they are ever praising you.

<sup>5</sup>Blessed are those whose strength is in you,  
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.

<sup>6</sup>As they pass through the Valley of Baka,  
they make it a place of springs;  
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.

<sup>7</sup>They go from strength to strength,  
till each appears before God in Zion.

<sup>8</sup>Hear my prayer, LORD God Almighty;  
listen to me, God of Jacob.

<sup>9</sup>Look on our shield,<sup>9</sup> O God;  
look with favor on your anointed one.

<sup>10</sup>Better is one day in your courts  
than a thousand elsewhere;

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God  
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

<sup>11</sup>For the LORD God is a sun and shield;  
the LORD bestows favor and honor;  
no good thing does he withhold  
from those whose walk is blameless.

<sup>12</sup>LORD Almighty,  
blessed is the one who trusts in you.



## Keep up the good Work

When I was clearing out books and papers, I came across a prayer, tucked into a book (I have updated the language a little) *“O Lord God, when you give your servants to a job to do, make us also to know that it is not the beginning, but the continuing of the same, until it be thoroughly finished, which yields the true glory; through him who for the finishing of your work laid down his life for us, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.* This reminds us of the encouragement in *Hebrews 6:9-12* to continue with the same diligence to the very end.

I tucked that prayer away again in a notebook I refer to frequently. However, just this last week, I was reading an Advent Book (yes, I know it is a bit early but I was preparing for something and felt that this book might give me the right direction), and came upon this prayer again. I now know it was written originally by Sir Francis Drake who was famous in England during the reign of Elizabeth 1 in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He was an interesting man – he sailed round the world, crossed the Atlantic many times, was involved in many sea battles (including the defeat of the Spanish Armada), he once spread his cloak over a muddy puddle so that the Queen could walk without getting her feet wet, he even tried to claim California as a British possession.

I don't know what great work Drake was thinking of when he wrote this prayer, but whatever it was not only had to be started but it had to be worked through until it was thoroughly completed. Most of us will recognise the sentiment - we start projects and then either they become too difficult or too time consuming or we just lose interest or maybe even it is a project we are just not equipped to do. Sometimes we get so far into the project and our initial enthusiasm wanes somewhat and it becomes a real struggle and we really need to buckle down to it, one step at a time. But what joy when we get to the end and we can rejoice, and maybe look for the next big project.

Sometimes, our Christian lives can be a bit like that – whether it is our time with God each day, our time of prayer, our service for the Lord, or even our daily work – we start out with great enthusiasm but as the days go on we find it difficult, temptations come our way or we think of other things to do. The picture in Hebrews 6: of the Christian community working together, demonstrating the love of God within their fellowship and to those around them is one to which we would all aspire whether as individuals or a church. Because God has taken note of what they have been doing we are told He will not let them fall away. But at the same time just because

God will not forget what they have done, they have to make every possible effort to continue their life of faith and persevere, avoiding temptations to be lazy, “until it is thoroughly finished”. Verse 12 reminds us that there are others on this journey and we should be encouraged by their efforts too.

Sometimes we become discouraged in our service, sometimes we become lazy in our praying, sometimes we “are too busy” to spend time with the Lord. I pray that if that is your situation that you might be encouraged by this prayer of Sir Francis Drake, by the example of the Christian community being addressed in the chapter 6 of Hebrews, and indeed by the example of Jesus Himself who proclaimed from the cross that His task to bring us Salvation was ended “it is finished”.

*God bless you this day as you serve Him.*



## Serving the Poor; A Privilege – Part 1

### What is God's Will for me to serve the poor?

In the current day world there are two broad approaches to meet the needs of the poor – Welfare/Service Delivery Vs Rights Based. The author and creator of the universe, God Himself addresses both aspects in the Scriptures and commands us what must we do.

A few scriptures

- *Matthew 25:35-36, 40* "For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me.."; "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"
- *James 2:15-17* "Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ....."
- *1 John 3:17* "But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?"
- *Proverbs 31:8-9* "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

### Discerning the Scriptures

The poor, the thirsty, the hungry, the homeless live alongside us. It is a fact. Inequities exist in this world. Turning a blind eye to them is ignoring the truth and reality. Nurturing the physical body is as significant as the spiritual body. They are inter-related. Providing for the physical needs of the poor is as important as for their spiritual needs. Gospel is one, whether for salvation of the soul or for social upliftment. Social gospel has its legitimate role in fulfilling God's Will for us. Physical life and eternal life go together.

The Gospel – Good News of Jesus the Saviour must be manifested. Not only in words but in actions. Empty vessels make much noise but serve no purpose. If we are filled with His love, we must be the vessels to pour it out into others through our words and actions. Saving grace of Jesus has a purpose - worship Him and demonstrate our love for Him.

People in need experience the love of Jesus through us; our actions which are propelled by our own gratefulness to Him. Loving the poor and serving them is serving Jesus. God is glorified when we serve the poor. God is manifested. Evidence of His presence in my Spirit. No love for the poor means no love for Him and no presence of His Holy Spirit in my life. Serving comes out of love in one's heart. It is a heart matter. Outward actions sustained by inward love (St Francis of Assisi "It would be considered a theft on our part if we didn't give to someone in greater need than we are.").

On the judgement day what we had done for the poor in our life in this world, counts in our favour or against. There are no ifs and buts. It's as white as white and as black as black, not grey. The judgement will be meted out to us subject to our response to the opportunity God creates for us to serve the poor, in gratitude for His glory. Serving the poor is an opportunity for us to manifest our love for Jesus and overcome the works of the devil.

Economic inequities lead to vulnerability, denial of rights and injustice for the poor people. We are commanded to stand up for their rights, restore equity, justice and dignity. Be the voice for the voiceless.

For His glory, in gratitude.

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



## Serving the Poor; A Privilege – Part 2

### Who comes in my way in serving the poor?

A few scriptures

- *1 John 2:16 "For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world."*
- *1 Timothy 6:10 "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."*

### Discerning the Scriptures

Inequity is an act of the devil manifested through covetousness, greed and self-centeredness of man. Inequity is a circumstance created by man and not God. Nobody is born unequal but could be born into inequity. A selfish person takes from others and keeps it for himself. What I have, is earned by me with my ability. So, I keep it. Called the wealth mentality of a so called Self-made man. But a godly man gives / shares because he knows that what he has is provided by God in trust. He values his riches given in trust to him but not attached to them.

### What reward does God promise for serving the poor?

A few scriptures

- *Luke 6: 38 "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*
- *Proverbs 19:17 "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his deed."*

### Discerning the Scriptures

Serving the poor is rewarded abundantly because it is serving God, the One who blesses those who obey His commands. God is no debtor. We are never the losers when we share our resources (financial and other) with the poor and serve them. The more we serve the poor, the more God gives us to share because we have made ourselves available for Him as the vessels for His grace to be poured out through.

### Pulling the threads together

Serving the poor is per God's will – He cares for the poor. Serving the poor is a free will choice for us. Serving the poor is an outcome of being in love and obedient to Jesus. To be disobedient is to yield to self(ish)-will instead of surrendering to God and desiring His Will in all my actions. Disobeying God's commands is sin. It is caused by rebellion and distrust in God.

Serving the poor is not a favour but a privilege, opportunity, mandatory and the right thing to do in the sight of God. Helps us to grow into His image – His character of serving the poor and needy.

*"I see Jesus in every human being. I say to myself, this is hungry Jesus, I must feed him. This is sick Jesus. This one has leprosy or gangrene; I must wash him and tend to him. I serve because I love Jesus." - Mother Theresa*

For His glory, in gratitude.

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





## Life in all its Fullness – 2.

### Nobuhle, kwaZulu Natal, South Africa

Nobuhle was half-way through primary school at Port Shepstone on the lower South Coast of kwaZulu Natal when the first signs of leprosy appeared on her skin.

Seven years later, despite many visits to clinics and hospitals, no one was able to tell her what was wrong with her. Her eyes no longer closed properly when she slept. Nobuhle began to lose feeling in her hands and feet. Worst of all, Nobuhle was beginning to lose hope.

Fortunately for Nobuhle, she met Lucky Kunene, the Leprosy Mission's field worker in kwaZulu Natal.

Lucky takes up the story:

**John 10,10** “Nobuhle was down in her spirits when we met.

“Her classmates were teasing her and she was about to drop out of school. It was so sad to see the injuries to her body. She was spending most of her time indoors to hide her wounds.”

Lucky arranged for Nobuhle to start leprosy treatment and showed her how to avoid injuries to those parts of her body where she no longer felt pain. He invited Nobuhle to a Christian youth camp. Nobuhle was blown away by the experience.

“I was scared that people at the youth camp would laugh at me, but I found new friends and we enjoyed ourselves. I thought I was useless, but pastor Mahlangu said that God knew me from before I was born. He will bring me home.”

“You gave me a chance to find a way to make my future better. Because of you, I am born again. Now I know what to do to make my future bright.”

“I am writing to tell you about the joy I have in my life.

“Thank you for sending me to the youth camp. I was nervous when I went. I didn't finish school because the children teased me about my leprosy. My heart was hurt. I started doing funny things like taking drugs.

“I learned so many things about Jesus. I connected my life to Jesus. I know the Bible is the Word of God. It is the manual for my life.

“I got all this knowledge and skills because of you. I thank you very much. God will bless you.”

“If you don't know God, your life will end in a bad situation. You must know your destiny. Thank you for giving me the chance to have this good experience at this beautiful place.”

The Leprosy Mission arranged for Nobuhle to subsequently attend several weeks of intensive counselling at a rehabilitation centre.

Please pray for her. We haven't had contact with her for a while and are concerned about her situation.

**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.



## When life falls in...

*Listen to my words, LORD, consider my lament.  
Hear my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.  
Psalm 5:1-2*

I was hit by a shower of toilet rolls this morning. Fortunately not the brand that has the puppy attached. Just ordinary toilet rolls. We buy them 16 at a time - toilet rolls, not puppies - because they're cheaper that way and there's no telling when emergencies happen, which is why they're called emergencies I suppose.

We store the rolls in a wall cupboard above the doors of the fitted wardrobe in our bedroom. But when I slid open the wardrobe door looking for a clean shirt, down came the toilet tissue on my head.

"Stuff happens", as the American politician said, most of it a lot more difficult to cope with than that, and we can't really prepare ourselves for it. My immediate reaction when something unpleasant happens is to ask, "Why me?" Sometimes there is a reason. In this case I was in a hurry and just threw the rolls into the cupboard without checking whether they were safe or not, and so, later on, down they came.

But more often we can't identify a reason, and there's no point in looking for one. You just pick up the loo rolls, or whatever it was that hit you, and try to find the strength to carry on. And usually, if we've sown the seeds of friendship beforehand, we'll find there's someone who will help us pick up the fallen debris.

*Lord, when life falls down on us,  
thank you for the friends who help me pick up the pieces.*

*Extract from Dabbling with Ducks, first published 2007.*

**Eddie Aske** (1927-2007) devoted half a century to leprosy and its consequences. In 1950 he and his wife Barbara set sail for India. Eddie's first placement was in Purulia, West Bengal. In 1965 Eddie took up the post of executive secretary at TLM's office in London. His first overseas visit in this new role was to Ethiopia, where he learned of plans to set up a leprosy training centre that would benefit patients and medics throughout Africa. He offered to become a founding member and signed TLM up to support what was to become ALERT (All Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre). The following year, the organisation now known as the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP) was set up. In 1974 Eddie became general director of TLM. He was keen to develop TLM's work elsewhere, and took a team into the closed land of Bhutan in response to a request from its government. - Inspired by his travels and his Christian faith, Eddie found an outlet for his creativity in painting and poetry. He retired in 1987. From 1998 until his death he was TLM- vice-president, and in 2000 he was awarded an OBE. (Fiona Spence)



## Psalm 85

*For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm.*

<sup>1</sup> You, LORD, showed favor to your land;  
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

<sup>2</sup> You forgave the iniquity of your people  
and covered all their sins.<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>3</sup> You set aside all your wrath  
and turned from your fierce anger.

<sup>4</sup> Restore us again, God our Savior,  
and put away your displeasure toward us.

<sup>5</sup> Will you be angry with us forever?

Will you prolong your anger through all generations?

<sup>6</sup> Will you not revive us again,  
that your people may rejoice in you?

<sup>7</sup> Show us your unfailing love, LORD,  
and grant us your salvation.

<sup>8</sup> I will listen to what God the LORD says;  
he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants—  
but let them not turn to folly.

<sup>9</sup> Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,  
that his glory may dwell in our land.

<sup>10</sup> Love and faithfulness meet together;  
righteousness and peace kiss each other.

<sup>11</sup> Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,  
and righteousness looks down from heaven.

<sup>12</sup> The LORD will indeed give what is good,  
and our land will yield its harvest.

<sup>13</sup> Righteousness goes before him  
and prepares the way for his steps.



## Psalm 86

*A prayer of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> Hear me, LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.  
<sup>2</sup> Guard my life, for I am faithful to you;  
save your servant who trusts in you.  
You are my God; <sup>3</sup> have mercy on me, Lord,  
for I call to you all day long.
- <sup>4</sup> Bring joy to your servant, Lord, for I put my trust in you.  
<sup>5</sup> You, Lord, are forgiving and good,  
abounding in love to all who call to you.
- <sup>6</sup> Hear my prayer, LORD; listen to my cry for mercy.
- <sup>7</sup> When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me.  
<sup>8</sup> Among the gods there is none like you, Lord;  
no deeds can compare with yours.  
<sup>9</sup> All the nations you have made  
will come and worship before you, Lord;  
they will bring glory to your name.
- <sup>10</sup> For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God.
- <sup>11</sup> Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness;  
give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name.  
<sup>12</sup> I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart;  
I will glorify your name forever.
- <sup>13</sup> For great is your love toward me;  
you have delivered me from the depths,  
from the realm of the dead.
- <sup>14</sup> Arrogant foes are attacking me, O God;  
ruthless people are trying to kill me— they have no regard for you.
- <sup>15</sup> But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God,  
slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.  
<sup>16</sup> Turn to me and have mercy on me;  
show your strength in behalf of your servant;  
save me, because I serve you just as my mother did.
- <sup>17</sup> Give me a sign of your goodness,  
that my enemies may see it and be put to shame,  
for you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.



## Life in all its Fullness – 3.

### Transformation – Part 1

*Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him,*

*Mt 5:2 and he began to teach them, saying:*

*Mt 5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Mt 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

*Mt 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

*Mt 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

*Mt 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

*Mt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

*Mt 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*

*Mt 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Mt 5:11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.*

*Mt 5:12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (NIV Translation)*

The Leprosy Mission is all about transformation, about lives transformed.

At the Members Meeting we heard wonderful stories of lives being transformed in various ways.

In the above passage, usually referred to as The Sermon on the Mount, we see Jesus’ promise of transformation as we live a radical, different lifestyle which comes from following Him.

Let’s not get involved with the Greek word translated here as ‘blessed’, or whether we are talking about spiritual poverty or physical poverty etc.

*Let’s look at the hope for transformation from one situation to another.*

Each ‘beatitude’ recognizes where the person currently is, they are spiritually poor, mourning/unhappy or suffering from their loyalty to God, seeking justice (there is no justice), spiritually or physically hungry and so on. However, they are called ‘**blessed**/happy/fortunate/well off’ because they have **hope for the future**.

The spiritually poor can have hope for the Kingdom of Heaven thus they are blessed; those mourning are blessed because they have the hope of God’s comfort, the merciful are blessed because of their hope in God’s mercy and so forth.

For each person, in whatever state they are in, there is *hope*. God gives them *hope* for what is to come, that the state they are in will not always be the same, and so they are *blessed* because they have hope for the *transformation* that is to come, sometime in the future.

I would add ‘Blessed are those in TLM because they have the hope of seeing a world and a people transformed, because there is no longer any leprosy, and they walk in God’s way receiving God’s blessing.

Prayer:

*Lord, we thank and praise you for the transformation we can experience when we accept you as our Lord and Saviour. We are grateful and blessed for the hope you give us. May we be generous in our sharing, with others, our knowledge of you. Amen.*

**Pam Packett** is an Australian and has been involved with The Leprosy Mission for over 40 years in various capacities.



## Life in all its Fullness – 4.

### Transformation – Part 2

#### *Mark 5:1-12*

As we continue to think about transformation there seems to be two sorts of transformation.

Lives can be, often immediately, transformed when one accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior. And then the transformation continues, usually slowly, throughout ones life as Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, continues to refine and make us more Christ like.

However, there is another sort of transformation that is not necessarily spiritual.

People's lives can be transformed in all sorts of ways – in TLM we see people cured of leprosy, hands made useful again, livelihoods created and lives changed drastically resulting in transformation.

Yet it seems that transformation can only take place if we are prepared to be involved. Transformation doesn't take place just by itself. We have to play our part.

Spiritually we have to accept Jesus; we have to take that leap of faith.

Physically too we have to play our part. A person *has* to take their medicine if they are to be cured; they *have* to do the hard slog of physio if the surgery is to be effective, they *have* to look after their goats if they want to make a new start in life, the children *have* to go to school if they want an education.

The Leprosy Mission holds out the *hope of transformation*, either spiritually or physically, however the person has to play their part if there is to be transformation.

And of course God has been constantly transforming TLM over these many years. No longer do people endure the agony of chaulmoogra oil treatment in the vague possibility of a cure, now pills can guarantee a cure. No longer is leprosy thought to be a curse but we know it is a medical condition. No longer do people travel months on a boat but hours on a plane. No longer do we wear button up boots....

Indeed I have seen amazing transformation within TLM in the years I have been involved, most recently the forming of The Global Fellowship

We have much to thank and praise God for in this transformation.

Prayer:

*Thank you Lord that you want to transform our lives and situations. Thank you that you want us to enjoy freedom which only you can give. Give us courage to be open to hear what you want to do in our lives, and to be ready to play our part in your transforming work.*

*We pray you would continue to bless and transform TLM, and give your courage to guide this work in new and different ways as you lead. .*

*Amen.*

**Pam Packett** is an Australian and has been involved with The Leprosy Mission for over 40 years in various capacities.



## Life in all its Fullness – 5.

### Transformation – Part 3

#### *Mark 5:1-12*

Let me tell you briefly about the transformation in the life of a person within TLM, who did *not* have leprosy. This person, well it was a woman, found it impossible to talk publically.

Because she was a part of TLM she would often be asked to speak about the work of the mission. Fortunately for her, her husband was a gifted speaker, and so after she had made herself physically ill about whatever she had been asked to do, he would offer to go and speak on her behalf.

This worked for her for quite some time, before she decided, in 1986, that she could not continue to live this way. She realised God could not change her while she continued to sit and say, 'I can't do this, I can't do this...'

He could only change her if she was involved and doing something. So she said to God that she would have a go at everything that she was asked to do, and trusted God to get her through.

The very first thing she was asked to do, after this decision, was to go and read the Bible to a very small group of older women. How simple you say, but no, not for this lady, she got herself into such a state that she ended up asking a friend to go with her!!

As an aside, if you needed proof of there being a God this could be it. She wasn't asked to something big and bold, just the most simple, unthreatening little thing. How gracious is our God.

Often in the beginning only a little squeak would come out as she tried to speak from her prepared notes. As the years went by she had a go at everything she was asked to do, often after spending long hours on her knees! She often didn't do things well, but she did them.

Just as she was becoming vaguely good at a certain level, something harder would come along.

Incredibly to her, she was invited onto TLMA Board in 1994. Of course she didn't contribute much as she was nervous of her opinions and ability to speak them out.

Then in 2002, she was asked to take over a small TLM Support Group which Ian Milne (previous TLMA and TLMI Chair) had started, as he was shifting to another area. God had found something a bit harder again!! She found if she prepared every single word she could get by. 'Welcome everyone and a special welcome to..... etc etc'

After a few years she could manage with just 'cheat sheets' and by now she was taking part in discussions on the Board, and representing TLM reasonably well at meetings.

To her amazement she became Chair of TLMAustralia in 2012 and quickly found herself overseeing a major restructure, requiring her to fly around Australia making TLM personnel redundant. God was, of course, faithful and she came through this extremely unpopular and difficult time still standing!

In 2013, to her astonishment, she found herself on the Global Fellowship Board – and in 2018 I found myself telling my story at the Members Meeting and then leading Board devotions on my last day on this Board. Yes, our God is certainly into transformation.

*Lord, we thank you for the transforming work you have done in each of our lives, and we ask that you would continue this work until we are the people you want us to be.*

*We also ask you to kindly lead and guide us today in all we do and say, that you would give us your wisdom in the decisions we need to make. Amen*



## The 'musts' of the gospel !!

*John 3:7 – “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You MUST be born again.’”*

->You MUST be born again!

*John 4:4 – “And He HAD TO/MUST pass through Samaria.”*

->You MUST love your neighbour!

*Mark 8:31-“And He began to teach them that the Son of Man MUST suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.”*

->You MUST proclaim a whole Gospel!

*Mark 13:10-“And the Gospel MUST first be proclaimed to all nations.”*

->You MUST keep the Gospel as a lifelong priority!

*John 10:16-“And I have other sheep that are not of this fold.*

*I MUST bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.*

*So there will be one flock, one Shepherd.”*

->You MUST have an Eternal Kingdom Vision!

*Luke 2:49-“And Jesus said to Mary and Joseph,*

*‘Why were you looking for Me?*

*Did you not know that I MUST be in My Father’s House?”*

->You MUST be accountable within a local church!

*Luke 19:5-“And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him,*

*Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I MUST stay at your house today.”*

->You MUST be hospitable!

A.W. Tozer has left us 5 KEYS TO ONGOING SPIRITUAL STRENGTH:-

1) Deal thoroughly with sin.....

2) Never own anything.....

3) Never defend yourself.....

4) Never speak badly of others....

5) Never accept any glory....

*CONCLUSION: Read Psalm 147:1-11*

*- Amen.*



**For self-examination before Advent, preparing the way to the Lord**

Your true character is most accurately measured by how you treat those who can do 'Nothing' for you

Mother Teresa





## Comfort for God's People - 1

### Isaiah 40

1 Comfort, comfort my people,  
says your God.

<sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and proclaim to her  
that her hard service has been completed,  
that her sin has been paid for,  
that she has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all her sins.

<sup>3</sup> A voice of one calling:  
"In the wilderness prepare  
the way for the LORD;  
make straight in the desert  
a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be raised up,  
every mountain and hill made low;  
the rough ground shall become level,  
the rugged places a plain.

<sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,  
and all people will see it together.  
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, "Cry out."  
And I said, "What shall I cry?"

"All people are like grass,  
and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.

<sup>7</sup> The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
because the breath of the LORD blows on them.

Surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
but the word of our God endures forever."

<sup>9</sup> You who bring good news to Zion,  
go up on a high mountain.  
You who bring good news to Jerusalem,  
lift up your voice with a shout,  
lift it up, do not be afraid;  
say to the towns of Judah,  
"Here is your God!"

<sup>10</sup> See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power,  
and he rules with a mighty arm.

See, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense accompanies him.

<sup>11</sup> He tends his flock like a shepherd:

He gathers the lambs in his arms  
and carries them close to his heart;  
he gently leads those that have young.



**ADVENT 1**

**Comfort for God's People – 2**

*Isaiah 40*

- <sup>12</sup> Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,  
or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?  
Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket,  
or weighed the mountains on the scales  
and the hills in a balance?
- <sup>13</sup> Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD,  
or instruct the LORD as his counselor?
- <sup>14</sup> Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him,  
and who taught him the right way?  
Who was it that taught him knowledge,  
or showed him the path of understanding?
- <sup>15</sup> Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket;  
they are regarded as dust on the scales;  
he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.
- <sup>16</sup> Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires,  
nor its animals enough for burnt offerings.
- <sup>17</sup> Before him all the nations are as nothing;  
they are regarded by him as worthless  
and less than nothing.
- <sup>18</sup> With whom, then, will you compare God?  
To what image will you liken him?
- <sup>19</sup> As for an idol, a metalworker casts it,  
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold  
and fashions silver chains for it.
- <sup>20</sup> A person too poor to present such an offering  
selects wood that will not rot;  
they look for a skilled worker  
to set up an idol that will not topple.
- <sup>21</sup> Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?  
Have you not understood since the earth was founded?
- <sup>22</sup> He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,  
and its people are like grasshoppers.  
He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,  
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

<sup>23</sup> He brings princes to naught  
and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

<sup>24</sup> No sooner are they planted,  
no sooner are they sown,  
no sooner do they take root in the ground,  
than he blows on them and they wither,  
and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

<sup>25</sup> “To whom will you compare me?  
Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One.

<sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:  
Who created all these?  
He who brings out the starry host one by one  
and calls forth each of them by name.  
Because of his great power and mighty strength,  
not one of them is missing.

<sup>27</sup> Why do you complain, Jacob?  
Why do you say, Israel,  
“My way is hidden from the LORD;  
my cause is disregarded by my God”?

<sup>28</sup> Do you not know?  
Have you not heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
He will not grow tired or weary,  
and his understanding no one can fathom.

<sup>29</sup> He gives strength to the weary  
and increases the power of the weak.

<sup>30</sup> Even youths grow tired and weary,  
and young men stumble and fall;

<sup>31</sup> but those who hope in the LORD  
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

## Authors in Alphabetical Order

## Textuarium

Asaph, psalmist	3, 4, 10, 11, 17 Nov		1 Sam 1,24-28	7 November
Christine Osman	19 November		1 Sam 3,1-10	14 November
David Beazley	2 November		1 Sam 15,34-16,13	5, 6 November
David, King of Israel	25 November		Psalm 5,1-2	23 November
Eddie Askew	23 November		Psalm 23,3	2 November
Elisabeth Barnett	5, 6 November		Psalm 79	3 November
Eric Chollet	12 November		Psalm 80	4 November
Glynis Forbes	16 November		Psalm 81	10 November
Isaiah, prophet	1,2 December		Psalm 82	11 November
James Barnett	1 November		Psalm 83	17 November
Moses Onoh MD	14, 15 November		Psalm 84	18 November
Mother Teresa	30 November		Psalm 85	24 November
Otto Kingsley	8, 29 November		Psalm 86	25 November
Pam Packett	26, 27, 28 Nov		Psalm 103, 1-14	2 November
Peter Hilton	7 November		Isaiah 40,3	30 October
Peter Laubscher	22 November		Isaiah 40,1-11	1 December
PLN Raju Dr	20, 21 November		Isaiah 40,12-31	2 December
Silvano Perotti	13 November		Matthew 5,2-12	26 November
Sons of Korah	19, 24 November		Matthew 11,28	8 November
Tim Collison	9 November		Matthew 25,35-36	20 November
			Mark 5,1-12	27, 28 November
			John 1,35-42	15 November
			John 3,7	29 November
			John 10	9 November
			John 10,10	22 November
			John 12,24	13 November
			Ephesians 6,12	1 November
			Hebrews 6,9-12	19 November
			1 John 2,16	21 November
			1 John 4,9	12 November