



# **TLM Daily Devotions**

**December 2019**



## Intro to the month of December

What a special month!

Advent is there ---- and The Bridge turned 4! A lovely age of a growing child – The Bridge means that for me in my heart – and a strong sign of God’s faithfulness. What He starts, never fails, and I am just giving thanks for that *“Down the middle of the main street of the city, on either side of the river stood a tree of life, producing twelve kinds of fruit and yielding a fresh crop for each month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” Revelation 22,2* A nonsense, for us humans, but a firm statement from God.

Thank you a lot for each “leaf”, written by each one contributing to The Bridge and strengthening spirituality worldwide! What a promise we have, that these messages are for the healing of the nations! Each message and each bit is a very precious one, filtered by the personality of the author, but pointing on the Almighty. Styles and tunes are different, but the Heart is the same: that of our Loving Father.

This time you receive a really long edition and a special one. To make your reading easy and smooth even when offices and emails will be closed, you can use this set until early New Year, the 5<sup>th</sup> January.

You may discover a special serie, too, in it, that of the lovely Christine Osman, very suitable on being used in staff or hospital Christmas – celebrations as well! Be encouraged to profit of it!

Remains nothing than wishing you all a very blessed Advent-and Christmastime! Blessed message to those preaching it, and blessed listening to those who will open their hearts before it! We do not celebrate a weak and helpless babe, especially not ourselves through a sentimental candle-lighted family-reunion, but the Lord of Eternity, glorious and victorious, in majesty and power! The First and Last whom this world in darkness is unconsciously so much waiting for!

His power endures forever! Hallelujah!

Marta



## Advent 1

### Messianic prophecies – 1.

*Proverbs 30:4 New International Version (NIV)*

<sup>4</sup> Who has gone up to heaven and come down?  
Whose hands have gathered up the wind?  
Who has wrapped up the waters in a cloak?  
Who has established all the ends of the earth?  
What is his name, and what is the name of his son?  
Surely you know!



## Christmas Gifts 1

### *Luke 2:4-7*

I was asked to prepare the Christmas Celebration for our Guild based on the theme of presents or gifts. Well, “where do I begin?” Yes we all know that at Christmas we all celebrate the most precious and amazing gift from God – the birth of His Son, our Saviour.

As I prayed and read the Gospel passages relating to Jesus’ birth, I realised that there were many gifts hidden in the passages. As I started to tease them out I became aware that there were far more that I would need for the presentation.

*I want you first of all to think of the best present you have ever received at Christmas and also to think of the present you have given that was most appreciated by the person you gave it to. I want you to remember those presents and the person or people involved.*

*Pray for those you have remembered and give thanks for them.*

We are starting with a table on which there is no nativity display (normally we would have that at the centre of our celebration) and gradually we will add the elements of that display, each one bringing its own special gift to the table.

First Gift: Mary and Joseph

Joseph was a really good guy! He and Mary had both had messages from God – Mary, that she would become the mother of a baby, God’s son. Can’t you hear her say “why me?” “why now?, couldn’t God have waited until I was married?” Joseph was persuaded by God’s messenger to stand by Mary and the baby. Individually they gave the present of their obedience to God’s will and their commitment to God and the decision they had each made. Together that first Christmas through their obedience and commitment, they gave God’s Son the gift of a family to care for him until he was ready to move away to follow God’s instructions. Are we willing to put our faith and trust in God and follow His instructions for us? Today we represent our commitment to God as we place Mary and Joseph on the table.

Second Gift: The Manger in the Cattle Shed

Imagine the innkeeper when Joseph arrives at his door, desperate to find someplace for Mary to shelter. He knows he has no room and he knows that by this time no one else in Bethlehem will have any rooms. He is just about to turn them away but he sees the exhausted and very pregnant Mary and he has a flash of inspiration and takes them to the shed where he keeps his animals. Not a clean sterile barn but a poor shed with the animals there. The innkeeper did a small thing to help Mary and Joseph he gave a gift of shelter. Think about some of the small things that you do or can do to help those who might not be expecting it. Today we represent our gifts of small things by placing the manger on the table.

Third Gift: Jesus

Jesus is the real gift of Christmas now as much as He was when He was born. Mary was told to give the baby the name Jesus which means God is salvation. Every year we read and hear in the

Christmas story that “the Saviour – yes, the Messiah, the Lord – has been born today in Bethlehem”. Jesus, God’s precious gift to us to bring us, yes, you and me back to God.

We spend so much time wrapping our gifts for each other. We find just the right paper, ribbons and bows.

For What?

So we can have a trash bag full of pretty colours?

God wrapped His gift – the Greatest Gift – to us

Not in beautiful foil or sparkly glitter,

But in something everlasting:

HIS LOVE

As we place the baby in the manger of our nativity, we remember that He is a truly wonderful love gift from God.

*Our Father we come to give our thanks for that priceless gift of Christmas. We pray that, as we think of the different gifts brought that first Christmas, you will draw each one of us gently into your love and your peace. We ask that you will give us ears to hear you speaking to us, that you will draw our attention to sounds and thoughts we have not heard before – the harmony that lies in You, the discords in the world we live in day by day, the laughter and the tears in other people’s lives. Amen*

**Christine Osman**, formerly Treasurer of TLMI



## Christmas Gifts 2

*Luke 2:8-20*

### Fourth Gift: The Angels

I wonder what you think angels look like – little girls dressed in white with wings on their backs, the cherubs you see in paintings? The occasions in the Bible when we read of specific angels like the Angel Gabriel (Gabriel means strong man of God), we read of a man who spoke directly to people whether in their dreams or just where they were. He spoke the words directly from God. His gift as part of the Christmas story was to communicate clearly God's word and to provide sensitive reassurance to those who heard those words.

In the account of the shepherds being told the good news of the birth of the Saviour we read about a host of angels – they were like God's choir in the sky. Their special gift that first Christmas was to Praise God and to tell men of the wonderful gift that God had given.

Later read again the whole Christmas story – 4 times the angels appear and they always start by saying "don't be afraid" (by the way, those words appear 365 times in the Bible – one for each day of the year).

The angels bring their gifts of reassurance and praise as they tell of God's love for us, and we remember that as we bring an angel to the table.

### Fifth Gift: The Shepherds

Imagine that you are a Judean shepherd all those years ago. There was not much going for a shepherd – work all hours, literally; stay out at night with the sheep to protect them from the weather, from other animals, from getting lost; keep them fed and happy. Shepherds were poor, they were unpopular, and often lonely with only other shepherds or the sheep themselves for company. Here they are on the hillside in the pitch black, their sheep in a basic pen, with a meagre fire to keep them warm, give a little light and hopefully ward off wild animals.

Suddenly there is a bright light all around them, brighter than anything they have ever seen, it almost blinds them and then in the middle of the light there is a man, yes we are back to the angel. All around them there is singing, singing like they have never heard before as the angel choir sing praise to God. They were terrified but they looked, they listened to their personal invitation and they needed no persuasion to dash off to Bethlehem with no thought of the sheep or their masters. According to the Scriptures, these ordinary working men were the first to hear of the birth of the Saviour, they found they were valued and important to God. Now we find they are the first to worship the Saviour as they came and they saw in the poor stable lying in the feeding trough, a baby. They just knew in their hearts how special this was and we find they just couldn't keep it to themselves – they had to spread the word. So were these the first New Testament missionaries? As we place the shepherds and their sheep on the table, let us remember that they too brought their presents to that first Christmas – the reminder that Jesus came with an individual invitation for ordinary people; their simple trust; and their enthusiasm to share the good news.

*Father, we recall the enthusiasm of those shepherds who came to visit the baby Jesus and today we pray that you will fill our hearts with that same enthusiasm to share the Good News of that first Christmas with those around us and with those we meet today. Amen.*



## Christmas Gifts 3

*Matthew 2:1-2; 9-12*

Sixth Gift: The Star.

I am fortunate where I live that I can look out over the water at night and see the stars twinkling. God placed a very special star in the sky to herald the birth of His Son. This star was significant in guiding the Magi, or wise men to Jesus. Graham Kendrick has written a lovely carol about the Magi and the star:

Stars in our eyes we're travelling mountains of stone and such wild hope rises inside. Day after day, and moonlit night after night, no knowing where the road will end. Weary and cold, sometimes we stumble and fall, and wonder why we carry on. But somehow this star has touched eternity deep inside our hearts, calling us near, leading us on. When we set out well, we were searching for him, but something strange is happening; Somehow it feels that he is searching for us, sending his star to guide us in, to lead us home.

We are the seekers, the dreamers, mystical travellers, believers, risking it all on a star,  
Knowing there's somebody there, longing to bring you our treasures  
Lay at your feet the most precious gifts our hearts can bring, oh how we long to be there.  
We are the seekers, the dreamers, mystical travellers, believers, risking it all on a star,  
Knowing there's someone out there, searching the far constellations, seeking the source of creation;  
Love is the treasure we bring, oh, how we long to be there.

So the star for the table speaks of gifts of guidance and hope brought to us through the birth of this baby, our Saviour.

Seventh Gift: The Wise Men and Their Gifts

Imagine the fuss that would have surrounded these men back home – many days and nights of study and debate to understand this new star, working out the reason for the star and insisting on going on this long journey taking with them very expensive gifts. They could not have travelled all that distance alone so they must have had servants with them.

They were Magi, they travelled from the East following a star, and they brought three gifts – Gold for someone important, perfume for someone special and spices for someone who would die. It is unlikely that they were kings but they were wise – they studied the skies and with the help of old scriptures they worked out that this special star would lead them to a new king, someone very special. They obviously journeyed for many weeks, if not months. As they were looking for a new king they went off course going first to Jerusalem where they expected to find the king. After Herod's "wise men" consulted the Jewish Scriptures, the travellers were redirected, to Bethlehem and so back on track with the star. They came to a surprising place: it was so quiet, there were no crowds of family or excited visitors. They wondered if they were in the right place and then...well then they just knew.

They didn't just offer their gifts to the baby, they knelt in worship and homage – can you imagine that. These would be important people where they came from; they were wealthy, and respected. Important and yet here they are kneeling before a small child. It was what felt right for them at that time.

As well as the gifts they are famous for, they brought as gifts their wisdom, their effort and sacrifice as they journeyed doggedly for a very long way, and indeed their sensible use of that wisdom, realising that they should not return to Jerusalem. So as we add them to the table we are reminded that part of their wisdom came from reading scriptures and that we too should continue to learn from God's word.

*Father, we thank you for the signposts you give us as we journey – they may not be stars but we know and trust as you guide us day by day. We thank you too for the Bible and we pray that you will encourage us to turn to your Word to inspire us and guide us to you. Amen*

**Christine Osman**, formerly Treasurer of TLMI





## Christmas Gifts 4

In the Reflection Christmas Gifts 1, I asked you to think of the best present you have ever received – remember what you thought of at the start of this reflection. I hope that brought you happy memories of places and people.

What about the presents God gave to us through the birth of that baby, His Son and our Saviour, that first Christmas:

*Love, Joy, Peace, Salvation*

And He continues to shower those gifts and many more on us day by day.

### ***The Priceless Gift of Christmas***

Now Christmas is a season for joy and merrymaking,  
A time for gifts and presents, for giving and for taking,  
A festive, friendly, happy time when everyone is gay –  
But have we ever really felt the greatness of the day?  
For through the centuries, the world has wandered away  
From the beauty and the meaning of the holy Christmas Day...  
For Christmas is a heavenly gift that only God can give-  
It's ours just for the asking for as long as we shall live...

It can't be bought or bartered, it can't be won or sold,  
It doesn't cost a penny, and it's worth far more than gold.  
It isn't bright and gleaming for eager eyes to see –  
It can't be wrapped in tinsel or placed beneath a tree.  
It isn't soft and shimmering for reaching hands to touch,  
Or some expensive luxury you've wanted very much.  
For the priceless gift of Christmas is meant just for the heart,  
And we receive it only when we become a part

Of the kingdom and the glory which is ours to freely take,  
For God sent the holy Christ child at Christmas for our sake  
So man might come to know Him and feel His presence near  
And see the many miracles performed when He was here.  
And this priceless gift of Christmas is within reach of all –  
The rich, the poor, the young and old, the greatest and the small.  
So take His priceless gift of love – reach out and you receive –  
And the only payment that God asks is just that you believe.

Remember too you thought earlier of the present you gave that was most appreciated by someone else. Recall that present to mind. What about the presents you can give to God this Christmas time? Through these reflections, we have thought about the presents given and received that first Christmas and no doubt you have thought of many others.

### ***Giving is the Key to Living***

Christmas is a season of giving  
    And giving is the key to living,  
So let us give ourselves away,  
    Not just today but every day,  
And remember, a kind and thoughtful deed  
    Or a hand stretched out in time of need  
Is the rarest of gifts, for it is a part  
    Not of the purse but a loving heart...  
And he who gives of himself will find  
    True joy of heart and peace of mind.

This Christmas as you do your shopping, wrap your presents, plan your meals – do so in love. Let that love speak to those you love and those with whom you celebrate this Christmas. But let that love too flow out beyond your friends and family. Look around you where you live, where you meet with others, as you walk up the street, and let that love speak in actions towards those you meet.

What will you give this Christmas: here are the words of the last verse of a carol by Christina Rossetti

*“What can I give Him poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;  
Yet what I can I give Him – give my heart.”*

Prayer:

The richest gifts are God’s to give,  
May you possess them as long as you live,  
May you walk with Him and dwell in His love  
As He sends you good gifts from heaven above. Amen

**Christine Osman**, formerly Treasurer of TLMI



## Christmas Gift 5

At Christmas I often do quite a lot of entertaining and I like to use and adapt some of the ideas that are created by Alternativity.

In one of their packs I found the story below which really made me think and I thought I would challenge your imagination and give you something to think about.

### ***Unintended Presents***

Three wise men arrived after a long journey. Bringing gifts – heavy gold, fragrant incense and myrrh. The star stopped over a stable. They went in and found a plain-looking couple with a baby boy. There was nothing royal about him, but it felt right. The knelt in front of the feeding trough, trying to introduce themselves to the puzzled parents. They took out their gifts and put them on the floor.

The parents gasped in surprise. The baby looked up at them and made a face that looked like the beginnings of a smile. But he only gurgled and spat out some milk. His mother looked embarrassed and told her husband to find something to wipe the baby's face. Don't worry said the first wise man, use this! And he removed the cloth that had been wrapped round the clay jar of Myrrh. She took it, lifted up her boy and wiped his face.

When she lifted him he spat up some more milk that dribbled down into the manger. The wise men saw then that it was only lined with straw. The second wise man quickly removed his cloak and put it in the crib. "There you go" he said. "My cloak is a bit dusty, but it will keep him warm". The mother smiled gratefully and laid the boy down.

As she did that, the manger wobbled slightly, and the third wise man saw that there was a bit of wood missing. If only I had something to put there, he thought. So he took off one of his sandals and put it under the wobbly bit. It was a good fit.

The boy's father said, "There is no need for that great sacrifice! A man needs his sandals!" But the woman said: "I'll teach my boy the value of gifts from the heart, and we will always remember your kindness!"

The men just smiled, and bowed to the boy in the manger, who now did have a smile on his face. The men marvelled at this miracle they still didn't understand. They looked at the parents and saw their surprise and gratitude over the expensive gifts and also of the improvised but much needed gifts they had been able to give. As they rode off they thought that although people called them wise, they still had much to learn.

### ***Giving is the Key to Living***

Christmas is a season of giving  
And giving is the key to living,  
So let us give ourselves away,  
Not just today but every day,  
And remember, a kind and thoughtful deed  
Or a hand stretched out in time of need  
Is the rarest of gifts, for it is a part  
Not of the purse but a loving heart...  
And he who gives of himself will find  
True joy of heart and peace of mind.

This Christmas as you do your shopping, wrap your presents, plan your meals – do so in love. Let that love speak to those you love and those with whom you celebrate this Christmas. But let that love too flow out beyond your friends and family. Look around you where you live, where you meet with others, as you walk up the street, and let that love speak in actions towards those you meet.

What will you give this Christmas? I know I have said that before but it is worth repeating here.

Prayer:

*The richest gifts are God's to give,  
May you possess them as long as you live,  
May you walk with Him and dwell in His love  
As He sends you good gifts from heaven above. Amen*

**Christine Osman**, formerly Treasurer of TLMI



## Messianic prophecies – 2.

*Isaiah 7:14*

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign:  
Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son,  
and she will call His name Immanuel.”



## Messianic prophecies – 3.

*Isaiah 9:6-7*

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;

And the government will rest on His shoulders;

And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,

On the throne of David and over his kingdom,

To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness

From then on and forevermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this



## The Spirit of Truth

*John 16 (12-15) "I have many things....., and tell them to you"*

To Jesus the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, whose great work is to bring God's truth to men. The special name given to this is *Revelation*. No passage in the New Testament shows us what we might call the principles of revelation better than this one.

*Revelation is bound to be progressive:* Many things Jesus knew but he could not at that moment tell this to his disciples because they were not yet able to understand and receive them. He started with his disciplines like teaching to children, simple & easy things first and then difficult. God's revelation to men is like that. He teaches men what they are able and fit to learn. The most important fact has certain consequences.

- a) *It is the explanation of the parts of Old Testament which sometimes worry and distress us.* At that stage they were all of God's truth that men could grasp. In the Old Testament there are many passages which call for the wiping out of men, women and children when an enemy city is taken. When Jesus came, men came to see that the way to preserve that purity is to convert the heathen. The people of Old Testament time had grasped great truth, but only one side of it. Revelation has to be that way; God can reveal only as much as a man can understand.
- b) *It is a proof that there is no end to God's revelation.* One of the mistake men sometimes make is to identify God's revelation solely with the Bible. That would be to say that since about A.D. 120, when the latest book of the New Testament was written, God ceased to speak. But God's spirit has been always active; He is always revealing Himself. It is true that his supreme and unsurpassable revelation came in Jesus; but Jesus is not just a figure in a book, He is a living person and in Him God's revelation goes on. God is still leading us into greater realization of what Jesus means. He is not a God who spoke up to A.D. 120 and is now silent. He is still revealing His truth to men.

2) *God's revelation to men is a revelation of all truth:* It is quite wrong to think of it as confined to what we might call theologian truth. The theologian and the preachers are not the only people who are inspired. When a poet delivers to men a great message in words which defy time, he is inspired. A great musician is inspired when he composes and completes a beautiful song. The same ways the surgeon is inspired for discovering new techniques which will save men's lives and ease their pain, when someone discovers a new treatment which will bring life and hope to suffering humanity that is a revelation from God. All truth is God's truth, and the revelation of all truth is the work of the Holy Spirit.

3) *That which is revealed comes from God:* He is alike the possessor and the giver of all truth. Truth is not men's discovery; it is God's gift. It is not something which we create; it is something already waiting to be discovered. At the back of all truth there is God.

4) *Revelation is taking the things of the Jesus and revealing their significance to us:* Part of the greatness of Jesus is his inexhaustibleness. No man has ever grasped all that he came to say. No man has fully worked

out all the significances of his teaching for life and for belief, for the individual and for the world, for society and for the nation. Revelation is a continual opening out of the meaning of Jesus.

There we have the crux of the matter. Revelation comes to us, not from any book or creed, but from living person. The nearer we live to Jesus, the better we will know him.

*The more we become like him, the more he will be able to tell us.*

*To enjoy his revelation we must accept his mastery.*

**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





## “Unveiled faces”

### *2 Corinthians 3:13 – 4:2*

“Their face was radiant”. What do you think of when someone says that? Have they had wonderful news about a job or an exam? In love, maybe? Or maybe it’s a young child who has been praised by her parents. It’s certainly more than just having a shiny face because you are hot or embarrassed.

Paul reminds his friends in the Corinth church of the story in Exodus 34. Moses met with God and his face shone. Paul was sad that many of his own people still had “a veil covering their hearts” when they read Scripture.

By contrast, *“we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit”*.

It’s an optional translation, but I like “reflect”, because that is what we do. We don’t have glory of our own, but we reflect the glory of Jesus. And the situation is not static – we ourselves are being transformed into his image (wow!) and we too have the prospect of ever-increasing glory. This all comes from God the Holy Spirit.

A friend of mine had a holiday in South Africa a few years ago, and visited a gold refinery. The refiner heated up the metal till it melted, then carefully skimmed the scum off the top. Then he put it back in the fire and heated it up again, skimming off a bit more scum. My friend asked, “how do you know when you have got pure gold, with all the impurity gone?” The refiner answered, “I know it is pure when I can see my face reflected in it.”

*Let us pray that God will go on refining us, putting us through the fire, getting rid of all the muck and rubbish, until we reflect him in our lives, showing him to the world around 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.



## Trust in God

All of us have struggles and hardship in life. They could be struggles you are facing now or struggles you have had in the past. I don't think I have come across a person in my life that has not faced some kind of hardship, big or small.

If we were going it alone, these hardships might have been enough to break us, but through it all we've had strong faith that God is working in our lives, that we can trust Him, and that His strength is enough.

One of the hardest things to do as a Christian is to have faith that God is working, and to not be afraid of all the things that come our way. How often have we continued to worry, be anxious and lose sleep? Here are some verses that talk about having confidence in God and trusting in His timing.

*Psalm 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?*

*Isaiah 41:13 For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.*

*1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

Let this serve as a reminder to us all when we are going through difficult times. And to trust in God's timing when we are going through some hardship. Its work in progress for us all as we continue our journey with Christ. Hopefully it helps us to remain positive and focused on our relationship with Christ.

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



## The Word became flesh and made his dwelling place among us

*John 1:14* This is a verse that we read often in Advent - in Carol Services and other events in the run up to Christmas. The words are true not only for Advent/Christmas, but for all year round, for every day.

The incarnation, God becoming man and dwelling among us is one of the basic doctrines of our Christian faith. He who is God, became flesh and blood for our sake.

God takes our flesh and blood seriously. He continues to be incarnate in us through our flesh and blood.

*Christ has no body now but yours  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours  
Yours are the eyes through which He looks with compassion on this world  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours. Teresa of Avila*

Incarnation means becoming human. Humanity includes weakness, frailty, impairments, growing old etc. We need to recognise that all of us are vulnerable in one way. Some are more vulnerable than others, and our vulnerability can vary over time and circumstance.

Incarnational Ministry = getting alongside and dwelling among those in need is the basic principle of ministries like *L'Arche* which works with people with learning disabilities.

As Jesus was willing to leave the glory of heaven and come alongside us, we His Body, should be willing to leave the comfort of the church. We too should come alongside those who are in need of physical, social, mental, emotional and spiritual ministry.

Incarnation brings other issues into play –

- **Patience** – think how many times Jesus had to repeat things to the first disciples. Peter had to learn and relearn many lessons, but Jesus remained patient with him (thankfully He is patient with me too – I relate a lot to Peter!). In our interaction with other people, even the most difficult people, we need to show patience.
- **Communication** – not just the words we use, but the way we use them, reflecting our attitudes. Are we loving or patronising? Are we understanding or judgmental?
- **Relationship** – the writings of Henri Nouwain show us the importance of and the blessings gained from concentrating on relationships rather than 'results'. *"Dare to love and to be a real friend. The love you give and receive is a reality that will lead you closer and closer to God as well as those whom God has given you to love."*
- **Commitment** Today's generation is characterised by the fear of commitment (in marriage, work etc.). "Here today, gone tomorrow". Many a good thing has started with great enthusiasm and energy, but has failed as the people in it have lacked commitment and give up as difficulties arise. Incarnational ministry is a long-term commitment to see it through. *Galatians 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*



## The Umpire

*Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:15-17*

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. Colossians 3:15*

Organized sports need referees and umpires. These unbiased officials make decisions on plays, fouls, physical contacts and other points of order to keep games fair and entertaining. Realistically, We might not always agree with the calls they make, but things could get chaotic without them.

Paul says, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” The word for “rule” here literally means “to act like an umpire.” In this way we can see that the peace of Christ, a result of working things out through God’s wisdom and love, is our reliable guide for decision making and daily living. With the peace of Christ as our guide and goal, we can follow God’s way of goodness, righteousness, and justice for all.

But we often mess things up. The peace of Christ is not always present in our marriages, families, churches, workplaces, sports and neighborhoods. We often act in line with our old sinful nature instead of seeking God’s wisdom and his peace.

People sometimes think of peace as the absence of conflict. But it’s far more—it’s about the way things are supposed to be. Having peace in our lives means living into all that Jesus represents, keeping in step with the Spirit of God who has come to live in us (*see Galatians 5:22-26*).

In our worship today, may the peace of Christ fill our hearts as we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to praise him. And may we live by his wisdom and real peace in all our relationships.

*Lord Jesus, teach us the peace of full life that you came to bring into the world. Amen.*

**Dorothy Owen** - TLMPNG Administration & Logistics Assistant



## Messianic prophecies - 4.

### *Micah 5:1-3*

“Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops;  
they have laid siege against us; with a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek.

2 “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
too little to be among the clans of Judah,  
from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.

His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

3 Therefore, He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child.



## Advent 3

### Messianic prophecies - 5.

*Isaiah 53 New International Version (NIV)*

Who has believed our message  
and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

<sup>2</sup> He grew up before him like a tender shoot,  
and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,  
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

<sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.

Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

<sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.

<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.

<sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

<sup>7</sup> He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.

<sup>8</sup> By oppression and judgment he was taken away.  
Yet who of his generation protested?

For he was cut off from the land of the living;  
for the transgression of my people he was punished.

<sup>9</sup> He was assigned a grave with the wicked,  
and with the rich in his death,  
though he had done no violence,  
nor was any deceit in his mouth.

<sup>10</sup> Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,  
and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin,  
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,  
and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

<sup>11</sup> After he has suffered,  
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;  
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,  
and he will bear their iniquities.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,  
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,  
because he poured out his life unto death,  
and was numbered with the transgressors.

For he bore the sin of many,  
and made intercession for the transgressors.



## The Week Before Christmas - Part 1

Let's project ourselves into heaven one week before Jesus is born

Heaven is alive & buzzing!

- For 9 months – in time – not eternity - Jesus has been away from heaven in the womb of Mary
- Often the crowds of heavenly hosts had talked about it & now the 9 months was coming to a close!!
- Eternity had been waiting for this moment for Jesus to be born which would start the process of the redemption of mankind

*Revelation 13:8 "...the Lamb who was slain from the creation (foundation) of the world."*

The heavenly hosts had seen the pain & agony in the world after Adam & Eve had sinned.

*Romans 8:20-23 NIVUK "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies."*

- Now The Lion of the Tribe of Judah was about to start the Father's rescue plan for mankind
- This eventually will end with the whole creation being liberated!

*Why Mary?*

For Jesus to be born on the earth He needed an earthly mother!

- One had been found and her name was Mary
- Out of all the ladies in Israel – why Mary?
- In eternity they found Mary

When Adam & Eve sinned God began to tell His story about Jesus, His redemption plan

*Genesis 3:14-15 "...I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."*

*Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."*

*Matthew 1:18 "This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit."*

### 1. Mary Was Sexually Pure!

Sexual purity is so important. There are 2 ways in which a person can be sexually impure

*In the body* – that is when you have sexual intercourse with a person who is not your husband or wife.

- Anything outside of this God calls sin and this is against His rules for life

*1 Corinthians 6:9-10 & 6:17-21 "...Flee from sexual immorality..."*



What is the biblical definition of *Sexual immoral sins*: All types of sexual sin – NIV & consists of the following

- Adulators: People in a marriage relationship who have a sexual relationship with someone who is not their spouse
- Fornicators: Are people who are not married & have sexual relationships
- Homosexuals: Sexual intercourse between people of the same sex

2. *The second way is in the mind*

*Matthew 5:27-30 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

*The cure:*

*"If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell".*

(Pornography & other such type of entertainment on TV, talk shows & magazines)

*Mary was sexually pure* – that's one reason why God chose her!

- Let's follow her example
- If you've slipped, given in or for whatever other reason

☒ Confess your sin & *God will forgive you!*

☒ Then stop sinning. Take some action or else you're in trouble with God

*Romans 6:1-2 NIVUK "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"*

**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.



## The Week Before Christmas - Part 2

### 2. Mary Was Chosen Because She Trusted God, His promise & His Word

*Luke 1:38 "I am the Lord's servant, - Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled' Then the angel left her."*

*She knew God's Word! Read how she quotes it: Luke 1:45-56 "And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants for ever, just as he promised our ancestors."*

Mary knew God's Word in an era & time when they did not believe in educating women

- Mary loved God's Word
- Knowing the Word of God kept her open to God even to her shame & disgrace!

Operation read the Word & Operation Watch & Pray is so important!

- Are you still reading the bible & praying every day?
- If you want God to take notice of you – do your part!
- Feed your spirit – get your mind right!!!

**3. Mary Acted in Faith!** *Luke 1:37-38 NIVUK "For no word from God will ever fail.' 'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' Then the angel left her."*

### 4. Mary Had God's Favour!

*Luke 1:26-28 "...The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.'*

*Exodus 33:13 NIVUK "If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favour with you."*

*Luke 1:25 NIVUK "The Lord has done this for me,' she said. 'In these days he has shown his favour and taken away my disgrace among the people.'"*

*Luke 4:18-19 NIVUK "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'"*

Oh to have God's favour in your life! Ask for it now, cry out for it now, its yours for the asking!

*Psalms 30:4-5 NIVUK "Sing the praises of the LORD, you his faithful people; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favour lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."*

**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.



## Challenging Choices! – 1. The Saviour is Born!

**Prelude** For many Christians, Christmas is a hectic season of baking, cooking, buying gifts, decorating the Christmas tree, buying new clothes and ending with a large Christmas meal. Often the Christmas story is read, and a prayer is said. A deep study of the Holy Bible provides insights into Christmas so that the believers may draw closer to God in reverence and gratitude. Christmas is a momentous outcome of challenging choices made of love, faith, hope, humility, submission and sacrifice. With grateful hearts let us reflect on some of these choices to grasp the significance of Christmas.

**God gifted us Jesus, the Saviour – The choice of love** *John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”.*

Man is intrinsically linked to God’s love from creation to redemption. God’s choice to gift us His son as the Saviour is propelled by His love for the epitome of His creation, Man. There is every reason for God to love Man; having created Man himself. He cannot disown His very own creation, that too what is created in His very own image (Genesis 1:27). I am precious in His eyes because of His love.

Man is embedded with the Spirit of God. Man's insubordination (sin) grieved the Spirit of God. It was dealt with by God's justice; but His love for Man never diminished. Love and justice are two sides of the same coin for God. Man’s original identity is in God’s love. He is precious for God. That identity is eternal. It was marred (covered under sin), when Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command; but it was not lost. It will be restored.

There was no logical reason for God to forgive and save man, the sinner. But God being the personification of love, is bound to save man. So divine is His love. God’s love foretold the birth of Jesus and His victory over Satan (Genesis 3:15). True to His word, God’s love had manifested in Jesus being born in the human body because it’s through the human mind and body that Satan deceived Man to disobey God. In the same form that Man lost his fellowship with God, it should be restored. God's weapon to defeat Satan is his love for Man. While Satan uses deception to separate man from God, love is used by God to reclaim man It's the fight between God's love and deception of Satan.

God's love opened the path for Man to go back to his Father. It’s an incredible act of God’s love, grace and forgiveness. The messenger (Jesus) is the message of God’s love. God is Love (1 John 4:8). God’s redemption plan is in and through Jesus, the gift of God. God gave us the gift of salvation to transform us; to make us victors over Satan. It is a love gift when received in gratitude by Man will enable God to reclaim Man into His loving arms.

Jesus is God’s love gift to man. God has gifted salvation in and through Jesus for Man to repent of his sins and receive salvation by faith. It is a gift, not earned by Man by his works. How gracious is God in His disposition towards Man! By gifting His one and only Son, Jesus, God gave His all to Man. God did not keep anything anymore for Himself. It rests heavy in one’s heart when one realizes that God gave this gift fully aware that His dear sinless Son will die a painful and humiliating death on a Roman cross in front of multitudes, for the sake of Man. The love gift of the unblemished sacrificial lamb given by God is because of the choice He made. An amazing choice of love. *May your Christmas be Christ centered!*

For His glory, in gratitude.



## Challenging Choices! – 2. The Saviour is Born!

### Jesus submitted himself to God's will – The choice to be a humble servant

*John 1:1-2 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning". Philipians 2:6-7 "Who, in very nature being God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness".*

Jesus is God. God became a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. Firstly, Jesus was born to proclaim the very character of God, the loving Father. Secondly, he was born to deepen our faith by placing his faith in God, the Father. And, thirdly, he was born to die for us and, thus, stand for us in front of the Father as our intercessor.

Man is condemned for his sin. On his own ability he can never save himself from damnation in hell. He can only receive (not earn) salvation through faith in the perfect sacrifice of a sinless person, Jesus on the cross and his resurrection (*Romans 10:9, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*). For this, God lowered Himself to be Man. Jesus in obedience chose to submit himself to God's will – save man from Satan's dominion. That choice made all the difference between Man to be damned to hell or receive the joy of being in heaven. Through the obedience of Jesus, God bridged the divide Satan had created between Him and Man. He himself stood in the gap for us to walk over into His presence and experience His love. God gave himself even unto death on the cross, for man's salvation.

Disobedience separated Man from God; obedience in humility like a servant by Jesus restored that relationship. It created a point of inflection for Man to realign his fellowship with God. For the revival of Man's identity, God had lowered Himself to a lowly man and experience all the pain that sin can inflict on Man. However, overpowering that burden of sin was; Jesus went ahead and bore it for our sake. There was a huge struggle between the will of man and the will of God when Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus did not fall prey to Satan's deception and deviate from God's purpose. Jesus humbled himself to fulfill God's will of salvation of mankind. Ultimately, in obedience to the Father's will Jesus said, *"... Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36).*

The intentional love of God is so intense that Jesus who is God himself must submit to that. God humbly bowed down to His own love for man. Jesus subjugated himself to the position of a servant so that the love of God becomes evident to all people. It's an act of faithful obedience in love. The creator chose to become his own creation. Everyone cherishes being born in anticipation of a joyous life ahead. But for Jesus, the choice of being born as a man was to ultimately die for mankind. It's a choice made by Jesus with the foreknowledge of His own death on the cross. The choice of a humble servant ripped apart the veil between God and Man, once and forever.

*May your Christmas be Christ centered!*

For His glory, in gratitude.

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



## Challenging Choices! – 3. The Saviour is Born!

### Mary (the virgin mother) and Joseph (the faithful husband) - The choice of submission

Mary was troubled when she was told that she was highly favored by God, to be the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:34). Will others believe that she is carrying the Son of God in her womb? Fear of ridicule must have daunted her mind. Most importantly, what would Joseph think of her if he comes to know of her being pregnant outside the wedlock? Mary had a choice to make. A very challenging one in the natural world, but one that could bridge the gap between God and Man.

The care and concern of God for her made her humble herself to God's will. Finally, *"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said."* (Luke 1:38). A choice that has been enabled and encouraged by the angel of God. In her own worldly wisdom, Mary possibly would have never decided to be a virgin mother. But by choosing to submit to God's plan, a solution had emerged for her in the challenging time.

The creator and the created became partners in creating the solution for redemption of Man. She asked her questions; and received the answers. The choice was made from a revelation. She chose to be part of God's plan for the salvation of mankind. She chose to receive Jesus in her womb. Thus, she became the carrier of Son of God, Jesus, the one who saves.

A woman (Eve) was deceived by Satan to disobey God; a woman (Mary) was encouraged by God's angel to submit to God's will. The first choice enslaved Man to Satan and the second lead to salvation of Man and his eternal fellowship with God. It was a monumental decision. Life and death of mankind hung in balance in the choice that Mary had to make. Being a god-fearing young woman, Mary made the right choice of obeying God and submitting to His will. That choice was the first step in the deliverance of mankind from sin through the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The choice made by an intermediary (Mary) lead to the birth of an intercessor (Jesus). She chose to become the chosen vessel. She made herself available though she had no ability in the natural world to execute God's plan. It is a choice of submission and not sufficiency. God made her competent to comply with His will because of her willingness. A simple village girl became a powerful instrument in the hands of God against Satan because she chose to say, "I am the Lord's servant".

Joseph was needed to standby Mary in her choice to obey God. Without Joseph's understanding, God's plan will not succeed. Even after being troubled by what he had heard from Mary on her encounter with God's angel, Joseph chose to listen to the wise counsel of God. His fears were allayed and was convicted to serve God's purpose (Matthew 1:20 "..... Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit"). He obeyed God's command, took Mary home and named the son "Jesus". Joseph is the unsung hero of faith and submission in the Christmas story. He humbled and submitted himself to what God desired him to do. He bore his cross (of obedience) for God's glory.

The choices of Almighty God, Jesus, Mary and Joseph were all made for one purpose; redemption of Man. They were made from conviction. Their choices made God's greatest gift available to us, Jesus.

### **Me – The choice of gratitude**

How does the supreme love of God, glorious obedience of Christ and enlightened submission of Mary and Joseph make me comprehend the importance of Christmas; and respond?

God loves me. Christmas is time to remember and manifest God's supreme love in my actions for His glory. Grace must be responded through gratitude. My choice is to reengage with Jesus in my soul with renewed vigour. My gratitude shall manifest through compassion towards the poor and needy; in spirit and in material need. Nurturing and providing for needs of others (not only of my clan) shall be at the center of my response to the Christ of the Christmas.

*May your Christmas be Christ centered!*

For His glory, in gratitude.

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



## Voice in the wilderness

*Isaiah 40:3-5 New International Version (NIV)*

<sup>3</sup> A voice of one calling:

“In the wilderness prepare  
the way for the LORD  
make straight in the desert  
a highway for our God.

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

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



## Advent 4

### The Coming of Zion's King

<sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!  
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!  
See, your king comes to you,  
righteous and victorious,  
lowly and riding on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

*Zechariah 9,9*





## Come Away With Me

*Mark 6:31. 'Come away with me. Let us go along to a quiet place and rest for a while' said Jesus to his weary followers.*

In today's highly pressured world many would welcome such an invitation – 'Here I come Lord. Lead me to it'. Others would panic at the thought of retreating to anywhere quiet! One person's rest is another's boredom. We can gladly say that God doesn't prescribe identical doses of rest any more than he does of work.

Taking time out is good because it reminds us we're not indispensable. If God says take a rest yet we fear that the whole world will fall apart if we do, we clearly haven't understood who's running it. Just as we have to learn to trust Him to direct our times of work we also have to trust Him for our times of rest.

There's no doubt about it – we live in a busy world. With all the time saving devices in our homes and work places one would think that we would have so much more time to do the things we like to do, to spend more time with our families, volunteer more of our time to our community and the church.

Time is something we wrestle with every day. Our lives are packed so full that the day is finished before we have accomplished half of what we wanted to do.

If there was ever a busy person it was Jesus. In Mark 6:31 we read that there was a constant flow of people wanting to see Jesus, to hear Him, to have Him heal their sick. For the disciples it wasn't any different. They were in the middle of it all and we are told that there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and the disciples didn't even have time to eat (v. 31). This is when Jesus says to His disciples 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'

We need to take timeout to reassess where we are going, how we can do things a different way. We know all this but more often than not we struggle on – we don't have time to stop for a while. In fact, we often feel guilty when we do stop for a while and have a bit of 'me' time.

Take time out, change the pace of living. You can't serve God if your body is fatigued, your nerves are frayed. You become worn out because everything and everyone is getting at you. You feel like doing anything but praising God. Both body and mind need a rest for a while.

Take time out to spend it with God who loves you. He made you, saved you, brought you into His family and has given you saving faith. He has given you everything and wants you to continue to bring before Him your every daily need.

As we draw close to the end of 2019, my prayer for each and every one of you is that you take time out with Him and be refreshed by the One who cares for you so dearly – our Saviour Jesus.

**Melonie Rajaratnam** – Works at The Leprosy Mission International Office as part of the Finance team as the Grants Officer for the last 19 years.



## Christmas Eve

### Scripture in song

Many will be familiar with the Christmas carol *Hark the herald angels sing*. The words were written by Charles Wesley in 1739 – so long ago, yet still so much loved today, and the great music by Mendelssohn. I have often been struck by these words, and as I started to recognise Bible references, decided to look up the passages. I share this with you all as a reminder of all God's goodness to us at this Christmas time – and maybe also a reminder of the gifts he gives to song writers. Charles Wesley wrote about 6,500 hymns, and this is not the only one we still sing regularly today.

Hark the herald angels sing. "Glory to the newborn King! Peace on earth and mercy mild (*Luke 2:13-14 angels visiting the shepherds*)

God and sinners reconciled" (*2 Corinthians 9 – God in Christ reconciling the world to himself*)

Joyful, all ye nations rise. Join the triumph of the skies (*Psalm 89:9 All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.*)

With the angelic host proclaim: "Christ is born in Bethlehem" (*Micah 5:2 out of you shall come one who will rule over Israel*)

*Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the newborn King!"*

Christ by highest heav'n adored Christ the everlasting Lord!

(*Isaiah 60:20 for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.*)

Late in time behold Him come offspring of a Virgin's womb

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see. Hail the incarnate Deity (*Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God*)

Pleased as man with man to dwell (*Colossians 1:19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,*)

Jesus, our Emmanuel (*Isaiah 7:14 Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*)

*Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the newborn King!"*

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! (*Isaiah 9:6 and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*)

Hail the Sun of Righteousness! (*Malachi 4:2 But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.*)

Light and life to all He brings. (*John 1:4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*)

Ris'n with healing in His wings (*Malachi 4:2 again*)

Mild He lays His glory by, (*Philippians 2:6-7 Who, being in very nature God.... he made himself nothing.... and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself*)

born that man no more may die (*1 Corinth. 15:54 Death has been swallowed up in victory – Paul quoting Isaiah 25:8*)

Born to raise the sons of earth; (*Hebrews 2:10 bringing many sons to glory*)

born to give them second birth (*Romans 5:18 just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.*)

*Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the newborn King!"*



## It was Christmas Eve 1942 – Part 1.

It was Christmas Eve 1942. I was fifteen years old and feeling like the world had caved in on me because there just hadn't been enough money to buy me the rifle that I'd wanted for Christmas.

We did the chores early that night for some reason. I just figured Daddy wanted a little extra time so we could read in the Bible. After supper was over I took my boots off and stretched out in front of the fireplace and waited for Daddy to get down the old Bible.

I was still feeling sorry for myself and, to be honest, I wasn't in much of a mood to read Scriptures. But Daddy didn't get the Bible instead he bundled up again and went outside. I couldn't figure it out because we had already done all the chores. I didn't worry about it long though I was too busy wallowing in self-pity.

Soon he came back in. It was a cold clear night out and there was ice in his beard. "Come on, Matt," he said. "Bundle up good, it's cold out tonight." I was really upset then. Not only wasn't I getting the rifle for Christmas, now he was dragging me out in the cold, and for no earthly reason that I could see. We'd already done all the chores, and I couldn't think of anything else that needed doing, especially not on a night like this. But I knew he was not very patient at one dragging one's feet when he'd told them to do something, so I got up and put my boots back on and got my coat. Mommy gave me a mysterious smile as I opened the door to leave the house. Something was up, but I didn't know what.

Outside, I became even more dismayed. There in front of the house was the work team, already hitched to the big sled. Whatever it was we were going to do wasn't going to be a short, quick, little job. I could tell. We never hitched up this sled unless we were going to haul a big load. Daddy was already up on the seat, reins in hand. I reluctantly climbed up beside him. The cold was already biting at me. I wasn't happy. When I was on, Daddy pulled the sled around the house and stopped in front of the woodshed. He got off and I followed.

"I think we'll put on the high sideboards," he said. "Here, help me." The high sideboards! It had been a bigger job than I wanted to do with just the low sideboards on, but whatever it was we were going to do would be a lot bigger with the high side boards on.

Then Daddy went into the woodshed and came out with an armload of wood - the wood I'd spent all summer hauling down from the mountain, and then all Fall sawing into blocks and splitting. What was he doing? Finally I said something. I asked, "what are you doing?" You been by the Widow Jensen's lately?" he asked. Mrs. Jensen lived about two miles down the road. Her husband had died a year or so before and left her with three children, the oldest being eight. Sure, I'd been by, but so what?

Yeah," I said, "Why?"

"I rode by just today," he said. "Little Jakey was out digging around in the woodpile trying to find a few chips. They're out of wood, Matt." That was all he said and then he turned and went back into the woodshed for another armload of wood. I followed him. We loaded the sled so high that I began to wonder if the horses would be able to pull it. Finally, he called a halt to our loading then we went to the smoke house and he took down a big ham and a side of bacon. He handed them to me and told me to put them in the sled and wait. When he returned he was carrying a sack of flour over his right shoulder and a smaller sack of something in his left hand.

"What's in the little sack?" I asked. Shoes, they're out of shoes. Little Jakey just had gunny sacks wrapped around his feet when he was out in the woodpile this morning. I got the children a little candy too. It just wouldn't be Christmas without a little candy."

We rode the two miles to Mrs. Jensen's pretty much in silence. I tried to think through what Daddy was doing. We didn't have much by worldly standards. Of course, we did have a big woodpile, though most of what was left now was still in the form of logs that I would have to saw into blocks and split before we could use it. We also had meat and flour, so we could spare that, but I knew we didn't have any money, so why was he buying them shoes and candy? Really, why was he doing any of this? Widow Jensen had closer neighbors than us; it shouldn't have been our concern.

Author Matt Miles

*Kindly shared by Helen Walton*



## It was Christmas Eve 1942 – Part 2.

We came in from the blind side of the Jensen house and unloaded the wood as quietly as possible then we took the meat and flour and shoes to the door. We knocked. The door opened a crack and a timid voice said, "Who is it?" "Lucas Miles, Ma'am, and my son, Matt, could we come in for a bit?"

Mrs. Jensen opened the door and let us in. She had a blanket wrapped around her shoulders. The children were wrapped in another and were sitting in front of the fireplace by a very small fire that hardly gave off any heat at all. Mrs. Jensen fumbled with a match and finally lit the lamp.

"We brought you a few things, Ma'am," Daddy said and set down the sack of flour. I put the meat on the table. Then he handed her the sack that had the shoes in it. She opened it hesitantly and took the shoes out one pair at a time. There was a pair for her and one for each of the children - sturdy shoes, the best, shoes that would last. I watched her carefully. She bit her lower lip to keep it from trembling and then tears filled her eyes and started running down her cheeks. She looked up at my Daddy like she wanted to say something, but it wouldn't come out.

"We brought a load of wood too, Ma'am," he said. Then turned to me and said, "Matt, go bring in enough to last awhile. Let's get that fire up to size and heat this place up." I wasn't the same person when I went back out to bring in the wood. I had a big lump in my throat and as much as I hate to admit it, there were tears in my eyes too. In my mind I kept seeing those three kids huddled around the fireplace and their mother standing there with tears running down her cheeks with so much gratitude in her heart that she couldn't speak.

My heart swelled within me and a joy that I'd never known before filled my soul. I had given at Christmas many times before, but never when it had made so much difference. I could see we were literally saving the lives of these people.

I soon had the fire blazing and everyone's spirits soared. The kids started giggling when Daddy handed them each a piece of candy and Mrs. Jensen looked on with a smile that probably hadn't crossed her face for a long time. She finally turned to us. "God bless you," she said. "I know the Lord has sent you. The children and I have been praying that he would send one of his angels to spare us."

In spite of myself, the lump returned to my throat and the tears welled up in my eyes again. I'd never thought of my Daddy in those exact terms before, but after Widow Jensen mentioned it I could see that it was probably true. I was sure that a better man than Daddy had never walked the earth. I started remembering all the times he had gone out of his way for Mommy and me, and many others. The list seemed endless as I thought on it.

Daddy insisted that everyone try on the shoes before we left. I was amazed when they all fit and I wondered how he had known what sizes to get. Then I guessed that if he was on an errand for the Lord that the Lord would make sure he got the right sizes.

Tears were running down Widow Jensen's face again when we stood up to leave. My Daddy took each of the kids in his big arms and gave them a hug. They clung to him and didn't want us to go. I could see that they missed their Daddy and I was glad that I still had mine.

At the door he turned to Widow Jensen and said, "The Mrs. wanted me to invite you and the children over for Christmas dinner tomorrow. The turkey will be more than the three of us can eat, and a man can get cantankerous if he has to eat turkey for too many meals. We'll be by to get you about eleven. It'll be nice

to have some little ones around again. Matt, here, hasn't been little for quite a spell." I was the youngest. My two brothers and two sisters had all married and had moved away.

Mrs. Jensen nodded and said, "Thank you, Brother Miles. I don't have to say, May the Lord bless you, I know for certain that He will."

Out on the sled I felt a warmth that came from deep within and I didn't even notice the cold. When we had gone a ways, Daddy turned to me and said, "Matt, I want you to know something. Your Mother and me have been tucking a little money away here and there all year so we could buy that rifle for you, but we didn't have quite enough.

Then yesterday a man who owed me a little money from years back came by to make things square. Your Mom and me were real excited, thinking that now we could get you that rifle, and I started into town this morning to do just that, but on the way I saw little Jakey out scratching in the woodpile with his feet wrapped in those gunny sacks and I knew what I had to do. Son, I spent the money for shoes and a little candy for those children. I hope you understand."

I understood, and my eyes became wet with tears again. I understood very well, and I was so glad Daddy had done it. Now the rifle seemed very low on my list of priorities. He had given me a lot more. He had given me the look on Mrs. Jensen's face and the radiant smiles of her three children. For the rest of my life, Whenever I saw any of the Jensens, or split a block of wood, I remembered, and remembering brought back that same joy I felt riding home beside of my Daddy that night. He had given me much more than a rifle that night, he had given me the best Christmas of my life..

Author Matt Miles

*Kindly shared by Helen Walton*



## Is it your own?

*“If you are not trustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is yours?” Luke 16: 1-13*

I have discovered that in life, at every point in time, one is always trusted with the need to take care of what belongs to someone else or the need to take care of what belongs to you. Whichever position you find yourself, a responsibility is laid on you to prove your trustworthiness for a higher trust.

In our scriptural text, we see a deliberate presentation of an order of trust. The order is, others first, then you. This is obviously not consistent with the one we are familiar with which is: myself first then others. Jesus Christ tells us that if you are trusted with another person’s property or wealth and you mismanage it, you don’t qualify to own yours. In other words, how can God give you your own when you did not treat other’s property responsibly?

I have been privileged to live in a rented house for several years and I am also privileged to work as an employed person. In all of these circumstances, I always heard this voice at the background of whatever I did either as a tenant or as an employee, “Is it your own?” Every time, my responsibilities needed to draw a lot of commitment from me, the small wicked voice will ask, “Is it your own?”

As a tenant, when I want to repair or replace something in the house, and I choose to use high quality materials or do an excellent job, the question pops up in my mind, “Is it your own?” Some workmen have also asked me before, “Why do you want to spend so much money on another man’s property?”

And as an employed staff, I spend so much time in the office and sometimes overnight to meet basic targets that would put our organization in a good light to the stakeholders. A man I respected so much has also asked me, “Is this your company? Why do you want to die for what is obviously everybody’s work place? Even my wife sometimes complained and asked, “Are you the only staff in that office.

I guess I am not the only one who has to answer such questions in my mind and even in the face of other people. You do too! The amount of indiscipline in our society today can be attributed to the answers we give to this question, “Is it your own?” We treat government properties anyhow because we don’t lay personal ownership to it. We treat our employers’ work and properties with waste and mismanagement because we say, “It is not my own”. We also see such levity and indifference even in the church. “Is it your own mentality” has continued to plague the world and has promoted unbelievable misuse of precious resources.

But the pleasant question to us all is, “IS IT REALLY NOT YOUR OWN?”

We are all connected to everything that belongs to others. What you own today came from what others own or owned. You don’t even qualify to own your own unless you treat another person’s own well. Furthermore we may not even qualify for heavenly blessings if we treat earthly provisions and opportunities with reckless abandon. Jesus asked, *“If, therefore you are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who will trust you with true wealth?”*

Let us consider every responsibility as a trust from God! Let us consider every possession as a trust from God. Let us consider every position as a trust from God. No matter how small, we will get a higher trust when we treat every trust as if it were our own.

*We could pray thus:*

*Lord, may You lead me to be trustworthy with my talent, wealth and position, reaping from the many blessings that abound in You. Jesus, I trust in You.*

**Moses Onoh, MD**, is a former Country Leader of TLM Nigeria. He is currently with the World Health Organization Nigeria; serving as a National Professional Officer and supports the control of Tuberculosis, Leprosy/NTDs and other communicable Disease



## Psalm 4

*For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> Answer me when I call to you,  
my righteous God.  
Give me relief from my distress;  
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.
- <sup>2</sup> How long will you people turn my glory into shame?  
How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?
- <sup>3</sup> Know that the LORD has set apart his faithful servant for himself;  
the LORD hears when I call to him.
- <sup>4</sup> Tremble and do not sin;  
when you are on your beds,  
search your hearts and be silent.
- <sup>5</sup> Offer the sacrifices of the righteous  
and trust in the LORD.
- <sup>6</sup> Many, LORD, are asking, "Who will bring us prosperity?"  
Let the light of your face shine on us.
- <sup>7</sup> Fill my heart with joy  
when their grain and new wine abound.
- <sup>8</sup> In peace I will lie down and sleep,  
for you alone, LORD,  
make me dwell in safety.





## Psalm 5

*For the director of music. For pipes. A psalm of David.*

<sup>1</sup> Listen to my words, LORD,  
consider my lament.

<sup>2</sup> Hear my cry for help,  
my King and my God,  
for to you I pray.

<sup>3</sup> In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice;  
in the morning I lay my requests before you  
and wait expectantly.

<sup>4</sup> For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness;  
with you, evil people are not welcome.

<sup>5</sup> The arrogant cannot stand  
in your presence.

You hate all who do wrong;

<sup>6</sup> you destroy those who tell lies.

The bloodthirsty and deceitful  
you, LORD, detest.

<sup>7</sup> But I, by your great love,  
can come into your house;  
in reverence I bow down  
toward your holy temple.

<sup>8</sup> Lead me, LORD, in your righteousness  
because of my enemies—  
make your way straight before me.

<sup>9</sup> Not a word from their mouth can be trusted;  
their heart is filled with malice.

Their throat is an open grave;  
with their tongues they tell lies.

<sup>10</sup> Declare them guilty, O God!

Let their intrigues be their downfall.

Banish them for their many sins,  
for they have rebelled against you.

<sup>11</sup> But let all who take refuge in you be glad;

let them ever sing for joy.  
Spread your protection over them,  
that those who love your name may rejoice in you.  
<sup>12</sup> Surely, LORD, you bless the righteous;  
you surround them with your favor as with a shield.



## The Crying Game

Rizpah mourned. And her mourning saved a nation.

We're often apologetic, or afraid of emotion. Supporters, moved to tears by a story about someone affected by leprosy, have apologised to me. We're embarrassed by our own emotions. But what is there to be embarrassed about? To empathise with another human, made in God's image, is to love them.

To mourn with and for others is to seek to put their needs first. But mourning is not, does not, have to be passive. In the time of King David, there was a woman named Rizpah. Rizpah's mourning saved Israel. But her story actually starts earlier. The Israelites had a treaty with another nation, called the Gibeonites. King Saul, David's predecessor, broke it.

Years after the breaking of this treaty, a famine fell upon Israel. David sought God, and asked 'why?'. He learned it was because Saul had broken the treaty. So David summoned the Gibeonites, and asked what do you want in reparations? This time he neglected to seek God's advice as well..

The Gibeonites said 'Give us 7 of Saul's male descendants to put to death'. So David took five sons from one of Saul's wives, and two from another. They were Rizpah's two sons with Saul. And David gave them over to the Gibeonites to be put to death.

Rizpah mourned for sons. She mourned for them while she followed them to where they would be put to death. She mourned for them while they were hung from a tree. She kept right on mourning for them for months. She mourned for her sons, and for their half brothers even as onlookers mocked her. She mourned for her sons as she had to chase away wild animals from their decaying bodies.

Still the famine didn't break. Eventually King David heard about Rizpah's quiet mourning for the lost sons of Saul. And so he had the bones of Saul's sons gathered. And he gave them an honourable burial. And then the famine broke.

Rizpah's mourning was all she had. She had no power. But her mourning was powerful. And it saved a nation.

*Rizpah's story can be found in 2 Samuel 21:1-13*



## Psalm 90

*A prayer of Moses the man of God.*

- <sup>1</sup> Lord, you have been our dwelling place  
throughout all generations.
- <sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were born  
or you brought forth the whole world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
- <sup>3</sup> You turn people back to dust,  
saying, "Return to dust, you mortals."
- <sup>4</sup> A thousand years in your sight  
are like a day that has just gone by,  
or like a watch in the night.
- <sup>5</sup> Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death—  
they are like the new grass of the morning:
- <sup>6</sup> In the morning it springs up new,  
but by evening it is dry and withered.
- <sup>7</sup> We are consumed by your anger  
and terrified by your indignation.
- <sup>8</sup> You have set our iniquities before you,  
our secret sins in the light of your presence.
- <sup>9</sup> All our days pass away under your wrath;  
we finish our years with a moan.
- <sup>10</sup> Our days may come to seventy years,  
or eighty, if our strength endures;  
yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow,  
for they quickly pass, and we fly away.
- <sup>11</sup> If only we knew the power of your anger!  
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due.
- <sup>12</sup> Teach us to number our days,  
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.
- <sup>13</sup> Relent, LORD! How long will it be?  
Have compassion on your servants.
- <sup>14</sup> Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love,  
that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

<sup>15</sup> Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,  
for as many years as we have seen trouble.

<sup>16</sup> May your deeds be shown to your servants,  
your splendor to their children.

<sup>17</sup> May the favour of the Lord our God rest on us;  
establish the work of our hands for us—  
yes, establish the work of our hands.



## New Year

*2 Chronicles 6,12 – 42*

### Solomon's Prayer of Dedication

<sup>12</sup> Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands. <sup>13</sup> Now he had made a bronze platform, five cubits long, five cubits wide and three cubits high, and had placed it in the center of the outer court. He stood on the platform and then knelt down before the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven. <sup>14</sup> He said:

“LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way. <sup>15</sup> You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today.

<sup>16</sup> “Now, LORD, the God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, ‘You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me according to my law, as you have done.’ <sup>17</sup> And now, LORD, the God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David come true.

<sup>18</sup> “But will God really dwell on earth with humans? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! <sup>19</sup> Yet, LORD my God, give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence. <sup>20</sup> May your eyes be open toward this temple day and night, this place of which you said you would put your Name there. May you hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. <sup>21</sup> Hear the supplications of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place; and when you hear, forgive.

<sup>22</sup> “When anyone wrongs their neighbor and is required to take an oath and they come and swear the oath before your altar in this temple, <sup>23</sup> then hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty and bringing down on their heads what they have done, and vindicating the innocent by treating them in accordance with their innocence.

<sup>24</sup> “When your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you and when they turn back and give praise to your name, praying and making supplication before you in this temple, <sup>25</sup> then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them back to the land you gave to them and their ancestors.

<sup>26</sup> “When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and give praise to your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them, <sup>27</sup> then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live, and send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance.

<sup>28</sup> “When famine or plague comes to the land, or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers, or when enemies besiege them in any of their cities, whatever disaster or disease may come, <sup>29</sup> and when a prayer or plea is made by anyone among your people Israel—being aware of their afflictions and pains, and spreading out their hands toward this temple— <sup>30</sup> then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive, and deal with everyone according to all they do, since you know their hearts (for you alone know the human heart), <sup>31</sup> so that they will fear you and walk in obedience to you all the time they live in the land you gave our ancestors.

<sup>32</sup> “As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when they come and pray toward this temple, <sup>33</sup> then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name.

<sup>34</sup> “When your people go to war against their enemies, wherever you send them, and when they pray to you toward this city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name, <sup>35</sup> then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.

<sup>36</sup> “When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to a land far away or near; <sup>37</sup> and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captivity and say, ‘We have sinned, we have done wrong and acted wickedly’; <sup>38</sup> and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their captivity where they were taken, and pray toward the land you gave their ancestors, toward the city you have chosen and toward the temple I have built for your Name; <sup>39</sup> then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their pleas, and uphold their cause. And forgive your people, who have sinned against you.

<sup>40</sup> *“Now, my God, may your eyes be open and your ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.*

<sup>41</sup> *“Now arise, LORD God, and come to your resting place,  
you and the ark of your might.*

*May your priests, LORD God, be clothed with salvation,  
may your faithful people rejoice in your goodness.*

<sup>42</sup> *LORD God, do not reject your anointed one.  
Remember the great love promised to David your servant.”*



## Raise your eyes!

I'm from Sweden, one of the Nordic countries way up north, and we usually get a lot of snow during the winter season. We just love practice cross-country skiing on that beautiful white snow. It is great fun and a very good way to exercise.

I once read about a man, who had previously practiced cross-country skiing, but in those days, he had a problem. He didn't get the flow he was eager to have when he was skiing.

Then a friend gave him a tip: "Lift up your eyes from your ski tips".

He did, and he found that everything was improved. The body got a different posture and he got a completely different speed under his skis. Just because he raised his eyes.

How often do you raise your eyes?

I know how it is in my life. Much too often my eyes are "nailed just in front of my feet", so to speak. If I'm in a busy situation, in the middle of things that should have been ready yesterday, running short of time, heading a lot of problems. I just don't raise my eyes.

Recognise it? Yes, I think you do. And we are many more with similar experiences. We are so concerned with all the important things we are doing, that we don't have the time to "raise our eyes".

Is it important to "raise your eyes?"

It was obvious for the cross-country man I told you about earlier. And it is important to us as well. Why? Because sometimes our eyes are like shut doors, and we will not see the things that are in front of us.

Let me show you a part from 2 Kings 6:15-17 *"When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."*

The servant in this passage is like you and me. He doesn't see what the Lord has in plan. His eyes were elsewhere. They were not widely opened. They were just in front of his feet. But he got his eyes opened and he saw!

He saw God's solution, the minute he raised his eyes and looked the way God wanted him to look.

What do we learn from this? Whatever circumstance we are in, God wants us to "raise our eyes" and see what he sees. He has other solutions in store for us that we just don't see. Things that we don't see because our eyes are elsewhere and not on him. - My advice to you at the beginning of 2020, too, is this:

*Let the Lord lead you. Guide you. Direct you. The only thing that matters for you, the only thing you should be determined on, is to "raise your eyes" and keep your eyes on him.*

I wish you the very best, in the name of Jesus. Amen

**Mr Bo Arvidsson** - Member of the Swedish Board of Leprosy Mission





## God lovingly says, “I know”

*“I know your afflictions and your poverty, -yet you are rich.”\_ Revelation 2:9a*

After a gap of some years I have recently been privileged to go again on a TLM field visit. The location doesn't matter because the impressions regained, I believe, would be the same across our implementing countries and our TLM family. Amidst many deeply valued experiences (I am always, *always* the beneficiary of such visits and contacts!) I was reminded of two themes. I knew them already, but meeting and talking with workers and partners makes them more real again.

The first concerned the complexity of suffering caused by the disease. It came home to me again in hearing from a lady of my own age, who referred to three causes of her lifelong struggles: (1) she was directly affected by leprosy, developed at an early age; (2) as result she was abandoned by her husband as a very young woman, robbed of much the family and children might have meant; (3) she was rejected from parts of her community because she had become a Christian. So on three different grounds she had many troubles: As a leprosy-affected person, as a single abandoned woman, and as a Christian.

Leprosy, as we know, has many direct and indirect effects, physically, socially, emotionally; this lady experienced them all. One result though, of a positive nature, was that she had met the Saviour through TLM, and had given her life to Him, and to caring for, and counselling, others who were similarly affected, especially young women. She had thereby saved many from misery, hopelessness and even self-destruction.

For this lady, and many others, I feel sure Jesus would want his words to reach deeply into hearts, hearing Him say, with loving understanding, *“I know your afflictions...”*. Like many we read of in the gospels, it was their affliction (whether leprosy, blindness or some other) that caused them to cry out to Jesus for His healing and saving grace. No-one chooses to have leprosy, but through it there can be discovered a source of radiance of life that is a measure of healing, a ‘down-payment’ of heaven -to be completed in His future presence.

The other theme I was reminded of on my recent visit came through conversations and observations. It was the dedication, the gracious self-giving, the sacrifices -professionally, financially, personally- and the sheer efforts, that TLM staff make in committing themselves to leprosy-affected loved ones, and the ongoing cause of eradicating the disease and its causes and consequences. How much ‘better’ could many of our people do -in the world's terms- if they chose other career paths.

They (you!) also need to hear those words of our Lord, *“I know your afflictions and your poverty...”* or, as he said in another of those seven letters, *“I know you deeds”*. As you serve him and suffer, you can hear, and await in faith, His words to you: *“Well done, good and faithful servant”*. St. Paul, without presumption, looked forward to receiving his crown, and so may those who have chosen the way of Christ, reaching out to the most afflicted, poor and marginalised.

With ear of faith the family of TLM can hear him say, *“...yet you are rich.”*

*In all these dear ones, I saw a richness already shining, but which will be fully realised in the Master's presence in his due time.*

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



## Psalm 6

*For the director of music. With stringed instruments. According to sheminith. A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger  
or discipline me in your wrath.
- <sup>2</sup> Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am faint;  
heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.
- <sup>3</sup> My soul is in deep anguish.  
How long, LORD, how long?
- <sup>4</sup> Turn, LORD, and deliver me;  
save me because of your unfailing love.
- <sup>5</sup> Among the dead no one proclaims your name.  
Who praises you from the grave?
- <sup>6</sup> I am worn out from my groaning.  
All night long I flood my bed with weeping  
and drench my couch with tears.
- <sup>7</sup> My eyes grow weak with sorrow;  
they fail because of all my foes.
- <sup>8</sup> Away from me, all you who do evil,  
for the LORD has heard my weeping.
- <sup>9</sup> The LORD has heard my cry for mercy;  
the LORD accepts my prayer.
- <sup>10</sup> All my enemies will be overwhelmed with shame and anguish;  
they will turn back and suddenly be put to shame.



## Psalm 7

*A shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjamite.*

<sup>1</sup> LORD my God, I take refuge in you;  
save and deliver me from all who pursue me,  
<sup>2</sup> or they will tear me apart like a lion  
and rip me to pieces with no one to rescue me.  
<sup>3</sup> LORD my God, if I have done this  
and there is guilt on my hands—  
<sup>4</sup> if I have repaid my ally with evil  
or without cause have robbed my foe—  
<sup>5</sup> then let my enemy pursue and overtake me;  
let him trample my life to the ground  
and make me sleep in the dust  
<sup>6</sup> Arise, LORD, in your anger;  
rise up against the rage of my enemies.  
Awake, my God; decree justice.  
<sup>7</sup> Let the assembled peoples gather around you,  
while you sit enthroned over them on high.  
<sup>8</sup> Let the LORD judge the peoples.  
Vindicate me, LORD, according to my righteousness,  
according to my integrity, O Most High.  
<sup>9</sup> Bring to an end the violence of the wicked  
and make the righteous secure—  
you, the righteous God  
who probes minds and hearts.  
<sup>10</sup> My shield is God Most High,  
who saves the upright in heart.  
<sup>11</sup> God is a righteous judge,  
a God who displays his wrath every day.  
<sup>12</sup> If he does not relent,  
he<sup>[e]</sup> will sharpen his sword;  
he will bend and string his bow.  
<sup>13</sup> He has prepared his deadly weapons;  
he makes ready his flaming arrows.

<sup>14</sup> Whoever is pregnant with evil  
conceives trouble and gives birth to disillusionment.

<sup>15</sup> Whoever digs a hole and scoops it out  
falls into the pit they have made.

<sup>16</sup> The trouble they cause recoils on them;  
their violence comes down on their own heads.

<sup>17</sup> I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness;  
I will sing the praises of the name of the LORD Most High.

## Authors in Alphabetical Order

## Textuarium

Bo Arvidsson	2 January		2 Samuel 21,1-13	30 December
Christine Osman	2 – 6 December		2 Kings 6,15-17	2 January
Dan Izzett	16 – 17 December		2 Chronicles 6,12-42	1 January
David Beazley	3 January		Psalm 4	28 December
David, king of Israel	2, 30 November		Psalm 5	29 December
David, King of Israel	28, 29 December, 5 January		Psalm 6	4 December
Dorothy Owen	13 December		Psalm 7	5 December
Helen Walton	25 – 26 December		Psalm 27	11 December
Isaiah, prophet	7, 8, 15, 21 Dec		Psalm 90	31 December
Jannine Ebenso	12 December		Proverbs 30,4	1 December
Kalpana Shah	11 December		Isaiah 7,14	7 and 16 December
Melonie Rajaratnam	23 December		Isaiah 9,6-7	8 December
Micah, prophet	14 December		Isaiah 40,3-5	21 December
Moses Onoh MD	27 December		Isaiah 53	15 December
Paul MD and Niki Jakeman	10 December		Micah 5,1-3	14 December
Pradeep and Sarah Failbus	9 December		Zechariah 9,9	22 December
Raju PLN Dr	18 – 20 December		Matthew 2,1-12	4 December
Salomon, King of Israel	1 January		Mark 6,31	23 December
Tim Collison	30 December		Luke 1,38	17 and 20 Dec
Trevor Durston	24 December		Luke 2,4-7	2 December
Zechariah, prophet	22 December		Luke 2,8-20	3 December
			Luke 2,13-14	24 December
			Luke 16,1-13	27 December
			John 1,1-2	19 December
			John 1,14	12 December
			John 3,16	18 December
			John 16,12-15	9 December
			2 Corinthians 3,13- 4,2	10 December
			Colossians 3,15-17	13 December
			Revelation 2,9/a	3 January

The Bridge - TLM Daily Devotions

Editor: Marta Risko - Theological lector: Allan Ekstedt - Grammar proof: Christine Osman