



TLM Daily Devotions

August 2017





Foreword

Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”
John 7,38

Each month when “bridging” (putting the next set together) these very words of the Lord Jesus jump into my mind. What a promise! And what a powerful implementation of the promise to experience that from North to South, from East to West, from hospital premises to headquarters, rural areas and urban homes it means the same: the Holy Spirit is in work and gives inspiration, understanding of God, clear words and messages. Take it, read it, profit of it! Thanks to each contributor!!

Praise to the Lord!

Blessed reading!

Marta Risko



Love

Everything Jesus did was done out of his perfect love for the Father and us. Every word, healing, prayer, and action was done out of unconditional devotion.

Ephesians 5:1-2 (Message) says: 'Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behaviour from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that.'

Scripture commands us to love others the way Christ did. Jesus is our model for living. And God never commands us without perfectly equipping us. If we are to “walk in love, as Christ loved us,” we must believe God will fill us up with the ability to love as Jesus loved. The concept of living like Jesus always seemed unreachable. It's like that saying, “Reach for the moon—even if you miss you'll land among the stars.” But God's word is not an unachievable suggestion. His word is perfect and true. And Scripture says in *Romans 8:29-30 (Message) 'God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. After God made that decision of what his children should be like, he followed it up by calling people by name. After he called them by name, he set them on a solid basis with himself. And then, after getting them established, he stayed with them to the end, gloriously completing what he had begun.'*

... God's plan is to conform us into perfect reflections of Jesus' love. His plan is to fashion us into disciples who live, work, and love as he did. - We can live our lives in obedience to God's command to love others for one reason alone: our heavenly Father is near, alive, and active in us. The same God who empowered Paul, Peter, John, Stephen, David, Daniel, and Esther lives in us today.

Romans 8:11 (Message) 'But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won't know what we're talking about. But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells—even though you still experience all the limitations of sin—you yourself experience life on God's terms. It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's!'

The Bible says that the fruit of the Spirit who dwells within us as believers is love. We can love like Jesus because his Spirit longs to produce the fruit of love deep within us. He longs to love people through us. He has a perfect plan to use you to reveal to a broken and searching world the unfathomable riches of Jesus' love. If we are to look to Jesus as our model, we must then believe that God can and will help us. We need to believe that the Spirit is perfectly capable of taking what was dust to fashion it into the likeness of the Son. Secondly, we need to spend time allowing the Spirit to move in and through us. We need to make space in our lives to be loved by God so that we can be used by him to love others. We can offer nothing of value that we haven't first received from our heavenly Father. we can do nothing great unless God has done something great in us.

1 John 2:6 (Message) 'If someone claims, "I know him well!" but doesn't keep his commandments, he's obviously a liar. His life doesn't match his words. But the one who keeps God's word is the person in whom we see God's mature love. This is the only way to be sure we're in God. Anyone who claims to be intimate with God ought to live the same kind of life Jesus lived.'

... We have to be children who abide in Jesus so that we can walk in his ways.

God longs to love us and help us love others today. He longs to meet with us individually and heal the wounds and insecurities that have kept us from loving others well. He longs to empower and transform us to live like Jesus. So, let us run to him with open arms, and allow him to do a mighty work in us today so that we can... act justly love mercy and walk humbly with our God. Or as The Message says

Micah 6:8 'Do what is fair and just to your neighbour, be compassionate and loyal in your love, and don't take yourself too seriously— take God seriously.'



Credit where credit is due

Psalm 115 v 1 "Not to us, Oh Lord, Not to us, but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness". Please read the whole of Psalms 114 and 115 !

Many of the mission's staff will have had the experience of showing visitors around their centre, or talking publicly about the work (perhaps on World Leprosy Day), or telling a new acquaintance what they do for a living, and then being embarrassed by the way someone responds admiringly with "you are doing such good work" and other praise. We know we do not personally deserve the credit: first because it is a team effort (involving not only local staff but the whole chain or, rather, the network of people from donors to recipients), and secondly because we do it not in our own strength but in Jesus' name and in His power.

In *Psalm 115 v 3*, we read "*our God is in heaven and He does whatever He wants*" but in *Psalm 114 v 2*, we read "*Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel His dominion*". God did what He wished, He came and lived in His people. What was true of the Hebrew race (as God's chosen people) in the Old Testament is even more true of the church in the New Testament (described as "*a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God*", *1 Peter 2 v 9*). Whatever "we achieve" (in serving the leprosy-affected people) it is because He provided the means, the grace, the resources, the skills, the permissions, the opportunities, the motivation. To Him be the glory! It is not for us to accept praise of men; it is for us to point men to Him, that they may give credit where it is due.

Let us not be proud of "what we do" but recognise we are honoured to be His servants doing His work in His power. Let us "*extol the Lord both now and for evermore*" (*Ps 115, v18*)

C Ruth Butlin Dr - A British doctor, previously TLM overseas staff but now retired and living in Sussex, who has not lost her concern for the leprosy work, so gives voluntary service whenever or wherever she can. Recently this has often entailed short visits to Bangladesh for capacity development or to support national staff with their research work".



My friend Holy Spirit – Part 1

Holy Spirit is my friend!

- I talk to Him, He talks to me,
- He encourages me, I'm encouraged
- He helps me talk to my Heavenly Father & Jesus

I don't know how I'd manage without Him

- He is more than a spiritual guide, He is God living in me
- He is my in-dwelling, full time God connection in the Trinity

He lives in every person who has been born again

- Yet He is demonstrated differently through different people

He, Holy Spirit is known by many names and titles, most of which denote some function or aspect of His ministry

- I'm not even going to try & cover His many names or the way He lives in us today
- I'm going to talk about His & mine's friendship

1. Jesus telling us about Him

*John 14:15... If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate ... the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and **will be in you**. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you..*

14:23 Jesus replied, 'Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.'

John 16:7 NIVU

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."

Jesus gave us this incredible promise that He, Jesus would send Holy Spirit to us!

- The day of Pentecost is proof of that promise
- Ready or not, the moment we were born again Holy Spirit took up residence in us.

2. How is He, God, Holy Spirit my friend? What is a friend?

Proverbs tell us: A friend loves at all times!

- So simple, so, profound
- The good, the bad & the ugly! In other words: All the times & moods, faults, mistakes, laughter & tears
- The friendship never changes

For me this is very important because I mess it up so often with God, yet:

A friend loves at all times!

He cares for me, takes me in & allows me to start again!

He is my friend!



My friend Holy Spirit – Part 2

1. A friend is an encourager, strengthener

Do you ever have "down-days"?

- Those days when things don't go right, the finances, the family, relationships, school, work - tough days! Don't dial down - dial in! - Holy Spirit is there in you, wanting for you to tune into Him

Acts 9:31 NIVUK "Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers."

2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

2. Mental health is a major problem all over the world

- Nation after nation is reporting massive increases in mental health problems & don't know what to do about it

- I've a friend that can set you free - Holy Spirit! He can give you a *sound mind*

- *Free from fear!*

- *Full of love... The God-kind of love*

This is just a few of the many reasons why I enjoy my friendship with Holy Spirit

3. He, Holy Spirit is the peace giver!

John 14:25-27 All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

Peace in a troubled world, in a troubled workplace, in a troubled home, nation... Peace through Holy Spirit

4. He, Holy Spirit helps me to pray, to sing...

Romans 8:26 NKJV "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

Ephesians 6:18 NIVUK "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."

1 Corinthians 14:15 NKJV "What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding."

Is He, Holy Spirit your friend?

God's promise to us: *draw near to me & I will draw near to you* - by Holy Spirit

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.



What for what?

I try to give to the poor people for love
what the rich could get for money.

No, I would not touch a leper for a thousand pounds,
yet I willingly cure him for the love of God!

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. John 15,12-14

Mother Teresa of Kolkata 1910-1997



"Destination"

"Our citizenship is in heaven" Philippians 3:20

Many of the old churches also contain cemeteries on the church grounds.

After visiting a church in England I took time to walk through the burial area, read the names and study the inscriptions.

One of the tombstones that captured my attention had the following text :

"Where you are now, I used to be
Where I am now, you too shall be.
So be prepared to follow me."

Somebody had placed a board next to the stone on which was written:

"To follow you, I'd be content
If only I knew the way you went."

The original inscription was perfectly accurate, we all have to die, but the pertinent question is: are we sure of our destination and on what basis?

Peter declared *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you ..." I Peter 1:3 & 4a*

Can you echo Peter's words and say:

"Praise God!"?

Silvano Perotti

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

Born in Italy - retired in Switzerland.

Worked with TLMI until 1990.



You're a dog?

Mark 7:24-30 (also Matthew 15:21-28 – I suggest reading them both as there are differences)

For many years I worked at the Blind Foundation in New Zealand. One of our programs was to breed and train guide dogs that would later become the constant companions of some blind people. I loved watching the cute Labrador puppies running on the grass fields that surround the Guide Dog Centre. Yes, puppies are cute, puppies are fun – but there's nothing either cute or fun in the way Jesus talks about puppies in Mark 7 and Matthew 15.

Jesus has left Galilee after a strong rebuke of the Pharisees over what is and isn't unclean. He's now in Tyre, a prosperous, mainly Gentile area which Galilee considered an enemy. Here a woman asks for healing for her daughter. Now, our mental image of Jesus is 'the man for others', who showed God's love to everyone. So what's this? First, she asks for help and he ignores her. Then, when she persists, he tells the disciples that Gentiles like her (regarded by Jews as unclean) are not his priority. Finally, he compares her and her sick child to dogs. What? It seems harsh and unjust. Commentators have tried to soften the story (maybe he had a smile on his face?) but it's notable to me that neither Mark nor Matthew seem to find it necessary to excuse Jesus. They just record what happened.

The surprises continue. The woman 'gets it'. That remark about not taking the children's bread and tossing it to the dogs is about Israel having priority over the Gentiles. She has a better understanding of the bread that Jesus offers than his disciples do! And she has a smart, but humble, reply. She accepts that she can't have the bread that Israel is entitled to, she just wants a crumb of that bread – Jesus' power – to heal her daughter. Jesus is impressed with that reply. Not, I think, because it was clever but because it showed faith and humility – she is prepared to be one of the dogs because she trusts Jesus to heal her daughter.

We see, again and again in the Gospels, how Jesus embodies Proverbs 3:34 – he opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble. But there are many other godly qualities – just think about the list of fruits of the Spirit in Galatians. Why does Jesus prize humility so much?

I think an answer is to be found in the poem in *Philippians 2*. '*Being in God's form, Jesus did not regard his equality with God as something to exploit. Instead he emptied himself ... he humbled himself*'. I used to think this meant that *even though* Jesus was equal with God, he identified with us and was born a human, lived among us, and was killed on the cross. I now think it's stronger than that. I think it is *because* Jesus was equal with God, that he did all those things. In other words – amazing as it seems – humility is a fundamental part of God's character.

So it's natural in the Gospels for Jesus to recognise and prize humility in the people that he meets – including the woman in Tyre. And he recognises and prizes it in us, just the same. His call is for us, God's children in his image, to reflect that character of humility back to him and also to the world around us. It's not an option, it's the normal Christian life.

May he give us the grace to do that!



A generation that did not know God – Part 1 – ‘Problem Tree’

Judges 2:10-16 ‘When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel’. Judges 2: 10

It's obvious that we live in the world similar to the generation that was described in the book of Judges chapter 2. Our present world is full of evil, man's inhumanity to man; corruption, mass destruction of lives and properties; and high rate of crime permeate everywhere; there seems to be nowhere that is safe at present. When you listen to news on television, it's all about evil.

Every time evil strikes in our world, we tend to question why? How did we come into this, where have we gone wrong? The answer to this can be found in the Bible; it is a very good reference point to identify the problem.

The book of Judges chapter 2 from verse 10 to 16 gives us a picture of typical ‘Problem Tree’ or what we now call ‘theory of change’ if we want to address and find solution to what is going on in our world.

Let's take a look at this few verses in the book of Judge 2:10-16: The Children of Israel were in great distress; they lived in constant fear and in serious trouble as they were exposed to calamity, destruction and oppression from their enemy and they could no longer stand before their enemy (vs 14-15).

WHY?

Because the LORD was against them ‘and the anger of the Lord was hot against them’ (Vs 14)

WHY?

Because they forsook the Lord and served Idols (vs 12-13). The true God was completely abandoned and replaced with idols made of wood or stone; they worshipped these idols and provoked the Lord to anger

WHY?

Because they did not know the Lord nor the work of the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel (vs 10).

WHY?

Because they are product of a generation that were not taught the way of the Lord; or disciplined by their parents. They are another generation (vs 10) (you can call it generation ‘Z’ of today)

This is the root of the problem of that generation and it is the same for our generation today. We now have another generation who have no knowledge of God; they wander around with their own ideas and do whatever seems right in their sight; their teachers are: internet and celebrities from Hollywood, Bollywood, Nollywood and all sorts of woods with no life! This is a generation that is called politically correct with zero tolerance for what is biblically correct; the fear and reference of God and authority have been removed and it's becoming more and more difficult to speak about principle of godliness so that we don't become an offence to the society. There is no line between what is truth and lie or what is right and wrong. We live in a generation of ‘anything goes’; if you are happy with it go for it!

Because God has been removed from every institution and the church has become very weak in addressing what is biblically moral; people now worship themselves or their wealth, human being has replaced God with self and materials, God is now against this generation and we now experience great distress and insecurity.

Bunmi Oluloto - Bunmi and Loveth Oluloto lives in Niamey, Niger republic and work for TLM as Country Leader for Niger and Chad.



A generation that did not know God – Part 2 - Solution

2 Chronicles 7: 13-15 NKJV If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land. (Vs 14)

We know from this scripture that God does still love this generation despite all the evils that permeate everywhere. The expectation of God is for the church (body of Christ) to rise up to their spiritual responsibilities.

Vs 14 of this scripture starts with an identity 'if my people who are called by my name'; we are the people of God with His identity; with a responsibility or mandate given to us to seek God's face for His mercy and revival for our generation. In the past God looked to the judges to deliver his people but this time the Lord is expecting His church to rise up to and take up the challenge. The world is looking at the government to save them from their calamity; but because the system of government of the world is imperfect and has no reverence to God people are always faced with frustrations and disappointment; the solution of this generation is in the hand of the church.

For the Lord to visit this generation, the Lord's expect His people to do the following:

- Humble themselves; 'the Lord gives grace to the humble' and the book of James 4: 6,10 admonishes us to humble ourselves in the sight of God and He will lift us up; it takes humility to admit our wrong and gives no room for excuses and without humility we cannot submit to God and God cannot help us because He detests the proud.
- Pray and seek my face; the place of prayer is very important if we want to see change in our generation. It is only by the power of prayer that we can influence and turn things around; unfortunately we are so busy making strategies, project and plans that we spend less time in the place of prayer: whereas apart from God we can do nothing. God's expectation is that we will pray and seek His face always. A consistent and effective prayer life of a child of God guarantees victory. James: 5:16
- Turn to God in repentance and away from sin (wicked way); God is a refuge for anyone who genuinely admits his or her sins or wrong and sincerely turns away from it; God detests people who give excuses and explain away or justify their wrong by blaming the system; other people and sometimes their past experience...*the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we confess and forsake our sin He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all or unrighteousness; if we give excuse for our sins we make Him a liar, and His word (truth) is not in us 1 Jhn 1: 6-10*
- Preach the gospel of salvation and persuade people to turn back to God; this is our biblical mandate Matthew 28:19-20. How can this generation change unless someone preaches to them unless the church shows them where they have missed the mark. We have to preach the gospel through our deeds; let our lives present Jesus to people and when we have opportunity let us also speak about what the Lord has done for us.

We have hope because God who sent Judges to deliver the children of Israel out of the hand of those who plundered them has also sent His only begotten son Jesus to deliver this generation.

Jesus is the only hope for this generation and our mandate is to proclaim it and demonstrate it in our conduct as we reach out in the name of Christ to our friends, family, People affected by Leprosy and to our neighbours. Following Jesus example in our deed and speech, people will come to know God and follow His way.

We must have a personal conviction and be strongly persuaded in our belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and what that means to us personally; because he who is not free cannot set others free; and you can only give (offer) what you have to others. Our lives must be worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Therefore let us take up the challenge to pass on what we know about Jesus and what He has done on the Cross for us to this generation so that this generation will not perish. Let us pray regularly to God to change the heart and open the eyes of people that they may come to the knowledge of truth and be save.

God bless us as we seek His kingdom and His will on this generation.



Citizens of Heaven

On a rail trip across India, I was elevated to celebrity status by my fellow-travellers. As the villages of the Deccan plateau flashed past the heavily barred window, I became the subject of intense scrutiny. No detail went unnoticed. My sandals attracted much admiration – thank you, Cape Town flea-market. My friends were uncomfortable with the way I frowned as I studied a map, trying to find out how my journey was progressing – “Too much psychological thinking, sir”; “You are using the wrong map – you need a rail map, not a road map”. The interview then progressed to the subject of my highest cricket score, met with embarrassed silence when the admittedly modest total was revealed – “Sir, we think you preferred to bowl”. I was offered much advice, including not to bother with the lunch offered on the train. Then, out of the blue, my companions asked to see my passport. There was a hint of reverence as this hallowed document circulated around the hushed compartment. If my new-found friends discerned a resemblance between my passport photo and my “in the flesh” self, they were kind enough not to say so.

I wondered about the wistful, intense curiosity elicited by this little book.

Had my companions previously seen a foreign passport? Maybe few or none had passports of their own? In all my travels and my many conversations on planes, buses and trains, no one else had ever asked to look at my passport or expressed the slightest curiosity about it. Did my passport speak of freedom, a world of plenty, adventure and privilege? A key unlocking the vaults of cornucopia? The ultimate ‘get out of jail free’ card on the Monopoly board of life?

Citizenship and the privileges that go with it are big and controversial issues in our world today, as they were in the time of Paul [Acts 16: 37]. Many people feel trapped by the nationality into which they were born and yearn to acquire citizenship elsewhere. Some countries thrive on selling citizenship, which is, of course, nothing new [Acts 22:28]. People long for a different earthly citizenship because they believe it will set them free from a life of unceasing hardship. It’s easy to understand why a citizen of a poor country might long to live in a rich country, but one of the interesting things that I’ve discovered is that some of my friends who live in “rich” countries long for something better [or at least a country with lower taxes!] Many of us wish we lived somewhere else – sunnier, safer, saner. Others willingly surrender their lives of comfort in the lands of their birth to serve elsewhere – maybe this applies particularly to you this morning. Even if you haven’t moved to a different country, you quite possibly have given up a great deal to serve people in need. Both choices are tough and bring their own difficulties.

In his letter to the *Philippians* [3:20], Paul uses the metaphor of heavenly citizenship – the only time that he does so. Surely this is no coincidence in view of the events in Philippi recorded in Acts 16: 16-40? Earthly citizenship is usually acquired through birth, although there are many other routes to a new identity. Birth remains the only route to heavenly citizenship [John 3:4-8]. Unlike so many earthly kingdoms, His Kingdom welcomes everyone [Luke 14:23]. In this world, people feel that their privileges as citizens are threatened and diminished when foreigners cross their borders; in His Kingdom, our joys are multiplied as its numbers swell [Luke 15:31]. Citizenship always brings rights and responsibilities, and God’s kingdom is no different [Micah 6:8]. However, it is one kingdom where no taxes are payable – He has paid it all [Isaiah 53: 4-6]. It is the only Kingdom whose citizens do not pine for a better place. When it comes to earthly citizenship, the question is often “What’s *innit* for me? – I want me benefits.” The mark of a true citizen of Heaven is the one who starts his day by asking, “How can I please my King today,” not because we need to win His approval, but because the hearts of His servants are filled with reverence [Hebrews 12: 28].

If we all start this day with that attitude, we will accomplish much together, despite the distractions which our earthly identities may occasionally bring.

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.



A wasted investment

Jeremiah 32: 1-3a and 6-15

The world is a dangerous place. The situations are pretty desperate – Syria, North Korea, South Sudan, and many others. As Christians, we need to find the balance between fear and fatalism, between realism and complacency, uncertainty and hope, avoiding the mistakes of the false prophets who said “Peace, peace” when there was no peace, and yet remembering that we follow Jesus who said *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid.”*

2500 years ago the Middle East (West Asia) was in as much turmoil as it is now. The Babylonian Empire ruled what is now Iraq and Syria. Israel had been invaded, Jerusalem was besieged, the enemy were at the gates, and starvation was setting in. Jeremiah then got a strange message from God. He was going to be visited by his cousin with the offer of the sale of a field.

Should he buy a field? It is good to have some land. The only problem – the field was outside the city, in enemy territory. “But you’d still like to buy it, wouldn’t you? It’s your family duty after all!” So Jeremiah pays up, and gets a formal contract witnessed and sealed in clay pots, just like the Dead Sea Scrolls.

What on earth was going on? What was God up to, asking Jeremiah to make such a hopeless investment?

The explanation of this acted-out parable comes in verse 15. *“This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel says: Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land.”* God has a future for his people. The war and the exile will come to an end. God will bring the people back, they will once again control their own land. Jeremiah will not live to see it, he will get no benefit from his investment, but it will not be wasted.

We can be hopeful because God is in overall charge. Jeremiah was willing to trust God. The defeat by Babylon was the worst thing the people could imagine, and yet it was what God had planned for them. God knows what is going on, and even if we do not like it, we need to trust that he has the best way.

We fight, not against flesh and blood enemies, but against the spiritual forces of evil, Paul reminds us in Ephesians. And Jesus’ farewell message is ringing in our ears: *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”.*

Jeremiah made a wartime investment that would not be wasted. Jesus invested in us – dying, rising and ascending, commissioning us to carry on. Should we be petrified into inactivity by events in the world, or in our own countries or in our own lives? Or should we invest our energies and our passions in God’s future, for those around us, and for those who come after us?

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.



20 x HOLY ASPECTS in the Bible

Good morning dear colleagues! We all know that the Bible is a unique literary library, containing many styles and emphasis. But most of all we appreciate the fact, that it is a divinely inspired book, expressing HOLY ASPECTS!

- 1) OUR HOLY GOD (Rev.1:8) *"I AM the Alpha and the Omega, says the LORD God: Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty (EL SHADDAI)."*
- 2) THE HOLY SON (Heb.1:8) *"But of the Son He says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of your Kingdom."*
- 3) THE HOLY SPIRIT (Acts 1:8) *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem....Judea....Samaria....end of the earth."*
- 4) THE HOLY SCRIPTURE (Josh. 1:8) *"This Book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you'll have good success."*
- 5) THE HOLY LAW (1Tim.1:8) *"Now we know that the Law is good, if we use it lawfully."*
- 6) THE HOLY GOSPEL (Gal.1:8) *" But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a Gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed."*
- 7) ANY HOLY PERSON (Job1:8) *"And the LORD said to satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?' (.....still requires Christ's Salvation!)"*
- 8) THE HOLY GRACE (Eph.1:8) *"...grace, which He lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will....His purpose in Christ..."*
- 9) THE HOLY RELATIONSHIP (1Pet.1:8) *"Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that's filled with glory."*
- 10) THE HOLY TESTIMONY (2Tim.1:8) *"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share in suffering for the Gospel by the power of God."*
- 11) THE HOLY BAPTISM (Mark1:8) *"I (John) have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the H.Sp.!"*
- 12) THE HOLY LIFESTYLE (Dan.1:8) *"But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food...wine...Therefore he asked the chief eunuch to allow him not to defile himself."*
- 13) THE HOLY CALLING (Jer.1:8) *"Do not say, 'I am only a youth', for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I AM with you to deliver you, declares the Lord."*
- 14) THE HOLY OFFICE (Titus1:8) *"Be hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, disciplined."*
- 15) THE HOLY SELF-ASSESSMENT (1John1:8) *"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us."*
- 16) THE HOLY LAND (Deut.1:8) *"See I have set the land before you. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give to them and to their offspring after them."*

17) THE HOLY MARRIAGE (1Sam.1:8) *"And Elkanah said to his wife Hannah, 'Why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why are you sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?' "*

18) THE HOLY FAMILY (Prov.1:8) *"Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and your mother's teaching."*

19) THE HOLY CHURCH (Rom.1:8) *"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world."*

20) THE HOLY "BOTTOM-LINE"/CONCLUSION (2Cor.1:8/1Cor.1:8) *"We were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.....Christ will sustain you to the end, guiltless in His Day!"* Amen.

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Moral Benefits of Wisdom

2 My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
 ² turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding—
 ³ indeed, if you call out for insight
 and cry aloud for understanding,
 ⁴ and if you look for it as for silver
 and search for it as for hidden treasure,
⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD
 and find the knowledge of God.
 ⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
 ⁷ He holds success in store for the upright,
he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,
 ⁸ for he guards the course of the just
 and protects the way of his faithful ones.

⁹ Then you will understand what is right and just
 and fair—every good path.
 ¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
 ¹¹ Discretion will protect you,
 and understanding will guard you.

Proverbs 2, 2-11



Do not be afraid!

Matthew 10:28

Jesus knows better than anyone, that it is never easy to speak of God.

It is with a tight heart that we must admit that those who follow him will have to face trial, incomprehension, mockery and persecution. Yet, Jesus repeats to us how to dominate this fear that takes on a new face in every epoch.

It is possible to address all tendentious, futile or scabrous subjects in front of the medias, but one who recalls the demands of the gospel risk for himself lots of troubles!

Daring to speak about Jesus became an act of courage.

Do not be afraid of men, Jesus repeats to us. Men can only reach earthly life, the body. But no human power is capable of destroying what makes our true value, the hope of eternal life, the soul.

The persecuted is greater than his persecutor. The tortured is taller than his torturer. For the promise is there: *"not a single one falls to the ground without your Father willing. Be not afraid! You are worth more than all sparrows in the world."*

Being "a stronger soul" is what counts. *"Do not you sell two sparrows for a penny?"* Not to fear, does not mean being blissful optimism, but because of a trust in the watchful love of our Father able to watch over the smallest of us.

"No, fear not those who kill the body, fear those who can kill the soul." What a formidable formula! What does "kill the soul" mean? Our only fear, says Jesus, should be to lose faith. Our only fear should be not having the courage to live our faith, to become "slackers."

Our life can not be neutral, our faith can not live hidden. Either we speak for Jesus, or we speak against him. And how ?

First, letting the Lord have time to love me. By letting myself be looked at by God: it is prayer. If I remain under the Father's gaze, if I really realize that I am loved, what can happen to me?

And then, practicing my faith. By not being afraid to be Christian and to act as a Christian before those who have nothing to do or who do not agree or ridicule you. "I believe in you, Lord." This rarely takes the form of martyrdom. But it often takes the face of heroic loyalties, our daily duties, our courage before what happens to us.



You lay your hand upon me

Psalm 139: 1-5

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.

² You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

³ You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

⁴ Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.

⁵ You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.

This is such a powerful piece of scripture which is both comforting and also frightening. Our God knows everything about me, the good, the bad, the ugly! In the context of a God who created us and wants the very best for us, then I take great comfort from knowing he understands fully what is going on in my life.

However the part of the passage I most want to focus on is one which I had overlooked before: “you lay your hand upon me”. This gesture communicates something of the intimacy with which God relates to us. Are we accepting of this from our Lord? This is how close he wants to be to us.

In thinking about what ‘you lay your hand upon me’ means, I realised that it could have many different meanings to us. Take a few moments now to think / discuss what these could be?

As a father, I will put a hand on the shoulder of my children in public, often to communicate that they are mine or to provide a physical reassurance that I am with them. In the context of God our Father, a hand on our shoulder signifies a sense of recognition, this is a child of mine who belongs to me. There’s also a sense of approval; my child with whom I am pleased.

Sometime I’ll put a hand on a shoulder to guide my errant sons in the right direction, perhaps keeping them safe from a busy road. I think God does the same with us, guiding us in a certain direction. The touch helps us to know that we don’t need to worry – God is with us.

A hand on the shoulder also signifies a well done and an encouragement to keep going. It communicates warmth and friendship.

Finally from me, though I’m sure you came up with other meanings, a laying on of a hand reminds me of times when I’ve been prayed for and the Holy Spirit has given me a reminder of his power in my life.

So as you carry on with the rest of your day remember that our God is with you every step of the way.



Weeds among the wheat—the price of freedom

So when the plants came up and bore grain, the weeds appeared also. Matthew 23:24-26.

The Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, the weeds appeared also. Matthew 23:24-26.

If along with me you watch the news every evening, or read the paper every day, you experience a non-stop barrage of terrible things that happen in the world. A young lady testifies what her life was like after being attacked. Doctors detail numerous beatings a little boy received before his death. Earthquakes and other occurrences of nature kill thousands. Perhaps tragedy may strike our own families. Or we may read about corruption within the government, or even churchmen behaving immorally. When these situations take place, we sometimes are tempted to ask, “Why didn’t God do a better job in creating the world. Why is there so much evil around us? Why does God allow terrible things to happen?”

These questions are the same ones asked by the early Christian Community that experienced assault from outside the community and, even then, corruption within the community. To these questions Jesus addresses the parable of the weeds and the wheat.

The darnel, the weed referred to, looks like wheat. It even has a head similar to wheat. When the plant is young, it is almost impossible to distinguish from wheat. Only when its fruit, or the lack of fruit, a head without grain, is seen, can it be separated from the wheat and burned.

God is aware of the evil in our world. Evil is the price of freedom. If mankind did not have the ability to choose between good and bad, he wouldn’t be free. The choice of bad affects all people, but it is the price of having the ability to choose Good. The farmer does not refuse to plant because he might find weeds among the wheat. He plants knowing that the result might not be perfect, but there will be wheat. God created man with the ability to bear fruit. That also gave him the ability not to bear fruit. We call out to God in times of tragedy, in times of evil. We want to be vindicated for doing Good and suffering evil.

Like the blood of the martyrs under the altar in the Book of Revelation (Rev 6:9-11) we ask, *“How long, O Lord until you vindicate your people.”*

The Lord responds that he recognizes our suffering and suffers with us, but he will give others time to choose him also, to be numbered among his wheat. God sees the weed among the wheat. They are the price of freedom. But without freedom there would be no wheat.

So where does this leave us? Are we to ignore evil? Are we to ignore pain and suffering? Should we keep our mouths shut when evil is around us? Absolutely not! We are called to till the soil of the Lord. We are called to bring forth fruit. We can’t allow evil to exist when we come upon it, particularly in ourselves.

So today, as we pray that we might withstand the onslaught of evil against us, we also pray that we might fight to eliminate evil in our lives. With confidence, with hope, we realize the Lord who sees all will in the wisdom of his time remove the weed from the wheat.



“keep us from falling”

Jude 24

In UK, and no doubt around the world, there are children’s playgrounds with equipment for adventures of imagination, thrills of balance and speed, strength and confidence. One favourite is the wobbly bridge, - planks loosely chained across a ‘chasm’ of a child’s imagination. It would be virtually impossible to cross, were it not for a rope to hold onto. The rope also moves, but it is anchored at both ends, and hanging onto it makes the difference between crossing the fearful chasm or falling into the waiting jaws of imaginary crocodiles hundreds of feet below!

As I write, most 11-year-olds in England are leaving their Primary Schools and preparing to enter the great world of Secondary School and the future. They leave with an impressive range of basic education in Maths, English, Geography, History, Religious Studies, Science, Art, Music, and so on, -basic steps to begin a life’s journey. And they have acquired a toolbox of skills for learning.

Those foundations will support them well, though lost to sight beneath the building of knowledge and competence and achievement yet to come. They are the ‘wobbling planks’ of their bridge, loosely chained together, but moving with the discoveries and innovations of human knowledge, changed and challenged by the fashions and trends of society.

So what will *“keep us from falling”* (Jude 24) on the perilous crossings of life, when we may be *“tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.”* (Ephesians 4:14)

That’s where the rope comes in, to hold tightly in a world of constant movement. For our children, and for ourselves, there are essentials that don’t show in exams or appraisals; vital character qualities we also need, which are of lasting and even greater foundational importance. God has given us the guide-lines of his word, anchored by his fatherly love for us. They are principles of character and morality, matters of heart and spirit, wisdom to equip us to discern and decide. We could name *“...the fruit of the spirit... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”* (Galatians 5:22-23). We could set our minds on, *“whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, ... anything excellent or praiseworthy”* (Philippians 4:8). We could cultivate works of grace, like compassion, courage, forgiveness, respect, gratitude, justice... and so on. These are all things learnt not so much in classrooms as in clinics and in communities; not so much by talking as by looking and listening, by the example of those amongst whom we work, and supremely in Christ. These are the ‘ropes’ to keep us from falling in an age of very ‘wobbly steps’, -and they are not just for children, they are for all of us.

We pray that we may never let go of those guide-ropes, nor of the God who anchors them in place for our lasting well-being. *“He is able to keep you from falling...”* (Jude 24).

David Beazley began involvement with The Leprosy Mission in 1992 when he came as Minister to a Church near the International Office in Brentford. He acted as an informal ‘chaplain’ to the Office, and served on the International General Council for some years. At the same time he became a member of TLM England and Wales Board, serving as Chairman for six years and on various committees. He now pastors a Church in South-West England part time, freeing time for TLM as a volunteer speaker and continuing on the E&W Board. He chaired the Spiritual Ministry MAWG, and is also able to serve TLMi by leading retreat days and other such things as opportunity allows.



Faith

"Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief" Mark 9:23

Recently a friend, writing about faith in God used two images of faith that resonated with me. Both images are of infants trusting in their mothers, but are very different from each other. A baby monkey clings to its mother anxiously, fearing it might fall as she swings in the trees. A kitten lies passive and relaxed as the mother cat carries it in her mouth, not worried about being bitten or dropped.

I believe we have all experienced both these kinds of faith at different times in our lives. Clinging to God when the going is tough, despite our doubts is an expression of faith just as valid as resting in him with quiet confidence. It is normal for humans to have worries and anxieties, but what is important is to keep grounded in a trusting relationship with God. And through both these different expressions of faith we mature and learn to trust Him more fully.

Dr Joyce Ponnaiya - I am a pathologist and worked for many years , till my retirement at the Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore, India. Apart from my academic appointment, I have served as the Principal (Dean) of the college and later as the Director (CEO) of the organisation. From 2006 to 2011 after retiring from CMC, I worked as Consultant Pathologist at the Schieffelin Institute of Health Research and Leprosy Centre (SIHR &LC), at Karigiri in India. Thereafter, I continue to work at Karigiri in an honorary part-time position as pathologist. I have served on the Board of Governors of both the TLM India Trust and TLM International.



¹² Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men,
from men whose words are perverse,
¹³ who have left the straight paths
to walk in dark ways,
¹⁴ who delight in doing wrong
and rejoice in the perverseness of evil,
¹⁵ whose paths are crooked
and who are devious in their ways.

¹⁶ Wisdom will save you also from the adulterous woman,
from the wayward woman with her seductive words,
¹⁷ who has left the partner of her youth
and ignored the covenant she made before God.^[a]
¹⁸ Surely her house leads down to death
and her paths to the spirits of the dead.
¹⁹ None who go to her return
or attain the paths of life.

²⁰ Thus you will walk in the ways of the good
and keep to the paths of the righteous.

²¹ For the upright will live in the land,
and the blameless will remain in it;
²² but the wicked will be cut off from the land,
and the unfaithful will be torn from it.



Psalm 3

A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom.

¹ LORD, how many are my foes!
How many rise up against me!

² Many are saying of me,
“God will not deliver him.

³ But you, LORD, are a shield around me,
my glory, the One who lifts my head high.

⁴ I call out to the LORD,
and he answers me from his holy mountain.

⁵ I lie down and sleep;
I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.

⁶ I will not fear though tens of thousands
assail me on every side.

⁷ Arise, LORD!
Deliver me, my God!
Strike all my enemies on the jaw;
break the teeth of the wicked.

⁸ From the LORD comes deliverance.
May your blessing be on your people.



Elisha's Miracles - 1: A God of Abundance

2 Kings 4: 1-7

Working for The Leprosy Mission I'm sure we're all very familiar with the story of Naaman's miraculous healing in 2 Kings 5. But that isn't the only miracle that Elisha performed. In the previous chapter there are 5 more which I'd like to think about - what they can reveal to us about God's work in this world. This is the first.

Even though the kingdom as a whole had stopped worshipping God correctly, worshipping instead at the golden calves at Bethel and Dan, as well as various high places to various pagan Gods, it seems that there was a small remnant who wished to remain faithful to God and at this time there were schools setup under Elisha and perhaps other faithful prophets to teach the true faith to groups of students. These "sons of the prophets" appear regularly through the end of 1 Kings and well into 2 Kings as witnesses to what God is doing and occasionally are used as messengers by the prophets.

Here at the start of chapter 4, one of these students – they weren't necessarily all young men – has died and left his widow with considerable debts.

There's an implicit warning here about the danger and irresponsibility of poor financial planning but the focus is on what God does to help the widow and her children in their perilous situation.

Throughout scripture we see that God has a special place in his heart for widows and orphans. There are specific mentions in the law both to prevent them being mistreated and to provide for their needs. Those who do are either condemned or commended throughout the Bible and James tells us that "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

So Elisha takes what little she has and God multiplies it to provide enough value for her to pay off her debts and have a little left over for them to live on for the next wee while. He could just as easily have provided something new as a gift but no, he asks "what do you have in the house?" He uses what she already has, in this case just a jar of oil, and multiplies it to achieve His purpose.

And God is a God of abundance. His blessing and provision can exceed all of our expectations. In this case it wasn't the oil that ran out, God kept it flowing for as long as the woman had jars to fill. God doesn't have a finite amount of love or grace or blessing available, but it seems that we often have a finite capacity to receive from Him – for all sorts of reasons. Maybe we don't have a big enough picture of God, maybe we don't believe God can or will bless us that much, maybe we don't believe we deserve it or are scared to accept it.

Today, let God use what you have, what you are, to fulfil his plan. He can take what you have and achieve great things. And accept what He might do openly and willingly, don't block off the flow of grace by being unwilling to accept what God might want to give you, or the team you are working with.

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Elisha's Miracles - 2: A God of Blessings

2 Kings 4: 8-17

The next two miracles (v8-37) both happen in the village of Shunem, though they happen at least a few years apart.

There we find a woman, the Bible describes her as prominent in the community, probably one of the wealthier residents, and she certainly had a reasonably large house, and she was obviously faithful to the true God because she provides hospitality for Elisha whenever he is passing through, even making him a room of his own in the house for him to use whenever he wishes.

And Elisha wishes to do something for her, to repay her generosity, but when asked she says there is nothing she needs – she is living among her own people and is obviously materially provided for.

At the time there was a huge cultural significance around having children and crucially an heir who will inherit from you. Elisha's attendant Gehazi notices that she has no son and her husband is old.

God knows and recognises our deepest desires even if we never verbalise them or even fully admit them to ourselves. He knows what's going on in our heads and in our hearts. And on this occasion as reward for her faithfulness and her service to God's prophet she is given a son.

Elisha tells her "at this time next year, you will have a son". And she doesn't believe him "No, my lord. Man of God do not deceive your servant" but sure enough at the same time the following year a son was born.

When our desires align with the will of God, God can provide what we could never expect or imagine. And he always keeps his promises. Once Elisha had said the word there was no going back, even though she didn't believe it, it still happened. God is faithful to everything He says.

Our motivation for serving God should never be in order to gain blessings for ourselves but God can bless us with the deepest desires of our hearts if He chooses.

The Shunamite woman's motivation was simply to serve God as she was able. How will you serve Him today?

As you serve Him day by day, as you pray and read His word and spend time in His presence ask Him to change your heart so that your desires and priorities become more like His.

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Elisha's Miracles - 3: A God of Faithfulness

2 Kings 4: 18-37

Skipping forward a few years from yesterday we see the same family again. We don't know how many years but the boy is now old enough to go himself to see his father and the others working in the fields; old enough to complain of a bad headache; but still young enough that the first response is to carry him home to his mother and for her to sit with him on her lap.

It was obviously more than just a headache because by noon the boy has died.

And here's what's perhaps the strangest part of this whole story. His mother doesn't cry out in anguish or to ask for help, she doesn't seem to cry at all or to behave as you might expect a grieving mother to. Instead she puts the boy in Elisha's bed and goes off to find him, even telling her husband "everything is all right".

Was she just numb to the situation or did she have faith to at least hope that Elisha could restore her son? I believe it was the latter, even if it was a slender faith it was there. When she meets Gehazi on the road again she says "everything is all right". She holds everything together until she gets to where Elisha is and falls down and grabs on to his feet in clear anguish and distress. But God withholds from Elisha what the problem is, requiring the woman to say it out loud this time,

'Did I ask you for a son, my lord?' she said. 'Didn't I tell you, "Don't raise my hopes"?''

She's not quite blaming God or Elisha for her pain but she's getting kind of close. "I didn't ask you for a son, but you gave me one anyway and now look at the pain I'm in because of it".

She doesn't have to say any more and Elisha drops everything and sets off for Shunem. He sends Gehazi ahead to check out the situation and when he arrives immediately locks himself in the room with the boy, prays and then lies down on top of him.

This isn't the first time someone has done this. In 1 Kings 17 Elijah did the exact same thing with a dead child at Zarephath. Elisha would have been familiar with the story as he learnt from Elijah all those years. The mother comes in falls at Elisha's feet in gratitude, takes her son and leaves – and we never hear of them again.

This time the woman had to say out loud what the problem was. If we have a problem and something is causing us pain or anguish, we often have to say it out loud, to share it with someone else in order for restoration to begin even if this is hard or painful to do. Once the woman had spoken it, God though Elisha was able to act. And what did he do – the same thing that had worked before!

As we serve God, we don't have to continually invent new ways to do things, new ways to draw people to God, often what has worked effectively before will be effective again.

This isn't always the case but we should learn from those who have gone before, build on their experience.

Take what has worked before and do it in your own way.

Use what has worked before and ask God to bless you as you serve Him.



Elisha's Miracles - 4: A God Who Sustains

2 Kings 4: 38-44

The last two miracles in this chapter are both about food.

Elisha was teaching the “sons of the prophets”; his attendant (perhaps Gehazi? the passage doesn't say) prepared some lunch for them all using non-specific “wild” vegetables – it was a time of famine and I guess they had to use whatever they could find. They turned out to be poisonous. Elisha through some flour into the pot and it became safe to eat.

Out of desperation, the attendant had made a unwitting mistake but God was able to undo the damage and the “sons of the prophets” could eat.

God can even use our mistakes to demonstrate His glory and achieve His purposes. We should always be diligent and careful in our work for God, but if we make a mistake, pray that God will use it to achieve something miraculous.

Then a little later a man brought them some bread – “the first bread of the harvest”, presumably the first bread after the famine was lifted. Elisha asked for the 20 small loaves to be shared out – there were 100 men and the attendant (was this Gehazi again? if so he's not having a good time of it) says it's not enough.

“But Elisha answered, ‘Give it to the people to eat. For this is what the Lord says: “They will eat and have some left over.” ’ Then he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the Lord.”

Now does that sound familiar? When Jesus did it he fed thousands but it's the same miracle. God can take the little there is and provide for many from it.

A little boy gave Jesus a small amount of bread and fish – faithful, selfless generosity.

The farmer here brought the first of the bread from the harvest as a gift to God, this was his offering – faithful, selfless generosity.

God used these offerings to satisfy the needs of those around them.

Whatever you bring to God and freely give to Him, he can use to meet the needs of those He wishes to bless.

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Follow me - Obeying this command of Jesus good enough to change our life

Some of us have very strong feeling that we must have good behavior and disciplined life style, and then only Jesus will accept us. They also believe that Jesus will not accept those who are leading a bad life and are involved in some kind of sinful activities. Such attitude of ours makes very strong wall and Gap against these people who are struggling in their daily lives and not yet found Jesus. Many times church discipline and senior leaders make so hard for these people to come to church and be accepted in the church fellowship by the very other members who have been Christian from a long time. When people with difficult life situations and very low income group start attending our churches, the older members of the church do not want to give them the equal status of church membership and treat these people like second class Christians.

But when we have understood the teaching of Christ correctly, then we realize that this type of attitude by some of the senior church members is not correct. This reaction is not part of teaching of Jesus.

One of the best examples of this kind of situation we see in Bible when we read *Luke 5, 27-28*- Jesus calls Levi (Matthew), the tax collector- FOLLOW ME. The Levi at once leaves his work and Follow Jesus. We also read that Jesus takes part in the celebration with other tax collector which was arranged by this Levi.

The life style, the character, the job of this tax collector- Levi was no way good. He had very bad reputation. He was exploiting the poor, earning money with wrong methods, must be unkind etc. People hated him and did not behave nicely with him. He knew about this attitude of people. Therefore when and the way Jesus spoke to him, was so different from the other people behavior. He recognized the difference and accepted Jesus invitation immediately. We also realized that the decision by Levi to follow Jesus at once must have been difficult one. He was now making a lifelong decision to be with Jesus. It must be costing him - the sacrifices he has to make (leaving his wealth etc), this was really a great decision. He had no time to calculate of profit & loss of leaving his wealth, the invitation of Jesus was so attractive and appealing to him, he agreed to accept it immediately.

We also noticed that Jesus did not tell him about his sinful life and did not ask him to change his life style. The invitation of Jesus was simple but attached with real love Follow me, whatever you are. Jesus did not put any conditions to him or did not force him to follow HIM. We also know from the Bible that obeying to Jesus invitation was the very right decision of Levi. He was given a very special position & reward by Jesus.

Therefore we as Christian must be very careful towards others who are having different and difficult life style. We must not have any reservations or hard feeling for them. We know that when Jesus could call the Levi to follow Him, He will also call these people and invite them to follow him. Jesus will not see their present life, he will not ask them for any conditions. He will not even force them but invite them with love to follow HIM. If Jesus is accepting this Levi, with bad reputation, he will surely accept these people also. Then why we as Christian keep distance and gap with this group of people?

We must ask God to grant us love and strength to invite these people and accept them as they are, like Jesus invited Levi to follow Him as he was.



The progression of a missionary call

“As child, at age 5: When I am a man, I mean to be a missionary and go to China.

As a young man: I feel I cannot go on living unless I do something for China.

Late in life, as a veteran missionary:
If I had 1,000 lives, I'd give them all for China.”

James Hudson Taylor - (Chinese: 戴德生; 21 May 1832 – 3 June 1905) was a British Protestant Christian missionary to China and founder of the China Inland Mission (CIM, now OMF International). Taylor spent 51 years in China. The society that he began was responsible for bringing over 800 missionaries to the country who began 125 schools and directly resulted in 18,000 Christian conversions, as well as the establishment of more than 300 stations of work with more than 500 local helpers in all eighteen provinces.

Taylor was known for his sensitivity to Chinese culture and zeal for evangelism. He adopted wearing native Chinese clothing even though this was rare among missionaries of that time. Under his leadership, the CIM was singularly non-denominational in practice and accepted members from all Protestant groups, including individuals from the working class, and single women as well as multinational recruits. Primarily because of the CIM's campaign against the opium trade, Taylor has been referred to as one of the most significant Europeans to visit China in the 19th century.

Taylor was able to preach in several varieties of Chinese, including Mandarin, Chaozhou, and the Wu dialects of Shanghai and Ningbo. The last of these he knew well enough to help prepare a colloquial edition of the New Testament written in it.



The World Hates the Disciples

¹⁸ If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. ²¹ They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

John 15, 18-25



The need for forgiveness

Luke 7, 36-50

Most people in the world today recognise some need for forgiveness. They may be very conditional as to who and why people should be forgiven and in what circumstances. But in the eyes of most societies there is a place for forgiveness.

Forgiveness is required at all levels in our world. We saw justice and forgiveness at a national level in South Africa, following years of a repressive apartheid regime, when South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up.

Part of the South African PROMOTION OF NATIONAL UNITY AND RECONCILIATION ACT, 1995 says that '...the Constitution states that there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation...'

A whole country previously exposed to many forms of violence and abuse, acknowledged the need for truth and forgiveness. Perhaps they may have been inspired, in part, by the words of Martin Luther King, who said... "Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude."

Forgiveness is also required at a personal level.

A number of years ago there was a couple who had been overseers of missionaries in Africa, for over 40 years. They travelled around offering support to the other missionaries in the field. One day a lady missionary came to them. She said that she couldn't feel close to God and she had seen several miracles but nothing ever happened involving her....it was getting her down. So the couple invited her around for dinner. When she arrived they learnt she couldn't eat most foods! She had eating problems nearly all her life. They talked all evening and made no progress.

She was invited back....but before she came, God revealed to the couple the cause of the problem. So when the lady missionary returned they prayed with her and revealed that God had said it was connected with her mother....the lady burst into tears and said that she had always hated her mother (who had died several years ago) because of things she'd heard her say about her. The couple said to the missionary that she had to ask for forgiveness. She did, cried heavily, but left with a heavy burden removed.

Several months later the couple met up with the lady missionary. Her face shone. Her life had been completely changed. The power of forgiveness had transformed her life.

The woman in Luke 7 understood something of forgiveness. As she cries at the feet of Jesus she experiences the reality of forgiveness. It is a lesson to all in that room as Jesus is touched by her love for him.

The power of forgiveness still transforms lives today. And the need for forgiveness is as great as ever.

Gordon Brown

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



A Big Storm

Matthew 14 22-31

After Jesus had fed the 5000 He made the disciples get in the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. The disciples went off and as they went a big storm arose and the boat was tossed about by the waves. Many of the disciples were seasoned fishermen, but they were afraid for their lives, even though they were obeying what Jesus told them to do. You will all know this story very well.

In their hour of need Jesus came to them, but when they saw Him

walking on the water they were even more frightened until Jesus told them not to be afraid. Peter, always the impulsive one said "*If it is You, command me to come on the water*" Jesus said one word, "*Come*" and Peter immediately got out of the boat and started to walk on the water towards Jesus. What great faith He had! But when he took his eyes off Jesus and saw the huge waves he began to sink! Jesus took him by the hand and together they walked back to the boat. What an amazing story!

None of us are exempt from the storms of life, and Jesus will always draw near to us in the storms that we have to face. We need to walk toward Jesus, for He will always hold out His arms to us. We just need to keep our eyes on Him and not at the storms raging around us.

What about the other disciples? They remained in the relative safety of the boat. Their comfort zone. Like many of us Christians do, and so never experience the true power of faith in the word of Jesus. Do we sometimes need to get out of the boat even in the middle of a storm so we can obey the call of Jesus?

In all the storms and difficulties we face, Jesus comes and says "*peace be still*". He will always bring His peace, that peace that passes all understanding. He Himself is our peace, *Ephesians 2:14*. There are so many references to peace in the Bible, and we spend so much time worrying, when His peace is available at all times. When we walk with Jesus we should be travelling in peace. He will calm the storms of life for us. His parting gift to the disciples was "*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you*" so let us receive that Word of peace, and spread it around to others.

Mollie Clark, worked in Purulia, Bhutan, and International Office.



The kingdom of God is like ...- Part 1

Reading of Matthew 13 v 24 to 43

Introduction:

The kingdom of God, a central notion in the Gospels. Matthew 13 & 14 give us a series of Parables to illustrate different aspects of The Kingdom.

... Like a man who sowed good grain in his field! The story of creation tells us that all that God created is good. For the Pharisees and in general for the contemporary religious leaders of that Time, God is above all the God of the Law who says, "You must; you must not. Beware of you if you do not act properly. But Jesus comes to remind us that God is good. His intentions are perfect and he wants the best, not only for men, but for all creation.

An enemy came while everyone was asleep to sow weed in the same field. Evil, represented here by the weed, does not come from God. According to this parable, the good grain and the weed cohabit in this world. It's a reality. The Kingdom of God is of a different nature from all the kingdoms of this World. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to live simultaneously in two realities that all opposes.

The suggestion made by the servants to go and to tear up weeds is not retained. The disciples are not safe from the desire to eradicate evil in human society. For example, when James and John ask Jesus if they should not cause the destruction of the villagers who did not welcome Jesus on his way to Jerusalem (*Luke 9: 51-56*). The timing of weed destruction and what they represent will come. But it will only be at the time of the harvest. The role of servants is to take care of those who are to inherit the kingdom.

... it looks like a mustard seed. Mustard is so small that it is difficult to imagine that it can produce anything important, and yet ... There is such an extraordinary capacity in its genes that it will overtake the other plants in the kitchen garden. The kingdom of God also begins insignificantly.

It becomes a shrub. We humans look at what it can produce. We expect a large quantity of seeds to make mustard. Who could have imagined that the handful of disciples whom Jesus chose to be His apostles would, in a few years, transform the whole world. They have brought about changes in values that will produce effects which are still valid today.

Jesus sees birds that can settle their nests. Jesus sees the extraordinary power of the kingdom which will benefit even those who do not seek the presence of God in their lives. The goodness and love of God are so immense that all creation benefits. This is also what Paul expresses when he writes in his letter to the Romans (chap. 8) that all creation suffers and sighs after liberation, the revelation of the kingdom of God.



The kingdom of God is like ...- Part 2

Reading of Matthew 13 v 34 to 43

The Kingdom of God is like...

... yeast that a woman takes to mix it with flour. A little bit of yeast is enough to make a large quantity of dough rise. There is a secret, unsuspected, mysterious work. It is a revolution that transforms the entire future of human history. The Good News, the Gospel, has produced changes in all human cultures.

Generally, in the Bible, yeast is rather synonymous with evil but in this Parable, it is the image of the Kingdom of God.

Why this reversal of meaning? Often, during the course of history, some have thought it necessary to impose changes in cultures different from theirs. The history of the Christian missions has sometimes provoked upheavals with unimaginable consequences, when its promoters thought it necessary to impose their conception of the Christian life, as it developed in their culture.

Others took a different approach, focusing on the Word of God, translated into the languages and cultures of each people. This is the case, for example, of the Wycliffe Bible Translators, but also of organizations such as The Leprosy Mission, whose object is to be like Jesus, who went simply to those whom nobody wanted, those who were rejected, to tell them that the curse that represented leprosy in the old world no longer exists. Jesus took it away, not by force, not by the taking of armed power, but by his death on the Cross.

Conclusion:

The parables of Jesus are suggesting unexpected results. They are intended for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see. Their Objective is to create faith in our hearts. They invite us to look into the future and not just in the present moment. The kingdom of God does not come in such a way that it can be observed (Luke 17). I mean that it does not correspond to the criteria of educated men. The ordinary rules do not predict the future of God's Kingdom. But we who listen to the Word of God know that God acts in this world, primarily through our witness and obedience. In the end, it is indeed this Kingdom of God that will stand. All other powers will eventually be defeated. And it will not be because we have tried to impose them on those who do not want, but because the Love of God is greater and stronger than all human reasons. Let us trust in His Word and accept to be simply His witnesses, His good seeds, His leaven.

*By His Spirit God triumphs.
It is He who convinces the world of sin, justice and judgment
(John 16 v 8)*



Authors in Alphabetical Order

Textuarium

Bunmi Oluloto Dr	8 and 9 August	Judges 2,10-16	8 August
Dan Izzett	3 and 4 August	2 Kings 4,1-7	21 August
David Beazley	17 August	2 Kings 4,8-17	22 August
David, King of Israel	20 August	2 Kings 18-37	23 August
Geoff Warne	7 August	2 Kings 4,38-44	24 August
Gordon Brown	28 August	2 Chronicles 7,13-15	9 August
James Hudson Taylor	26 August	Psalm 3	20 August
Joyce Ponnaiya Dr	18 August	Psalm 115,1	2 August
Mollie Clark	29 August	Psalm 139,1-5	15 August
Moses Onoh Dr	16 August	Proverbs 2,2-11	13 August
Mother Teresa of Kolkata	5 August	Proverbs 2,12-22	19 August
Nicky Ward	1 August	Jeremiah 32,1-3 and 6-15	11 August
Otto Kingsley	12 August	Matthew 10,18	14 August
Pascal Machefer	14 August	Matthew 13,24-43	30 and 31 August
Paul Dr and Niki Jakeman	11 August	Matthew 14,22-31	29 August
Pete Garratt	15 August	Matthew 23,24-26	16 August
Peter Laubscher	10 August	Mark 7,24-30	7 August
Pierre Geiser	30 and 31 August	Mark 9,23	18 August
Pradeep and Sarah Failbus	25 August	Luke 5,27-28	25 August
Ruth Butlin Dr	2 August	Luke 7,36-50	28 August
Silvano Perotti	6 August	John 14,15	3 August
Stuart McAra	21, 22, 23, 24 Aug	John 15,18-25	27 August
		Ephesians 5,1-2	1 August
		Philippians 3,20	6 and 10 August
		Jude 24	17 August