



TLM Daily Devotions

January 2020





New Year

2 Chronicles 6,12 – 42

Solomon's Prayer of Dedication

¹²Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands. ¹³Now 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. ¹⁴He 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. ¹⁵You 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.

¹⁶“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.’ ¹⁷And now, LORD, the God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David come true.

¹⁸“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! ¹⁹Yet, 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. ²⁰May 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. ²¹Hear 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.

²²“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, ²³then 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.

²⁴“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, ²⁵then 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.

²⁶“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, ²⁷ 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.

²⁸ “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, ²⁹ 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— ³⁰ 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), ³¹ so that they will fear you and walk in obedience to you all the time they live in the land you gave our ancestors.

³² “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, ³³ 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.

³⁴ “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, ³⁵ then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.

³⁶ “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; ³⁷ 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’; ³⁸ 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; ³⁹ 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.

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

*⁴¹ “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.*

*⁴² 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.

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

¹ LORD my God, I take refuge in you;
save and deliver me from all who pursue me,
² or they will tear me apart like a lion
and rip me to pieces with no one to rescue me.

³ LORD my God, if I have done this
and there is guilt on my hands—

⁴ if I have repaid my ally with evil
or without cause have robbed my foe—

⁵ then let my enemy pursue and overtake me;
let him trample my life to the ground
and make me sleep in the dust.

⁶ Arise, LORD, in your anger;
rise up against the rage of my enemies.
Awake, my God; decree justice.

⁷ Let the assembled peoples gather around you,
while you sit enthroned over them on high.

⁸ Let the LORD judge the peoples.

Vindicate me, LORD, according to my righteousness,
according to my integrity, O Most High.

⁹ Bring to an end the violence of the wicked
and make the righteous secure—
you, the righteous God
who probes minds and hearts.

¹⁰ My shield^[d] is God Most High,
who saves the upright in heart.

¹¹ God is a righteous judge,
a God who displays his wrath every day.

¹² If he does not relent,
he^[e] will sharpen his sword;
he will bend and string his bow.

¹³ He has prepared his deadly weapons;
he makes ready his flaming arrows.

¹⁴ Whoever is pregnant with evil
conceives trouble and gives birth to disillusionment.

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

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

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



2020 Begins Today – Part 1

Your future lies in the seed you sow today! Your today *started* yesterday As Jesus told us about the parable of the Sower! Israel under Joshua was about to go into the Promised Land *Joshua 3:5 Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you.”* We all know the importance of planning. • The success of our lives & business depends on the way we plan for tomorrow. • Far too many people fail for the lack of planning. **If you fail to plan, you've just planned to fail!**

Your tomorrow, your 2020 begins today! Because the Bible says: *Matthew 6:34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.* There is a huge difference between worrying, planning & preparing!

- Planning can keep you out of trouble
- Worrying keeps you tethered to yesterday or trapped in the future
- Preparing advances you forward This is a true in the natural but it is vital for your **inner-spirit** being or for your spiritual maturity, leadership & growth

The First Step To A Successful Tomorrow, 2020 is: “Consecrate yourself” Consecrate means: To set apart as sacred. I’d like to say: Be submitted to God, set apart to His ways and the direction of His indwelling Holy Spirit. Some ideas on setting apart:

Get Rid Of Excess Baggage. When a soldier is sent out he is given a “ration-pack” with army ration food in it. To say the least: It’s not like home cooking! So what does he do; he removes the excess baggage, the extra weight. Then he gets going with what he has to do, being a soldier. He gets on with life!

Remove hindrances that steal your time with God, time spent with Our Heavenly Father builds our obedience and relationship with Him. As Christians we are fighting the good fight of faith, which means; Trying to get it right. This requires that we need to get rid of our *excess baggage* Excess baggage could be made up by some of the following that can hold us back from achieving God’s best for our spiritually:

Fear: It paralyses our faith.

Anger: It ruins relationships. o Even our relationship with God! We've prayed, where are the goods I asked, prayed for?

Un-forgiveness: if we live with un-forgiveness, It makes it difficult for God to forgive us. Even forgiving God when I feel He May have failed me! *Matthew 6:11-15 Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.* For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Lying, laziness, crooked ways, cheating, ... Any practices that are unbiblical

Grumbling: It attracts destroying angels! *1 Corinthians 10:10 ... "And do not grumble, as some of them did – and were killed by the destroying angel." Philipians 2:14-15 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation."* Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky

Sickness: It's very restrictive and debilitating in life. Do all you need to do to *get well!*

Habits: Any habit that eats away at your time with God needs to be changed! Get rid of them today or else *they will affect your tomorrow.*

Ideas for a "Spring-clean": Spend some time praying for *yourself*. Even get prayer from others.

Cleanse your mind with the blood of Jesus.

Ask God to **expose** wrong in your life. Wrong: attitudes, speech, attractions to things of the world... What is your main activity in life? Stick to it! Ask God to streamline it for you! Desire to be clean before God. Let this be a priority in your life you.

It's better to be right with God & out with man! "Consecrate yourself"

Leave the stuff of the world behind!

The stuff that draws us away from our calling, your God given plan and direction

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.



2020 Begins Today – Part 2

Tomorrow, 2020 Has To Begin Today In Your Home. Whatever you do at home today will bloom in your life tomorrow.

- Good relationships at home tomorrow are established today.

Dangerous bits of baggage to take from your home with you today into tomorrow are:

- Un-forgiveness
- Anger
- An intimidating & demanding attitude.
- Lack of self-control. The way you leave home is the way you arrive at your destination!

You leave angry - you arrive angry!

Tomorrow, 2020 Will Begin Today In Your Attitude Towards Bible Reading & Prayer. You are not here just to exist, make money, have children work yourself to death and die. Don't waste the resources you have! Be wise about this - there are people that need Jesus, invest your time and energy into the Kingdom of God. Be lead by Holy Spirit, not a clever speaker or the flesh or your emotions. You are here to make a difference. So build on **"The Rock"**, the principles of God they are found in prayer and study of the Bible. You are here to tell & demonstrate the good news, proclaim peace in a troubled world...

Tomorrow, 2020 Has To Begin Today In Your Church. Your church is not your world, but it plays a very important role in your spiritual well being

- It's the first & best place to express your calling. Your spiritual life affects the church you attend and become an active member.
- A Church is affected by its weakest member. A Church is strengthened by its members.
- Build each other up! The way you conduct your everyday life affects your home & church life

Tomorrow, 2020 Has To Begin Today With You Deciding To Get On With Living. Go out there and **be part of the solution to life & not part of the problem!** The ravages and the hard things of life, will cause you to:

- Focus, speak, believe and act in the negative.
- Will cause you withdraw, pull back from being an effective member of the Body of Christ. Get into life believing that God has a plan & purpose for you: Did He not say: *Jeremiah 29:11-14 NIVUK "For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future... Joshua told the people: "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you..."*

Get rid of useless baggage! Make some changes & see God do amazing things in all areas of your life!

Set yourself apart for God to use you! If you are not living a consecrated - set apart - life do something about it now! For example: As Christians don't be a material Christian, don't be caught up & spend money you may not have, buying things you may not need, going into **completion** and **comparing** yourself against other people.

Seek God on how you use what you have.

Tomorrow begins today by the seeds you plant in your mind & water. Joshua told the people: *Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you*

- Get Rid Of Excess Baggage

Tomorrow, 2020 Has To Begin Today In Your Home.

Tomorrow, 2020 Will Begin Today In Your Attitude Towards Bible Reading & Prayer

Tomorrow, 2020 Has To Begin Today In Your Church.

Tomorrow, 2020 Has To Begin Today With You Deciding To Get On With Living.

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Seasons

This year, where we live in South West England, we have had a glorious Autumn. The leaves on all the trees, all shapes and sizes, no two alike and each a different shade of red, brown, green, yellow and bronze. As we looked at the wonderful array of colours, in perfect harmony, we worshipped in awe our great Creator, Who made it all. We know He created all things and are always amazed at the marvellous detail in all His creation. In *Ecclesiastes 3:11* it tells us that God has made everything beautiful in its time. Each season has its own beauty.

I think we also have seasons in our lives, and thinking about this I decided I must now be in late Autumn, being well past my three score and twenty years! The only thing I am an expert in these days is old age! There are many joys and wonders in all the seasons and all stages of life.

I write this in Advent. Also a wonderful time of the year, as we look forward to celebrating Christmas, but not only that but the coming again of our beloved Lord in all his glory. How amazing will that be? We have hope, peace, joy and love always available in Him. - Then there will be the start of another year and in the UK the heart of winter, another season! Each year is a gift from God to us. We live in a world that is full of life and brimming with beauty. It offers opportunities and possibilities. Some people enter a new year with excitement and filled with courage at what it may offer them. Others dread the thought and are fearful of what might happen. We know that at present there are wars and conflicts, fires and floods, earthquakes and volcanos erupting, and there is chaos and confusion around the world. We sometimes question, where is God in all of this? His great love has never changed and He speaks His peace into every situation, He has the answer if we will only listen to Him.

I leave with you a Blessing written by Keith and Kristyn Getty.

*Now may the fragrance of His peace
Soar through your heart like a dove released;
Hide in His wings, O weary distant soul;
He'll guide your spirit home.*

*And may His love poured from on high
Flow to the depths of your deepest sigh;
Oh, come and drink from the only living stream,
And on His shoulder lean.*

*And may the hope that will not deceive
Through every pain bring eternal ease;
There is no night that can steal the promises
His coming brings to us.*

*So may His joy rush over you;
Delight in the path He has called you to;
May all your steps walk in heaven's endless light
Make your sole purpose Christ.*

May you be conscious of the Lords love filling and surrounding you through this coming year.

Mollie Clark - Purulia, Bhutan and the International Office.



A New Year Blessing

Do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." Joshua 1: 9.

As we stand on the threshold of a brand new year I want to share with you the following article I came across from *Rev. Arnold Schoonveld (a retired pastor from USA)*.

On the first day of a New Year many of us wish each other a "Happy New Year!" But as we begin a new year, we need more than a hopeful greeting from the people around us.

We need to listen to what God told Joshua about 3,400 years ago. As Joshua was about to lead God's people into the Promised Land, he had reason to be afraid. He had an enormous task ahead of him, and he was well aware of the dangers that he and the people would soon be facing. He needed God's encouragement.

A new year brings lots of questions: Will our health hold? Will our marriage last? Will I be able to hang on to my job? Will I get into the right school? Will I live to see the end of this year? Will the economy improve? Will there be a terrorist attack or some natural disaster that takes me or my loved ones?

The Creator of the universe comes to us and says, "Don't be afraid; don't be discouraged." What happens in this coming year is not left to chance. God is in charge, and he promises to stay close. "The LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Many years later, the Lord Jesus made the same promise when he said, *"I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20)*. That's the reason we can wish each other a "Happy New Year!"

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



Role of Shepherds in the birth of Jesus

Luke 2nd (8-20), we find the incident “Good news given to shepherds” only in Luke’s Gospel, not in other three. There is now definite & clear prophecy about the role Shepherds in the Old Testament. We need to understand the working and living conditions of shepherds of that time in Palestine, to understand the very purpose of God to send the Good News of the birth of Jesus to them. Shepherds were considered to be very simple people; they were in general very hard working but poor people. We can learn that Christ also came for very simple, ordinary and poor people. - They were taking care of their sheep in very cold night, this shows that they were sincere & honest to their work and caring to their sheep. Therefore they were chosen to receive the Good News and reward was given to them to see and witness the Baby Jesus.

Angles gave the Good News to Shepherds and also expressed the importance of birth of Jesus. They gave guidance, evidences and hints to find the birth place of Jesus.

Reaction and Action of Shepherds after receiving the Good News:

- Listened very carefully, even though they were afraid.
- Believed what was said to them and agreed together.
- Took action and trouble to follow the instructions given by Angle.
- Witnesses and worshipped Baby Jesus.
- Returned, glorifying and praising God.

If we place ourselves in the situation of shepherds of that night, we will realize that:

- We would have not done our duty so carefully in that cold night, some of us would have gone to half sleep.
- Some of us would have not believed in the message of Angle, and wanted some proof etc for this. Some of us would have used our own knowledge to verify the truth of the message.
- Some of us would have believed but not taken trouble to travel far, find out the birthplace of Jesus.
- Many of us would have given many excuses for not going. Some of us would have question, what is my personal gain (what is my profit) by visiting Baby Jesus?
- Some of us would have not been happy and rejoiced after seeing baby Jesus.

This is very much true and this happens even today with us.

We have many reasons and excuses for not believing:

- In God the father and His plan of sending His son Jesus Christ to this world for us.
- In Jesus Christ and on His teachings, His love, His forgiveness.
- No time to read Bible and to pray, to go to church, share the good News and His love with others.

The story of Shepherds teaches us much about our own commitment to Christ. We can visualize the situation even today. Though the shepherds are not with us today but there is God for us. Though shepherds are not there but we are here. There was message then from Angel but today we the Good News message from Bible.

The question in this Christmas time, we must ask ourselves, do we really pay attention, listen carefully and believe what Bible tells us? We do say that Bible has many good teachings but we do not in our personal life believe and follow these teachings of Bible.

Therefore let us take encouragement and learn from the story of Shepherds. Let us remind ourselves that the Good News is for ordinary people like us. Let us listen carefully to the teachings of Bible and believe them, also to follow them in our daily life.

Finally we must also glorify and rejoice after receiving Christ (like shepherds) in our personal life.

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



Psalm 8

For the director of music. According to gittith. A psalm of David.

¹ LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory
in the heavens.

² Through the praise of children and infants
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.

³ When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,

⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?

⁵ You have made them a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honor.

⁶ You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their feet:
⁷ all flocks and herds,
and the animals of the wild,
⁸ the birds in the sky,
and the fish in the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.

⁹ LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!



Psalm 9

For the director of music. To the tune of "The Death of the Son." A psalm of David.

¹I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

²I will be glad and rejoice in you;
I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High.

³My enemies turn back;
they stumble and perish before you.

⁴For you have upheld my right and my cause,
sitting enthroned as the righteous judge.

⁵You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked;
you have blotted out their name for ever and ever.

⁶Endless ruin has overtaken my enemies,
you have uprooted their cities;
even the memory of them has perished.

⁷The LORD reigns forever;
he has established his throne for judgment.

⁸He rules the world in righteousness
and judges the peoples with equity.

⁹The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.

¹⁰Those who know your name trust in you,
for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.

¹¹Sing the praises of the LORD, enthroned in Zion;
proclaim among the nations what he has done.

¹²For he who avenges blood remembers;
he does not ignore the cries of the afflicted.

¹³LORD, see how my enemies persecute me!
Have mercy and lift me up from the gates of death,

¹⁴that I may declare your praises
in the gates of Daughter Zion,
and there rejoice in your salvation.

¹⁵The nations have fallen into the pit they have dug;
their feet are caught in the net they have hidden.

¹⁶The LORD is known by his acts of justice;

the wicked are ensnared by the work of their hands.

¹⁷The wicked go down to the realm of the dead,
all the nations that forget God.

¹⁸But God will never forget the needy;
the hope of the afflicted will never perish.

¹⁹Arise, LORD, do not let mortals triumph;
let the nations be judged in your presence.

²⁰Strike them with terror, LORD;
let the nations know they are only mortal.



Purpose: a guarantee for focus

“Even days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, --- They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away.” Matt 24: 36-51

Welcome to a new decade, of the 20s! 2019 was indeed a very eventful year and Christmas (the virgin birth of Jesus) so uniquely celebrated across the globe.

Let's start this reflection with the story from the animal kingdom. The tortoise wanted to borrow an umbrella from a friend. So when he arrived at his friend's house, he was offered some refreshments. As the tortoise was enjoying the refreshments, the rabbit came to the house. He was also offered some refreshments. But unlike the tortoise, the rabbit told his host that he came to borrow his umbrella. As soon as the tortoise heard that, he got up and told the host that he actually came to borrow his umbrella. So the host said, “you did not tell me that earlier. You sat down all the while enjoying the refreshment. I am sorry I will have to lend the umbrella to the rabbit.” The tortoise was angry and the rabbit collected the umbrella and sat down and said, “Now I can take the refreshment too.”

Many lessons can be drawn from this story. Question is, why are we in 2020 for, what is our purpose, or better put, what do we want to achieve in the New Year and in this new decade of the twenties and by extension for our lives?

The story explains living with God's purpose as a major consideration for getting ready for the Lord's return. A person who has no purpose will be swayed easily by whatever comes his or her way, easily get lost and easily lose his or her values. Purpose keeps a person focused, it defines the boundaries and makes it easier to judge oneself to discover how far he has gone and how far he still needs to go. Purpose gives meaning to one's life. The refreshment offered to the tortoise distracted him. He forgot his purpose but the rabbit kept his purpose alive. We should define our purpose in life and keep it alive!

A person who has purpose is governed by it. His or her job will be aligned with the life's purpose. This determines the spouse, the contracts he accepts, where he lives, his clothing. It directs his prayers and it inspires his pursuits.

This message highlights the days of Noah, people allowed drinking, marriage, merriments and so many other things to govern their lives. The consequence of that was that they ignored the warnings and as such they did not get ready for the oncoming judgement. There will be a time we will be done with this part of eternity and need to be ready for the next. We are being asked today to evaluate our purpose in life as a practical way of assessing our readiness. If our purpose is not in synchrony with God's set ways and orders, then we might likely be caught unawares.

This season affords us the opportunity to reflect on where we are going and how far we have gone. It affords us the opportunity to ask ourselves if we are living ready. It affords us a time to ask ourselves, “what have I been living for?” If we are driven by God's purpose, we cannot be caught unready or unawares. The time we have to give account of how we lived on earth will come. That time could come sooner than we could ever imagine. One sure way to keep us ready is if we are driven by God-given purpose.

Isaiah said, *“Come, let us climb the LORD's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob that He may instruct us in his ways, and we walk in His paths.” (Is. 2:3)*. The only purpose for going to the house of God, as an example, is to get instructions that will help us walk in the paths that God has set before us.

We could pray thus: Lord, may You lead me to discover and rediscover your purpose for my life, and continually reap 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; serving as a National Professional Officer and supports the control of Tuberculosis, Leprosy/NTDs and other communicable Diseases in Nigeria.



Do we Take Care of or do we subdue the creation.

Genesis 2 v 15 and Genesis 1 v 28

Recently I read the different texts about creation in the Bible and I noticed the contrast in the instructions given to man in the two stories at the beginning of Genesis.

In the first, which is a liturgical text, man — human kind is created in the image of God with the words « *to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and also to have dominion over the fish* » and the list of other groups of creatures.

It is a beautiful poem with its repeated phrases and rythme, each day ending with and *God saw that it was good* and then *it was evening and it was morning the day*. The days become a week and 4 weeks make a month; there is a link to the lunar calendar. But, and the but is this the harsh picture, which has become linked to the history of mankind. Dominating the animal kingdom, so much that species have become extinct, cutting down forests not just recently but also at turn of the ages round the Mediterranean, to build boats and to find land to grow wheat for the Roman Empire.

Humankind has been good at multiplying and filling the habitable parts of the earth leading to groups become jealous and subduing their neighbors. The desire for the powerful to conque the weaker seems to me be ingrained in the history of people, and not just the English speaking world. Did it come from this idea in Genesis chapter 1. Many say it did. Who knows?

Only last week I heard a young woman from Benin express forceable the many ways Africa and Africans have influenced the world, and reminding us we not see the acknowledgements for these achievements.

Today with the worry of global warming seen as the cause of so many problems , maybe we need to take count of the other instruction in the second story of creation.

Here, God creates man because there was no one to work the land, *Genesis 2 v 15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*

The instruction is to take care, what a difference to the other to subdue or to dominate, he is *to keep it and to care for it.*

The caring is not just for the soil, it effects all we do. We need to repeatedly ask ourselves the question, « Is what we do helpful ». Today in France there is a strong movement to eradicate domestic violence. Situations where the physically stronger has forced the weaker to do things that are unreasonable. When one sees the statistics we must know some of those who are subdued, forced to do things which are unreasonable. The demonstrations are to help and to encourage the subdued.

To give them power, to nourishing, and to caring for them

Taking caring for the world we live in, the whole of it, all levels, remembering the fallow year, remembering not to take all the eggs form the nest, respecting and caring for the stranger, and caring for those we live with and love, those we work with and those we see every day.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.



Consider the decorator crab

As many of you know, once you sit down with a small child and get them talking, they can turn out to be extraordinarily knowledgeable about subjects that interest them. In one such conversation I discovered the 'decorator crab'. They are actually a whole family of crabs who like to disguise themselves with whatever they come across. They attach and decorate their shell with a whole range of creatures and objects. They've been known to have seaweed, anemones (useful for protection!) and even plastic rubbish attached to their shell in order to not look like a crab to the many creatures that would want to eat them.

This devotional aspect of decorator crabs was inspired by listening to a sermon and realising that in so many ways, I have acted like a decorator crab. Instead of picking up ocean objects, I have picked up my identity this way. Let me try to explain: In my previous work life, when I was asked "what do I *do*" I replied "I am a ..". My job or role is not something which I *do*, but has become something "I am". I picked up my role from work, I picked up many different labels from my church and 'flavour' of Christianity. I have labels on my sexuality, my beliefs and my political stance. Many of my labels are ones I have not chosen, but I seem to have picked them up along the way.

I am not the only person to have been doing this. People disagreeing with political stances, beliefs or sexuality becomes not a debate (and being 'right' is what the Pharisees prided themselves on) but can become an attack on identity. To be denied our identity is to be denied in a very profound way, especially when it has been earned by hard work (for example the title of Dr). Some of the things we take are positive like 'activist', 'leader' or mother and so on. Some are more neutral or debatable such as 'christian' or 'spiritual' which depend on the viewpoint of those around us.

Changing our labels requires a step to work out what our labels are. What is this strange growth I'm carrying on my back? Have I outgrown it? Do we want to accept these labels or reject them? Travel (or change) between our labels and beliefs becomes harder and can be traumatic because of the identity change this involves. Do you recognise this around you? People feel constrained – they can no longer state their beliefs or feel they have to watch everything they say. If people are 'unconstrained' then others feel attacked!

If you are feeling trapped by the labels others have put on you. Or perhaps burdened by labels you have adopted for yourself I would really encourage you to go to someone you trust and talk about how that has been affecting you. I would also like to challenge you to consider others in the same way – are people really themselves or do you have a label-like character that you see them as?

This prayer is for myself, but I'm inviting you to join in:

Father help me to stop being a decorator crab and become more who God calls me to be. Help free me from the burden of carrying all that identity on my back when I can be free in You. Through your Spirit I want to worry less about defining myself and others. Thank you that nothing can separate me from my identity in Christ. Give me your grace and love when engaging with others so that I can respect their identity. May they too be free from all that binds and know the peace and love that comes from being your child. Amen.



The decorator crab part 2

Decorator crabs are actually a whole family of crabs who like to disguise themselves with whatever they come across. They attach and decorate their shell with a whole range of creatures and objects.

Genesis 2:19 "So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name."

Who are you? I find it really interesting that even in our story of creation at the beginning of the Bible, we find a tale where we (people) are already naming things. We are labelling creatures. That a label for a thing is its name. There's a real power in a name – it's a really powerful moment when the LORD reveals his name to Moses in Exodus 3:14. What does God call God? It's also incredibly interesting that our best translation of this in English is circular. I AM who I AM. I have never introduced myself as Jonathan who is Jonathan. God's name is so powerful that are we to treat the name carefully. Names can be both positive and negative. Some are forced upon us by those seeking to hurt us like 'fat' or 'ugly'. Some positive names can actually take over our existing identity like 'mother' or 'leader'. Many biblical leaders found it hard to accept their calling such as Moses or Gideon. It can be hard to be called beautiful when you don't find yourself so. We pick up names as we move through life like the decorator crab picks up disguises.

Matthew 16:15 He said to them, *"But who do you say that I am?"*

Here Jesus turns God's name on its head! Do his disciples really know His name? It is an act of submission to accept another's name for us. To accept God's label for us is also a liberation: we no longer need to define our 'self' and we can refuse all labels except those given by Jesus. It is an act of trust, but one that places our heart or self in a safe place. Moreover we can also trust that others are not defined by how we perceive them either!

We are not to crawl through our lives picking up names for ourselves and names that others have given, like the decorator crabs. We are given names by our Lord and Creator who sees in us His Son.

Have you ever discovered people think of you in a way that you didn't expect or see in yourself? Have you ever asked your team or those closest to you, who do you say that I am? It can spark a really interesting conversation! How well does your idea of how you present to others match their perception of you?

This prayer is the same as yesterday, but I find I have to be very persistent when it comes to my identity, so I'm including it again:

Father help me to stop being a decorator crab and become more who God calls me to be. Help free me from the burden of carrying all that identity on my back when I can be free in You. Through your Spirit I want to worry less about defining myself and others. Thank you that nothing can separate me from my identity in Christ. Give me your grace and love when engaging with others so that I can respect their identity. May they too be free from all that binds and know the peace and love that comes from being your child. Amen.



Consider the Elephant

A group of blind men heard that a strange animal, called an elephant, had been brought to the town, but none of them were aware of its shape and form. Out of curiosity, they said: "We must inspect and know it by touch, of which we are capable". So, they sought it out, and when they found it they groped about it. In the case of the first person, whose hand landed on the trunk, said "This being is like a thick snake". For another one whose hand reached its ear, it seemed like a kind of fan. As for another person, whose hand was upon its leg, said, the elephant is a pillar like a tree-trunk. The blind man who placed his hand upon its side said the elephant, "It is a wall". Another who felt its tail, described it as a rope. The last felt its tusk, stating the elephant is that which is hard, smooth and like a spear.

I think of this story a lot when I hear people talking about the kingdom of God. We see Jesus try to describe the kingdom in [Luke 13](#). The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed! The kingdom of God is like yeast! Wait a minute, hasn't yeast been traditionally a symbol sin? It's like the eye of needle (Matthew 19:24)! The kingdom is near (Mark 1), but tax collectors and prostitutes might be entering it before you (Mark 21:31-32).

"It suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. I didn't feel like a giant. I felt very, very small." — Neil Armstrong

Just 12 humans in all the world and all our time have so far stepped foot on the moon. How do you explain to someone about an experience or sensation of which they have no understanding? If you're reading this devotion with someone else, you could try to describe a colour without using any other colours as a reference point. Only 12 people have had a unique viewpoint of seeing our planet from our lunar partner. Does your experience change with your eyesight, or lack of? Our own point of reference frames what we see, so Jesus has to explain to people who have never experienced the kingdom what the kingdom is like. He attempts to by describing individual aspects of the kingdom separately. It can feel like the blind giving reports about this strange beast without being able to capture the essential elephant-ness of the whole, dazzling, incredible kingdom that we can be part of.

Too often I want to understand the whole, without acknowledging what I see and can understand is a limited view. Too often I feel like one of those Jesus talks about in Luke 8:10 – "though hearing, they may not understand". I feel the strain of 1 Corinthians 13:12 and seeing only dimly. It's an adventure finding more and allowing the Spirit to shape me and listening to others, my fellow kingdom-blind people, describe what the kingdom of God looks like to them.

May we continue to read the Bible and listen to each other's stories: "The kingdom of God is like this.." "The kingdom of God is like this.." "The kingdom of God is like this.."

After all, when we look at the world God has created and the diversity of life and abundance of nature, how can I assume the kingdom of God is any more diverse, strange, surprising and colourful than the rest of his creation?



Psalm 10

- ¹ Why, LORD, do you stand far off?
Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?
- ² In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak,
who are caught in the schemes he devises.
- ³ He boasts about the cravings of his heart;
he blesses the greedy and reviles the LORD.
- ⁴ In his pride the wicked man does not seek him;
in all his thoughts there is no room for God.
- ⁵ His ways are always prosperous;
your laws are rejected by him;
he sneers at all his enemies.
- ⁶ He says to himself, "Nothing will ever shake me."
He swears, "No one will ever do me harm."
- ⁷ His mouth is full of lies and threats;
trouble and evil are under his tongue.
- ⁸ He lies in wait near the villages;
from ambush he murders the innocent.
His eyes watch in secret for his victims;
- ⁹ like a lion in cover he lies in wait.
He lies in wait to catch the helpless;
he catches the helpless and drags them off in his net.
- ¹⁰ His victims are crushed, they collapse;
they fall under his strength.
- ¹¹ He says to himself, "God will never notice;
he covers his face and never sees."
- ¹² Arise, LORD! Lift up your hand, O God.
Do not forget the helpless.
- ¹³ Why does the wicked man revile God?
Why does he say to himself,
"He won't call me to account"?
- ¹⁴ But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted;
you consider their grief and take it in hand.
The victims commit themselves to you;
you are the helper of the fatherless.
- ¹⁵ Break the arm of the wicked man;

call the evildoer to account for his wickedness
that would not otherwise be found out.

¹⁶The LORD is King for ever and ever;
the nations will perish from his land.

¹⁷You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted;
you encourage them, and you listen to their cry,

¹⁸defending the fatherless and the oppressed,
so that mere earthly mortals
will never again strike terror.



Psalm 11

For the director of music. Of David.

¹ In the LORD I take refuge.

How then can you say to me:

“Flee like a bird to your mountain.

² For look, the wicked bend their bows;
they set their arrows against the strings
to shoot from the shadows
at the upright in heart.

³ When the foundations are being destroyed,
what can the righteous do?”

⁴ The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD is on his heavenly throne.
He observes everyone on earth;
his eyes examine them.

⁵ The LORD examines the righteous,
but the wicked, those who love violence,
he hates with a passion.

⁶ On the wicked he will rain
fiery coals and burning sulfur;
a scorching wind will be their lot.

⁷ For the LORD is righteous,
he loves justice;
the upright will see his face.



Partners in the Gospel

Philippians 1:3-6

Networking feels like a relatively new concept which we have all become used to since the onset of the internet age. Social media especially enables us to instantaneously network with people on the other side of the world – people we may never have met and may never hope to meet. The Leprosy Mission is very spread out across many continents – yet we value the network opportunities which the Bridge has brought to us all over its 50 editions so far – well done to everybody who has contributed and let's keep it up!

But maybe networking is not so new when we dig into our own history, and it has often struck me that Wellesley Bailey was a pioneer in this regards. He lived in an age when missionaries (or mission partners as we call them now) tended to keep to their denominational groupings, or stay in one place and concentrate on one area. And so we see any number of mission hospitals or schools that are dedicated to the memory of these people. But the only building I ever saw with Wellesley Bailey's name on it was the Vocational Training Centre at Faizabad – and that was opened in 2001! Wellesley Bailey did not invest his time in building one or two centres – his legacy reaches so much further. He invested in relationships with people.

After he started out on his life's work, he networked with countless other mission partners in India and then beyond – mission partners who encountered people affected by leprosy but didn't really know how to respond, or didn't have the money to respond to their need. These partners were already serving in the field, and they came from many different church backgrounds and many different countries. And so it was that Wellesley's network started to extend into North America, Switzerland, Australia and New Zealand.

He didn't have the luxury of the internet to keep in contact. Letters took weeks to reach their destination and there was a long wait for the reply. But it worked, and so the work progressed to reach vast numbers of people living with leprosy – so many more than Wellesley could have possibly reached if he had stayed in Ambala and the local area.

But there again, networking has always been with us, and when we read the New Testament we see how well the Apostle Paul had mastered the art. Before the age of postal services he dictated and sent his letters to many churches, following up on his personal visits – but also to churches he had not visited like the church in Rome.

Paul was very much aware of the power of networking, and he took great care in some of his letters to include personal greetings to many people. He was very aware of the need to work together for the cause of the Gospel – partners in the Gospel is how he described it in his letter to the Philippians.

And that's what we are in TLM – partners in the Gospel. We all share in this great work in many different ways, but every one of us seeking to share the love of Jesus and the message he brings for all. As we set out into this New Year, I pray that we can continue to encourage each other as we all work together in this great partnership.



The power of truth

A while ago, I received a call from the dermatology department at one of the academic hospitals in Cape Town. A person from Bangladesh had just been diagnosed with leprosy. He was deeply distressed. They were battling to communicate with him. Could I help?

I sent a message to Sumon Halder in Dhaka and he kindly sent me leprosy information in Bengali.

When I arrived at the hospital, the patient was waiting for me. He was extremely agitated, pacing back and forward, anxious to speak to me. I spoke briefly, but noticed that my words didn't seem to be making much of an impression. I opened my folder and showed him the Bengali information. He read it with delight. A huge smile crossed his face.

"Oh, is this what I have?" he pointed to the heading at the top of the leaflet.

"Uh, yes ..." came my puzzled response. He beamed with happiness. "Now I know!"

It turned out that when he was diagnosed, the English word 'leprosy' meant nothing to him. He feared that it was something really dreadful. I've never seen a person so overjoyed to be told that they have leprosy! I thought he was going to hug me. Now that he recognised the Bengali name for his illness, he knew he could be helped.

I in turn was thrilled that such a simple act on my part had brought him such instant relief from fear.

"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." [John 8:32]

The truth, even when it is unpleasant, has a remarkable ability to set people free. In this case, the person was set free from worrying that he had an incurable ailment and was able to focus his energies on fighting leprosy – thankfully, although he has had leprosy for many years, he has no disabilities.

It's a privilege to work in and for an organisation that focuses on spreading the truth. Is there any other condition that afflicts humanity that is so intertwined with myth and needless fear? What an honour we have to be entrusted with the truth about leprosy, truth that has the ability to break much of the power of leprosy. People look to us to speak the truth about leprosy and we owe it to them to remain on top of our game in this regard, always ensuring that we are armed with the latest and most credible information.

Yet, only a few people have questions about leprosy. Everyone has questions about eternity. None of us would claim to know all the answers to those questions, but what a relief that we can point them to the One who is the Truth, who is the Answer to each of those questions. I've no doubt that we each in our own way and to our level of competence, seek to remain current regarding our knowledge of leprosy, but for our sakes and for the sake of everyone who looks to us for guidance, it is even more important that our love for Him should not grow dim, that we seek to renew and refresh it at every opportunity. In that love, there is freedom and joy that I hope at this very moment is lighting up your face in the same way that my Bangladeshi's friends face was illuminated with happiness when he learnt the truth about his condition.

Peter Laubscher - Country Leader, Southern Africa. Peter and Elizabeth Laubscher have worked with the Leprosy Mission since 1981. They are blessed with three children. Peter cruises the waters of False Bay when he's not trying to polish scratches out of telescope mirrors.



“If I look at the sky I can’t see him”

If I close my eyes I can’t see HIM. I talk to HIM, I ask for a sign.... How is HE? Is HE bigger than the sky and the earth? Is HE like us? A child encountered all this questions when she was just 5 years of age....How to imagine HIM? His home. His eyes. His hands. His ears. His face.

His home *Acts 17:24 The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands*

Eyes and seeing *Job 34:21 For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, And He sees all his steps.
1 Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*

Hands *Isaiah 49:14-16 But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me." "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me*

Isaiah 48:13 My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together

Ears *1 Sam. 8:21. When Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the Lord*

Eyes ears and face *1 Peter 3:12 For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.*

Hands and ears *Isaiah 59:1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;*

Next time you pray for blessings for your work, for people affected by leprosy, to give thanks, to give praise or to ask for help, try to really see HIM...

Remember to lean over to speak in his EAR...

Remember that he SEES you and protects you, with his EYE upon you.

Remember that his HAND he created the earth we live in and with his hand he looks forward to bless you.

Remember that the he made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth... because he is real, he sees us, he listens to us, he is near...

And even more remember that Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation. (Colossians 1:15)



Fruits of the Holy Spirit

I came across the following short story pinned on a notice board in a waiting room. The title is Two Wolves.

Two Wolves

One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people.

He said, “My son, the battle is between two wolves inside us all. One is EVIL – It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego. The other is GOOD – It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, “Which wolf wins?”

The old Cherokee simply replied “The one you feed”

This little story reminded me of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)

The Greek word translated “fruit” refers to the natural product of a living thing. Paul used “fruit” to help us understand the product of the Holy Spirit, who lives inside every believer. The fruit of the Spirit is produced by the Spirit, not by the Christian. The Greek word is singular, showing that “fruit” is a unified whole, not an independent characteristic. As we grow, all the characteristics of Christ will be manifested in our lives.

Yet, like physical fruit needs time to grow, the fruit of the Spirit will not ripen in our lives overnight.

Like a successful gardener must battle against weeds to enjoy the sweet fruit they desire, we must constantly work to rid our lives of the “weeds” of our old sin natures that want to choke out the work of the Spirit.

This is so related to the Two Wolves story where the Cherokee simply tells his grandson that those who feed on GOOD will win over those who feed on EVIL.

Kalpna Shah - Joined TLMI in April 2017 as a temporary Finance Assistant and from November 2018, became permanent as the Finance Officer.



THE MINISTRY

(as seen by Chuck Swindoll)

The foundation of ministry is **CHARACTER**, not a profound skill.

The nature of ministry is **SERVICE**, not being served.

The motive for ministry is **LOVE**, not money or power.

The measure of ministry is **SACRIFICE**, not success.

The authority of ministry is **SUBMISSION**, not pulling rank.

The purpose of ministry is **TO GLORIFY GOD**, not to glorify ourselves.

The tools of ministry are **PRAYER AND THE HOLY BIBLE**, not marketing handbooks.

The privilege of ministry is **GROWTH**, which may be in depth rather than in numbers.

The power of ministry is **THE HOLY SPIRIT**, not programmes.

The model for ministry is **JESUS CHRIST**, not a corporation nor an idol of a man.

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



Psalm 12

For the director of music. According to sheminith. A psalm of David.

¹ Help, LORD, for no one is faithful anymore;
those who are loyal have vanished from the human race.

² Everyone lies to their neighbor;
they flatter with their lips
but harbor deception in their hearts.

³ May the LORD silence all flattering lips
and every boastful tongue—

⁴ those who say,

“By our tongues we will prevail;

our own lips will defend us—who is lord over us?”

⁵ “Because the poor are plundered and the needy groan,
I will now arise,” says the LORD.

“I will protect them from those who malign them.”

⁶ And the words of the LORD are flawless,
like silver purified in a crucible,
like gold refined seven times.

⁷ You, LORD, will keep the needy safe
and will protect us forever from the wicked,

⁸ who freely strut about
when what is vile is honored by the human race.



World Day of Leprosy

Knowing Our 'Why'

That is why we labour and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, and especially those who believe – 1 Timothy 4:10

Today is World Leprosy Day, an important date in the calendar for the leprosy community worldwide, and an opportunity to raise awareness about leprosy and the plight of persons around the world whose lives have been devastated by this ancient disease.

In recent times, I have taken World Leprosy Day as an opportunity to reflect on our 'why' – why as friends, supporters, prayer partners, volunteers, board members, and staff, do we support the work of The Leprosy Mission?

Our organisational 'why', the reason we as The Leprosy Mission exists, is our Mission Statement which articulates;

Following Jesus Christ, The Leprosy Mission seeks to bring about transformation; breaking the chains of leprosy, empowering people to attain healing, dignity, and life in all its fullness

If we reflect further on our organisational values, the things we as The Leprosy Mission hold dear;

Because we follow Jesus, we value compassion, justice, integrity, inclusion and humility.

I love that our organisational 'why' and the things we hold dear, our values, both start off with '*following Jesus*'. It gives me great encouragement. It may seem fairly obvious – we are a Christian Mission, of course we follow Jesus!

And yet it is far easier said than done. There is a cost to following Jesus – he said as much when addressing his disciples (Mathew 16:24). And there are plenty of distractions along the way that can hinder us, it is important to keep our eyes firmly fixed on him (Hebrews 12:1-2).

It is always a special privilege to visit the 30 Member Countries of The Leprosy Mission and see the fantastic work of transformation taking place. We work in some very difficult and challenging contexts, whether they be raising funds to resource our field work, or implementing and working alongside people, families and communities affected by leprosy. There is a cost in doing the work that we do, and there are often many obstacles and distractions along our path.

My prayer this World Leprosy Day is that we take time to reflect again on our 'why', amidst all this wonderful and yet challenging work taking place. It may also be an opportunity to reflect on your personal 'why'. And as you do so, may you be encouraged, comforted and blessed by the one we follow!



“What do you have in your house?”

Elisha replied to her: “How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?” “Your servant has nothing there at all” she said, “except a small jar of oil”. 2 King 4:2

A widow of a disciple of the prophet Elisha was in a serious trouble. The man was dead and he had left the family with some debts behind. This was now a critical problem for the family because the creditor came with their claims. The widow feared that the creditor could take her two sons away and leave her alone without any possibility of survival. In this critical moment the prophet Elisha asked her an important question: *“Tell me, what do you have in your house?”* And the answer was clear: *“I have nothing at all!”*

This is often the way God is acting in our lives. He always first asks us what we have and what he may use to meet our challenges. Very often we feel like the widow that we **have** nothing at all. That we **are** nothing at all. But look carefully, God wants to use what you have in your house.

“Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.” 1 Cor. 1: 27-29

“I have nothing except a small jar of oil” Some translations mentioned that the small bottle of oil probably was a bottle of anointing oil, left by her husband. Her husband was anointed as a prophet before he died and he had the bottle in his house ready to anoint others.

The anointing oil was a sign of God’s calling and purpose. We know that in the Old Testament prophets, kings and priests were anointed by oil as a sign of their ministry in the service of God. They were all anointed into ministry: Saul, David, Elisha, Aron...(*“It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down on the collar of his robe.”* Psalm 133:2)

The anointing oil was also a sign of God’s equipment to serve: *“So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David” 1 Sam 16:13*

The anointing oil is a sign of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said: *“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 favor.”* Luc 4:18-19

In the beginning of this new year, with all its challenges and opportunities we could perhaps feel that we have nothing to really offer God. Not enough with resources, money or volunteers. Not enough with ability or equipment. Not enough with visions and new ideas.

We have nothing but the Holy Spirit! That’s enough! That “small jar of oil” will flow, and flow, and flow and fill all our needs! This is the answer for us and the world.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses” Acts 1:8



Lesson from a Cathedral

Never stop praying, especially for others. Always pray by the power of the Spirit.

Stay alert and keep praying for God's people. Ephesians 6:18 (Contemporary English Version)

I took the opportunity to visit Peterborough Cathedral recently. It was a cold and windy day, but the Cathedral was bathed in winter sunshine and several keen tourists were admiring the golden stonework, the splendid stained-glass windows, the elegant spires and the sturdy towers. Predictably, there is one significant feature that none of the tourists admired or commented on. The excellent foundations!

The foundations are vital and without firm foundations the cathedral would surely topple over, yet none of the visitors to this ancient, historic building ever stops to wonder at, or comment on, the beauty of the foundations. They are totally vital, but completely invisible, and therefore sadly unappreciated.

The Leprosy Mission is a charity that is founded on prayer. We know that Wellesley Bailey based his ministry on fervent prayer. We can't see his prayers, we don't have written examples of his prayers, but they certainly happened.

And the work of TLM today is built on his prayers and on the efforts of many other prayer warriors through the decades. So, if you are reading *The Bridge* today as part of your own prayer time, thank you.

Thank you for your prayers.

Thank you for your time.

Thank you for your support.

Your faithful prayers are the strong foundation on which we build our ministry to those affected by leprosy.

We may not be able to see you, but we REALLY appreciate you. May God bless you richly today.



“Eyes Open to God.”

“How are you doing?”

It’s a simple question, but one that can be taken in many different ways. When you’re chatting with the cashier at the store checkout, “How are you doing?” is like saying “hello.” If your doctor asks you that question, you’re expected to provide an update about your medical status. When meeting a friend for coffee, she or He probably wants to know what’s been happening since you last spent time together.

Has anyone ever asked you this question as it relates to your spiritual life?

“How are you doing *spiritually*?” Maybe you’ve been convicted about certain sins recently. Perhaps you feel compelled to do something new for God. Or maybe your heart has been moved—yet again—by how amazing God’s grace is.

Timothy Keller summarizes well the big pictures of how we’re *all* doing spiritually: “*The gospel says you are more sinful and flawed than you ever dared believe, but more accepted and loved than you ever dared hope.*” John Newton, the author of the hymn “Amazing Grace,” shared a similar concept toward the end of his life: “Although my memory’s fading, I remember two things very clearly: „*I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Saviour.*”

We often abandon our Lord in favour of this world’s attractions. With eyes open to the truth, we can also see God’s endless patience with an undeserving people and our need to be saved from ourselves. Above all, eyes open to God help us see that we are not our own, “but belong—body and soul, in life and in death”—to our patient, merciful Judge and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

As you read the Today’s devotion, may you be refreshed, refocused, and renewed in God’s Word!



“Love came down at Christmas”

This advent our vicar encouraged us to read the book “*Love came down at Christmas*” by Sinclair B. Ferguson. It is a study based on *1 Corinthians 13*, the love chapter. Each of the 24 days speaks of what love is or isn't. I wasn't going to buy yet another book, but finally gave in!

As I read each daily chapter, I found it challenging. I have been contemplating the Christmas story again, and seen afresh the costly obedience of Mary and Joseph, the joy of the shepherds, the determination of the wise men in seeking God's plan, the expectant waiting of Simeon and Anna to see the fulfilment of prophecy of God's love being birthed. Yes, love did come down at Christmas.

Now as I have thought over my Christian life, love is the essence of what the Lord has often drawn me to understand what is needed in my life. I remember as a child thinking about the do's and don'ts of the Christian faith (which didn't attract me) and coming to the conclusion that the most positive and important thing needed was love and the greatest sin is rejecting his love.

As a young adult in the late 60's or early 70's I struggled with what the essence of the Holy Spirit meant in my life and remember the Lord showing me the most important thing was love for Him.

Later in the early days of working in Bhutan when there were many challenges to daily living and relationships and how to demonstrate my faith, it was impressed upon me that “they will know we are Christians by our love”, that was needed to be worked out on a daily basis. It's not easy, in fact I think it is the most difficult thing, but the most rewarding, that “pearl of great price”.

Now in my 70's I am again challenged by how love is demonstrated in daily living in retirement. I guess throughout our lives love incarnate is the challenge. God's love for his created beings meant he sacrificed himself in humility to raise us to be with him eternally. *“He who began a good work in me will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ”.* (Phil. 1⁶)

Well, I'm glad that work continues in me and I will never have exhausted it!

I pray as you read afresh 1 Corinthians 13 that Jesus' love (that multifaceted diamond) will continue to grow in us all, until he appears and we see Him face to face.

Joyce Missing - Living in retirement in the south of England. Formerly a staff member. I worked in Bhutan from 1973 – 1991 [nurse/administrator]; then at the International Office 1991-2006



Why should I choose Christ today?!

1) Consider the WOW of God!

John 10:10 – “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly.”

->Yes! Jesus' offer of abundant and eternal life IS satisfying, fulfilling and real – WOW!

2) Consider the WAY of God!

Romans 10:10 – “For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

->Open your heart and soul to the Gospel of Jesus Christ today
and He will save you for time and eternity! And you will glorify Him!

3) Consider the WARNING of God!

1 Cor. 10:10 – “Nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.”

->A grumbling and discontented person will surely end up morbid, morose and mean –
'what goes round comes round' – and then miss Heaven too!

4) Consider the WORKER of God!

2 Cor. 10:10 – “For they say, ‘His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech is of no account.’”

->Here's a harsh assessment of one of God's greatest co-workers – the apostle Paul:
May 'our walk always match our talk' as we endeavour to follow Christ!

5) Consider the WILL of God!

Heb. 10:10 – “And by THAT WILL we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

->By remaining thankful and focused on God's final sacrifice for our sin,
we will be sanctified in this life and glorified in the next!

6) Consider the WORD of God!

Rev. 10:10 – “And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter”

->The Word of God will always feed us spiritually, build us up daily,
but also chastise us when necessary (cf Psalm 19:7-11; Jer.15:16). And always remember:-

God loves you!

God died for your sins!

God accepts you!

God cares about you!

God will never forsake you!

God has vested interests in you!

Psalm 94:14 – “The LORD will not forsake His people; He will not abandon His heritage.”

P.S. – Did you choose Christ today?!

-Amen.

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



Psalm 13

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

¹ How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?

² How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?

³ Look on me and answer, LORD my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
⁴ and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

⁵ But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.

⁶ I will sing the LORD's praise,
for he has been good to me.



Psalm 14

For the director of music. Of David.

¹ The fool says in his heart,
“There is no God.”

They are corrupt, their deeds are vile;
there is no one who does good.

² The LORD looks down from heaven
on all mankind
to see if there are any who understand,
any who seek God.

³ All have turned away, all have become corrupt;
there is no one who does good,
not even one.

⁴ Do all these evildoers know nothing?
They devour my people as though eating bread;
they never call on the LORD.

⁵ But there they are, overwhelmed with dread,
for God is present in the company of the righteous.

⁶ You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor,
but the LORD is their refuge.

⁷ Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!
When the LORD restores his people,
let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!

Authors in Alphabetical Order

Textuarium

Allan Ekstedt	27 January		Genesis 2,15	14 January
Bo Arvidsson	2 January		Genesis 2,19	16 January
Brent Morgan	26 January		Joshua 1,9	9 January
Damaris Villanueva	22 January		Joshua 3,5	6 January
Dan Izzett	6. 7 January		2 Kings 4,2	27 January
David Beazley	3 January		2 Kings 6,15-17	2 January
David, king of Israel	4, 5, 11, 12, 19, 25 Jan, 1, 2 February		2 Chron 6,12-42	1 January
Dorothy Owen	29 January		Psalm 6	4 January
Elisabeth Barnett	14 January		Psalm 7	5 January
Jonathan Tsang	15, 16, 17 January		Psalm 8	11 January
Joyce Missing	30 January		Psalm 9	12 January
Judith Merrell	28 January		Psalm 10	18 January
Kalpna Shah	23 January		Psalm 11	19 January
Melonie Rajaratnam	9 January		Psalm 12	25 January
Mollie Clark	8 January		Psalm 13	1 February
Moses Onoh MD	13 January		Psalm 14	2 February
Otto Kingsley	24, 31 January		Eccl 3,11	8 January
Peter Laubscher	21 January		Matthew 24,36-51	13 January
Pradeep and Sarah Failbus	10 January		Luke 2,8-20	10 January
Solomon, King of Israel	1 January		Luke 13	17 January
Trevor Durston	20 January		John 8,32	21 January
			John 10,10	31 January
			Acts 17,24	22 January
			1 Cor 13	30 January
			Gal 5,22-23	23 January
			Eph 6,18	18 January
			Phil 1,3-6	20 January
			1 Tim 4,10	26 January
			Revelation 2,9/a	3 January

The Bridge - TLM Daily Devotions

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