



# **TLM Daily Devotions**

**May 2019**





## Beauty for Ashes - 1.

The man God used to start the Salvation Army, General Booth would tell you this: The purpose of a Christian Church is to introduce people to Jesus the Christ who came to earth, to die for us, to deal with our sin problems

- *The Christian message is God loves you and wants you saved!*

When you take a lump of coal and put in in a bowl of 'Scrubs Ammonia'

☠ The chemicals reacted with the minerals in the coal and produced a myriad of beautiful colours over a period of time. So often our lives could be like that lump of coal:

- Ready for the fire
- Colourless
- Thrown aside
- Too old to be useful
- Yet there is beauty inside that needs to be released

*Isaiah 61:1-3 NIVUK The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendour."*

The prophet Isaiah is talking about Jesus and *the effect that He can have on us* as we open our hearts & minds to Him. Let's look at the transactions He's prepared and able to do for us:

😊 He, Jesus does it for us that

- We can be compared to the stability of an oak tree
- Righteous people
- Planted by the Lord
- To display His splendour!

*We then become His mouthpiece, His outstretched hands, His voice in times of heartache...*

**1. ...to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted**

So often we think of the poor are those who have very little but I've found often the poorest people are those with "broken hearts"

- Broken by life
- Loss of a spouse, a child, abandoned, financially struggling...
- Knowing Jesus can heal a broken heart!

**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.



## Beauty for Ashes - 2.

### 2. ...to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,

When Jesus walked the earth He set innumerable numbers of people trapped in life,

- Trapped in unseen dark corners,
- The widowed mother, whose son had died, Jesus raised him up
- The 10 lepers that had been sent outside the city gates
- The lady with the issue of blood

Jesus, the light of the world - turned on the light in the lives of people

### 3. ...to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour and the day of vengeance of our God,

- Instead of being a victim to life -*the LORD's favour* has been declared upon you
- His favour calms the storms of life, introduces peace, hope and joy
- Instead of wanting to hit-back at those who have hurt us the Lord will take care of our enemies

### 4. ...to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion

There is only one way to re-say this:

- Jesus takes my heart that is overwhelmed by loss, holds it in His hands,
- massages it until the pain is gone,
- Until the heart beats rhythmically again,
- Until we can face life again
- He brings the God-kind of comfort to us - the kind that passes our understanding

### 5. ...to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

Can you visualise a broken person, it may be you!

- Life is hard, loss, sickness, loneliness, aged bodies, forgetful minds, empty pockets...

Along comes Jesus, introduced by *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me* He takes you and me and makes the "great exchange"

- A crown of beauty for the ashes of our lives
- Pours in the oil of joy instead of mourning,
- oil of joy instead of sadness, grief, loss

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD* wants us to put our shoulders back and stand up straight

• A garment of praise instead of complaining, grumbling, moaning, gossiping, whinging, grumpy - just unpleasant to be with!

• Life should be one round after another of praise and thanksgiving for what Our Heavenly Father has done for us!

*And then:*

### 6. ...They (you and me) will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendour." From being miserable to being full of the joy of the Lord

- W shall go out with joy!

Do you remember the story of the lump of coal?

- Let Our Heavenly Father infuse you from inside so that the God beauty that is trapped in you come out of you

*Isaiah 55:12 NIVUK “You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.”*

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## Please don't remain an average "foursome"!

Sadly, the paltry prayer of an average family of four today goes something like this:-

"Dear LORD, please continue to bless Pa and Ma and 'Sis' and me – us four – and no more!" Amen.

However, from the Scriptures, we learn how impacting every "Christian Four" should be:-

### 1) THE 4 GALILEAN FISHERMEN - THEY TRUSTED! (Read Matth.4:18-22)

These 4 trusted the 'New Rabbi' immediately and implicitly and left their nets to follow Him. We too, need to keep on trusting God through Jesus Christ His Son promptly and daily, and we will have an amazing new life! (cf Heb.11:6)

### 2) THE 4 LEPROSY SUFFERERS of the besieged city of Samaria – THEY TOLD! (*Read 2Kings 7*)

At first these 4 leprosy sufferers were reticent to share their good news with the beleaguered town's folk. But later we see these 4 leprosy sufferers willingly and gladly becoming the bearers of their good news to the city! Only one unbeliever missed the blessing! Just keep telling, and leave the results with God!

### 3) THE 4 COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS – THEY TOOK! (Read Mark2:1-12) Like these 4 caring chaps, take

your sultry and disillusioned friend to your church, or to your Christian mid-week meeting – but always make sure you bring him/her to the feet of Jesus! (cf Luke10:39;John12:3)

### 4) THE 4 UNMARRIED DAUGHTERS of the dynamic deacon Philip – THEY TAUGHT! Acts21:9 In their

own right, these choice lassies taught God's people God's truths(cf 2Cor.14:1-3). As parents, we need to keep on bringing up our children in the ways of the Lord and then our children will not disappoint us - nor fail God and His Church!(1Tim.3:8-13)

### 5) THE 4 LIVING-CREATURES – THEY TRIUMPHED! (Read Revelation 4+5) These 4 Living-Creatures represent our 4 complimentary Gospels in the Bible (4:7):

In Matthew's Gospel – Jesus is the Lion of Judah and long-awaited Messiah of Israel!

In Mark's Gospel – Jesus is the Ox, a Beast of burden and Servant of the Lord!

In Luke's Gospel – Jesus is the Son of Man; the Friend of sinners, yet without sin!

In John's Gospel – Jesus is the Eternal I Am, the Son of God represented by an eagle!

These 4 Gospels present to us His Person and Work in such a complimentary way, so that we can be totally saved, helped and triumph by it!

*Don't ever leave the Gospel!*

-Amen.



## Psalm 117

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD, all you nations;  
extol him, all you peoples.

<sup>2</sup>For great is his love toward us,  
and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.

Praise the LORD.



## Psalm 118

<sup>1</sup> Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.

<sup>2</sup> Let Israel say:

“His love endures forever.”

<sup>3</sup> Let the house of Aaron say:

“His love endures forever.”

<sup>4</sup> Let those who fear the LORD say:

“His love endures forever.”

<sup>5</sup> When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD;  
he brought me into a spacious place.

<sup>6</sup> The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid.  
What can mere mortals do to me?

<sup>7</sup> The LORD is with me; he is my helper.  
I look in triumph on my enemies.

<sup>8</sup> It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust in humans.

<sup>9</sup> It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust in princes.

<sup>10</sup> All the nations surrounded me,  
but in the name of the LORD I cut them down.

<sup>11</sup> They surrounded me on every side,  
but in the name of the LORD I cut them down.

<sup>12</sup> They swarmed around me like bees,  
but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns;  
in the name of the LORD I cut them down.

<sup>13</sup> I was pushed back and about to fall,  
but the LORD helped me.

<sup>14</sup> The LORD is my strength and my defense;  
he has become my salvation.

<sup>15</sup> Shouts of joy and victory  
resound in the tents of the righteous:  
“The LORD’s right hand has done mighty things!

<sup>16</sup> The LORD’s right hand is lifted high;  
the LORD’s right hand has done mighty things!”

<sup>17</sup> I will not die but live,  
and will proclaim what the LORD has done.

<sup>18</sup> The LORD has chastened me severely,  
but he has not given me over to death.

<sup>19</sup> Open for me the gates of the righteous;  
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.

<sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the LORD  
through which the righteous may enter.

<sup>21</sup> I will give you thanks, for you answered me;  
you have become my salvation.

<sup>22</sup> The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;

<sup>23</sup> the LORD has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

<sup>24</sup> The LORD has done it this very day;  
let us rejoice today and be glad.

<sup>25</sup> LORD, save us!

LORD, grant us success!

<sup>26</sup> Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.  
From the house of the LORD we bless you.

<sup>27</sup> The LORD is God,  
and he has made his light shine on us.

With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession  
up<sup>[c]</sup> to the horns of the altar.

<sup>28</sup> You are my God, and I will praise you;  
you are my God, and I will exalt you.

<sup>29</sup> Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.





## To all nations

*Jesus said: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of **all nations**" Mat. 28:18-19*

When Jesus gave his commission to the disciples he gave them a real challenge to reach all nations. In the Greek original text is not mentioned "nations" = "countries" but Jesus used the word "ethnos" = "ethnic group". So the challenge of Jesus is to reach all the people groups and ethnic groups with the good news of the Gospel. How many ethnic groups are there? Approx. 17 000 ethnic groups are known and around 7000 of them have not heard about Jesus through an established church.

It's amazing to see that from the beginning Gods plan was to reach to all nations. When God called Abraham, he gave the vision of all the nations: *"The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and **all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.**" Gen, 12:1-3.* Through the nation of Abraham, Israel, all nations will be blessed!

When Jesus came to us, he came to the entire world: *"For God so loved **the world** that he gave his one and only Son" John. 3:16.* Each girl, boy, women and man were in God's love and all nations and people groups were in his heart when he sent his Son. Jesus was very much aware of his ministry to the Jewish people but also that through this people he will be a blessing for the whole world. The promise to Abraham starts to become reality. Before his death Jesus started to prepare the coming apostles about their global task: *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to **all nations**, and then the end will come."* Mat. 24:14

After his resurrection Jesus started to open the mind of the disciples and to broaden their understanding and perspective: *"Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name **to all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."* Luc. 24: 45-48

The day of Pentecost in Jerusalem I think the disciples started to realize that the Gospel was for all people. Through the Holy Spirit they talked in different languages so people from many nation could understand the Good news. The people in Jerusalem said: *"We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Acts. 2:11*

In Revelation, the last book of the Bible, we have the final chapter in the history of humanity, a beautiful and lovely scene: *"..the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God **persons from every tribe and language and people and nation**. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."* Rev. 5: 8-10

That day God will conclude: The church did it! Mission completed!



## Lessons from an Amaryllis

### *Psalm 36:5-10*

In January I had a bit of Amaryllis trouble. The first one looked for all the world as though it was dead. I watered it but didn't want to overwater it and the top of the bulb just looked at me. I was within an inch of throwing it out until I saw a little green shoot peeping out. So, I gave it some more water and waited. Slowly it shot up and is now blooming. Not only that but there is another flower coming up. I am so glad I didn't give up.

The lesson for me was not to assume that nothing was happening just because I couldn't see it. We do rely so much on what we can see and not on what is going on underneath. I guess to that there was some impatience. Sometimes we must let things take their time. 'Give me patience and give it now', is sometimes what I feel like saying!

I was given a second Amaryllis for Christmas. It sat in its box for most of January. Then suddenly I spotted something red peeping out. When I examined it, I found that the bulb had sprouted and even had a flower head. The stem was white and bent but remembering the resilience of the previous Amaryllis I potted it up, watered it and put it near the window to see if it would recover.

I am just amazed that these plants are so hungry for light that even without soil or water they seek it out. Even to the extent of growing down and out through a hole in the box. For them light is life. So, they are prepared to use the resources in their bulb to get to that light.

Jesus is the light of the world, - in Him is light and life. I wonder how hungry I am for Him? Do I recognise that I need his light in order to grow? I suspect sometimes I stay as a brown bulb, stuck in the box because I'm afraid to venture out into the light. But like an Amaryllis I was designed for light and I need to seek it out.

This Psalm has that lovely verse –

*“For with you is the fountain of life and in your light do we see light.”*

If we hide in the dark, we miss out on that fountain of life and even worse we miss out on seeing the light in others and on what's going on around us. My amaryllis was pale and wan, but the light did provide strength and cure. I hope that I am not too pale and wan, but I know too that being in His light will give me strength and joy.

### **June Nash**

I have worked for the Leprosy Mission for 35 years. At first I was on the mission field in Papua New Guinea and then Ethiopia. In the beginning I did leprosy control but then moved into the training of health workers. It was a privilege to serve overseas with TLM for 20 years. I returned to be part of the team in Brentford, firstly as global training adviser, then HR Director and lastly as Knowledge Management Director. I am now retired but being a part of the Leprosy Mission never really leaves you. I continue to hold the work in my heart through prayer and visits to Brentford.



## Remain in me – Part 1.

*Joh 15 v 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.*

I was once told by someone who played a big part in leading me to Christ that “you can tell a lot about someone’s walk with the Lord by the fruit”

He even went so far as to say that if someone claims they love the Lord Jesus but is not fruitful in their walk then you can question whether they are genuine.

Harsh, maybe, we all have different seasons in our lifetime, but two things we are promised when we choose to follow Christ is that we are justified, and we are sanctified.

The two things happen though in very different ways.

According to the word, to be justified happens in an instant. It is a legal term used in the Bible to describe the act of God in which He declares that a person is not guilty. A person who is justified is therefore in a state of acceptance with God. Through the grace of God, the moment we choose to be ransomed, healed, restored forgiven, the moment we accept Jesus into our life, our sins are forgiven, and we are accepted into the kingdom of heaven.

This point in our journey with God, however is only the beginning of the journey towards sanctification the definition, which fits nicely with what the Bible teaches, is that it means to be set apart for holy use. It also means to make holy or to purify. Sanctification in its simplest form can be described as the work of the Holy Spirit to make us more like Jesus Christ every day.

To simplify matters again we can say that a measure of how we are doing on that journey is by seeing if we are displaying the fruit of the Spirit in the way we conduct our lives.

So, let’s list the fruit of the Spirit

*Galatians 5:22-23 New International Version (NIV) <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*



## Remain in me – Part 2.

It is important to abide in Christ so that we become more like Him. To remain in Him so He can remain in us.

Becoming more like Christ cannot happen without Christ. We need to abide in HIM. This cannot be made any clearer than in the second part of this verse *“For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.”*

So, we arrive at this point through nothing that we have done but through the grace of God.

At a recent conference I heard how important it was to develop a rhythm in our walk with the Lord. He described this method after explaining how he had got it wrong many times and had come close to breakdown on more than one occasion. He had been so tied up in the busyness of his role that he had started to believe that he could only achieve for his organization in his own strength, He had to find a way of climbing out of the abyss that he was heading towards.

He did this by creating his own discipline which he called his own unique rhythm with Jesus. His way of abiding in Christ.

He explained how he had recorded the different ways that he would abide in Christ daily, weekly and monthly. An example is that each day he might read an excerpt from the bible in a year (A bible split into 365 manageable chunks with a section from the old testament and the new testament to read each day. Each week he would ensure he had a sabbath where for a 24-hour period he would dedicate that time to being with God, with his family, and to find time to rest. Each year he would go on a 3-day retreat to spend quality time with the Father. He therefore prepared for himself a rhythm of life, a rhythm of prayer, a rhythm with God. Daily, weekly, monthly.

Finally, in sharing the parable of the sheep and the goats we can see how in working towards leprosy defeated, lives transformed we are abiding in Christ in a very special way because Jesus himself said

*“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> 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, <sup>36</sup> 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.’*

**The Sheep and the Goats** <sup>31</sup> *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. <sup>34</sup> “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> 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, <sup>36</sup> 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.’*

<sup>37</sup> *“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’*

*<sup>40</sup> “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.’*

*<sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’*

*<sup>44</sup> “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ <sup>45</sup> “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ <sup>46</sup> “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

**Peter Waddup** – Country Leader, TLM England and Wales



## The door

I was interested to learn that the door in Hebrew is called “Deleth” whose the root means humility, poverty. This applies so well to Jesus. He himself tells us in *John Ch. 10* *“Truly I say to you, he who does not go through the door into the place where the sheep are kept, but gets in by some other way is a thief and an outlaw. He who goes in by the door is the keeper of the sheep. The porter let him in; and the sheep give ear to his voice, he says over the names of the sheep, and takes them out. V7 So Jesus said again. Truly, I say to you; I am the door of the sheep. V9 I’m the door; if any man goes in through me he will have salvation, and will go in and go out, and will get food.”*

In the book of Revelation chapter 3:20 *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me.”*

On the front door of a missionary hospital in Pakistan opened in 1893, we can read:  
*There is a door everywhere which can be opened by love and sympathy and practical service.*

Since the beginning of TLM, many doors have been opened thanks to the love and care given to those affected by leprosy. Our vision that we have just endorsed says that we want to remain centred on Jesus.

There are still many doors before us that can be opened through our commitment.

Let us ask God to renew our zeal for him, always keeping our eyes on Jesus.

Following Christ’s example, we want to continue our ministry with humility and love to those we serve.

**Eric Chollet** - I'm retired since six 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.



## Psalm 119 – Part 1

*κ Aleph*

<sup>1</sup>Blessed are those whose ways are blameless,  
who walk according to the law of the LORD.

<sup>2</sup>Blessed are those who keep his statutes  
and seek him with all their heart—

<sup>3</sup>they do no wrong  
but follow his ways.

<sup>4</sup>You have laid down precepts  
that are to be fully obeyed.

<sup>5</sup>Oh, that my ways were steadfast  
in obeying your decrees!

<sup>6</sup>Then I would not be put to shame  
when I consider all your commands.

<sup>7</sup>I will praise you with an upright heart  
as I learn your righteous laws.

<sup>8</sup>I will obey your decrees;  
do not utterly forsake me.



## Psalm 119 – Part 2

⌋ *Beth*

<sup>9</sup>How can a young person stay on the path of purity?

By living according to your word.

<sup>10</sup>I seek you with all my heart;  
do not let me stray from your commands.

<sup>11</sup>I have hidden your word in my heart  
that I might not sin against you.

<sup>12</sup>Praise be to you, LORD;  
teach me your decrees.

<sup>13</sup>With my lips I recount  
all the laws that come from your mouth.

<sup>14</sup>I rejoice in following your statutes  
as one rejoices in great riches.

<sup>15</sup>I meditate on your precepts  
and consider your ways.

<sup>16</sup>I delight in your decrees;  
I will not neglect your word.





## Be made and not marred by the past, don't blow the whistle on yourself!

*"Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." John 8:1-11*

I watched a local football match at a school playing ground. As I sat down, I asked one of the boys what the score was. With a smile, he replied; "They are leading us 3-0"! And I said, REALLY!! I was so surprised to see the look in his face, "you don't look discouraged at all" I exclaimed. "Discouraged?" the boy asked with a puzzled look ... Why should I be discouraged when the referee has not blown the final whistle? I have confidence in the team and the managers; we shall definitely overcome! Truly, the match ended 5-4 in favor of the boy's team! He waved at me gently, with a beautiful smile as he left; I was amazed, mouth wide open; such confidence; such beautiful faith. As I got back home that night, his question kept coming back to me: "Why should I be discouraged when the referee has not blown the final whistle?" - All of us here may have one or more mistake in our past. Today God gives us a message of Hope. This message tells us not to dwell on the past. *"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past" Isaiah 43:18.* It is useless to cry over spilled milk. Experiences of life come either as lessons or blessings. Don't be stuck in your past. Don't cry too much over the missed sunshine of yesterday to the point that you miss the sunshine of today.

In case you're wondering why you should put away your past, here are some reasons from the readings of today: The Future is always better than the past. Look away from your past because the future is loaded. *The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys - Job 42:12. Sometimes we cry over lost opportunities not knowing that better things that are ahead. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead - Philippians 3:13.* Change your focus from the past to the future. Look away from the past. Insist that you will not be tied by your past.

God already has settled your past. God is a merciful God. The woman in this message was brought before Jesus to be humiliated because of her past. But Jesus came to her rescue. Keep your past behind and launch yourself into a future filled with hope and brightness. God can make a beautiful future out of an ugly past. Your past feature does not determine your future. *See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. <sup>20</sup>The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen - Isaiah 43: 19-20.*

For as long as you are alive, you are an ongoing project in the hand of the Lord. Release yourself from the past and march into the future with hope. Wake up every morning with the hope that it will be better by the day. If ever you doubt anything as you wake up in the morning, don't doubt the possibility of a better tomorrow brought about by an all Powerful God. Life is like a game. Half time is not full time and HIS calendar for your life is not man's calendar. Don't blow the whistle on yourself. BE ENCOURAGED! DON'T GIVE UP. The death and resurrection of Christ completely demonstrated this as His disciples witnessed and the rest of us are still witnessing the new from the old -the blessings of freedom and salvation. This will benefit even more those hanging up to Him in great faith. We should never be discouraged because Almighty God is our Manager. The truth is that many people blow the final whistle on themselves. But as long as there is life, nothing is impossible and it is never too late for you. We could pray thus:

*Lord, I will always wholly commit my absolute faith to your promise that greater harvest abound in my future. 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.



## To love and to serve God

As I write we have just celebrated Palm Sunday, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem. The disciples had admired the wonderful structure of the temple, Jesus had said one stone will not be left on top of another. One thing which struck me this year was that as he journeyed into Jerusalem Jesus stopped and wept over that city (Luke's account), the city of peace. Why? Because they did not recognise their Messiah when he came and because of that devastating judgement which was to fall on it. They rejected the Christ for another- Barabbas? Caesar? Another verse which has been on my heart this Easter has been the words Jesus spoke to Pilate, *"the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin"* (John 19<sup>11</sup>). I had thought that person was Judas Iscariot, but realise now that it was the High Priest, the spiritual leader, who had handed Jesus over to Pilate. Caiaphas should have known who Jesus was, because he had demonstrated through the many miracles that he fulfilled scripture, but he chose not to believe. Position, power and maintaining the physical structures of religion seemed to be more important to Caiaphas than truth and righteousness, so his eyes were blinded to God's purposes.

Yesterday it was announced on the news that the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, France was on fire. A national icon, a historical and cultural gem is how it is described. We like to preserve such artefacts because they are important reminders of the past. But what about the one for whom the building was first constructed? It was heartening to hear the response of French Christians of what was really important to them.

There is a programme on British TV at present called the Repair Shop, showing people who bring tattered, and worn out old things to skilled people who can restore them. Invariably the customers, and sometimes the skilled crafts people, end up in tears of delight because the item has been restored back to (or even better than) its original state and the memories that brings is often overwhelming. A good question is asked when the item is returned to the owner "what will you do now with this"? The craftsmen/women have gone to great lengths, to bring the item back to usefulness and they are keen to know that their time and effort will be worthwhile.

Christ has gone to the greatest length to bring us back to our original purpose, to love and to serve God.

*What will we do now with our lives as we seek to bring him glory?*

When we are young it's exciting to follow Jesus on a new adventure; in middle age, perhaps, we consolidate what we set out to do. In old age we battle with ill health, a declining body and wonder what use we can now be? Our task is the same to bring God glory, to love and serve him through who we are. I love the Anglican exhortation at the end of a service *"Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord, in the name of Christ"*. So, whatever your stage in life is right now, keep focussed on what matters and recognise what God is doing.

### Prayer

*Heavenly Father, thank you for your redeeming love, for accepting me through Christ's sacrifice to be your treasured possession. Never let me be blinded to what you wish to fulfil in and through me.*



## Harness your imagination

*Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:2*

Georgia is one of our granddaughters. One day when she was about five years old the family was in the car and playing 'I spy'. It was Georgia's turn. She said, "I spy with my little eye something beginning with c." Everyone looked around. "Car," shouted one. "Cushion." "Carpet." "Clutch." It was none of those.

Finally everyone gave up. "Crisps," said Georgia triumphantly.

"We can't see crisps," someone said. "You're only supposed to choose things you can see."

"I can see them," Georgia answered.

"Where?"

"In my mind."

"We can't see them there," said the others.

"Well you could if you tried," said Georgia, emphatically. End of discussion.

Imagination is one of God's greatest gifts. I'm not talking about thinking up a convincing reason for being late for work, but the gift of seeing things in a way others don't. The ability to put ourselves into other people's lives.

If we could use our imagination a bit more, and feel what it must be like to be forced from home by fear or violence, or because there just isn't enough food for the family then we might be a fraction more welcoming and a little less critical of the strangers in our midst.

*Lord, let me see the world through your eyes, and keep me sensitive to others' needs.*

*Extract from Love is a Wild Bird, first published 2003.*

*with the kind permission of Jo-Anne Thomson and Judith Merrell from TLM Trading)*

**Eddie Askew** (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)



## Clean or unclean

*The Lord said to Moses and Aaron "When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a shiny spot on their skin that may be a defiling skin disease, they must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest...." Leviticus 13: 1- 2*

Leprosy is also known as Hansen's disease; it is caused by bacteria. It is not hereditary. It is not caused by food or any combination of foods such as milk, fish and meat eaten together.

It is a disease that mainly affects a person's skin and nerves. It is treatable with medicines. The medicines must be taken daily for 6 to 12 months period, a person who has started the treatment does not transmit the disease neither does a person who has completed the treatment. The medicines kill the bacteria and the person is cured from the disease. However, for some people there might be additional physical troubles such as an ulcer or a reaction. Patients with protective loss of feeling in a body part need to do special self-care to avoid further damage. Therefore, an early start of treatment prevents disability and deformity. The bacteria can be transmitted during close and frequent contact with a person with untreated leprosy. Also, not all untreated leprosy is transmittable. If the body is not successful in fighting the bacteria, there is likely to be between two to five years before any sign/symptom of the disease.

Let us see some signs and symptoms of leprosy, leprosy might be suspected when any of the conditions are present: Pale or reddish non-itching skin patches with sensation loss. Loss of sensation in the skin without a patch. Thick, red, shiny skin on the face, often with thickened earlobes, blockage of nose with bleeding. Skin nodules or skin lumps. Numbness or tingling sensation in the feet and/or hands. Weakness of eyelids, hands and/or feet. Burning sensations in the skin. Enlarged and/or tender nerves in arms and legs. Painless wounds/blisters/cracks or unnoticed burns on the body. Visible deformity of hands/feet/face.

Every year World Leprosy Day is one of the big events in the hospital, I was thankful to God for such a great turnout, and hopes that the event will go a long way in reducing fears about leprosy. That was the last Sunday of January, around 350 people took to the streets in Pokhara as part of an awareness-raising rally organized by my hospital. Themed around ending discrimination, stigma and prejudice towards people with leprosy, rally participants carried placards with positive messages such as "Leprosy can be cured, do not fear it, treat it."

The rally finished at our hospital, where a program was held. Wheelchairs and warm clothes were distributed to leprosy patients; nursing students participated in a quiz on leprosy; and posters about leprosy by nursing college students were exhibited for a competition. Two people affected by leprosy shared their stories, including how their lives had been transformed by receiving care from our hospital. A number of stalls also showed the services available at the hospital for people with leprosy. Following the program, leprosy patients and staff joined together to sing and dance. It was a very special day for them, they felt honored and respected, but for me, being able to stand beside these people on this particular occasion was very special.

*"Almighty Father, the giver of life and health, look mercifully on those who suffer from leprosy.  
Stretch out your hand to touch and heal them as Jesus did during his earthly life.  
Touch the hearts of the broken, homeless and inflicted and heal their spirits."*

**Yuek Ming Poon** (Hong Kong) Worked with TLM for 22 years. 1993 – 2000 seconded to INF to work in Nepal in leprosy clinic as Clinic Manager. 2002 – 2004 worked with TLM as POID Technical Officer in India, 2005 – 2012 worked with TLM as Country Leader in China and Laos, 2013 -2015 worked with TLM in PNG as Capacity Building Advisor. June 2015 left TLM and then studied in Vancouver Regent Bible College from September 15 to April 2016, and then back to HK involving in Nepali ministry. 2017 back to Nepal as Leprosy Nursing Advisor in Green Pastures Hospital with INF.



## What is it Lord God that You want to say to your people today, Heavenly Father?

My Grace is ALL-Sufficient for you. In your weakness My Power is perfect.

My Peace is for you. Here for the taking - whenever you need more - there is an everlasting supply. Breathe it in like oxygen. With every breath you can have peace.

My Joy is for you. For you to be filled to the brim and running over - spilling into the world. My joy is infectious - spread it around!

My Passion is for you. My Love intense and overwhelming. Let it wash over you - bathe/soak in the tides/waves/the swell of My Love.

My Precious, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. I have heard you and I AM not far from you. I AM right here. I AM not just beside you, I AM within you - always. No need to reach out. I AM always within your grasp.

My Spirit - feel it releasing, relaxing and reviving every part of your body. My Spirit is always on tap. Come drink. Drink all day long and GO with the FLOW. I direct the streams and they shall not return to me void.

My angels, I have commanded them concerning you to guard you in all your ways. They will uphold you in their hands so that you will not strike or hurt your feet against any rocks.

Swim and play safely in the ocean (sea) of My Love today.  
Bathed in the light of The Son shining upon your face.

**This is LIFE and LIFE to the FULL.**

Anything less is not full. And if you are not full, you are experiencing some level of emptiness.  
That is NOT My Will for you.  
Do not let yourself run dry.

*My Beloved, Come Drink, Soak, Swim!*



## Psalm 119 – Part 3

### ⲁ *Gimel*

<sup>17</sup> Be good to your servant while I live,  
that I may obey your word.

<sup>18</sup> Open my eyes that I may see  
wonderful things in your law.

<sup>19</sup> I am a stranger on earth;  
do not hide your commands from me.

<sup>20</sup> My soul is consumed with longing  
for your laws at all times.

<sup>21</sup> You rebuke the arrogant, who are accursed,  
those who stray from your commands.

<sup>22</sup> Remove from me their scorn and contempt,  
for I keep your statutes.

<sup>23</sup> Though rulers sit together and slander me,  
your servant will meditate on your decrees.

<sup>24</sup> Your statutes are my delight;  
they are my counselors.



## Psalm 119 – Part 4

### *7 Daleth*

<sup>25</sup> I am laid low in the dust;

preserve my life according to your word.

<sup>26</sup> I gave an account of my ways and you answered me;

teach me your decrees.

<sup>27</sup> Cause me to understand the way of your precepts,

that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds.

<sup>28</sup> My soul is weary with sorrow;

strengthen me according to your word.

<sup>29</sup> Keep me from deceitful ways;

be gracious to me and teach me your law.

<sup>30</sup> I have chosen the way of faithfulness;

I have set my heart on your laws.

<sup>31</sup> I hold fast to your statutes, LORD;

do not let me be put to shame.

<sup>32</sup> I run in the path of your commands,

for you have broadened my understanding.





## Meekness Births Magnificence – Part 1 - Mary, the mother of Jesus

Meekness is weakness is what the ruler of the world (Satan) wants us to believe. There is a premium on aggressive behaviour in pursuit of excellence, recognition, fame and position in this world. But biblical meekness connotes humility, submission and accepting God's sovereignty over one's life. Meekness is faith in God's goodness, His plan and power. Out of such meekness emerges magnificent response to glorify God.

When the angel announced that she was highly favoured by God (*Luke 1,26-38*) and the Lord was with her, Mary was perplexed. The news of her, a virgin, will conceive miraculously and give birth to the Messiah was of no great joy for the simple girl, Mary. While on one hand Mary would have been elated that she was a chosen vessel to pour out God's grace; on the other hand, the social stigma, rejection and ridicule that she would face among her friends, relatives and others in the village would have weighed heavily on her mind. A virgin mother having a child outside the wedlock would not be easily accepted by the society, then. It was a taboo that could lead social excommunication. A myriad thoughts and questions must have flashed through Mary's mind; joy, frustration, anxiety, why me? how is it a favour? What should be her priority, must have troubled Mary's mind.

God did not consult Mary about His plan; her consent was neither sought nor taken. She was told the plan of God; and that too not in its entirety, just the beginning of the Saviour's story, his birth. Mary's faith was tested and challenged. Mary's anxiety did not change God's mind or His plan to save the fallen mankind. God's plan was above Mary's comprehension. But the merciful God understood Mary's predicament. He addressed it through a revelation of another miracle He was performing in the life of Elizabeth, Mary's cousin. In Mary's case it was a virgin's womb and in the case of Elizabeth a barren womb that God had blessed to reveal His powers. The physical impossibility that daunted Mary's mind was addressed through a miracle of a physical impossibility being made a physical possibility by God.

*Mary was meek but not weak.* God did not rough shod over Mary. God was patient with Mary. The creator desired the fulfilment of his plan through his creation. Though he could have come into the world in any manner he desired, he wanted the manifestation of his grace through the highest form of his own creation. God wanted her to consent to his divine plan. He respected her feelings and the circumstance she was in. Most importantly, what would Joseph think of her if he comes to know of her being pregnant. He was conscious of the thoughts that went through Mary's mind. The humble submission by Mary was not instantaneous; it happened after God addressed Mary's concerns in a manner that she could comprehend. It took a process for Mary to realize her significant role in God's plan for humanity. Evidence of God's miraculous power and care turned a hesitant and confused Mary to submit herself to God's will and plan. Finally, Mary said *"I am your servant"*. The care and concern of God made her humble herself to God's will.

Doubt, confusion and shame turned to joy. She made herself meek. Surrendered herself to whatever God wanted to do in and through her life. She agreed for God's glory to be revealed through her. God's plan for her was accepted by her as the appropriate and relevant one. She was part of God's design. God's plan became her plan as well. There was a union of thoughts in her concurrence. Her meekness birthed the magnificence of Jesus coming into this world as a human being to save us. She was the carrier of God's glory. The creator and the created were partners in the solution for sins of man.

*In God's plan there is a way out of every challenging situation.*





## Meekness Births Magnificence – Part 2 - Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus

Not much is spoken or written about Joseph in the Jesus's story. Only a few lines. But he was a key player in many significant ways. *Matthew 1, 18-24*

Shocked and betrayed would have been Joseph's natural reaction to the news that Mary would have a baby outside their wedlock. Would anyone believe a divine encounter with a village girl? Joseph would have thought that Mary was lying to him. A cover up. He is being led up the garden path. His trust in Mary was betrayed. A simple village girl did not turn out to be as innocent as he had expected. An expectant virgin? Unbelievable, unacceptable. His love, faith and belief have been betrayed. He was deeply hurt. His expectations of Mary have been shattered. What else could have been hidden? He had agreed to have Mary as his life partner in faith. Mary was not being faithful, she was faithless. His faith in her was not reciprocated. How can an untruthful person be trusted in life's journey? In a relationship trust cannot be one sided, its mutual. There was a huge trust deficit. The only solution was to opt out of the engagement, soonest. Better to break the relationship before the news becomes public. A very reasonable thought by worldly standards. A budding loving relationship was on the verge of breaking down.

What would his family think of their prospective daughter-in-law? At the individual, family and society levels the relationship can create trouble. Who would believe him if he had said that Mary was carrying a divine baby. He will become a laughing stock. He would be at the receiving end of sly comments by others; husband of a wife whose character was dubious. His own social standing would be damaged forever. He may be boycotted by his clients and bring down his carpentry business. A joyful occasion can be his nemesis. It can lead to his ruin, personally, socially and professionally. He would have hated Mary for putting him in such a situation. He was confused and saddened.

It's better to conform to the existing societal norms. There is safety in that. Why risk one's standing in the society to an unbelievable story of God's favour on Mary. But a troubled heart was convicted through a divine intervention. A person who is perplexed by God's plan is not left alone by God. The divine purpose was cemented through a divine revelation. God's plans are bigger and beyond human comprehension. They are never incomplete, inconclusive nor imperfect. They are moulded in love. They are executed in love. Whatever God does is divine.

Joseph was a significant person in God's plan for saving mankind. His moral and emotional support to Mary was critical. Without him Mary will not be able to face the situation in the society. Mary and Joseph were joined together to bring Jesus into this world. God was aware that Mary may be able to handle the physical pain of giving birth to Jesus but not the social stigma and condemnation. She needs a person to stand by her side. Mary needed a person on who she can rely on. Joseph's loving arms were necessary for God to make Mary experience His love for her.

Joseph was needed to strengthen Mary in her resolve to obey God. Without Joseph's understanding and support, Mary's joy would be short lived. Using Joseph God had created the social security infrastructure for Mary. He was the protective shield in a hostile environment. Joseph's availability for Mary would enable her to travel to Jerusalem where Jesus was to be born as prophesied by the prophets.

For the fulfilment of God's prophesy, Joseph has to be aligned equally with Mary's meekness. So, God spoke to Joseph through an angel in a dream. He strengthened Joseph's heart to face the situation which was created by God. Only a revelation could change Joseph's mind. God acted precisely that way. The divine baby in Mary's womb was accepted by Joseph only because an angel of God spoke to him through a dream. A divine call for a divine purpose. It made Joseph meek and submit to God's plans in faith and humility.

*How gracious and magnificent is the living Lord!*



## Meekness Births Magnificence – Part 3 - Jesus, the Messiah

God in person as Man. The Creator became the created. The supernatural became the “natural”! The ruler of the universe become the servant of mankind. The saviour reached down from the heavenly realms to the earthly abode. He exchanged His place in the heavens above with one in the dusty plains of Judean desert. The Spirit became flesh and dwelled among us. The supernatural turned into the natural. The source of the universe become a part of the universe. To one from whom everyone seeks salvation, reached down to save the sinner.

He could command ten thousand angels but hung alone on the cross. The God who promised never to leave or forsake any believer, was abandoned by all. He remained faithful even to his faithless disciples. The God who can punish mankind for its sins, was nailed to the cross for its sins. The only one who can forgive sins of the world, became the sin for the world. The light of the world walked into the darkness of human sin. He always enjoyed fellowship with the almighty but experienced the darkness (of sin) that separated Him from his Father. The light of the world was engulfed in deadly darkness. One who said he would never leave man was forsaken by his heavenly Father.

The giver of the law lived on this earth to fulfil the law. The law giver became a subject of the law. One who received sacrifices of His people became a sacrifice himself. The whole world bowed down in obedience to Him, but He turned himself to obey the will of God. The one who abhors sin, bore the sins of mankind. One in whose presence sin has no place, allowed the sin of the world to be heaped on him. He who had no blemish bore the brunt of God’s wrath for man’s disobedience. The king became a servant in his own kingdom. The master took the role of a servant to save the (disobedient) servant. The obedient Son of God stood in the gap for the disobedient man.

The one at whose throne everyone is judged stood as an accused before the seat of an earthly ruler. In the heavens He is clothed in glorious heavenly robes, in the world his bare back received whip lashes. He had blessed man but was cursed in return. He who can decimate the world by His Word had allowed himself to be put to a cruel death on the cross. The source of living waters (of salvation) had said “I thirst”, hanging on the cross. The one who ought to be carried on a throne carried his own cross. He deserved to be publicly worshipped but was publicly shamed. One who deserved all honour in the world was humiliated and mocked by mere men.

The all-powerful One had submitted himself to become powerless. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords humbled himself to be treated like a criminal. The tallest of the tall was punished as a lowest of the low criminals. The wisest of the wise was ridiculed by the fools of the world. The grace of mankind was made a pawn in their games of greed. One who can command nature and perform miracles beyond human imagination, subjected himself to man’s judgement. Judge of the universe became a subject of judgement by men.

He is the first among the first but kept others first. The one who is holy and worshipped by angels had decided to offer himself as a sacrificial lamb atoning for the sins of the world. Only He has the authority to forgive sin, but willingly bore the sins of the world. What an irony? From the mountain top did he not walk down into the deepest of the valleys? Even when the sin of the world overwhelmed him, he still said “let your will be done”.

The “Great I am” had made himself but the ordinary. What a demonstration of meekness by Jesus! How deep is his love for the highest form of His own creation! He could not bear the pain of separation from man. He experienced the humiliation on the cross only for one reason, to save man. He died so that I may live. His meekness was not out of inability but out of His ability to bear the burden of sin of the world.

*It was not a weakness, but strength. In his humility Jesus exhibited His power.*



## Meekness Births Magnificence – Part 4 - Peter, the impetuous turned humble

Peter was a spontaneous, impulsive and a rash fisherman who followed Jesus. His first interaction with Jesus was not a happy one. He was circumspect when Jesus told him to cast out his nets during day time after night of no catch. He was already frustrated with nothing to take home from the previous night's fishing. He knew his business of catching fish. What does a carpenter's son know about fishing! His unbelief was set to rest by Jesus through the biggest catch of fish that Peter and his friends got that day. Peter confessed his lack of faith when he said, *"Go Away from Me, Lord, for I am a Sinful Man"*. Luke 5,8 The die for his commission was cast when he had confessed to his unbelief (sin). From then on, he was to catch people for Jesus. Jesus had prophesied on Peter his future vocation.

Peter's faith walk with Jesus was a roller coaster; it went up and down, rapidly. He had associated with Jesus at the physical/worldly level and not at the spiritual/eternal level. He denied knowing Jesus thrice. He demonstrated his impetuosity repeatedly. He rebuked Jesus for saying that He must be killed and raised on the third day. He could comprehend only the death aspect but not the resurrection of Jesus (even though Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead!). If Jesus dies, Peter's own life would become rudderless. His anchoring was in Jesus, the son of Jacob and Mary, son of a carpenter. Peter's zeal led to recklessness because it was not disciplined. He did not comprehend Jesus' mission.

Peter was deeply emotionally attached to Jesus. Will protect his master at any cost. In Jesus being alive was his own safety. He ran to the tomb first but was thoroughly disappointed for not meeting the risen Lord. All hope of a new chapter in his life had vanished. It's time to get back to safety, the familiar vocation of fishing. Enough is enough. Worked for 3.5 years for someone with the expectation of relief from Roman rule and entering into a new life in the powerful kingdom of Jesus. All hopes have been dashed to the ground.

First part of Peter's journey with Jesus had started in unbelief and had ended in unbelief. He was playing his own game for his own gain.

In the second part of his faith walk, Peter grew in humility. Peter was humbled repeatedly, and not just once. Jesus was patient. Peter had to be aligned to God's plan to be used for His purpose. Jesus checked out Peter's faith in Him. Jesus asked Peter whether he loved Him, not once but thrice. Three denials of not knowing Jesus and three confessions of love. Faith requires unconditional love. That is the bridge to cross over into the presence of God. It is a unilateral love relationship.

Love and faith are interrelated. It is the unconditional love that leads to faith and commitment in a relationship. It is the starting point of becoming useful to Jesus for the expansion of His heavenly kingdom in this world. It is the affirmation that came out of a humbling experience which had set Peter on a new course.

Peter was publicly convicted by Jesus in the company of the other disciples. He did not condemn Peter for his failures but used them to drive home a point. Humility arising out of love and faith were the foundations for Peter's magnificence later on. On the day of the Pentecost, Peter boldly proclaimed the saving grace of Jesus, defended Jesus and urged people to repent and receive Jesus as their personal saviour. He said that out of his own experience. Peter was just as zealous as before, but as he grew in Christ, he learnt what it was meant to walk in humble boldness. Peter demonstrated great spiritual growth as he humbly rested in the holiness of God. Peter's potential burst open when he surrendered himself to God in meekness.

*In Jesus' hands, his potential had created opportunities for God to work mightily through him to establish the first century Church.*

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



## Meekness Births Magnificence – Part 5 - Paul, the Persecutor turned Preacher

Paul was a persecutor of the followers of the Way. Those who believed in Jesus as their personal Saviour were hated by Paul. His mission was to destroy all such people. He was there when Stephen was stoned to death, watching the happenings with an approving eye. He was pleased. People came to honour Paul for being there. They laid their clothes before Paul just as they laid their clothes for the donkey which carried Jesus when He entered Jerusalem for the very last time ahead of His crucifixion. Paul was no ordinary person. He was the Jew of the Jews. Very learned in the Law. Groomed by Gamaliel. He sought and received permission to persecute the followers of Jesus. His passion was to persecute the believers and ensure that the faith in Jesus no longer exists. His hate was immense and intense. His mission was singular and destructive. His speech was venomous. He did not hide his hatred. His actions were brutal.

His transformation was due to a personal encounter with Jesus. He heard the voice of Jesus, loud and clear. Persecuting believers in Jesus is persecuting Jesus himself. For Jesus, his believers are precious. They are His possession. He cares for them. He was thrown off his high horse, literally and spiritually. He fell from a self-proclaimed high pedestal to the dusty reality. He came to his senses. The circumstances were created by God for Paul to accept Jesus and none else. In his condition of haplessness and meekly submitting to the power of God, the grace of God was poured out. Paul's world was shattered on the encounter with Jesus. He was a high class Jew but now he has to start from scratch. In his bewilderment God gave Paul clarity of propose. He was not condemned but convicted. It was in a state of helplessness where Paul experienced and realized the grace of God in and through Jesus Christ.

God didn't leave him alone after he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul needed to be equipped to preach God's Word. Ironically a persecuted Jew who feared Paul, was sent to Paul's rescue. What can be a more fitting way to make Paul experience the saving grace of Jesus. Because of his personal encounter Paul could fully understand the mission of Jesus to fulfil the law (of obedience) and reconcile Man with God. If God wanted, He could have decimated Paul. He would have removed Paul from the face of the earth. God did not condemn Paul in anger and hate for what he did but convicted him in love for the expansion of God's Kingdom.

The process of submission through meekness was painful for Paul, shell shocked and became blind. The anger of Paul in his heart was turned into love for Christ because Christ loved him first. Jesus reconciled Paul to himself so that Paul becomes an ambassador for Christ for reconciliation sinners with God. Breaking down Paul was essential for a breaking through him.

Even someone who detests Jesus is loved by God because God is love. Such love compelled Paul to become meek to serve Jesus. The passion for persecution was turned into passion for grace. From anti to pro Jesus. Scholar in and supporter of the Law became the greatest proponent of grace. The force against God was turned to a force for God. The conviction propelled Paul to challenge even the disciples on their faith and practice of Christianity.

In his meekness Paul became a useful instrument of God's grace. In his weakness Paul realized God's greatness. After he was humbled, God used Paul for the expansion of God's kingdom in the hearts of sinners. Every bent knee is useful for God's service. By becoming meek (not weak) Paul became strong. *Blessed are the meek they will inherit the kingdom of God; (Matth 5,5)* Paul did that in his heart.

*Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into the world, Peter and Paul took Jesus to the nations.*

*You can read the final part tomorrow!*

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



## Meekness Births Magnificence – Part 6 - Pulling it all together

Meekness is a must to serve God. The humble are exalted. Pride has no purpose to serve in God's kingdom, meekness has. God can mould a submissive heart. He wants our availability through submission and not our abilities. Meekness makes one to repent and receive Jesus as the saviour. Meekness breaks me down before rebuilding. It gives me a new meaning and purpose in life.

At times God's plans for us are perplexing by human standards. They don't fit into the worldly schemes of man. A divine assignment can be completely outside the socially acceptable norms. God's plans may be perplexing for us humans, but they are perfect and complete in God's eyes. Out of pain emerges the purpose. God reveals His purpose for us through such promptings. I must humble and heed to God's guidance in faith. I may not know the entire plan but in faith I trust God. His magnificence manifests when we humbly submit ourselves in meekness to His calling. Humility invites us into the inner sanctum of God's presence.

Human nature is selfish, stubborn, self-centred and inward looking. It must be reversed through a humbling process. God's reprimand is for conviction and not condemnation. Self-Pride limits our spiritual growth. But in humility we invite Jesus into our lives. Self (ego) has to be eliminated before becoming available to serve God. The priorities have to be set right. We have to accept that Jesus must be exalted, and we be humbled to nothing. Meekness is emptying oneself so that God can pour out His Holy Spirit into our souls. It's submission to His calling in body, mind and spirit. Humility is not being insecure. A heart that is made tender to receive the gospel of Jesus, having faith in God's power, can move mighty mountains.

*Meekness is not weakness! It births magnificence!*

In gratitude, for His glory.

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





## Psalm 119 – Part 5

*He*

<sup>33</sup> Teach me, LORD, the way of your decrees,  
that I may follow it to the end.<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law  
and obey it with all my heart.

<sup>35</sup> Direct me in the path of your commands,  
for there I find delight.

<sup>36</sup> Turn my heart toward your statutes  
and not toward selfish gain.

<sup>37</sup> Turn my eyes away from worthless things;  
preserve my life according to your word.

<sup>38</sup> Fulfill your promise to your servant,  
so that you may be feared.

<sup>39</sup> Take away the disgrace I dread,  
for your laws are good.

<sup>40</sup> How I long for your precepts!  
In your righteousness preserve my life.





## This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Elizabeth and I are renovating our home and we spent the weekend painting. During my coffee break, I read the label on the paint tin. I was alarmed by the list of things to do before painting, which included filling the cracks, washing off mildew, removing old flaking paint, removing grease and oil and preparing a clean, sanded, and primed surface. Huh? That's what paint is for! If my walls were already perfect, why would I paint them? And then, between coats, I'm expected to sand the surface that I've have just painted. What foolishness is this? Who does that? Never one to allow a set of namby pamby instructions to spoil my fun, I continued to slosh the paint onto the walls.

Look, the results aren't great, but my theory is that when you come to visit me, you will be sufficiently distracted by whales and dolphins so as not to notice the places where even five coats of paint have failed to conceal the dodgy plaster work. Eventually, the damp and mildew will re-appear and we'll have to dig the rollers and brushes out of the work-room and set about the house again. Wouldn't it be great if you could paint a house once and that would be it?

We long to be able to fix things and for them to stay fixed. Unfortunately, when things are left their own devices, they don't tend to get better. I wonder what it was like before the Fall, before everything began groaning because of its bondage to decay [Romans 8:21]?

The frustration we feel with flaking paint and leaking roofs is more than just a human response to a physical nuisance. It is a reminder that things were not meant to be this way. Even people who are far from the Lord are able to catch a glimpse of what a fully restored world would look like [Romans 1:20]. Above all, we are reminded that this is not how we are meant to be. We are to *"Be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect"* [Matthew 5:48]. Perhaps we feel that we must go through the process outlined on the paint tin before we can reach this stage of perfection – that we first need to treat the rust and sand everything smooth – but He has a better plan. He extends an invitation to us in *Isaiah 1:18: "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool."*

I can get away for a while by covering the rising damp on my walls with loads of paint, but there is only one way to be liberated from the power of sin, and that is through *"Christ's sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood"* [Romans 3:25]

Take time today to reflect on how His blood cleanses you now and for all eternity and if you have to fix something today, knowing that it will probably need repaired again next year, give thanks that when He repairs our lives, He doesn't paint over the problem, but removes the cause. What a Saviour.

*"Father, thank you that I don't have to try fixing myself before I come to you. All the paint in the world cannot hide my sin from you. Yet you love me and you invite me to draw close that you might wash me, so that I will be whiter than snow."*

**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 8: a model of praise and worship

*Psalm 8, verse 1: Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory in the heavens.*

Praise and worship is about acknowledging who God is, telling him how we feel about him. It is about him and us. So the basis for our worship is what we know about God.

Although we dare call him Abba, Daddy, he is also Creator of the world.

*2. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.*

David the psalmist says that it is a natural part of our life to praise God because he has made us that way. If he planned for children and infants to praise him, it is clearly not something we should grow out of.

And amazingly God needs us to praise him - because this silences the opposition.

*3-4. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,  
what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?*

These were the verses Col Buzz Aldrin famously broadcast from Apollo 11. David did not trouble himself about how God created things – he simply declared that everything he could see was made by God. That is as true now, in the age of modern cosmology and space travel, as it was in David's time. Our God is creator, and seems bigger, not smaller, as we understand more of how the universe works. He is above the heavens.

*5-6. You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honour; you made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet.*

Hebrews 2 shows us that these verses are prophecy about Jesus. Through Jesus, we can better understand the God we worship – and that reminds us of his sacrifice and the salvation he won for us – a great motivation for praise!

*7-8. All flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky,  
and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.*

The God of creation has given us everything we have. Flocks and herds were the bank accounts of David's day. God has given us control over his world. He has entrusted us with the works of his hands. As we praise God, together or alone, let's remain conscious of all that he has given us, our generous God, and link thanks with our praise.

And so today we can say:

*9. O Lord our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

**Paul and Niki Jakeman** served as TLM missionaries from 1979-1994, successively in Mongar, Lhuntse and Thimphu (Bhutan) and then in Singapore. They returned to the UK and worked in the east end of London for ten years, moving to Wiltshire where they continued medicine and midwifery for another decade. They have both recently retired.





## **“I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”**

*“And afterward,  
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
your old men will dream dreams,  
your young men will see visions.  
Even on my servants, both men and women,  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”*

*(Joel 2:28-29)*

Having worked with international and intercultural mission for more than 20 years, my concern has always been how to get through to people and how to communicate the Gospel. I'm still learning and exploring out of a passion to let people hear the Gospel to really understand it and receive Jesus in their hearts!

One thing I have learnt is that God speaks in his own ways and reveals himself directly to people regardless my efforts and attempts. This is a true story about a Muslim person having a dream.

He told the dream in a telephone call after listening to a Gospel radio broadcast in his language and this is what he told:

*“I dreamt was walking in a field together with my daughter. Far away we could see an open door and inside the door was a shining light. Suddenly we were attacked by a group of men who wanted to kill us. My daughter managed to escape, and I shouted to her that she should run toward the open door, which she did. But the evil men still held me captured and one of them was just about to raise a knife and stab me to death. When he did this, suddenly a man in white clothes came and said to the evil men that they should let me go. They replied that they were willing to do so if they received a ransom. Then the man in the white clothes said to them that he had already paid the ransom and hearing that, the evil men just ran away. The man in the white clothes then took me by the hand and led me toward the open door and into the light.”*

The counsellor answering the phone call then opened the Holy Scriptures and started to explain the dream to this Muslim man. He read that Jesus had paid the ransom for our sins on the cross and that Jesus also is the door into God's kingdom. The man listened and admitted that Jesus is a reality and that he wanted to start exploring the Gospel in a serious way by studying the Word of God.

*So, be open and let God speak to you. He can do it through people coming in your way  
and He can do it directly!*

Be blessed!



## The King of Kings

*Reading: Revelation 19 verses 11 to 16*

The Bible says my king is the king of righteousness, He's the king of the ages,  
He's the king of the heavens, He's the king of glory, He's the king of kings,  
He's the Lord of lords, that's my king. I wonder do you know him?

My king is a sovereign king no measure can define He's limitless Love, He's enduringly strong, He's entirely sincere, He's eternally steadfast, He's immortally graceful, He's imperially powerful, He's impartially merciful. Do you know Him?

He's the greatest phenomenon that has ever been in this world, He's God's son, He's the sinners saviour,  
He's the centrepiece of civilization, He's unparalleled, He's unprecedented,  
He's the loftiest idea in literature,  
He's the highest personality in philosophy, He's the fundamental doctrine of true theology,  
He's the only one qualified to be an all sufficient saviour. I wonder if you know Him?

He supplies strength to the weak, He's available for the tempted and the tried,  
He sympathizes and He saves, He strengthens and sustains, He guards and He guides, He heals the sick,  
He forgives sinners, He discharges debtors, He delivers the captive, He defends the feeble,  
He blesses the young,  
He serves the unfortunate, He regards the aged, He rewards the diligent and He beautifies the meek.  
I wonder if you know Him?

He's the key to knowledge, He's the wellspring of wisdom,  
He's the doorway of deliverance, He's the pathway of peace, He's the roadway of righteousness,  
He's the highway of holiness, He's the gateway of glory. Do you know Him?

His life is matchless, His goodness is limitless, His mercy is everlasting, His love never changes,  
His words are enough, His grace is sufficient, His reign is righteous, His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

I wish I could describe Him but yet He's indescribable, He's incomprehensible,  
He's invincible, He's irresistible. You can't get Him out of your mind,  
You can't outlive Him and you can't live without Him.

The Pharisees couldn't stand Him but neither could they stop Him,  
Pilate couldn't find any fault in Him, Herod couldn't kill Him,  
Death couldn't handle Him and the grave couldn't hold Him.

*That's my King, the king of kings!*

*Reflection (taken from Dr S M Lockridge):*



## At the Lord's feet

*Luke 10, 38-42*

A little child often runs to its mother and exclaims: „Mother, mother!“ Very often the child does not want any particular, he only wants to be near his mother, to sit upon her lap, or to follow her about the house, for her sheer pleasure of being near her, talking to her, hearing her dear voice. Then the child is happy.

His happiness does not consist of asking and receiving all kinds of things from his mother. If that were what he wanted, he would be impatient, and obstinate, and therefore unhappy.

No, his happiness lies in the feeling of his mother's love and care, and in knowing the joy of her mother love.

It is just the same with the true children of God, they do not trouble themselves so much about spiritual blessings.

They only want to sit at the Lord's feet, to be in living touch with Him, and when they do that they are supremely content.

**Sadhu Sindar Singh** Indian missionary, 1889 - 1929



## Psalm 119 – Part 6

### *Waw*

<sup>41</sup> May your unfailing love come to me, LORD,  
your salvation, according to your promise;

<sup>42</sup> then I can answer anyone who taunts me,  
for I trust in your word.

<sup>43</sup> Never take your word of truth from my mouth,  
for I have put my hope in your laws.

<sup>44</sup> I will always obey your law,  
for ever and ever.

<sup>45</sup> I will walk about in freedom,  
for I have sought out your precepts.

<sup>46</sup> I will speak of your statutes before kings  
and will not be put to shame,

<sup>47</sup> for I delight in your commands  
because I love them.

<sup>48</sup> I reach out for your commands, which I love,  
that I may meditate on your decrees.



## Psalm 119 – Part 7

### *r Zayin*

<sup>49</sup>Remember your word to your servant,  
for you have given me hope.

<sup>50</sup>My comfort in my suffering is this:  
Your promise preserves my life.

<sup>51</sup>The arrogant mock me unmercifully,  
but I do not turn from your law.

<sup>52</sup>I remember, LORD, your ancient laws,  
and I find comfort in them.

<sup>53</sup>Indignation grips me because of the wicked,  
who have forsaken your law.

<sup>54</sup>Your decrees are the theme of my song  
wherever I lodge.

<sup>55</sup>In the night, LORD, I remember your name,  
that I may keep your law.

<sup>56</sup>This has been my practice:  
I obey your precepts.

## Authors in Alphabetical Order

## Textuarium

|                          |             |  |                     |                               |
|--------------------------|-------------|--|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Allan Ekstedt            | 6 May       |  | Leviticus 13,1-3    | 16 May                        |
| Belinda Pettman          | 17 May      |  | 2 Kings 7           | 3 May                         |
| Bo Lundin                | 29 May      |  | Isaiah 61.1-3       | 1, 2 May                      |
| Dan Izzett               | 1, 2 May    |  | Psalm 8             | 28 May                        |
| Eddie Askew              | 15 May      |  | Psalm 36.510        | 7 May                         |
| Eric Chollet             | 10 May      |  | Psalm 117           | 4 May                         |
| Jane Willcocks           | 30 May      |  | Psalm 118           | 5 May                         |
| Joyce Missing            | 14 May      |  | Psalm 119           | 11, 12, 18, 19, 26, 27<br>May |
| June Nash                | 7 May       |  | Joel 2,28-29        | 29 May                        |
| Lockridge S M            | 30 May      |  | Matthew 1,18-24     | 21 May                        |
| Moses Onoh MD            | 13 May      |  | Matthew 5,5         | 24 May                        |
| Otto Kingsley            | 3 May       |  | Matthew 5.48        | 27 May                        |
| Paul Dr and Niki Jakeman | 28 May      |  | Matthew 28, 18-19   | 6 May                         |
| Peter Laubscher          | 27 May      |  | Luke 1,26-38        | 20 May                        |
| Peter Waddup             | 8, 9 May    |  | Luke 5,8            | 23 May                        |
| Raju, PLN Dr             | 20 – 25 May |  | Luke 10,38-42       | 31 May                        |
| Sadhu Sundar Singh       | 31 May      |  | John 8,1-11         | 13 May                        |
| Yuek Ming Poon           | 16 May      |  | John 10             | 10 May                        |
|                          |             |  | John 15,4           | 8, 9 May                      |
|                          |             |  | John 19,11          | 14 May                        |
|                          |             |  | Hebrews 13,2        | 15 May                        |
|                          |             |  | Revelation 19,11-16 | 30 May                        |

The Bridge - TLM Daily Devotions

Editor: Marta Risko - Theological lector: Allan Ekstedt - Grammar proof: Christine Osman, Mo Lewis.