



TLM Daily Devotions

April 2019





Intro to the month

*Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, **STAND** firm.*

***LET NOTHING MOVE** you.*

*Always **GIVE YOURSELVES** fully to the work of the Lord,*

*because **YOU KNOW** that your labor **IN THE LORD IS NOT IN VAIN.***

Blessed Easter season, TLM!



Talking Helps

*"A little talk with Jesus makes it right, all right;
A little talk with Jesus makes it right, all right;
In trials of every kind, praise God I always find
A little talk with Jesus makes it right, all right."*

These words written by someone called H. Wright, are the words of a chorus which I learned in my teenage years. They may have been written many years ago, but how true they are still. It seems to me that we as Christians are faced with one of two big problems in this 21st century – either we have too much to do, we are so busy doing God's work that we don't have time for God; or we don't have enough to do that we become introspective and forget about God. I think it has been ever thus!! In *1Kings 19* we find Elijah fleeing for his life. Eventually, he can go no further and sits down under a tree and says to God "OK I've had enough! Just let me die here." With that he falls asleep. But God has other plans for Elijah, you can read on in 1 Kings of all that Elijah accomplished after this.

We read too of David turning in desperation to God when life got tough and we read in *Psalms 138* of his acknowledgement of God's help *"When I called, you answered me, you made me bold and stout-hearted"*.

What problems do you face today – too much to do; persecution from someone close to you; a difficult situation you don't know how to deal with; an appointment the results of which cause you to fear; a colleague who seems to have "it all together" when you don't; don't have anything to do. Whatever your problem, think of that chorus – talking it over with Jesus will bring it in to focus and perspective and He will give you the strength and courage to face and deal that problem.

I have written those words, but how often do we do that. Is it easier just to moan to someone, even if only yourself? God does not ask us to do His work in our own strength. He wants us to be partners in His work of redemption. There is an old Latin saying *nemo dat quod non habet* – you can't give what you haven't got. In other words, we cannot *give* God – His love, compassion, mercy, hearing ear, seeing eye – if we don't make time to *know* God – through His creation, through study, through reading the Bible, through interaction with others but most importantly through prayer. However busy we are, we need to take that time alone with Him. We need to tell Him who we are, and what we are going through just now - our doubts, our disappointments, our challenges, our desires, and our accomplishments. But we need to be quiet to wait, and to listen, to let Him be the influence in our lives, words and actions.

Have that conversation with Jesus right now – that little talk with Him that makes it right, all right.

I'm very busy, Lord. I have so much to do today....., it's important and.... Just a minute – no not you Lord, me. I'm doing all this, Lord. I've just realised that it's Your work so shouldn't the "I" be "we". Am I giving you enough chance to be in this work I have to do today? Please give me the gift of making time each day for you to tell you about me and to listen to you and be strengthened and helped by you as I remember that it is Your work that I will do today. Amen.

God bless you all as you walk through this day with God at your right hand to lead and to guide.



“On This Day in History”

Psalm 24:1 “The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;”

Recently I was given a book called “On This Day in History”. It describes an event from the past for each date of the year, whether 50 years ago or 500, one per page, from all around the world. It’s interesting reading, and as I have looked at each day two thoughts have come to mind:

The first is that small events, or decisions taken apparently on a whim, hastily or for some incidental, trivial, selfish or ‘political’ reason, have often had immense, complex, unforeseen outcomes for decades or generations. It could be personal ambition, military action or ‘empire building’, or the ‘accidental’ discovery of a medical breakthrough, or a misunderstood communication.... but it led to something history-making. Our own lives reflect the same: a small decision, word or action today may have far-reaching, life-changing consequences for ‘good’ or ‘ill’, for ourselves or those we love.

The second is how often in history negative or positive trends have developed almost unnoticed, and then morphed into something awful, -or wonderful. Like stones dropped into a pond, the ripples moving outwards affect individual lives, international affairs and the world, causing such things as the holocaust, persecution or war. On that negative side we see today effects like climate change or mass migrations. It’s not a huge leap of imagination to see a parallel in the silently creeping effects of leprosy, either physically within a body, or through the effects of stigma, ignorance and prejudice, into a whole life and community. But then there is the slow but steady progress of leprosy research and education, leading to a medical transformation like multi-drug therapy, or the slow melting away of stigma!

The English poet John Donne wrote “No man is an island...” and that seems truer than ever today in our inter-related world. We are all involved, as children of one Father: *“The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;”* (Psalm 24:1). I don’t think that means that God purposes all the bad stuff of history or of today, but that like a good parent he shares with us the responsibility to care for ourselves and the world, and gives us free will as individuals and nations. There is huge progress in many ways, but we live in a fallen world, in which man’s sin and the world’s own ‘groaning’ (Romans 8:21-22) reach an alarming level. I feel sure our Father God responds to our seeking of his guidance and grace, forgiveness and peace; all as part of relationship with him and with one another. So I find comfort in the words of a century-old hymn, based on Psalm 24:1.

*This is my Father’s world:
Oh, let me ne’er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the ruler yet.
This is my Father’s world, The battle is not done:
Jesus, who died, shall be satisfied,
And earth and heaven be one.*

So to take up the words of another English poet, Tennyson: *“More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.”* Our first duty is clear... we must pray. With my good wishes and prayers, David

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, and continues as a volunteer speaker for TLM.



Passion-Prayer-Provision-Planning-Power: all necessary for organisational change

Nehemiah 2 and 3

(Adapted from a sermon from Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Karen, Nairobi)

There is much talk in TLM about organisational change and organisation development. Recently on a trip to Nairobi with the Leprosy Research Initiative, I heard a sermon that illustrated organisational change using the story of Nehemiah.

What is necessary for organisational change?

1. **Passion** – we bring about organisational (or societal) change when we know God and know our purpose and combine both with our passion. God calls us to change things – to bring about transformation. Find your passion and let God use it to change the world!
2. **Prayer** – All the passion in the world will only take us so far. Nehemiah turned to prayer. Divine tasks require divine power! Has prayer become a ritual? Prayer that is real is when the heart is connecting with God. Effective prayer like Nehemiah's results from being already in touch with God – having an established relationship with Him.
3. **God's Provision** – whether we are talking about resources, authority or protection - God provides all. Phil 4:19 *"my God will provide all my needs according to His riches in glory"*. Begin with where you are and as you see His provision, grow in faith to trust Him for more. *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."* (Matt 6:33).

Matt 29: 35-38 tells us that when it comes to His work, God will send workers - people who will trust Him to supply all they need

4. **Planning** - Nehemiah needed a strategy to get work done. He used a simple strategy - repair the piece of the wall near your own house (Nehemiah 3:23) – now that is sheer brilliance in terms of quality assurance - as they are unlikely to make shoddy job there!

We also need God-given strategy if we are to be His agents of transformation in the world.

5. **Power** - *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"*. (Acts 1:8) The Holy Spirit is the source of God's power. Filled by the Holy Spirit we have everything we need to serve God, achieve change and transform society.



Heartfelt Prayer – 1.

His home - my heart

What is your heart full of?

Joy, satisfaction & peace

Thank goodness a period is finished

Frustration

Thank goodness the new season is coming, a chance for change!

For something better!

1 Peter 4:7 NIVUK The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray.

♥ Your heart is exposed in prayer

What you pray about is where you're treasure is

Matt. 6:19-21 NIVUK Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Let me try to paint a New Testament "Prayer pattern picture"

1. Jesus

When Jesus started His ministry:

Luke 3:21-22 "When all the people were being baptised, Jesus was baptised too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'"

When Jesus was hanging on the cross He prayed:

When He completed His ministry *Luke 23:34 Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'*

Throughout His ministry there is a constant reference to His prayer life & practice

2. The Bride of Christ - Us, the Born Again's - The Church *Acts 1:14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.*

Acts 2:1-2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting."

The Church was **birthed in prayer** & Pentecost!

" The Church Runs on prayer!

" Are **you** running on empty? Is **The Base** running on empty?

" There's no prayer crisis in heaven it's on earth.

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.



Heartfelt Prayer – 2.

When there was trouble - The Church prayed!

Acts 4:31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."

Acts 12:5, 12-15 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

Acts 4:13, 16, 18-20 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

'What are we going to do with these men?' they asked. 'Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, 'Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.'"

What happened when the disciples prayed?

The lost were saved, the sick were healed, miracles were the order of the day!

Those who had been arrested and persecuted by hostile authorities were delivered, They were fearless

...and the church grew.

These kinds of prayer that James calls: *powerful and effective James 5:13-16 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you ill? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.*

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

Don't pray prayers without legs

" If you're going to pray it - be prepared to do it!

" Prayer without legs is a waste of time

These are the prayers that are desperately needed today!

Do you live in a prayer less Pentecost?

🔥 Pentecost: The celebration of the birth of The Church, The Bride of Jesus the Christ

🔥 Pentecost: The climax of Jesus coming to earth

His home - my heart 📖

A **prayer less heart** is open & exposed to:

The negative, it thrives on it, it repeats

A life of fear & worry filled with anxiety

It flourishes on gossip & lies

It finds it difficult to hear Holy Spirit voice


It's an open door for sin to enter in...

This statement challenged me to the core of my life:

📖 Leonard Ravenhill: **No person is greater than their prayer life.**

The New Testament church was birthed in prayer

" Let this year be bathed in prayer

" Continue the year in prayer
" Restart in **"Prayer Mode Default"**
" Will you make: His home - your heart 
" Has your heart "Flat lined"
" Prayer is more than asking.
" Prayer is also listening, which is usually more important than talking
Are you serious about your prayer life?
Are you ready to make a commitment?
Do it now!

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Psalm 112

¹ Praise the LORD.

Blessed are those who fear the LORD,
who find great delight in his commands.

² Their children will be mighty in the land;
the generation of the upright will be blessed.

³ Wealth and riches are in their houses,
and their righteousness endures forever.

⁴ Even in darkness light dawns for the upright,
for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous.

⁵ Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely,
who conduct their affairs with justice.

⁶ Surely the righteous will never be shaken;
they will be remembered forever.

⁷ They will have no fear of bad news;
their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the LORD.

⁸ Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear;
in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.

⁹ They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor,
their righteousness endures forever;
their horn will be lifted high in honor.

¹⁰ The wicked will see and be vexed,
they will gnash their teeth and waste away;
the longings of the wicked will come to nothing.



Psalm 113

¹ Praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD, you his servants;
praise the name of the LORD.

² Let the name of the LORD be praised,
both now and forevermore.

³ From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets,
the name of the LORD is to be praised.

⁴ The LORD is exalted over all the nations,
his glory above the heavens.

⁵ Who is like the LORD our God,
the One who sits enthroned on high,

⁶ who stoops down to look
on the heavens and the earth?

⁷ He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;

⁸ he seats them with princes,
with the princes of his people.

⁹ He settles the childless woman in her home
as a happy mother of children.

Praise the LORD.



JESUS our J. O. Y. !

In these turbulent and traumatic days - is there an affordable and an accessible Constant?...
 Yes – there is: **JESUS ! (Heb.13:8)** – always the same - oh so 'affordable' - oh so accessible!
 The beauty is, when you are 'in Jesus', you also experience His J.O.Y. !!!

1) J.O.Y. from a place of vulnerability: JESUS OUR "YELP"!

(Mark 7:26) – The Syrophoenician woman's faith..... Daringly she said to Jesus: "yet even the yelping puppies eat the crumbs under the table"....

How joyful she became, when Jesus delivered her demonized daughter that very hour!

2) J.O.Y. from a place of desperation: JESUS OUR "YELL"!

(Mark 10:47) – the blind son of Timaeus cried out/yelled out..... Desperately wanting to see again, he yelled towards Jesus: "Son of David, have mercy on me!" How joyful folk become, when Jesus answers their 'yell'! "Whoever 'yells' upon the Name of the LORD shall be saved!" Joel 2:32/Acts2:21/Rom10:13

3) J.O.Y. from a history of sin: JESUS OUR "YESTERDAY"!

Rom.3:23; Rom.9; 2Cor.5:17; Philp.3:7-11 "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ....(read on)."

Jesus removes all guilt from our "yesterdays" and makes us fresh, new and joyful in Him!

4) J.O.Y. on account of a definite commitment to Him: JESUS OUR "YES"!

The Bible unequivocally appeals to us for a 100% commitment to Jesus.

James 5:12 – "But above all, my brothers, do not swear by Heaven or earth, but let your "Yes" be yes and your "No" be no, so you may not fall into condemnation." Have you experienced the J.O.Y. of this YES? cf 2Cor.1:20-22-"For all the promises of God find their YES in Him. That is why it is through Him that we utter our Amen to God for His glory. And it is God Who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and Who has also put His seal on us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee."

5) J.O.Y. for restless/wrestling believers: JESUS OUR "YIELDEDNESS"!

The Rich Young Ruler was reticent to yield all of himself and all of his assets to Jesus (Mark10).

Jesus' disciples must be willing to yield all to Him and to follow Him in His way (Mark10:43-45)

John 15:11 – "These things I have spoken to you, that My J.O.Y. may be in you ...to the full."

6) J.O.Y. for the persecuted believers: JESUS OUR "YEARNING"!

Such believers achingly yearn for Heaven's final bliss and glory – where J.O.Y. will be endless!

Rev.22:17 – "The Spirit and the Bride say "Come". And let the one who hears say "Come".

Let the one who is thirsty say come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price."

Constant J.O.Y. in Jesus for you and for me – accessible TODAY - affordable via CALVARY! Amen.



A holistic Gospel

The 10th December 2018 Dr. Dennis Mukwege and Nadja Murad received the Nobel Peace Prize in the city hall of Oslo. Their strong messages touched not just the audience, but the whole world, when they spoke about justice and peace out of their experiences of the opposite.

Finally Dr. Mukwege received the Prize after have been nominated many years. His enduring struggle and support of Congolese women, victims of sexual violence, was now recognized by the world community. From Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, South Kivu, he and his team have been able to help ten thousands of women escaping from rape and humiliation. As a Pentecostal pastor and medical doctor Dr. Mukwege is now a model, not only for his country and continent, but for the entire world.

When I visited him together with some colleagues of TLM a couple of year ago in his office in Panzi hospital he told us that he has been very much involved in the work of TLM Congo in South Kivu and he knows very well about the activities of TLM. I know that he once was nominated as board member of TLMI. So we may be proud of him. And of course, as a Swedish Pentecostal, I'm proud of the close connection with him since many years. His hospital was built by Swedish money and he is quite often in our country.

The 14th December 2018 Dr. Mukwege was received by the Swedish Parliament and I was invited to meet him. I was impressed when he explained their program in his hospital to help these vulnerable women:

1. First of all they give of course medical help. Often the women are in a very bad condition and need series of surgeries. Sometimes the patients are young girls and even small children affected by sexual violence.
2. All women need counselling and help to treat traumatic experiences. There are many counselors at the hospital ready to listen and support for the mental and spiritual wellbeing.
3. Often the women need help with contact with the police and legal matters. This is very difficult in a country as DRC to see the criminals prosecuted and punished so they really need professional help.
4. Quite often it's impossible for women to go back and join the family. The local society refuses to welcome them back after their bad experiences of being raped. In order to help the women, and often their newborn child, they must be trained to earn their livings. Small trainings centers are connected to the hospital to prepare the women for a future of their own.

I think the program of Panzi hospital is very similar to how we in TLM try to help people affected by leprosy and their families. Our program is also about medical help, counselling and spiritual support, integration back into society and practical support for better livelihood.

Perhaps one day The Leprosy Mission will receive the Nobel Peace Prize for the way we have been helping people affected by leprosy almost 150 years!

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Matt 5:16



Pruning and Preparation

John 15:2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit
While every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

Let's look at *Isaiah 40:31* *Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength they will soar on the wings of eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

Gods pruning process is to refine and mould us to become more like Jesus, preparing us for eternity. We all have boulders in our path maybe material possessions, relationships, maybe our ego or reputation, even aspects of our job that have become idols, our daily stumbling blocks.

It's important to remember that the pain of pruning is not Gods end game! We are pruned because God loves us too much to let us stay as we are. God chooses to prune us because we are doing good. And God wants so much more of the good we are doing to further His Kingdom! Through the process we are growing as disciples of Jesus who will be able to soar on the wings of eagles over our difficulties.

Let's us imagine having to have an operation. The surgeon reassures us he can do remove the problem, it will be painful for a while, but it will get better. We trust the surgeon because he knows what he's doing. Do we trust God when He takes us through painful pruning, removing our problem to make us better?

When we are in the pruning process, we can be assured by Gods word IT IS temporary, it will be providing great benefits for us, his Kingdom and our place in eternity!

Pruning makes us more fruitful. Let's look at *Galatians 5:22*. *The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control.*

And let's not forget *2 Timothy 1:7* *And God did not give us a spirit of Timidity but a spirit of power of love and of self-discipline.* Yes, it may well be a tough time but in Christ we are tougher. We will come through fitter and stronger bearing much more fruit for his Kingdom.

Finally, looking at *Colossians 1:10* *So that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.*

Gods loving, attentive, meticulous pruning helps us to;

- Listen to Gods small quiet voice,
- Adjust our habits and routines
- Change the way we think and speak to be in line with Gods calling.

Global Strategy Scripture

Rev: 22:2 *On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for healing of the Nations.*

As part of the Global Fellowship we have been called for such a time as this in the final leg of the relay race to defeat leprosy and transform lives.

God has called each of us to be part of his team to find the lost, broken and hidden people whether in our home town, our families or further afield with people affected with leprosy.



On Prayer

In January this year we were blessed to have Dr Famkima Darlong, Kashi Aryal and his daughter Rebika join us in Australia to speak to churches and supporters. I went on leave thinking I had arranged a church for a particular Sunday for Famkima to speak in. But I was mistaken - and when I returned I found that I had just a couple of weeks to find a church for Dr Darlong to speak in.

So I looked at my map of churches in Australia which have supported the Leprosy Mission over the last three years, and found some likely candidates. But who to call? I looked at their websites. And I saw that one of them had an old friend listed as a youth pastor. But they were also the church which had the most lapsed relationship with people affected by leprosy. Apart from my friendship connection this would have been the church I called last.

But I felt compelled to do something unusual. I went for a walk, and I prayed about which church I should call. I strongly felt God's leading to call my friend. I did, and Dr Famkima went and spoke there, and we are able to rebuild that relationship. Praise God!

I'm sure from one perspective I could simply say it was coincidence - of course my friend was happy to help facilitate this. But the point I am trying to make is that I did something unusual - I prayed about my decision.

It's not that I don't pray about my work - each morning before I start I commit my day (and my wife's!) to prayer. I'm not sure they are the most articulate prayers as they are pre coffee. But I do not often remember to pray, as Paul writes, *"And pray in the Spiritⁱ on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying^l for all the Lord's people."* Eph 6:18.

The new Global strategy calls for prayer to be a key part in our decision making process. How do we do that?

*Take five minutes to turn to the person next to you and ask their opinion.
Share the suggestions with the group, and pray about them*

Tim Collison — Engagement Coordinator TLM Australia



By Faith

Hebrew 11 starts by saying 'Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see'.

This is a verse familiar to many, but only recently did I realise how many of the subsequent paragraphs in Hebrews 11 begin with the words 'BY FAITH...'. Count them for yourself and you'll find it's more than 18 times, so I think the writer is trying to tell us something!

Rather surprised by this, I mentioned it to a friend who informed me that the passage is often referred to as the 'Hall of Faith'. It's a fitting name - this one chapter refers to generation after generation of God's faithful followers - Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, David, Samuel and so on.

BY FAITH, these men and women conquered kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, were mighty in war, endured trials and torture, and stood firm even in the face of death.

In Hebrews 11 we learn what God's people did BY FAITH. They didn't do these things because of their personality, their training, their family background, their own ability or ambition. They did these things BY FAITH.

Naturally this makes me reflect on my own faith: How deep does my faith go? Am I growing in faith? Am I living by faith? How am I expressing my faith on a daily basis?

As we work together in the Global Fellowship, let us encourage one another to live and grow in faith.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank you that you are the 'author and perfecter' of our faith. We thank you for the testimonies of the faith of other believers. We thank you that our faith can move mountains. We ask that you increase our faith, so that we may see you more clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly. Amen!

Jane Willcocks – Global HR Advisor, TLMI



Psalm 114

¹ When Israel came out of Egypt,
Jacob from a people of foreign tongue,

² Judah became God's sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.

³ The sea looked and fled,
the Jordan turned back;

⁴ the mountains leaped like rams,
the hills like lambs.

⁵ Why was it, sea, that you fled?
Why, Jordan, did you turn back?

⁶ Why, mountains, did you leap like rams,
you hills, like lambs?

⁷ Tremble, earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,

⁸ who turned the rock into a pool,
the hard rock into springs of water.



Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

Luke 19, 28 After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ³⁰ “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

³² Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

³⁴ They replied, “The Lord needs it.”

³⁵ They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

³⁷ When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

³⁸ “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”^[b]

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

⁴⁰ “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

⁴¹ As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴² and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴ They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

Jesus at the Temple

⁴⁵ When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. ⁴⁶ “It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be a house of prayer’ but you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’

⁴⁷ Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. ⁴⁸ Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words.



Whom do you fear?

Read 1 Samuel 5:1-7

I want to begin today by asking some difficult questions: Who or what is it in your life that is the biggest threat? What fills you with fear?

For the Israelites, the Philistines were their most feared enemy. Goliath was a Philistine. Samson's great acts of strength were against the Philistines. Despite some victories, for many years, the tyranny of the Philistines was something that the people of Israel daily had to live with.

All of which means that in 1 Samuel 4 when the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant, God's presence on earth, the Israelites were devastated. The most precious thing that they had was now with the people that they feared the most.

As we read 1 Samuel 5:1-7, we read of what happened to the Ark in captivity.

The Ark was set in a Philistine Temple, in a city called Ashdod. It was put beside their boss God, Dagon, who was father to the better known Baal. The next morning, the Philistines find Dagon face down in the Temple. They put him back in place. The following morning they return to find that Dagon has fallen again. This time, he is broken. His face and hands are at the threshold of the door. His torso is still on the table. Add to this, in the coming days, many of the people of Ashdod became seriously ill.

The Philistines finally realise what the problem is – The Ark of the Covenant! The rest of the chapter tells us that the Ark is sent to another Philistine city, then another, and another. After visiting 5 cities, and reeking havoc in all of them, the Philistines give up, and decide to send the Ark back to Israel. Throughout their history, fear filled the Israelites at the very mention of the Philistines. Now, the Philistines were the ones running scared. God had turned things around!

As I've studied this passage, I've felt that God has a message for us today as we deal with fears and threats in our lives. Often, like the Israelites, we have lost, or fear losing that which is most precious to us. It might be that we fear the loss of our freedom, friends, family or future. But the message of this passage is that God, when placed in the middle of our fears, is powerful. He is able to break the power of the enemy. He is able to smash the idols. He is able to weaken the army of darkness which stands against us. He is so holy, so powerful, and so great that those things that we fear themselves become afraid in the mighty presence of God.

This passage teaches us to believe that God can overcome and overpower even our darkest fears. It also teaches us to pray, so that we can invite God into those dark places, asking that his presence and his power will bring us freedom from that which we fear.



I thirst

John 19,28

Mother Teresa recalled that it was on a train journey to Darjeeling, on September 10, 1946, that she received a second vocation within religious life, “a vocation to give up even Loreto where I was very happy and to go out in the streets to serve the poorest of the poor.” In 1928 she had left her home in Albania to join the Sisters of Loreto in Ireland who, at her request, assigned her to teach in India. She felt an overwhelming desire not just to teach the poor in school and then send them home but also to go live among them and experience herself the poverty in which they lived. September 10 is observed as “Inspiration Day,” the true beginning of the Missionaries of Charity Mother Teresa was eventually allowed to found.

The mystical experience on the train placed her on Calvary with Jesus at the very moment he cried out, “I thirst.” She explained it this way to the Missionaries of Charity:

“I thirst”. Jesus said on the cross when Jesus was deprived of every consolation, dying in absolute poverty, left alone, despised and broken in body and soul. He spoke of thirst – not for water- but for love, for sacrifice.

Jesus is God. Therefore his love, his thirst is infinite. Our aim is to quench this infinite thirst of a God made man. Just like the adoring angels in Heaven, ceaselessly sing the praises of God, so the Sisters, using the four vows of absolute poverty, charity, obedience, and charity towards the poor, ceaselessly quench the thirsting God by their love and of the love of the souls they bring to him.”

Mother Teresa once summarized her life this way:

“By blood, I am an Albanian.

By citizenship, an Indian.

By faith I am a Roman Catholic nun.

I belong entirely to the heart of Jesus.”



Lent: a time in the desert

*Lent is a tree without blossom, without leaf,
Barer than blackthorn in its winter sleep,
All unadorned. Unlike Christmas which decrees
The setting-up, the dressing-up of trees,
Lent is a taking down, a stripping bare,
A starkness after all has been withdrawn
Of surplus and superfluous,
Leaving no hiding place, only an emptiness
Between black branches, a most precious space
Before the leaf, before the time of flowers;
Lest we should see only the leaf, the flower,
Lest we should miss the stars.*

Jean M. Watt

I came across this poem and I was reminded that Lent can be compared to a tree that has lost all blossom and foliage. There is something stark about a bare tree. Although it can open up new perspectives. E.g. through the bare branches it is easy to see the stars in the night, in contrast to the time of full bloom, when we are focused on the beautiful leaves and blossoms.

During the 'bare' time of Lent we can become aware of Jesus' time in the wilderness (Mathew 4) and us following him in the experience of the wilderness. Some of the things I became aware of:

Our vulnerability *"...for dust you are and to dust you will return." - Gen 3:19*

As Jesus was facing his death, so am I to understand that I 'will return to dust'.

Being stripped *"... the mind-set as Christ Jesus: Who did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing . ." Phil 2:5-8*

I am willing to be stripped in order to live with the same attitude of Jesus?

The fruit of solitude *"Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted. Jesus answered him, 'It is also written . .' Mathew 4: 1- 11.*

While being in solitude in the wilderness, Jesus knew exactly how to answer the devil. Solitude helps us to understand our inner world, our attachments and desires. There we can become aware how we cling to the noise of our lives. Eventually, in solitude we can discern which powers are controlling our inner world.

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

Dry Bones?

Ezekiel 37: 1-14



'The Vision of the Dry Bones'

by Gustave Doré

This is an evocative passage, painting a slightly terrifying picture of a wasteland, like the scene of a mass grave or a long-forgotten battlefield.

Is this passage relevant for you? Is it even relevant for The Leprosy Mission? Look around you; at church, in your family, at work, can you see dry bones? And no, I don't mean the lovely person sitting next to you as you read this! Although, actually that may be the case!

Within TLM, perhaps there are parts of us, projects, teams, offices where people are saying *"we are all dried up, our hope is gone, we are cut off"* (v11). Where we are present, but just going through the motions and lacking that spark that the Holy Spirit gives us.

Well, the passage says that they (and you and me) are not cut off. What we have and what we are belongs to the Lord, he will bring it back to 'Israel', he will put his Spirit in us and give us life. Then we will know that the Lord has spoken and has done it (v14). The process of developing our new Global Strategy '23 allowed us to hear what God was speaking to us. *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* John 10:10 and the picture of the tree of life in Revelation 22:2 were two such scriptures. So we have heard the voice of God; now what are we doing about it?

Don't give up on our Mission, the church, nor anyone in it, including yourself. We were dead in our transgressions and sins but have now been made alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:1-5). I assume that none of us wants to have dry bones in our life or in the Mission, so let's seek the fullness of life that God promised us.

*Allow the Holy Spirit to be breathed upon us and to fill us up.
We will know that the Lord has spoken and that he has done it.*

Pete Garratt – head of operations support



Why the Cross of Calvary?

Luke 23: 39-43 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

The choices made by the two criminals at Calvary resonate with the choice all mankind has to make at some point of time or the other. There is no escape from the Cross of Jesus. So, what does it signify?

Cross of forgiveness Through forgiving those who condemned Him to the cross *Luke 23:34 "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*, Jesus convicted the heart of one of the criminals crucified next to Him. Conviction comes through forgiveness. Jesus did not condemn those who humiliated him, physically or verbally. Condemnation leads to confrontation and hatred. In conviction, there is compassionate love. Where there is conviction, there is no fear. Conviction gives new life, condemnation destroys life (Galatians 6:15 "Neither circumcision nor un-circumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation"). Jesus convicted sinners through words and deeds of compassion.

Cross of choice to repent At the Cross we choose Jesus or the Devil. It is an inescapable reality. It is an opportunity to realize who one really is and make the choice to believe in Jesus. One may choose to ignore/avoid it, but it does not go away. To turn to the Cross or turn away from it determines what we will be here in this world and in eternity. It is the moment of decision to continue with self-pride or in humility submit to the grace of Jesus so that we belong to His kingdom *Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"*. The choice is to cleanse oneself with the blood of Jesus or not. Truth and light were separated from falsehood and darkness at the Cross; what one chooses is a personal, individual commitment.

Cross of gate to heavenly realm At the Cross Jesus, once for all, threw open the gates of heaven for man to be reunited with God. It is the atoning sacrifice of Jesus which opened the gate, not my good works under any law or religion. No sinner would ever be separated from the presence of God if one steps through the gate called Jesus (John 10:9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture; Matthew 27:51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split.). The gate is open or shut depending on our faith in Jesus.

Cross of supreme sacrifice of God Jesus was condemned and humiliated by the world. Sentenced to die as a criminal. But it was in accordance with God's plan of perfect sacrifice (of the lamb) for the atonement of sins of mankind. The lamb was Jesus Christ, the Son of Almighty God (John 16:16 Simon Peter answered, *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."*). The atoning sacrifice of the Son of God was a must because sin cannot be condoned but dealt with. A sinful man cannot enter the presence of a holy God. Out of that sacrificial death came the hope of salvation for mankind (John 12:24 Very truly I tell you, 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). The sacrifice opened the door for salvation of man.

Cross of freedom from death By the work of Jesus on the cross, we have the hope of re-union with our creator. All fear of death is gone because sin that separates us from the fellowship with God has been paid for in full by Jesus. In life and death, we have freedom and victory because of the Cross and the subsequent resurrection of Jesus. Sin and death can no longer separate us from the love of God (Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ; Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us).

Cross of God's abundant Grace God's unmerited favour to man was demonstrated on the Cross through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God heaped on Himself the sins of mankind through the crucifixion of Jesus. It is His works that released His grace to me (Ephesians 2:9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast). God's grace is more abundant than we can ever ask or hope for. Grace is not an outcome of us practicing difficult or torturous religious rituals. Greater is my faith in Jesus, greater is God's grace poured out unto us (Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise"). He gives it not because we deserve it for any reason, but because of his great love for us.

The Cross of Calvary is a done deal. What is our response?

In gratitude, for His glory.

Dr PLN Raju





Christ Jesus,
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature^l of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2, 5-11



The mystery of Easter

Luke 24 1-12

Think of the times when we use that odd metaphoric phrase

'It has just dawned on me'.

Usually it is when we believe that we have an extraordinarily good idea or when some long-buried memory has been dredged from our sub conscious and brought to light. Or perhaps at a particular moment of enlightenment.

Here on Easter Day we stand at dawn - the dawning of a new day.

As we read and reflect on the strange and miraculous occurrences of the first resurrection day

- *what new thoughts dawn on us?*
- *what memories from far away and long ago are brought to mind?*
- *how does the story enlighten us?*

Does this story serve to strengthen or challenge our faith and belief in Jesus?

In fact, the details of the resurrection could well do both!

But overwhelmingly Jesus resurrection calls us to greater faith rather than greater understanding.

This is a mystery. In Greek 'mystery' - *mysterion* has similar connotations as sacrament.

Who can understand this mystery?

As a mystery it is not meant to be comprehended as with clinical logic, with lawyer's skill, nor explained with persuasive oratory.

No, it is meant to speak to us of God who remains mysterious

but calls us to trust and faith in the tangible Jesus.

The presence of the resurrected Jesus is proof enough.

The disciples knew Jesus in the breaking of the bread, may we too know and experience the presence of Jesus as we share this meal together and go on into the growing light of this Easter Day assured that He is with us as He promised to be.

Not seeking to explain the mystery but allowing the truth to dawn on us.

Alex Packett has been involved with The Leprosy Mission in various capacities since 1970



The Resurrection of the Dead

¹ *Corinthians 15,12-58* 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? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he “has put everything under his feet. Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,

“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”
³ Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.

The Resurrection Body

But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being” the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we^[g] bear the image of the heavenly man.

I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm.

Let nothing move you.

Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord,

because you know that your labor IN THE LORD is not in vain.



The power in the cross of Jesus

The story of the death of Jesus is much more than a dramatic story! His death and resurrection are the most significant signs in all human history and can transform the existence for every human being and will one day transform the whole world.

Paul writes, *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."* 1 Cor 1,18 There are many places we associate with power and energy: Niagara Falls, nuclear power stations and others. However, there is no place as loaded with spiritual power as Calvary! The death of Jesus seemed to be the result of a deep weakness and total helplessness, but in fact it was a crescendo of a positive power!

Creative power. What happens on the cross is actually a creative act. When Jesus dies, the earth is wrapped in darkness, and when the darkness leaves its grip, a morning of a new creation actually groans. He "destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility..His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace" (Eph. 2:15). "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: " (2 Corinthians 5:17). The old man ruled by sin, dies with Jesus on the cross. A brand new man is created who can live by his image.

Liberating power. Easter was a celebration of the memory of the Jewish people's liberation from slavery in Egypt. When you read the interesting story in Exodus, you truly discover that it was the hand of God and the power of God that liberated the people from the tyranny of a cruel despot. When we celebrate Easter, it is in memory of God's power, revealed in the cross of Jesus, to the liberation of a whole humanity. We are free from the slavery of sin! " So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:36)

Healing power. When Isaiah prophesies of Jesus' death, he says that "through his wounds we are healed" (Isa. 53: 5). When Peter writes his first letter, he clarifies and says, "Through His wounds you have been healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). In the death of Jesus, healing power is released to our entire being; spirit, soul and body.

Victorious power. On the cross, Jesus takes the decisive battle with our enemy. The devil's revolt and coup attempts would be knocked down. The decisive battle is fought on the cross. There the divine promise from the Garden of Eden is fulfilled, that the head of the snake would be crushed. Jesus triumphs on the cross of the devil, the sin, and the death. "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:15). His victory on the cross was eternal, devastating and total!

This is the power our world needs more than anything else! Our task is to be representatives of this wonderful and mighty power that operates through the cross.



Walking with Jesus

"They recognized him in the breaking of the bread." Luke 24:13-35

Jesus once walked on the earth and His walking was far more important than walking on the moon. Today, we his disciples walk on the path he has set for us. With the Psalmist, each of us can say, "You have shown me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence" (Ps 16:11; cf Acts 2:28). We are on a journey towards eternal life with God. God could not create us for merely mortal ends. We will one day reach our destiny. As long as we keep our sense of direction, taking time out to consult our faith; as long as we observe our speed limits, setting a pace that won't burn us out before we reach our destination; as long as we watch the road signs, such as the indications of spiritual danger and signs of progress; as long as we are concerned for other travelers, giving support to them; as long as we take care to refuel our spirits, making it a regular practice to pray, we are sure to reach our goal.

However, our Christian journey will not be exempt from the rocks and dust of simply being human. Gospel is good news, but Jesus never said it was easy news. We will encounter the harsh realities of our personal and social lives. At those moments we must persevere in our journey and our set path. After the crucifixion of Jesus, two of his disciples, disappointed because all hopes have been dashed by his death, left Jerusalem and were on their way to Emmaus in search of the other side of Calvary (Lk 24:13). We cannot act like them. "In prayer, you call God a Father; so then, live out the time of your sojourn here in reverence for God" (1 Pet. 1:17). This means that, when we are faced with difficulties in our Christian journey, we must not give up on God. We cannot always trace God's hands, but we can always trust God's heart, because God's goodness is equal to His greatness.

Thus, in our journey we are not alone. Jesus walks with us. He walks with us in our lack of understanding, our hurts and our bitterness, as he did with the two disciples. He asks us to surrender our difficulties into His hands and continue our journey. At times we can experience His presence with us; at other times we can't. He is like the sun in the sky, which at times is big and bright and clearly visible in the sky, but other times, it disappears behind a layer of cloud and seems to have vanished from the sky. But we know from experience that the sun is always somewhere in the sky. So too, in our low points of our journey we should not be disturbed by the apparent absence of the Lord; we should rather use them as opportunities to show Christ our trust that He is still walking with us and He will appear to console and heal us. For a journey, maps and road signs are useful; but it is infinitely better to have the guide himself, someone who has been there before and knows the way.

Jesus is that Someone who walks with us.

We could pray thus: Lord, I will always wholly commit to your promise, the journey of my life; that in it, no conditions or fate will ever circumvent my absolute trust that You walk with me. Jesus, I trust in You.

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



The challenge of forgetfulness

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, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "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.' (Matthew 25:35-40) (NIV)

In the scripture above we saw how Jesus honoured those who served Him on earth, but we noticed the reaction of the people of not remembering those good deeds done to Jesus; it is natural for us human beings to forget what we ought to remember and remember what we ought to forget

We can easily forget: Good deeds (towards us and for us): because we are wrapped in daily needs and heavy burdens we sometimes forget, to remember good deeds and sometimes help rendered to us either by men or God. A good example was the Butler who completely forgot Joseph's good deed to him when in prison.

We sometime forget to appreciate God's goodness, His daily cares and promises rather we are so engrossed in demanding and seeing what God has not done for us

We sometimes also forget to celebrate achievement and success; being so task oriented and giving no margin for error or failure in our lives, we let success pass by without celebrating it.

We also easily forget God's promises and our **Identity in Christ**, because of society pressure and attempt to comply with world standards.

It's sometime easy for us to also forget our vow (marriage) and promises made to our kids, friends or family. We forget special days (spouse and loved one).

We can also easily forget why we are in the Leprosy Mission; we can be so engrossed with meeting deadlines, writing report and carrying out evaluation that we forgot our aim of 'Following Jesus' in carrying out our services to People affected by leprosy.

But without much effort we easily remember: Our shortcomings; weaknesses, failure. Our sins even though we are forgiven. What others do to hurt or harm us (in word or deed) (2 Tim 4:14)

God is different. From the above scripture we noticed that God is completely different from us in what He remember and what He forgets.

Our God forgets and never counts these things on us: Our sins/offences (Psalm 106: 8-13), Isaiah 43:25). Our failures.

But He remembers: Our good deeds towards other (our labour of love 1 Thessalonians 1:3, Hebrew 6:10); our prayers; and his Covenants and Promises towards us.

To forget what holds us back and remember the promises and goodness of God we need: The help of the Holy Spirit (teach us all things).

To surround ourselves with people who can encourage us and build up our faith (what we hear and see affect and influence us). Also, to constantly study the word of God and be active prayer life.

Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely, they may forget, Yet I will not forget you, see, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me. (Isaiah 49:15-16 NKJV)

Bunmi Oluloto - Bunmi and Loveth Oluloto live in Niamey, Niger. Bunmi works for TLM as Country Leader for Niger and Chad



“Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?”

Wherever I go I am drawn to water - lakes, streams, the sea and rivers - and so when I was attending meetings in Brentford a few weeks ago, I of course took a walk along the Thames. The tide was out, and whilst this would be no big deal to my friends in the UK, this is an endless source of fascination for me, as back home the tidal variation is minimal. Our harbours don't empty in the way that they do in so many other places, leaving boats stranded for hours in the mud. We can go boating without ever consulting tide tables, something that is impossible for sailors in other countries.

Many British waterways are home to what were previously working boats which have been converted into dwellings. Some of the converted canal boats are works of art and one or two of the refurbished Thames sailing barges are simply magnificent. Unfortunately, when the tide is out, the Thames is anything but a flattering backdrop for these graceful vessels. The mud is littered with broken concrete, bricks, tyres, discarded anchor chains and the remnants of wooden jetties. Weeds which look like malevolent creatures from the “Day of the Triffids” adorn the river banks. I imagine that scenes like this prompted some of the poet William Blake's darkest musings.

It's a relief when the tide turns and the water surges over the rubble and lifts the boats from their muddy dungeon, and life returns to the Thames, reminding me of *2 Corinthians 4:7* **“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”**

It is when the boats are set afloat that their true purpose can be recognised. These vessels weren't designed to be floating caravans. They were built to harness the power of even the gentlest breeze, to move the heavy cargos that fuelled the industrial revolution.

The tide lifts everything in its path, from the humblest kayak to the largest ship. The wildest gale will not shift any of the ships held fast by the mud, but when the waters return, even the stickiest clay is powerless to prevent the barges from escaping its grim clutches. Consider then what His “all-surpassing power” might accomplish in your life. Let's be filled with longing for the things He wants to accomplish in and through our lives.

This reminds me of a poster that I had in my office when I first started working – a very long time ago! It was a photo of a tall ship in full flight in the teeth of a moderate gale, beneath which were the following words, which I think will resonate with everyone in the Fellowship:

“A ship in the harbour is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.”

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.



Psalm 115

¹ Not to us, LORD, not to us
but to your name be the glory,
because of your love and faithfulness.

² Why do the nations say,
“Where is their God?”

³ Our God is in heaven;
he does whatever pleases him.

⁴ But their idols are silver and gold,
made by human hands.

⁵ They have mouths, but cannot speak,
eyes, but cannot see.

⁶ They have ears, but cannot hear,
noses, but cannot smell.

⁷ They have hands, but cannot feel,
feet, but cannot walk,
nor can they utter a sound with their throats.

⁸ Those who make them will be like them,
and so will all who trust in them.

⁹ All you Israelites, trust in the LORD—
he is their help and shield.

¹⁰ House of Aaron, trust in the LORD—
he is their help and shield.

¹¹ You who fear him, trust in the LORD—
he is their help and shield.

¹² The LORD remembers us and will bless us:
He will bless his people Israel,
he will bless the house of Aaron,

¹³ he will bless those who fear the LORD—
small and great alike.

¹⁴ May the LORD cause you to flourish,
both you and your children.

¹⁵ May you be blessed by the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

¹⁶ The highest heavens belong to the LORD,
but the earth he has given to mankind.

¹⁷ It is not the dead who praise the LORD,
those who go down to the place of silence;

¹⁸ it is we who extol the LORD,
both now and forevermore.

Praise the LORD.



Psalm 116

- ¹ I love the LORD, for he heard my voice;
he heard my cry for mercy.
- ² Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live.
- ³ The cords of death entangled me,
the anguish of the grave came over me;
I was overcome by distress and sorrow.
- ⁴ Then I called on the name of the LORD: "LORD, save me!"
- ⁵ The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.
- ⁶ The LORD protects the unwary;
when I was brought low, he saved me.
- ⁷ Return to your rest, my soul,
for the LORD has been good to you.
- ⁸ For you, LORD, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling,
- ⁹ that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.
- ¹⁰ I trusted in the LORD when I said "I am greatly afflicted";
- ¹¹ in my alarm I said, "Everyone is a liar."
- ¹² What shall I return to the LORD
for all his goodness to me?
- ¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD.
- ¹⁴ I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.
- ¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the LORD
is the death of his faithful servants.
- ¹⁶ Truly I am your servant, LORD; I serve you just as my mother did;
you have freed me from my chains.
- ¹⁷ I will sacrifice a thank offering to you
and call on the name of the LORD.
- ¹⁸ I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,
- ¹⁹ in the courts of the house of the LORD—
in your midst, Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD.



Give us this day our daily bread, *Matthew 6 v11*

Give us each day our daily bread *Luke 11 v 3¹*

As I write from France and watch snippets of English news with the possibility of Brexit looming ever nearer one item of news that I have noticed is the stocking up on medicines and food in case there is a shortage if there is a no deal exit: by the time you read this more will be known. *Well it might be clearer*

Some companies have put together a kit of dried and tinned food to order so be prepared. Is this being wise, over cautious or silly? From the opposite side of the channel it looks the latter.

This example is irrelevant to most of you, however I am sure for many of you there have been or will be occasions when a shortage of something has been threatened and there is the temptation to go out and buy as much of that item as one can carry and afford. When the shortage arrives there is then an obvious division in the society the haves and the have nots. If you have experienced rationing you may see things differently.

Many of us pray daily « Give us today our daily bread, » do we think of give us a 3 days supply, maybe a week a month or even longer; but we are living today in the present, the future is yet to come so why do we think of needs for tomorrow, next week, next month or even next year. I am tempted to plan too far ahead and start thinking and even loosing sleep on how I am gong to organise something which is months or even a year away. I wonder if it does any good, as when the event arrives the circumstances are completely different for the ones I dreamt up in the imaginary planning that they are irrelevant. By then I am busy planning something else.

When we are directed in that passage in the gospels to ask today for our daily bread: or *our bread for tomorrow* I think it a warning to say look you will be OK you will have sufficient for the day, only ask for that and not for weeks because that is all you need. Trust.

The English translation in the two passages of Jesus's teaching on prayer are not quite the same gives a slightly differences senses, Luke refers to giving us **each day**, so there is a tomorrow, but still we don't need to worry about it.

*Lord help us to have confidence to prayer **Give us today our daily bread,**
all we need for the day no more no less.
Amen*

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.

¹ In both the gospel according to Matthew and Luke the alternative reading of this phrase is give us our bread for tomorrow. *New Revised Standard Version*



Let us learn from the early disciples

It is interesting to learn from the Gospel of *John 1, 35 – 42* that Andrew was the first disciple among the two chosen by Christ. It seems that Andrew with another person was following John the Baptist. It was John the Baptist who showed them Jesus Christ and said '*He is the lamb of God*'. John the Baptist had already told everyone that He, Jesus is greater than him. He also told them that they should follow Him. Andrew and another person followed Jesus and asked Him 'where do you stay? Jesus invited them to come with him to see. They went with him to see His place and then they spent whole day with Him. The very first thing in the morning Andrew did... he went out to meet his brother Simon Peter and said to him "*we have found The Messiah*"....means Christ.

The second important thing Andrew did in the next morning was that he brought his brother, Peter to Jesus. We all know the rest of the incidents, how Jesus changed the name of Peter. We also come to know that Finally Peter became the main and most important disciple among the twelve.

The role of Andrew is very important in the entire story because he only brought his brother Simon Peter to Jesus.

We do not have much information about Andrew but whatever we know about him, it tells us about his great character. He had two outstanding characteristics.

1) Andrew was the man who was always introducing others to Jesus: There are only three times in the Gospel story when Andrew is brought into the center of the stage. First is the incident when he brings Peter to Jesus. We also read in John 6:8, 9 when he brings to Jesus the boy with five loaves and two small fishes. Then this incident in John 12: 12 when he brings the enquiring Greeks into the presence of Jesus. It was Andrew's great joy to bring others to Jesus. He stands out as the man whose one joy to share the glory of Jesus. He is the man with the missionary heart. Having himself found the friendship of Jesus, he spent all his life in introducing others to that friendship. Andrew is the great example that he could not keep Jesus to himself.

2) Andrew was the man who prepared to take the second place: Again and again he is identified as Simon Peter's brother. It is clear that he lived under the shadow of Peter. People might not know who Andrew was, but everyone knew Peter, and when men spoke of Andrew they described him as Peter's brother. Andrew was not one of the inner circles of disciples. In most cases Peter, John and James were with Jesus in most important events. It would have been so easy for Andrew to resent this. Was he not one of the first two disciples who ever followed Jesus? Did Peter not owe his meeting with Jesus to him? Might he not reasonably have expected a foremost place in the apostolic band? But all that never occurred to Andrew. He was quite content to stand back and let his brother have the limelight; he was quite content to play a humble part in the company of the Twelve. To Andrew matters of precedence and place and honour mattered nothing at all. All that mattered was to be with Jesus and to serve him as well as he could. Andrew is the patron saint of all who humbly and loyally and ungrudgingly take the second place.

We also see later in this chapter how Christ found Philip and asked him "*Follow me*". The first thing Philip also did, he went out and found Nathanael and told him about Jesus.

*Let us also take engorgement from these early disciplines to tell other about Jesus and bring them to Jesus.
Also to be humble to serve Christ with the second position.*

Authors in Alphabetical Order

Textuarium

Alex Packett	21 April		Genesis 3,19	17 April
Allan Ekstedt	9, 23 April		1 Samuel 5,1-7	15 April
Bunmi Oluloto	25 April		1 Kings 19	1 April
Christine Osman	1 April		Nehemiah 2 and 3	3 April
Dan Izzett	4, 5 April		Psalms 24,1	2 April
David Beazley	2 April		Psalms 112	6 April
Elisabeth Barnett	29 April		Psalms 113	7 April
Erna Möller	17 April		Psalms 114	13 April
Helen Walton	10 April		Psalms 115	27 April
Jane Willcocks	12 April		Psalms 116	28 April
Jannine Ebenso	3 April		Ezekiel 37,1-14	18 April
Luke MD, evangelist	14 April		Matthew 5,16	9 April
Moses Onoh MD	24 April		Matthew 6,11	29 April
Mother Teresa	16 April		Matthew 23,35-40	25 April
Otto Kingsley	8 April		Luke 19,28-48	14 April
Paul, apostle	20, 22 April		Luke 23,39-43	19 April
Pete Garratt	18 April		Luke 24,1-12	21 April
Peter Hilton	15 April		Luke 24,13-35	22 April
Peter Laubscher	26 April		John 1,35-42	30 April
Pradeep and Sarah Failbus	30 April		John 15,2	10 April
Raju, PLN Dr	19 April		John 19,28	16 April
Tim Collison	11 April		Acts 4,31	5 April
			1 Cor 1,18	23 April
			1 Cor 15,12-58	21 April
			2 Cor 4,7	26 April
			Ephesians 6,18	11 April
			Philippians 2,5-11	20 April
			Hebrews 11,1	12 April
			Hebrews 13,8	8 April
			1 Peter 4,7	4 April

The Bridge - TLM Daily Devotions

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