



TLM Daily Devotions

November 2019





All Saints' Day

Revelation 21 New International Version (NIV)

A New Heaven and a New Earth

21 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth, ”for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

⁵He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

⁶He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. ⁸But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

The New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb

⁹One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” ¹⁰And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. ¹³There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. ¹⁴The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls.

¹⁶The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. ¹⁷The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick. ¹⁸The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The

first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. ²¹ The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.



Psalm 145

A psalm of praise. Of David.

- ¹I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
- ²Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.
- ³Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.
- ⁴One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.
- ⁵They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty—
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.
- ⁶They tell of the power of your awesome works—
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
- ⁷They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.
- ⁸The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
- ⁹The LORD is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.
- ¹⁰All your works praise you, LORD;
your faithful people extol you.
- ¹¹They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,
- ¹²so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- ¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.
The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does.^[a]
- ¹⁴The LORD upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.
- ¹⁵The eyes of all look to you,

and you give them their food at the proper time.

¹⁶You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

¹⁷The LORD is righteous in all his ways
and faithful in all he does.

¹⁸The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.

¹⁹He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;
he hears their cry and saves them.

²⁰The LORD watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

²¹My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD.
Let every creature praise his holy name
for ever and ever.



Psalm 146

¹Praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD, my soul.

²I will praise the LORD all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

³Do not put your trust in princes,
in human beings, who cannot save.

⁴When their spirit departs, they return to the ground;
on that very day their plans come to nothing.

⁵Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD their God.

⁶He is the Maker of heaven and earth,
the sea, and everything in them—
he remains faithful forever.

⁷He upholds the cause of the oppressed
and gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets prisoners free,

⁸ the LORD gives sight to the blind,
the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down,
the LORD loves the righteous.

⁹The LORD watches over the foreigner
and sustains the fatherless and the widow,
but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

¹⁰The LORD reigns forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the LORD.



The Book of Ruth

Sandwiched between the book of Judges and the book of Samuel is the book of Ruth.

The book of Ruth tells a touching story of the love and devotion of an ancestor of David and Jesus Christ. It also reminds us of what is important to God. Even though its short, this remarkable book contains many principles with profound impact to our lives today.

Please take some time later to read the full book in the Old Testament if you are not familiar with it, for now, the following is just a brief summary of the book of Ruth.

A woman by the name of Naomi packed up and moved from Judah to Moab due to a terrible famine that was affecting her family. She and her husband moved there with their two sons, who eventually took wives while living in Moab.

Tragically, Naomi lost her husband and two sons. Broken and empty, Naomi decided to move back to Bethlehem in Judah. Her daughter-in-law Ruth came with her, since she had also lost her husband.

Keep in mind that Ruth was a Moabite woman, and she was now moving to Judah as a foreigner.

This was a big deal in their culture, but she was committed to Naomi as her daughter-in-law, and she wanted to follow after the God of Israel.

While in Judah, God worked out an amazing plan for a man named Boaz to take Ruth as his wife, give her a child, and provide for her and Naomi. What's remarkable about this plan was that Boaz was qualified as a "kinsman redeemer" to take her as his wife.

What in the world is a "kinsman redeemer" you may ask? Well, they had a custom in those days, based upon Deuteronomy 25:5-6, that directed that a relative of a man who dies should marry that man's widow in order to perpetuate his lineage through this woman.

According to God's remarkable sovereignty, it turned out that Boaz was a relative to Ruth's husband who had passed away; so, he was qualified to marry her and perpetuate his lineage. So, even in the midst of Ruth and Naomi's awful affliction, God still had a plan to take care of them.

There are 2 points that I can take away from this lovely story and how it may relate to The Leprosy Mission's work:

1. God is concerned about all people, regardless of their race, status, nationality and gender. Jesus healed those affected by Leprosy, those that had been cast aside and discriminated against. As members of The Leprosy Mission, we are continuing with that work.

2. God uses "little things" to accomplish great plans
All the contributions (past and present) of people that have worked and are working towards defeating Leprosy. Each contribution (big or small) counts towards achieving our goal. We do not boast and brag about our achievements and consider ourselves meek and humble but with God's power, we can accomplish our goal.

Kalpna Shah - Joined TLMI in April 2017 as a temporary Finance Assistant and from November 2019, became permanent as the Finance Officer.



Behind the scenes - Disciples

Mark 15:40-47 Earlier this week as I was reading Mark's account of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus, I was struck again by the presence and participation of the women. In various chapters of the Gospels, we read of women who followed Jesus but they are particularly prominent in the accounts of the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus. For much of the time, they had been very much in the background as they undertook the practical tasks without which Jesus would have struggled to carry out his ministry (eg. who cooked for Jesus and the disciples? who did their laundry?). Though not numbered among the Twelve, they were just as much disciples – for example read again the stories of Martha and Mary.

In accordance with the customs of the time, it was the women who prepared a body for burial. But go back to the crucifixion where we read of their presence, watching albeit from a distance. They witnessed Jesus' death. They accompanied Joseph of Arimathea to the tomb and saw where Jesus had been buried, hastily because of the Sabbath. It is the women who first discovered the empty tomb. It was to women that Jesus first appeared and to them was given the responsibility of taking the news of the resurrection to the Twelve. Although Jewish law does not discredit the testimony of women, in practice legal witness always seems to have been given by men. Even the disciples seemed not to believe them. However, the credibility of the resurrection depends on the testimony of women. - Now before you get the idea that I am taking a feminist line here, let me remind you that Paul tells us that in God's kingdom there is 'neither...male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28).

So today, whatever your role in TLM, in the church, in the family, whether in the public eye or behind the scenes, remember your service to Jesus is part of His ministry today and is valued by Him. Even if you feel that you are unimportant, to Jesus you are important.

When I was writing these thoughts, I was interrupted and so it is some time since I wrote the part above. Before I could come back to this piece, I heard a sermon on some of the women in the Old Testament – I thought it was not a very good sermon, but it certainly made me sit down and think. Although this piece is not about women I was uncertain about continuing with it.

However, God has led me on from there and I know that I was interrupted to wait for Him to show me how to continue. Last Sunday evening I attended a celebration of 10 years of a particular ministry which takes place in our town on a Tuesday evening (52 weeks of the year). Although I have not been involved with a hands on role I have prayed for this ministry for almost all of its time. There is a "bus" which comes and is like a drop in centre for those with addictions or mental health problems – it is a befriending but the evenings always end with a very short devotional and prayer. I have met some of those who have attended and they have told me that even if they don't go earlier in the evening, they always go for the prayer time at the end – oh that more of our church members would come to the prayer meetings!! Anyway Last Sunday evening I was struck by two things most of the people who gave their testimony said of those who faithfully go along each week as part of the team – they treated me as a normal person, not just on the bus but even if they met me on the street; and we saw Jesus and His love in them as they talked to us and gave us tea and buns. How that stirred my heart as I thought not just of that team but of the faithful service and witness of TLM staff over many, many years.

Do you sometimes feel insignificant or that the work you have to do is insignificant? Remember that if God cares for the sparrow, He cares for you much more (Matthew 10:29, 31). Remember too that you are His witnesses to those around you – by what you do; by how you treat those you meet; as well as by what you

say.
Today thank God for the courageous and faithful witness of those first women disciples. Thank God too for the people who serve and care for you. Think of how you can serve Jesus today, whether publicly or behind the scenes.

May God bless you as you witness to His love today whether your task be big or small.

Christine Osman, former Treasurer of TLMI



The Holy Spirit will transform the mediocre disciple!

John's gospel Ch.14

John's Gospel is different to the earlier three Synoptic Gospels: The Apostle John is at pains to help Jews and Gentiles find Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour; he uses 7 signs for Jews and 7 "I AM's" for Greeks!

In John *Ch.14*, we read of three of Jesus' up-and-coming, albeit at that time still mediocre disciples: Thomas Didymus, Philip and Judas (not Iscariot).....

We notice immediately, that they are sincere, but sincerely wrong at the same time! What they needed, was for the H. Sp. 'to illumine and to inspire' them!

1) Read vv1-7 – THOMAS' QUANDRY!

"Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ->(Jesus)"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also...."

->Dear friend, know Jesus/know the Father: Is He your Lord/Saviour/Father?

2) Read vv8-14 – PHILIP'S QUERY!

"Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." ->(Jesus) "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know Me..."

->It's all about having a deepening relationship with God/Jesus every day!

->Our prayer-life will become a daily barometer, re this deepening relationship

3) Read vv15-25 - JUDAS'(NOT ISCARIOT) QUESTION!

"Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?"

->(Jesus) "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him...."

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My Name,

He will teach you all things....Peace I leave with you...

Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

->In this old world we live in, there are basically 2 kinds of spiritual people:

The mediocre, and those who are filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit!

The latter: Love God in return! Rejoice much! Believe God simply!

Resist the enemy constantly! Obey God willingly! (vv26-31)

And now by faith, receive God's Spirit and God's Word anew (1 John 4:13-16)

History affirms that Thomas, Philip and Judas (not Iscariot) did! -Amen.

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



The Church and the four friends of the paralytic healed by Christ

Mark 2: 1-12

No sooner had Jesus returning to Capernaum, than so many people gathered before the door of the house where He was. His fame spread like wildfire, and the locals were curious to see the miracle worker in action. Wherever God intervenes with power, people are attracted. The Saviour faithfully proclaimed the Word to all those who huddled in front of the door. In the back was a paralytic carried by four men on an improvised stretcher. Because of the crowd, they could not approach the Lord Jesus. In general, when you want to bring someone to Jesus, there are always obstacles standing in the way. But faith is ingenious. The four porters climbed on the flat roof by the external staircase, uncovered part of the roof, and through this opening, perhaps giving onto an inner court, sent the paralytic down on his makeshift bed. Four virtues found in the four friends of the patient: Sympathy, Mutual Aid, Ingenuity and Perseverance. Let us strive to be a friend who presents these virtues.

Jesus, impressed by their faith, said to the paralytic, *"My child, your sins are forgiven."* What a strange introduction from the Lord! The man had come because of his paralysis, not because of his sins! But Jesus, behind the symptoms, sees the cause. He did not want to heal the body and neglect the soul. He refused to remedy a temporal situation without at the same time remedying an eternal situation. This is why He declared: Your sins are forgiven. What a wonderful announcement! Now - on this earth - during his present life - the sins of this man were forgiven. He did not have to wait until Judgment Day. From that day he enjoyed the assurance of forgiveness. It is the same for all who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus. It seems to me that these four anonymous and charitable believers are a beautiful figure of ecclesial communion. Their common faith, their efforts, their daring and their solidarity allowed an unfortunate man to recover the use of his body. I believe that this is exactly what the Church is: we are one body where each member serves the other and makes up for their deficiencies. In the Church, we complement each other for the salvation of all: the strong bear the weak; the saints help sinners; the ascetics compensate for the weaknesses of those who are negligent; those with strong faith support the fearful. The Church makes sense only if it is really the place for the exchange of gifts and talents, for the good of all, for the salvation of all its members. The Church cannot be the accuser of humanity, but it is this community of the four anonymous friends in the Gospel that bring the sick man to Christ. The strength of their faith, their trust in the power and love of the Lord saved the paralytic.

I am convinced that, in the same way, the faith of the Church will save humanity, paralyzed as it is. I believe that this is the reason for the Church's existence: the Lord expects her to bring him, no matter what, even if it means dismantling the roof of ancestral traditions, prejudices and habits, this paralysed humanity to God that each may have their sins forgiven, be reconciled with the Father and resurrected for eternal life, in the light of the divine Trinity.

Reverend Elie FOFOLO - Born on August 5, 1964, son of a Baptist Pastor, both parents died. I am a pastor of vocation and formation, in 2001 I had my degree in Theology at the Protestant University in Congo (U.P.C). After working as a Pastor in the local Church of Kingabwa 1 from 2004 to 2011, I had a meeting with Angelika Piefer who headed the Coordination of the Mission against Leprosy in the Democratic Republic of Congo, from where I had this passion for people affected by Leprosy and I invited Angelika to come to World Leprosy Day in our church on Sunday 29/01/2012, in Kingabwa. This work led us to discover two girls from the same family with signs of leprosy, and their brother ended up being infected, but all three were treated and in good health. This sparked this passion to work as a volunteer in raising awareness, mobilization and the relationship with the local

churches of the platform "Church of Christ in Congo" (E.C.C in acronym). - In July 2019, I obtained the Master in Psychotrauma, at the University of Kinshasa, at the Faculty of Medicine. Training that allows me to better listen to and accompany people who suffer trauma and stress for biopsychosocial care. - I am married to only one woman, Madame Espérance since 16/10/1988. From this union God gave us five children including two girls and three boys. Just like Abraham and Sarah, my wife and I, are willing to give up everything and go where the need for the Mission is felt. - Elie Fofolo is currently pastor at the local church of Masina 3, the 15th Congo Baptist Community in Kinshasa

L'Église et les quatre amis du paralytique guéri par le Christ.

Mc 2:1-12

A peine Jésus était-Il de retour Capernaüm, qu'il s'assembla un si grand nombre de personnes devant la porte de la maison où Il se trouvait. Sa renommée s'était répandue comme une traînée de poudre, et les habitants étaient curieux de voir le faiseur de miracles en action. Partout où Dieu intervient avec puissance, les gens sont attirés. Le Sauveur annonça fidèlement la Parole à tous ceux qui se pressaient devant la porte. A l'arrière se trouvait un paralytique, porté par quatre hommes sur un brancard improvisé. A cause de la foule, ils ne pouvaient pas s'approcher du Seigneur Jésus. En général, quand on veut amener quelqu'un à Jésus, il y a toujours des obstacles qui se dressent sur le chemin. Mais la foi est ingénieuse. Les quatre porteurs montèrent sur le toit plat par l'escalier extérieur, découvrirent une partie du toit et, par cette ouverture donnant peut-être sur une cour intérieure, firent descendre le paralytique dans son lit de fortune. Quatre vertus qu'on trouve chez les quatre amis du malade : *Sympathie, Entraide, Ingéniosité et Persévérance*. Efforçons-nous d'être un ami qui présente ces vertus.

Jésus, impressionné par leur foi, dit au paralytique : Mon enfant, tes péchés sont pardonnés. Quelle étrange introduction de la part du Seigneur ! L'homme était venu à cause de sa paralysie, pas à cause de ses péchés ! Mais Jésus, derrière les symptômes, voit la cause. Il ne voulait pas guérir le corps et négliger l'âme. Il refusait de remédier à une situation temporelle sans en même temps remédier à une situation éternelle. C'est pourquoi Il déclara : Tes péchés sont pardonnés. Quelle annonce merveilleuse ! Maintenant - sur cette terre - durant sa vie présente - les péchés de cet homme étaient pardonnés. Il n'avait pas besoin d'attendre jusqu'au Jour du jugement. Il jouissait dès ce jour de l'assurance du pardon. Il en est de même pour tous ceux qui ont placé leur foi dans le Seigneur Jésus.

Il me semble que ces quatre croyants anonymes et charitables sont une belle figure de la communion ecclésiale. Leur foi commune, leurs efforts, leur audace et leur solidarité ont permis à un malheureux de recouvrer l'usage de son corps. Je crois que c'est exactement ce qu'est l'Église : nous sommes un seul corps où chaque membre sert l'autre et compense ses déficiences. Dans l'Église, nous nous complétons mutuellement pour le salut de tous : *les forts portent les faibles ; les saints aident les pécheurs ; les ascètes compensent les faiblesses des laxistes ; ceux qui ont la foi solide soutiennent les craintifs*. L'Église n'a de sens que si elle est vraiment le lieu de l'échange des dons et des talents, pour le bien de tous, pour le salut de tous ses membres.

L'Église ne peut pas être l'accusatrice de l'humanité, mais elle est cette communauté des quatre anonymes de l'Évangile de ce jour qui portent l'homme malade au Christ. La force de leur foi, leur confiance dans la puissance et l'amour du Seigneur ont sauvé le paralytique. Je suis convaincu que, de la même façon, la foi de l'Église sauvera l'humanité, aussi paralysée qu'elle soit.

Je crois bien que c'est la raison de l'existence de l'Église : le Seigneur qu'elle lui apporte, coûte que coûte, même s'il faut pour cela dénoncer le toit des traditions ancestrales, des préjugés et des habitudes l'humanité paralysée pour qu'il lui accorde la rémission de tous ses péchés, la réconcilie avec le Père et la ressuscité pour une vie éternelle, dans la lumière de la divine Trinité.

Révérend Elie FOFOLO - Né le 05 Aout 1964, fils d'un Pasteur Baptiste les deux parents sont tous morts. Je suis pasteur de vocation et de formation, en 2001 j'ai eu ma licence en Théologie à l'Université Protestante au Congo (U.P.C). Après avoir travaillé comme Pasteur dans l'Eglise locale de Kingabwa 1 de 2004 à 2011, j'ai fait une rencontre avec Angelika Piefer qui dirigeait la Coordination de la Mission contre la Lèpre en République Démocratique du Congo, de là j'ai eu cette passion des personnes affectées par la Lèpre et j'ai invité Angelika de venir faire la Journée Mondiale Lèpre dans notre église le dimanche 29/01/2012, à Kingabwa. Ce travail nous a emmené à découvrir deux fillettes d'une même famille avec des signes de la lèpre et leur frère aussi a fini par être contaminé mais tous trois ont été soignés et sont en bonne santé. Cela suscita cette passion de travailler comme volontaire dans la sensibilisation, la mobilisation et la relation avec les églises locales de la plateforme "Eglise du Christ au Congo" (E.C.C en sigle). - En juillet 2019, j'ai obtenu le Master en Psychotrauma, à l'Université de Kinshasa, à la faculté de

Médecine. Une formation qui me permet de mieux écouter et d'accompagner les personnes qui souffrent des traumatismes et des stress pour une prise en charge biopsychosociale. - Je suis marié à une seule femme, madame Espérance depuis le 16/10/1988. De cette union Dieu nous a donné cinq enfants dont deux filles et trois garçons. - Tout comme Abraham et Sarah, ma femme et moi, sommes disposés de tout abandonner et aller où le besoin de la Mission se fait sentir. - Elie Fofolo est actuellement Pasteur à l'Eglise locale de Masina 3, de la 15^{ème} Communauté Baptiste du Congo à Kinshasa



The desert experience

“He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness and tempted by the devil.” Luke 4: 1-13

A mother camel and her baby are talking one day and the baby camel asks, “Mom why have we got these huge three-toed feet?” The mother replies, “To enable us trek across the soft sand of the desert without sinking.” “And why have we got these long, heavy eyelashes?” “To keep the sand out of our eyes on the trips through the desert” replies the mother camel. “And Mom why have we got these big humps on our backs?” The mother, now a little impatient with the boy replies, “They are there to help us store fat for our long trek across the desert, so we can go without water for long periods.” OK, I get it!” says the baby camel, “We have huge feet to stop us sinking, long eyelashes to keep the sand from our eyes and humps to store water. Then, Mom, why the heck are we here in the Toronto zoo?” - Modern life sometimes makes one feel like a camel in the zoo. And like camels in the zoo we need sometimes to go into the desert in order to discover who we truly are. The periods of Lent particularly exemplifies this message.

The desert was the birthplace of the people of God of the first covenant. The Hebrew people who escaped from Egypt as scattered tribes arrived the promise Land as one nation under God. It was in the desert that they become a people of God by covenant. In the course of their history when their love and faithfulness to God grew cold, the prophets would suggest their return to the desert to rediscover their identity, their vocation and their mission as a way of reawakening their faith and strengthening their covenant relationship with God. The great prophets Elijah and John the Baptist were people of the desert: they lived in the desert, ate desert food and adopted a simple desert lifestyle. The desert is the university where God teaches His people.

In this gospel, we read that, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil” (Luke 1:1-2). Where else but the desert could you have such a meaningful encounter of the Holy Spirit as well as Satan, of the wild beasts as well as of the holy angel? The desert was the school where Jesus came to distinguish between the voice of God which he should follow and the voice of Satan which is temptation. How many voices do we hear from the moment we get up in the morning till the moment we go to sleep at night? The countless voices in the daily paper, the soliciting voices on the radio and the television, the voices of those who live and work with us, not forgetting our own unceasing inner voices. In the desert we leave most of these voices behind to focus on distinguishing between the guiding voices of God and the tempting voice of Satan. In the desert we come to know ourselves, our strengths and weaknesses, and our divine calling. In the desert Jesus encountered beasts and angels.

There are wild beasts and angels in everyone one of us. Sometimes, owing to our superficial self-knowledge, we fail to recognize the wild beasts in us and give in to vainglory, or we fail to recognize the angel in us and give in to self-hatred. But in the silent and recollection of the desert we come to terms with ourselves as we really are, we are reconciled with the beasts and the angels in our lives and we begin to experience peace again for the first time.

We cannot all afford to buy a camel and head off for the desert. But we can all create a desert space in our overcrowded lives. We can set aside a place and time to be alone daily with God, a time to distance ourselves from the many noises and voices that bombard our lives every day, a time to hear God’s word, a time to rediscover who we are before God, a time to say yes to God and no to Satan as Jesus did.

We could pray thus: *Lord, may I encounter You in my daily life activities, and reap from the many blessings that abound in You as I obey Your divine guidance. Jesus, I trust in You.*

Moses Onoh, MD, is a former Country Leader of TLM Nigeria. He is currently with the World Health Organization (WHO) Nigeria Country Office, within the Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases Cluster; serving as a National Professional Officer for Tuberculosis.



Psalm 147

¹ Praise the LORD.

How good it is to sing praises to our God,
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

² The LORD builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the exiles of Israel.

³ He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.

⁴ He determines the number of the stars
and calls them each by name.

⁵ Great is our Lord and mighty in power;
his understanding has no limit.

⁶ The LORD sustains the humble
but casts the wicked to the ground.

⁷ Sing to the LORD with grateful praise;
make music to our God on the harp.

⁸ He covers the sky with clouds;
he supplies the earth with rain
and makes grass grow on the hills.

⁹ He provides food for the cattle
and for the young ravens when they call.

¹⁰ His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his delight in the legs of the warrior;

¹¹ the LORD delights in those who fear him,
who put their hope in his unfailing love.

¹² Extol the LORD, Jerusalem;
praise your God, Zion.

¹³ He strengthens the bars of your gates
and blesses your people within you.

¹⁴ He grants peace to your borders
and satisfies you with the finest of wheat.

¹⁵ He sends his command to the earth;
his word runs swiftly.

¹⁶ He spreads the snow like wool
and scatters the frost like ashes.
¹⁷ He hurls down his hail like pebbles.
Who can withstand his icy blast?
¹⁸ He sends his word and melts them;
he stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow.

¹⁹ He has revealed his word to Jacob,
his laws and decrees to Israel.
²⁰ He has done this for no other nation;
they do not know his laws.

Praise the LORD.



Psalm 148

¹Praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise him in the heights above.

²Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

³Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.

⁴Praise him, you highest heavens
and you waters above the skies.

⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for at his command they were created,

⁶and he established them for ever and ever—
he issued a decree that will never pass away.

⁷Praise the LORD from the earth,
you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,

⁸lightning and hail, snow and clouds,
stormy winds that do his bidding,

⁹you mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars,

¹⁰wild animals and all cattle,
small creatures and flying birds,

¹¹kings of the earth and all nations,
you princes and all rulers on earth,

¹²young men and women,
old men and children.

¹³Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for his name alone is exalted;

his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.

¹⁴And he has raised up for his people a horn,
the praise of all his faithful servants,
of Israel, the people close to his heart.

Praise the LORD.



God clothes the grass of the field

If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Matthew 6:30

My afternoon walk takes me up the mountain behind the naval base in Simon's Town. This evening I wanted to walk along the path to the Admiral's waterfall, but found it blocked by a troop of baboons. The babies were as cute as cute could be, but the large male baboons looked less than amused at my presence, so I headed up the steps to the grave of Able Seaman 'Just Nuisance', a Great Dane who adopted Allied sailors in Simon's Town during World War II. It's a climb of 250 metres and on the way up I began to realise that my idea of the food pyramid, built on a base of roast potatoes and their many friends, is not a short-cut to physical fitness.

I slumped down on the beautiful stone wall that lines the path to the top of the hill. Now I have to say, if you are going to stop for a breather, this is the place to do it. From any point on the hill, you have glorious views of the Cape Fold Mountains to the North-East, the back of Table Mountain to the north and False Bay and its whales below you. The mountains across the bay turn purple as the sun sets behind you, the sound of the bells from the dockyard drift up the krantz on the breeze and the tugs nudge the submarines into their pens, tucking them in for the night. Sometimes I am so overwhelmed by the beauty of it all that like Paul I want to say, "The things he heard were too sacred for words, things that man is not permitted to tell". These are moments to be savoured, rather than described. Yet what especially strikes me during these [frequent] pauses for breath is how my focus shifts from the mountains and the yachts below to my immediate surrounds. Things that escape me whilst I am climbing suddenly come into view. The many varieties of sunbird, the honey eaters and the bee catchers. And today, as I sat panting and sweating, a distinctively striped Cape field mouse, swinging from the tufts of the tall grass, a twinkle in his eye, merrily at play, oblivious to me and my distress.

Now there is nothing especially fancy about the field mouse, but in that instant, I was reminded that the Lord's eyes are upon him: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care." True, the majesty of the ocean and the mountains speak loudly of God's sovereign power, but there is something startling about becoming aware of the proliferation of life around you when you stop climbing and realise that there is this beautiful drama playing out in front of your nose and the Lord provides for each of these creatures - pollen from the pincushion Proteas, nectar from the nerinas and pools of water on the eroded tops of the sandstone boulders. Sometimes, to see this beauty and appreciate it in some of its astonishing detail... you have to stop.

And so, when my lungs say, "this is it, we need a minute [or more]" I'm deeply thankful, because otherwise I would miss out on so much of this beauty.

Isn't interesting that the Lord had to give us a command to rest? A command to work – yes, I get that, but He knew that rooted in our pride is the belief that if we stop pedalling the world will stop spinning. He wants us to see the beauty of His creation, to appreciate it in all its magnificence and we can't do that when we're constantly at work. I am glad that in recent times there has been a strong urging in the fellowship for people to observe the Sabbath – to come to rest and not feel guilty about it. This is not time wasted but rather a time of enrichment. Yes, like everyone else, I feel a sense of accomplishment when I climb a hill, but at the end of the day, that's not what I recall. It's those special moments, catching the eye of a mongoose, watching a tortoise scurry out of sight [who ever said they were slow?], the guineafowl hen shepherding her chicks to safety...

I hope you will make time in your day to discover His beauty and the joy of seeing him providing for His creation. In the midst of this, we are reminded that He provides for us, in ways that are often mysterious, but which always speak of His unfailing love.

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.



Are you living a courageous life?

“Be strong. Take courage. Don’t be intimidated. Don’t give them a second thought because God, your God, is striding ahead of you. He’s right there with you. He won’t let you down; He won’t leave you.” Deuteronomy 31:6

How do you define courage? The dictionary offers two definitions: “The ability to do something that frightens oneself” and “strength in the face of pain and grief.” Everyone admires someone who displays this type of courage in the face of overwhelming obstacles and fear. Think about it, movies typically centre their hero or heroine’s storyline around this theme.

Jesus certainly displayed this type of courage while here on earth: boldly facing critics and ultimately the cross. Knowing Jesus would lose His life for the sake of you and me, the Apostle Matthew depicts the final hours leading up to Jesus being arrested in Matthew 26:36-44.

“My soul is sorrowful, even to death,” Jesus said. And yet, He continued along the path God had laid out for Him. Talk about courage in the face of fear.

And all because of His love for you and me.

Thankfully, Jesus’ story didn’t end on the cross. After paying the ultimate price for all OUR sins, Jesus rose again so that we might have a relationship with God. Jesus’ act of courage redeemed mankind.

More often than not, living courageously doesn’t require a life or death decision – but it might feel like it in the moment. We’ve all had a season in life where we’ve had a choice: move in courage or shrink back in fear. What the movies often don’t depict in their happily ever after ending is what comes next. *Living courageously is rarely a ‘one and done’ moment, but a daily decision in how we approach each day.*

In what areas of your life is God asking you to walk boldly and courageously for Him? Is it at work or at home? Maybe you’re facing a health, marital problems, unemployment or financial crisis and just getting out of bed each day takes tremendous courage. Ask Jesus for the strength and wisdom to know HOW to live courageously not only today, but every day. You never know who might be watching

Dorothy Owen - Administration & Logistics Assistant, The Leprosy Mission Papua New-Guinea



Christian engagement in the current world.

We are a chosen race, we are privileged.

John 15:16 (HCSB) You did not choose Me, but I chose you. I appointed you that you should go out and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you.

The current world has established its own scale of values: power, honour, money ... are the current references. The symbol of success today is measured by the rank one occupies in society, in one's work, in one's political party, the influence one has on others. Success is also measured by the notoriety that we have in society and everyone wants to be the best known, that everybody talks about him in the medias, in the newspapers, in social medias, ... Also, success is measured by the balance of one's bank account (in thousands of US dollars, Sterling pounds or Naira), the number of luxury cars, villas, and other ... But all this is nothing because it is only passenger. *Ecclesiastes 12:8 (NASB) "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "all is vanity!"* - As Christian, we are not forbidden to possess material goods because we need them to live. But what place do we give to our goods? *Matthew 6:21 (NASB) for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

If your car passes before your life of faith, then there is reason to question and come back as soon as possible.

Working in The Mission Leprosy is a call. A special call that the Lord has addressed to each of us to set us apart and to use us as an instrument of salvation. For us to bear fruits, visible fruits that transform lives and enlighten the world. So let's not be distracted, let's lead a life that conforms to what we confess. We want to focus our life and our work on Christ so avoid hypocrisy and be consistent.

Matthew 23:5-7 (HCSB) They do everything to be observed by others: They enlarge their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. They love the place of honour at banquets, the front seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called 'Rabbi' by people.

Luke 20:46-47 (KJV) Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

A great danger for Christians in today's world is to split up. To have our Christian identity simply as a label. A label that can be worn at certain times of the day, in public, where we are known, and can be removed at will in the dark, where we suppose not to be sufficiently known. This label can be in our daily actions too.

How do I interact with my colleagues, with friends, with my family members?

Consistency in our life requires constant effort. This effort will be fuelled by the life of prayer, by reading and meditating on the word of God. But also by always recognizing oneself humble. Humble and ready to ask forgiveness.

Proverbs 25:6-7 Do not claim honour in the presence of the king, And do not stand in the place of great men; For it is better that it be said to you, "Come up here," Than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the prince, Whom your eyes have seen.

James 4:10 (KJV) Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

1 Peter 5:6 (KJV) Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

We will lead a coherent life with the faith we confess by living in fidelity, humility, prudence and sincerity.

- Fidelity to God and our commitments, our commitments to God and to our neighbours, our commitments in the accomplishment of our daily tasks. Because a job well done is a prayer to God. To slap one's work is to lack fidelity. Fidelity also in our homes.
- Humility in our practices, the exercise in forgiveness even towards our subordinates and especially before those who seem weaker. The weaker we become, the more the Lord will lift us up. But elevation is not the goal of humility.

- Caution in what we do. We are not alone in the world. We must not expose ourselves either because we are Christians. We must know where to set foot and avoid, as far as possible, any act or place that can lead us into compromise.
- Sincerity: we must be sincere with ourselves, with our brothers and with God. No need to lead a double life.

We are Christians, we work in The Leprosy Mission, we need to consider that as a privilege because many would like to be in our place and are not there.

Many Christians today are exposed in their professional life but we have the advantage of working where we remember God and where Christ is at the Centre.

Consider this with greater value and keep this unique treasure that the Lord put at our disposal by living in consistency and providing the proper care to all those affected by leprosy in the name of Christ Jesus.

Thus, chosen by God Himself, we are called to bear fruits and fruits that remain.

Three questions for our own meditation

1. Am I aware that the Lord has called me and set me apart?
2. Am I sincere with myself in my commitment?
3. Does my Christian life produce fruit? Amen.

Christian Bulambo Bisimwa - Head of Finance, The Leprosy Mission DR Congo



Groundhog Day

There's an American comedy movie from the early 90's in which a cynical weatherman goes to report on a strange local event in a small local town in Pennsylvania where a groundhog comes out of its hole at the end of hibernation. The theory is if the animal sees its shadow then it goes back into its hole, which portends six weeks more of winter weather.

The weatherman hates everything about this, but when he awakes the next day he gradually realises that he is living the same day again. In fact, no matter what he does, he's stuck repeating the same events every day he awakes. The movie was so successful that now the expression 'groundhog day' means a situation in which a series of unwelcome or tedious events appear to be recurring in exactly the same way!

I wonder if this in fact sometimes happens to us in regard to sin. We find ourselves entrapped by a sin, something that no matter how hard we try, seems to occur time and again. It can seem like we find ourselves in our own version of a 'Groundhog Day'.

However, isn't God good? He forgives us time and time again. Perhaps it feels like 'Groundhog Day' for God because he always finds himself covering us in his grace and forgiving us. There is no limit to how many times God forgives us, if we turn to him in repentance.

"Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." Matt 18:21-22

Though it may seem to us that we are falling into the same sin over and over again, much like the brother in Jesus' example, every time we ask forgiveness, God will grant it. This seems strange by our human standards. After all, if a neighbour does the same thing to us over and over again, it is very hard to trust their sincerity past the first couple of times. Yet God, unlike us, can see the heart. If we acknowledge our sin, confess it, and repent of it, He will forgive. That is regardless of whether or not we later stumble in the same sin.

Of course that is not an excuse to become complacent in sin, or to use grace as a license to sin. *Romans 6:15-16 "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?"*

Maturing in Christ is a process (2 Peter 1:3-11). As it says in Romans 8:12-14, we should daily strive to follow God and walk in obedience. As we walk by the Spirit, we will put to death the deeds of the flesh.

So then, let's seek to escape our own Groundhog Day, relying on the strength of our Lord and grateful for His ever present grace when we fall short.

Hebrews 4:16 "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."



Learning – what to do at the time of troubles.

The life experiences of King Jehoshaphat teach us about this. (2 Chronicles 20, 1-30 verses)

Jehoshaphat was thirty five years old when he became the king of Judah. This is considered younger age to be the king. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and also obeyed his father's teachings. He faced very difficult time when Moabites and Ammonites with some the Meunites came to attack his kingdom and suddenly declared the war against him and his people. He was also informed that a large army is coming against him from Edom, the other side of the sea and already reached to the land area. He and his people were not prepared for this war.

Let us see what King Jehoshaphat did:

- He developed fear and become afraid of this sudden war.
- He searched and inquires the Lord, to resolve this sudden problem of war.
- He proclaimed a fast for all Judah.
- The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord, they came from every town to seek help.
- Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the Lord in front of new courtyard and made long prayer to the Lord for this purpose.

The results:

- Then the spirit of the Lord came upon Levite Jahaziel, the son of Zechaiah and he stood in the assembly and conveyed God's message to them *"Do not be afraid..... this battle is not yours, but God's.Do not be discouraged, go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you"*.
- Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down to worship before the Lord. Some Levites stood up and praised the Lord, the God of Israel in loud voice.
- Then Jehoshaphat said to his people *"Have faith in the Lord and you will be upheld"*. He appointed people to sing for the Lord to praise Him".
- Finally all the enemies were defeated. Jehoshaphat and his people were protected. They found and collected much valuable item of their enemies who all died in this war.
- They all thanked the Lord what all He did for them. They entered Jerusalem and went to the temple of the lord with harps and lutes and trumpets.
- The fear of God came upon all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel.

- The kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at PEACE, for his God had given him REST on every side.

Our problem is that when we face difficulties in our life, we use our own strength, knowledge and brains to solve those. We know very well that we cannot resolve these problems with own capacity and strength alone. The problems are much bigger for ourselves to solve them. Therefore we learn from the example of King Jehoshaphat that we must ask God to help us as we face these difficulties, especially those problems which come suddenly in our life. We must fully depend on God and keep our trust on him only, and go to him with these problems and ask His help to solve these. Also important not to forget to thanks the Lord and openly acknowledge His help, after the problems are resolved.

Pradeep & Sarah Failbus Worked for 39 years and 29 years with TLM (most at Anandaban, Nepal) Now retired and settled at: Kathgodam, District Nainital Uttarakhand, India



Psalm 149

¹ Praise the LORD.

Sing to the LORD a new song,
his praise in the assembly of his faithful people.

² Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;
let the people of Zion be glad in their King.

³ Let them praise his name with dancing
and make music to him with timbrel and harp.

⁴ For the LORD takes delight in his people;
he crowns the humble with victory.

⁵ Let his faithful people rejoice in this honor
and sing for joy on their beds.

⁶ May the praise of God be in their mouths
and a double-edged sword in their hands,

⁷ to inflict vengeance on the nations
and punishment on the peoples,

⁸ to bind their kings with fetters,
their nobles with shackles of iron,

⁹ to carry out the sentence written against them—
this is the glory of all his faithful people.

Praise the LORD.



Psalm 150

¹ Praise the LORD.

Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens.

² Praise him for his acts of power;
praise him for his surpassing greatness.

³ Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
praise him with the harp and lyre,

⁴ praise him with timbrel and dancing,
praise him with the strings and pipe,

⁵ praise him with the clash of cymbals,
praise him with resounding cymbals.

⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD.



The fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:19-26

I have a couple of hibiscuses planted in the garden that are a great disappointment. I barely get any flowers on them. I am not sure why it has happened perhaps I haven't fertilised them enough. It's disappointing though to have all that promise of flowers and nothing to show for it. I can understand why Jesus got annoyed with the fig tree that appeared to have lots of leaves and be full of free fruit, but it was just leaf and nothing else. Very disappointing when you are hungry and fancy a fig.

The fruit of the Spirit is interesting. When I was a young Christian, I thought that the gifts of the Spirit were out of the ordinary but the fruit ... Shouldn't all humans be like that? Maybe that is because the sort of fruit that we are asked to produce isn't showy.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Now I see that it is in very short supply. Forbearance, kindness and goodness, so easy to say but not so easily found. Turn that fruit on its head – hate, unhappiness, war, impatience, nastiness, selfishness, unreliability, hardness and lack of self-control seem to be much more prominent these days. Driven not by love but by anger, I think.

It may be not showing off to have the Fruit of the Spirit but my word it is a challenge. They seem to me to be all about character. I used to think that they were all different fruits, but I suspect that it is the whole thing that is the fruit. After all you don't get apples, oranges and grapes all on the same tree, do you? I think the core of the fruit is love and the other parts come out of that. I wondered if it would look like this in a diagram



The great thing is that fruits come from the tree. It is the tree that produces and feeds the tree. So, these are definitely the fruit of the Spirit and not the fruit of June.

I just need to let Him flow through me to produce it.

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.



The God of Genocide

Matthew 10,28-31 "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul...Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."

Do we ever consider where God is amidst the worst suffering, the most painful situations, the greatest poverty our world knows? Has He gone? Does He ignore the suffering? Does He punish us? Was He ever there to begin with? - This is how people found the divine amidst genocides in Europe and Rwanda.

Determination to praise

These are the words of a Rwandan woman named Edith,

"I wanted to let myself go, because life had become too bitter. So, I do not know how, I started to pray. I began shyly and I went into the church, I recited psalms, then I sang my lungs out. I understood that God was calling me because it was He who would sustain me from now on." - This is a woman who sings her lungs out when confronted by her pain – she had lost her husband to the genocide, yet she still worshipped with all her heart. This is the visceral presence of God, this is outright defiance; the refusal to relinquish God; a determination to praise, even in the face of a world that insists that God must be missing.

Defiance in the holocaust

This defiance is not limited to experiences of Genocide in Rwanda. Yaffa Eliach writes of Jews who disobeyed orders from German soldiers in a concentration camp. They were fasting on Yom Kippur and were ordered to repent or be forced to run up a mountain and slide down on their stomachs repeatedly.

"And so ten times they repeated the humiliating performance, each time with more determination, each time with more strength, climbing and sliding from an unknown Polish mountain which, on that soggy Yom Kippur night, became a symbol of Jewish courage and human dignity."

Commitment to God can be a driver for people, allowing them to endure more than they thought possible.

The words of a dying girl

Jean Hatzfeld shared the testimony of a Rwandan man who witnessed the death of a young girl, (Warning: sensitive content)

"They set to cut her. From my hiding place I could listen to everything. She did not ask for pity to try and save herself; she only murmured before dying "Jesus". This is not outright worship; this is a murmur, a faint refusal to abandon God, even when all else is gone.

The hope for us

God is a very real presence in the testimonies of many people who have been victims of genocide. The divine permeates the suffering; God is present in beautiful and tragic ways. When people share their first-hand accounts of some of the worst events in human history, they refuse to omit God from their testimonies.

What does that say about our God?



Finding Rest

Read Matthew 11:28-30 In this scripture passage Jesus promises that we will find rest for our souls when we come to him. We often plan times of rest in our lives. Would you rather find rest by:

- | | | |
|--|-----------|---|
| Going on a cruise | <i>or</i> | Going on a beach holiday |
| Going skiing | <i>or</i> | Going on a city break |
| Going for a spa day | <i>or</i> | Going out for a meal with friends |
| Hiding away for the day with a good book | <i>or</i> | Going shopping for the day with friends |

We all have a different idea of what it means to rest. One person's rest can be another person's torture! Our passage from Matthew 11 tells us that as we come to Jesus, we can find rest **when we share his yoke**. A yoke is a wooden frame that held together to animals, that would pull a heavy load. Jesus knows that so often we are yoked to things and to people that weight us down. He promises to share our burdens, to take the weight, to enable us to be able to bear the load of life. Often, we can fall into the trap of not sharing the load with Jesus. Take the stories of the missionary and the mother.

A missionary became ill and was confined to her bed. Week after week, year after year, she implored the Lord to set her free of her illness, so that she could get back to doing God's work. But nothing changed. She despaired and kept on pleading with God to set her free. Finally, after 8 years of being bedridden, she gave in.

'Ok Lord, you win. I give up. If you want me to remain ill, I will. I want you even more than I want my health.'

Within two weeks, she was up and out of bed, completely well again! For years she wanted Jesus to fix the problem so she could get on with her mission. She finally learnt to walk through life with Jesus beside her, not with her mission for Jesus beside her.

Another story is told of a mother, whose daughter Una became ill. It was the 1800's and she had contracted Malaria. With a high fever, and shortness of breath, the doctor said that she may not make it through the night. As her mother knelt and prayed for her, she was angry with God and refused to accept that Una might die. She reasoned with God – Una was far too clever and beautiful to die. She kept railing against God deep into the night, until she finally reached a point when she said 'Ok God, why should I doubt your goodness and your providence. If you see best to take Una, then so be it.'

She describes feeling lighter after praying that prayer – a peace descended on her. Una pulled through the night, and her mother gave God thanks for the miracle.

Coming to the point of acceptance is often a very difficult experience. We don't want to relinquish that which is most precious to us. But when we do we can find peace for our mind and rest for our soul.

It doesn't always mean that God will do a miracle. It just means that God will help us bear the pain and loss and grant us the strength to move forward.

The invite is there for us today to come to Jesus and to allow him to take the strain. Listen again to these words from *Matthew 11*: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

Peter Hilton - I worked for 12 years with TLM Northern Ireland and am now a Church of Ireland minister.



Church Discipline

2 Thessalonians 3:4-15

In this passage, Paul is concerned about 'idlers' or 'loafers' in the church. They were not working – for apparently good religious reasons relating to the Second Coming – but were therefore not earning their keep, and were becoming nuisances.

Do we remember that our work is an important part of our Christian life? Do we work hard at it? Or do we try and do the minimum we can get away with? Do we do voluntary work, either in church or in the community? Is our contribution as a prayer warrior? Let's check that we are not being idlers and loafers.

How do we regard the authority of Scripture? Are there clear messages that we have deliberately ignored? Do we risk turning our backs on God because we don't obey his word? Paul was not embarrassed to use powerful language in insisting on obedience to what he was telling the church.

How do we feel about discipline within the church? Are there doctrines, issues or behaviours that are right out of line for Christians? How do we handle the welcoming of people whose lifestyle has been very different from our own? How would we feel if the Church told us that we were wrong about something?

Is this all a bit uncomfortable? God made us, and he wants us to be perfect. He wants everything we do to be worthwhile. He wants us to follow his instructions because he knows what is best for us. He wants the church family to help one another stay on the right path. We'll not be uncomfortable if we know God's on our side.

"And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good".

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.



Through wining and losing our character is built up

Father, You see my life from beginning to end. Your plans for me are good; to prosper me and strengthen me. I know that this doesn't mean I am exempt from challenges, disappointment or setbacks, but that You are with me through them all, using them to bring about Your plans in my life. Holy Spirit teach me how to lean on your grace through the wins and losses in my life.

Amen.

Kindly shared by **Dr. Yousif Deng Riak Deng**, country leader of TLM South-Sudan



Psalm 1

¹Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
²but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
³That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.
⁴Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.
⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
⁶For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.



Psalm 2

¹ Why do the nations conspire
and the peoples plot in vain?
² The kings of the earth rise up
and the rulers band together
against the LORD and against his anointed, saying,
³ “Let us break their chains
and throw off their shackles.”
⁴ The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.
⁵ He rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
⁶ “I have installed my king
on Zion, my holy mountain.”
⁷ I will proclaim the LORD’s decree:
He said to me, “You are my son;
today I have become your father.
⁸ Ask me,
and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession.
⁹ You will break them with a rod of iron;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”
¹⁰ Therefore, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the earth.
¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear
and celebrate his rule with trembling.
¹² Kiss his son, or he will be angry
and your way will lead to your destruction,
for his wrath can flare up in a moment.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.



The Great Commission

Matthew 28:19 (KJV) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

These words can be quite challenging for some Leprosy Mission staff working in countries where conversion is not allowed.

I was quite young at the time, but rather disconcerted when Father Moxon interpreted this text as “be ye missionaries”. I had no wish to leave my parents and go and live in one of those little huts displayed on the Sunday school table.

While researching the archives at TLMI in Brentford I have realised the missionaries in India during the first half of the last century had very limited success making converts. However, with leprosy patients the situation was quite different. Visiting Purulia in 1895 Dr Revie wrote: -* “I am satisfied now (I was in doubt before coming) that the conversion to Christianity of almost all the inmates is a *real* and not merely a nominal thing.” I imagine living within a Christian asylum was very different from living in the society that had shunned them. These patients were totally immersed in Christianity. They were nursed by Christians, most of the visiting dignitaries were Christians and even the army marching along the road was a mix of Hindu, Muslim and Christian.

I have known Shati all her life. Her parents are from Bangladesh and they are Muslims, and so is Shati. Shati’s mother thought as she was growing up in a Christian country the school should have taught her about Christianity and not the all the other religions of the world, but that is not the way schools work in this country. Shati’s teenage years were not easy for her or her parents but she is now a strong minded independent young lady. Recently an aunt visited her from Bangladesh and I invited them for lunch. Obviously she had discussed this with friends and colleagues at work who had asked who I was. She gave the question some thought and came up with “We do not really have godmother’s in Bangladesh but I suppose Auntie Rosemary is like my godmother”. I wonder. How much have you learned my little friend by growing up in a Christian country? Shati’s mother grew up in Bangladesh/East Pakistan and her grandparents were British Indian. Certainly her mother knows more of Christian festivals and tradition than Shati. One thing Shati has known from her mother from an early age is that it is possible to change your religion. Maybe one day the right person will come along with the right words and remind her of this.

O God, we have read the manual but we need help to carry out the instructions

Rosemary Tootle, VSO Purulia 1968 – 69. Volunteer TLMI Brentford since 2002

*A visit to leper asylums in India and Burma 1895 – 96 by Wellesley C. Bailey



Being non-judgemental

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you » Matthew 7: 1-2

My favorite story in the Bible is without a doubt the story of Joseph in the old testament. As I read the story the situations described come as vivid pictures to my imagination. I can hear him shouting from the well, when his brothers left him, I can picture him in Potifar's house, that thrives under his management, and I can see him sitting in prison, probably discouraged and yet not giving up hope.

The passage I would like to share with you today is Genesis chapter 39, where Joseph is in Potifar's house. I guess most of you know the story, but it pays off to read it again attentively.

Everything seems to work out fine for Joseph after being sold into Potifars home and Joseph could have lived happily ever after. But then comes the temptation, that he withstands, and even though innocent, he is thrown into prison. Superficial reading makes this story easy: Potifar the workaholic, his wife the evil woman and Joseph the godfearing saint. But let us take a closer look.

When I learnt that Potifar was probably an eunuch, a castrated man (as was usual for all the servants of a king that had access to the wives of the king) my view of this story changed. Because that would mean that there was no normal husband-wife relationship between him and his wife, no possibility of them getting children, and there would probably be much frustration and alienation between the two of them. Potifar probably realised that he could not fulfill his duties as a husband, so his anger after the discovery that Joseph could do what he could not, is probably too an explanation for his enormous anger. Yet he does not have him killed, but puts him in prison, and even puts him in a special prison. That is remarkable. Does he feel guilty? Does he not fully believe what his wife tells him, knowing their special situation? The story does not tell us.

It changed also my perspective of Potifar's wife as well. Unfulfilled, no future with children, no purpose in life, what was left for her? No wonder her eye is drawn to a handsome, masculine, strong man, though a slave. Probably it was not unusual for slaves to obey the masters wife in this area as in other areas. Does that make it right? No, but it makes her more human, closer, easier to identify with than just an evil woman, with whom I cannot identify. It teaches me that unfulfilment is a powerful road to sin, and that one should guard oneself from unfulfilment.

And Joseph? He knows that he should not touch Potifars wife, and so he does not give in. But it is not easy for him. She probably is a beautiful woman that has a desire for him, and he is but a slave. Yet he knows that God is his ultimate master and that obeying Him is the way to go. Joseph must have guessed that this situation would not be without consequences, and he was willing to bear those. So before the temptation would be too strong, he flees the room, leaving his cloak with her, probably all he was wearing.

What it teaches me is that I should not judge superficially, but look for everybody's story: Everyone has a story to tell. And often that changes our perspective. It does not make wrong right: it is still a sin to commit adultery. But it leaves more room for meekness and a non-judgmental attitude.

As we know, the leprosy patient, even if he has been healed, can encounter a lot of suspicion, exclusion, judgement. Let us encourage everyone who is in contact with them to listen to their stories, not judging appearances, but giving them the worthiness they deserve and encountering them in the name of our meek King Jesus.

Hannie Stehouwer, medical doctor, board member with the Leprosy Mission the Netherlands. *I am a board member with leprosy Mission the Netherlands since 8 years. I was trained as a medical doctor and after my training my husband and I went for 7 years to Chad, Africa, to serve in a community development programme with a national church in health and agriculture. Since returning I teach nurses pathology. I am 61 years old now, married, with 2 children and 3 grandchildren*



Treasure

Scripture Reading: Colossians 2:1-5

*In [Christ], are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
Colossians 2:3*

Smartphones put remarkable treasures at our fingertips. We can use these devices to make phone calls, send text messages, take photos, set up appointment calendars, search the Internet, and download vast amounts of musics & files. With the addition of countless apps, the treasures in a smartphone are multiplied a thousand fold. I am abit slow at finding all these treasures, so I often rely on my children for help.

One months from today we will celebrate Christmas. Looking at the seemingly ordinary child Jesus in a manger, we would never guess that “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” are hidden in him. As a result, we rely on the Bible to reveal these treasures so that we may make use of them.

What is wisdom?

Wisdom is personified in *Proverbs 8* as being the right and best way to live. Wisdom was “the first of [God’s] works,” brought forth before the Lord created anything else in the universe. And wisdom finds its perfect expression in Jesus Christ. In him we find insight for daily living life—how to distinguish right from wrong, the important from the unimportant, and the temporary from the eternal.

Knowledge has to do with understanding a subject. Jesus knows his Father, the Creator, intimately. When scientists begin to scratch the surface of all the wonders of the universe, I stand amazed at the knowledge and wisdom of God. What a lifelong task he has given us—to discover and use all the treasures hidden in Jesus!

*Lord, you are the fountain of wisdom, knowledge, and truth. As we live and learn each day,
may we find all we need in you. Amen.*



Life with Holy Spirit – Part 8

continued from 18th October

I'll be dealing with the 9 gifts as listed in 1 Corinthians 12

1 Corinthians 12.1-11 (NIVUK) 1 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

In 1 Corinthians 12, two Greek terms are translated as "spiritual gifts".

- In verse 1, the word pneumatikos ("spirituals" or "things of the Spirit") is used.
- In verse 4, charisma is used. This word is derived from the word charis, which means "grace"

Charisma = gift: "The free, unmerited favour of God towards the undeserving and ill-deserving"

1. Word of wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8; Luke 6:9)
2. Word of knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8; Luke 18:22)
3. Faith (1 Cor. 12:9; Acts 3:6)
4. Gifts of healing (1 Cor. 12:9, 28; Acts 28:1-10)
 5. Working of miracles (1 Cor. 12:10; Acts 6:8)
6. Prophecy (1 Cor. 12:10; 1 Thess. 5:20-21; Eph. 4:11)
 7. Discerning of spirits (1 Cor. 12:10; Luke 8:29)
8. Tongues (1 Cor. 12:10; Acts 19:6)
 9. Interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 12:10; 14:13-33)

• "Grace giftings" has only one administrator: "Holy Spirit"

• *Hebrews 10:29* 29 ... *the Spirit of grace?*

1 Cor 12,4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

☒☒ *Motivational Gifts:* "different kinds of gifts" 12:4 - How God works in a believer to shape his perspective on life and motivate his words and actions. (Rom 12:3-8)

☒☒ *Ministry Gifts:* "different kinds of service" 12:5 - How God works with what a believer does to serve and meet the needs of others. (Ephesians 4:11-13 and I Corinthians 12:27-31.)

☒☒ *Manifestation Gifts:* "different kinds of working" 12:6 - How God works through a believer in each situation to demonstrate His supernatural power. (I Corinthians 12:7-11.)

God uses all the gifts in each of these three categories to minister to His Church and to accomplish His work in the world.

NB: the same Spirit distributes them!

Dan Izzett - Zimbabwe. Retired pastor. I was diagnosed with lepomatous 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.



A splash of colour

“See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you - you of little faith.”

Matthew 6:28-30

Another cold winter morning, and not many smiles about. I walked through the echoing concrete tunnel under the road from the car park. Halfway down there was a door. ‘Emergency Exit’ it said and, underneath, ‘This Door Is Alarmed’. “Well, me too,” I thought, alone and with no-one else in sight.

But then, as I emerged safely into the light at the other end of the tunnel, the first thing I saw was a flower stall. The flowers were gorgeous, bucketsful of colour, a whole live rainbow just standing there to lift my spirits. It may have been a struggle to grow them, although they’ve probably been reared under acres of heated glass in Holland or flown in from Kenya, but they were singing a song without words. A song about the beauty of life and creation.

It’s so easy in these dark, dull days to concentrate on the negative - and some folk honestly can’t help it and deserve our sympathy - but as I walk around with my own problems, I try to catch a bit of that colour and beauty, most of it unexpected, that adds a little cheer to the day. Thank God for it.

*Gracious Lord, your presence colours my life with joy;
and when clouds gather help me hold your beauty close.*

Extract from Dabbling with Ducks, 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)



Psalm 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁷Arise, LORD!

Deliver me, my God!

Strike all my enemies on the jaw;
break the teeth of the wicked.

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

Authors in Alphabetical Order

Textuarium

Christian Bulambo	13 November		Deut 31,6	12 November
Christine Osman	5 November		Book of Ruth	4 November
Dan Izzett	28 November		2 Chronicles 20,1-30	15 November
David, king of Israel	2, 30 November		Psalm 1	23 November
Dorothy Owen	12, 27 November		Psalm 2	24 November
Eddie Askew	29 November		Psalm 3	30 November
Elie Fofolo	7 November		Psalm 145	2 November
Hannie Stehouwer MD	26 November		Psalm 146	3 November
John - apostle	1 November		Psalm 147	9 November
June Nash	18 November		Psalm 148	10 November
Kalpana Shah	4 November		Psalm 149	16 November
Moses Onoh MD	8 November		Psalm 150	17 November
Otto Kingsley	6 November		Matthew 6,28-30	29 November
Paul MD and Niki Jakeman	21 November		Matthew 6,30	11 November
Pete Garratt	14 November		Matthew 7,1-2	26 November
Peter Hilton	20 November		Matthew 10,28-31	11 November
Peter Laubscher	11 November		Matthew 11,28-30	20 November
Pradeep and Sarah Failbus	15 November		Matthew 18,21-22	14 November
Rosemary Tootle	25 November		Matthew 28,19	25 November
Tim Burton	19 November		Mark 2,1-12	7 November
Yousif Deng Riak Deng MD	22 November		Mark 15,40-47	5 November
			Luke 4,1-13	8 November
			John 14	6 November
			John 15,16	13 November
			1 Cor 12,1-11	28 November
			Galatians 5,19-26	18 November
			Colossians 2,1-5	27 November
			2 Thess 3,4-15	21 November
			Revelation 21	1 November

The Bridge - TLM Daily Devotions

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