



TLM Daily Devotions

July 2020





“...for the good...” – Part 14

Caring for the sick / Stigma

Blessed are those who have regard for the weak; the LORD delivers them in times of trouble. The LORD protects and preserves them— they are counted among the blessed in the land— he does not give them over to the desire of their foes. The LORD sustains them on their sickbed and restores them from their bed of illness. Psalm 41:1-3

Martin Luther was the father of the Reformation – the movement that constituted the beginning of the protestant church. He was born in 1483 and became an Augustinian monk and a professor of theology at the university of Wittenberg. His many writings include a booklet he wrote about an epidemic of the plague (an infectious disease transmitted from person to person) that hit his home town in 1527. In what follows, I summarize some of his ideas¹. They are not direct quotes, but I have tried to maintain his style of speaking directly to his readers.

It would be great if the authorities could provide hospitals and nursing homes and if they do we should contribute to their efforts. But if not, then we will have to be carers and turn our homes into hospitals². When the epidemic hits, it is a judgment from God that he uses to test our faith in him and our love for our neighbours.

If we are disgusted at the sight of a patient or afraid of the disease, we can be sure it is the devil generating that negative emotion in us. We should not be afraid of death so that we can truly have peace in this life. Otherwise we risk losing sight of Christ and abandoning our neighbour and that would be a sin. We can speak out against the devil and we can fight our disgust precisely by going to such a patient against our natural inclination saying: “from Him is my expectation which far exceeds the fear you seek to instil in me”.

Caring for the poor and the sick brings blessing. The promise of God’s word is that if we care for others, God will also care for us (Ps 41:1-3). Experience shows that those who care for the sick with love, devotion and sincerity are usually protected. It is not wrong to accept payment for such services, but if your motivation in caring for the sick is that you want to get hold of their money, you cannot expect God’s protection and you should not be surprised to be eventually stricken yourself. The promise that God will be our physician should so fill us with joy that we take pleasure in going towards the sick, even if s/he is covered with boils! If God himself stands ready to bind up our wounds, what difference do a few boils then make? We know God will command his angels so that no plague will ever strike us (Ps 91:10-13)!

It is not difficult to see how these words apply to the care for persons affected by Leprosy. The same is true as we care for people infected with Covid-19. We should not act out of fear but out of love, even as we take preventive measures. But more about that tomorrow.

Johan Velema headed TLM’s Evaluation & Monitoring Service from 1999 to 2007, co-ordinating evaluations of projects and programmes and collecting statistical data from all centres. He did research & development work for TLM International from 2007 to 2011.

¹ The full summary is available on my website theologica.nl

² Luther also put this into practice and cared for a number of plague patients in his own home.



“...for the good...” – Part 15

Preventive measures

You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. Psalm 91:5-7

Martin Luther was the father of the Reformation. He was born in 1483 and became an Augustinian monk and a professor of theology at the university of Wittenberg. His many writings include a booklet he wrote about an epidemic of the plague that hit his home town in August 1527. In what follows, I summarize some of his ideas³. They are not direct quotes, but I have tried to maintain his style of speaking directly to his readers.

Apparently referring to Ps 91:7, Luther says that at his left he sees people who fall into sin by running away from the threat too quickly and easily, while on his right he sees people who fall because they are too eager to throw themselves into the danger zone and so tempt God. Didn't we receive intelligence from God, and food and medicines?

It is normal and understandable to take action when a fire breaks out, so getting medical care is a good and normal thing. Just as we pray “deliver us from evil” or eat when we are hungry, so doing everything possible to treat or prevent disease makes perfect sense. Therefore, consider this: If you do not take preventive measures to protect yourself against the plague, you take the risk of falling ill and infecting others as well. Thus you would become responsible for the death of others and become a murderer!

You would be like someone who wants to encourage the flames to jump to the next house, and the next, and the next and so to burn down the whole town! For an epidemic is like a fire that does not consume wood but living bodies instead. Better to be like someone who helps to put the fire out. Use medicines, disinfect your house, avoid high-risk locations and people if you are not needed there. And if you have been ill and have recovered, avoid unnecessary contact so as not to infect others⁴. If we were all acting by these rules, far fewer people would have to die.

Then there are people who fall ill but hide the fact and so consciously transmit the disease to others in the hope of being rid of it themselves. Such people should be sentenced to death.

Wise words from someone who ‘has been there’. Two of Luther's brothers had died from the plague at a young age. His son Hans falls ill during the epidemic but eventually recovers. His wife Katharina was pregnant at the time and although the baby is born in December, it dies several months later, possibly as a consequence of exposure to the plague during gestation. Luther was well aware of the risks and advocated for a clear-headed, balanced response to the threat. Yet, he decided to stay in Wittenberg and serve his community. But more about that tomorrow.

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³ The full summary is available from my website theologica.nl

⁴ Luther apparently believed that people would still be infectious after they recovered from plague. He refers here to Lev 13-14 where people affected by leprosy have to stay outside the camp.



“...for the good...” – Part 16

The strong and the weak

The King will say to them, ‘Yes! I tell you that whenever you did these things for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did them for me!’ Matthew 25:40

In August 1527 the plague comes to *Wittenberg* and the professors of the university are ordered to evacuate to Jena, 160 km to the South. Five days later the whole university is moved to Jena. Luther, however, chooses to stay, with his family, in order to serve the population. He explains his decision as follows:

Those who say that one should not run away have a strong faith and a firm trust in God. They are willing to undergo Gods judgment if that is his will. However, many Christians do not have such a strong faith and one cannot put the burden of such an assignment on them. People with a strong faith can drink poison and survive, they can walk on water like Peter. But one who can walk fast must necessarily hold back when he is accompanying someone who is slower, at least if he wants to be in communion with him. It is not helpful to condemn someone because of something he is unable to do. Christ does not want us to leave the weaker brothers behind.

There are plenty of biblical examples of believers who fled: The apostle Paul had himself let down in a basket over the wall of Damascus and in Ephesus he evaded the riots⁵. Jacob fled for the threats of his brother Esau. David fled for Saul and later for Absalom. The prophet Uriah fled to Egypt to stay out of the hands of king Jehoiakim (Jer 26). Elijah fled for Jezebel, Moses for Pharaoh. But all of them first took care of those who had been placed in their care. If the patriarchs fled for famine and the sword, why should we not flee for the threat of disease? But first we should carefully evaluate both the risk and the necessity to expose ourselves to it.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (John 10). Therefore, pastors should stay in their post in spite of the dangers. But they can redistribute their tasks so that a part of the team can leave while the rest stay behind to serve. Servants of the state, such as governors, judges etc., should stay. Without them there will be rioting, looting and arson. However, they can appoint someone to fill in for them in their absence. The same is true for anyone who has a duty to serve others. A servant cannot just leave his master and a master cannot leave his servants without first arranging for their care. Similar for parents and children. We should remember the words of Jesus that what we do for our neighbour, we do for Him (Mt 25:40).

If we are not bound by our duties towards others, we are free to choose. It is not wrong to bring yourself to safety. It is a way of caring for your own body (Eph 5). But we also know: If you run away but God does not want to save you, you will find your death wherever you are going; and if God wants to save you, no danger will be able to touch you. Someone who chooses to suffer through difficulties

⁵ “Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him.” (Acts 19:30)

and dangers is to be commended, but should not condemn others who do not make the same choice with them.

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Psalm 49

For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm.

- 1 Hear this, all you peoples;
listen, all who live in this world,
2 both low and high, rich and poor alike:
3 My mouth will speak words of wisdom;
the meditation of my heart will give you understanding.
4 I will turn my ear to a proverb;
with the harp I will expound my riddle:
5 Why should I fear when evil days come,
when wicked deceivers surround me—
6 those who trust in their wealth
and boast of their great riches?
7 No one can redeem the life of another
or give to God a ransom for them—
8 the ransom for a life is costly,
no payment is ever enough—
9 so that they should live on forever and not see decay.
10 For all can see that the wise die,
that the foolish and the senseless also perish,
leaving their wealth to others.
11 Their tombs will remain their houses^[a] forever,
their dwellings for endless generations,
though they had^[a] named lands after themselves.
12 People, despite their wealth, do not endure;
they are like the beasts that perish.
13 This is the fate of those who trust in themselves,
and of their followers, who approve their sayings.
14 They are like sheep and are destined to die;
death will be their shepherd
(but the upright will prevail over them in the morning).
Their forms will decay in the grave,
far from their princely mansions.
15 But God will redeem me from the realm of the dead;
he will surely take me to himself.
16 Do not be overawed when others grow rich,
when the splendor of their houses increases;
17 for they will take nothing with them when they die,
their splendor will not descend with them.
18 Though while they live they count themselves blessed—
and people praise you when you prosper—

19 they will join those who have gone before them,
who will never again see the light of life.
20 People who have wealth but lack understanding
are like the beasts that perish.



Psalm 50

A psalm of Asaph.

1 The Mighty One, God, the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to where it sets.
2 From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth.
3 Our God comes and will not be silent;
a fire devours before him,
and around him a tempest rages.
4 He summons the heavens above,
and the earth, that he may judge his people:
5 "Gather to me this consecrated people,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."
6 And the heavens proclaim his righteousness,
for he is a God of justice.^[a]^[b]
7 "Listen, my people, and I will speak;
I will testify against you, Israel: I am God, your God.
8 I bring no charges against you concerning your sacrifices
or concerning your burnt offerings, which are ever before me.
9 I have no need of a bull from your stall
or of goats from your pens,
10 for every animal of the forest is mine,
and the cattle on a thousand hills.
11 I know every bird in the mountains,
and the insects in the fields are mine.
12 If I were hungry I would not tell you,
for the world is mine, and all that is in it.
13 Do I eat the flesh of bulls
or drink the blood of goats?
14 "Sacrifice thank offerings to God,
fulfill your vows to the Most High,
15 and call on me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you will honor me."
16 But to the wicked person, God says:

"What right have you to recite my laws
or take my covenant on your lips?
17 You hate my instruction
and cast my words behind you.
18 When you see a thief, you join with him;
you throw in your lot with adulterers.
19 You use your mouth for evil

and harness your tongue to deceit.

20 You sit and testify against your brother
and slander your own mother's son.

21 When you did these things and I kept silent,
you thought I was exactly^[9] like you.

But I now arraign you
and set my accusations before you.

22 "Consider this, you who forget God,
or I will tear you to pieces, with no one to rescue you:

23 Those who sacrifice thank offerings honor me,
and to the blameless I will show my salvation."



“...for the good...” – Part 17

A Time to Reconnect.

In mid-April, almost a month after we began working from home due to the Covid 19 lockdown in UK, I learnt that soon I would be furloughed along with several other of my colleagues. I received this news with mixed emotions. Mentally, I knew it was the right decision for our office and for TLM. Emotionally, I experienced sadness and hurt, feelings of undervalue and anxiety about loss of pay and the fear of losing my job.

We were encouraged to speak to our line managers, HR and avail of independent counsellors, but personally, I felt unable to do this. I felt a sense of loss and disconnect and my anxiety grew over the next two weeks as I worked towards the day I would start furlough. Having access to information and help, does not always mean you feel able to use them.

The month of lockdown until then had been challenging – At work, I was busier than I had been since joining The Leprosy Mission International in June 2019. At home, both me and my husband were working fairly long days; our two children, 9 and 13 years old, were on an extended Easter break- missing a healthy routine, missing school and missing home as they had known it.

In the days leading to being furloughed, the thought of not having to ‘work’ caused me a lot of anxiety. The thing that was giving me structure, connectedness and purpose in this crazy time would be gone. On the last day of work, due to technical difficulties, I was unable to connect for daily devotions. I completed my work and then I knelt down and prayed.

Alone, at my desk in my bedroom, I prayed for guidance on what I must do next; for purpose, for my feelings of sadness and anxiety. Two messages came to me, first – *“This is not about you.”* and second, *“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. ¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.” (Jeremiah 29, 11-12).*

The first week of furlough, the schools resumed and I was able to give the children my time and attention as they settled into a new and still challenging way of school. I learnt about how they had anxieties too, and missed their friends and school. I was able to spend time with my husband and speak about my anxieties and fears about our parents in lockdown in India, our finances, our future. My little girl said to me, “I’m so happy you are now home with me.” While I was working, I had been home for the whole month, but not with her.

We have reconnected as a family, we do a lot more together: household chores, work in the garden, online calls with family in India and we make sure to spend time on our own as well. We still have anxieties and fears, but we feel more connected and we pray together. We pray for protection and provision: for the poor, the desperate and lonely, for health workers and key workers, for the bereaved and for us as a family.

Over the next weeks we began to go on longer walks and connect with neighbours and friends, especially our elderly neighbours and those who are shielding and so cannot leave their homes. We cooked and baked and shared food with them.

We started working on our allotment, a small communal plot of land, where we grow fruit and vegetables. Here, we have connected with more people, most of them elderly or retired. For many, in the current situation, the allotment is their only way of spending time outdoors, of feeling productive and of connecting with others while maintaining safe social distancing. Apart from sharing seeds and saplings and watering the plants, we have shared life stories, laughter and fears. We continue to learn from their wisdom - not only to care for the earth, so we can grow better fruit and vegetables, but to grow better as people- to respect and care, to be happier and be in tune with nature. *Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days. Job 12:12*

I believe that during this furlough God's plan for me has been to reconnect and appreciate others- to appreciate my family at home and abroad, to connect with my neighbours and community, especially with the elderly and the lonely; and to show them they are valued. To connect with the earth and see it as our source of life and provision, and to treat it with care and respect. I feel more grounded and connected in His love.

Pierina Dsouza has worked at the Leprosy Mission International, London since June 2019.



“...for the good...” – Part 18

Younger & Wiser

“I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes” Ps 119:99

One of the things about this Covid-19 pandemic is that we see older people pass away. They are the most susceptible to develop critical disease when infected. With an already fragile health condition, they may not be able to fight off the virus. That’s bad, because there are so many people older than I am, who have been so important to me. People I used to listen to, to whom I went for advice, who helped me figure things out when I did not know how. People older and wiser that have made a difference in my life at one time or another.

So how am I going to live my life without the wisdom and support of those lovely people? Oh, I know I am supposed to be growing older and wiser, too. And I guess I do, learning from my mistakes, one at a time. But even so, I still need the input from people wiser than myself!

It’s at this point that I began to realize that I serve a Master who never even made it to age 40. In many cultures, 40 is considered the age of maturity. But Jesus did not even reach that age. In fact, that was part of his problem. The priests and teachers of the law could not accept that he, although younger, had a deeper insight in the Scriptures than them. In every debate he would come up with Scripture references and interpretations that were out of the box and piercingly relevant. This infuriated them so much! When Jesus was only twelve years old, he asked such good questions about the law that the teachers were stunned and treated him tenderly. But when he was older and seriously criticized them, their attitude changed completely. Event to the point of plotting to kill him. Yet, Jesus was not arrogant. He sought to keep the relationship with the people he argued with.

I am a follower of Jesus. I consider him the source of all wisdom and love and I ask him every day to help me with the challenges I am facing. Could it be that He would send me a person younger than myself in answer to my prayers? The devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic challenge me to look for wisdom in people who do not fit the usual pattern; to be open to significant input from people I would not have asked. We believe that Christ lives in each of his disciples through the Holy Spirit. So then He can speak to me through those disciples he has transformed.

I am sure God often gives wisdom to people younger than me and blesses them with insights and gifts I lack. And they can speak wisdom into my situation. If only I am willing to listen. So if you consider yourself junior, do not be afraid to exercise your God-given gifts.

Let us cherish our older friends and pray (and work!) for their protection, so that we may enjoy their wisdom a little longer. At the same time, let us value all the good things younger generations have done as they took over responsibility and let us pray for them. For there is no age-discrimination in the kingdom of God.

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“...for the good...” – Part 19

An unforgettable experience!

How did you get through (although we are not yet at the end!) this period of lockdown set up by government decree where everything stopped? From one day to another, no more agenda, no more school. For many not allowed to go to work. The key message was “stay at home”.

An invisible enemy threatens us, strikes and unfortunately makes many victims. The whole earth is shaken. Everyone is concerned, rich or poor. The coronavirus ignores the social differences built by men. We then measure our fragility, our vulnerability. Relying on Christian convictions since my childhood, I thought I could ride the wave.

It was not the case. Each day, I had to find this peace in Jesus by depositing my fears with him. In my daily walks to find my serenity, I gladly crossed a small forest to reach three tombstones, placed next to the path. These are the stones of a couple who died in 1902 for him, 1913 for his wife and 1958 for their daughter. On the oldest stone, these words are engraved: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28.*

I stopped for a while at the foot of these stones and humbly asked God to grant me the grace to be able to appropriate these promises and to renew me in the strength that I needed for today. Maybe as I share my experience you will find it has been echoed in you? Be blessed and encouraged in Him we can trust.

Eric Chollet - I'm retired since four years. I used to work with TLM Switzerland for 32 years. During that time, I have had the privilege to stand in different committees (e.g. executive committee - directorate) with TLMI, which has been very rewarding. All along these years of service, I have met a lot of wonderful and dedicated people. May God continue to bless the mission for His glory.

Une expérience inoubliable !

Comment avez-vous traversé (bien que nous ne soyons pas encore au bout !) cette période, depuis le 14 mars, où par décret gouvernemental, tout s'est arrêté ? Du jour au lendemain, plus d'agenda, plus d'école. Un confinement à rester à la maison fortement encouragé qui nous est rappelé chaque soir aux nouvelles télévisées. Un ennemi invisible nous menace, frappe et malheureusement fait de nombreuses victimes. La terre entière tremble. Tout le monde est concerné, riche ou pauvre. Le virus fait fi des différences sociales bâties par les hommes.

Nous mesurons alors notre fragilité, notre vulnérabilité. Assis sur des convictions chrétiennes depuis mon enfance, je pensais pouvoir surfer sur la vague. Et bien non. Chaque jour, je devais retrouver cette paix en Jésus en lui déposant mes craintes. Dans mes balades quotidiennes, pour retrouver ma sérénité, je traversai volontiers une petite forêt pour aller à la rencontre de trois pierres tombales, posées à côté du chemin. Il s'agit des stèles d'un couple mort en 1902 pour lui, 1913 pour son épouse et 1958 pour leur fille. Sur la pierre la plus ancienne, ces paroles sont gravées : « *Venez à moi, vous tous qui êtes travaillés et chargés, et je vous soulagerai (Math 11 :28).* » Je m'arrêtai un moment au pied des ces pierres et demandai humblement à Dieu qu'Il me fasse la grâce de pouvoir m'approprier ces promesses et qu'Il me renouvèle dans les forces dont j'avais besoin pour aujourd'hui. Peut-être que le partage de mon expérience fera écho en vous ? Soyez tous bénis et encouragés par Celui sur qui nous pouvons compter.



“...for the good...” – Part 20

Are you living with disappointment?

What happens when you get disappointed? Often, we lose our hope. We feel that nothing is changing and our efforts are not leading to the change we hoped for or desired. It's at this point where we can so easily give up. But if we look at disappointment in the Bible, we discover that it was what they did with their disappointment that gave them the victory in the end. Disappointment can lead to fear and fear can kill off all hope inside of us.

Mary and Martha (*John 11*) were disappointed because when their brother, Lazarus, got ill and they called for Jesus, He did not seem to do anything about their urgent cries for help. Things got worse and their brother died. Jesus, their best friend, the one who could have healed Lazarus, seemed to ignore their cries for help and didn't even turn up for the funeral.

You can just imagine the disappointment. When Jesus did come, that disappointment was openly displayed. *“Jesus, if you had been here, my brother would not have died,”* said Martha. When Mary saw Jesus, she said the same thing, “If you had been here my brother would not have died.” In other words, where were you Jesus? Why didn't you come? Why didn't you answer our cries for help? Why, why, why? Today we may have many whys. Why did the Queen not mention the need for prayer (in her broadcast about Coronavirus)? Why have the Government not issued a call for a National Day of Prayer? Why are their mixed messages from the Government at times? Why can't they get it right? Why are we suffering the way we are? Why does it seem like there are no answers to the problems we face? Why hasn't God answered our prayers?

This week we were told that there is no vaccine and perhaps a vaccine will never be found. What is going to happen to us all?

Disappointment, despair, discouragement. All this leads to our hope being eaten away.

I was told last week by someone who knows, that the letter I received from the Queen was very significant – as normally when a certain subject is raised by a member of the public, there is a certain written response from the Palace to each letter received on this subject. The fact that my letter was so different from others meant that the response was significant. I had hope in my heart that our beloved Queen would at least urge her subjects to pray. I have to say I was disappointed when the hope I had at her mentioning prayer in her speech on VE day was not fulfilled. There may well be a reason behind the scenes why this was not done, but it is still disappointing and some have expressed that to me.

In every disappointment we have a choice. Do we dwell on the disappointment, the discouragement and the despair, or do we continue to trust in God for a miracle? Mary and Martha were keenly disappointed, and this led to an end of their hope of ever seeing their brother made whole again in this life. Jesus then issued a command to “Remove the stone” from the tomb. At that point everyone would have looked at Martha. Martha was the eldest sister and because of this, she would have had to give her permission for the stone to be removed. She said, “But Lord he has been dead for four days – his body is decomposing – it's too late – he's gone” (my paraphrase). Jesus response was to basically say to her, “Martha, trust me!”

She decided to trust Jesus despite her disappointment and of course when she did a miracle happened and Lazarus was raised from the dead.

We too have a choice.

Right now, people across the world are living with many disappointments. Life is not turning out the way we thought it would. Do we let our disappointment lead us to despair and discouragement and eventually to lose our hope, or do we decide to trust in our incredible God and allow him to show us a miracle? Today, and every day, I choose to put my faith in our supernatural God – I choose to pray, I choose to believe he has the answers, I choose to trust in him – are you ready to do the same? Are you ready to lay your fears, your disappointments, your discouragements and your despair aside, and trust in God? If so – let's pray with hope in our hearts, with faith running through our veins and with the belief that God is doing something spectacular in our day. We just need to trust in him like Martha did and believe for our future.....remember what I said last week – your prayers are working. God is moving.

The signs are there – let's not give up but continue to trust him and pray!

Written by **Nancy Goudie**, author and motivational speaker. She initiated "Every Friday, National Day of Prayer "Heal our Nation"



“...for the good...” – Part 21

Lockdown – A Time of Waiting

As I write this, we have just passed Ascension Sunday. *At the beginning of the book of The Acts* of the Apostles, Luke recounts that Jesus appeared to the disciples at different times over a period of 40 days and then before His ascension, he told them: “do not leave Jerusalem, but wait...” Later in that same chapter we read “Then they returned to Jerusalem...They all joined together constantly in prayer...” God chose to make them *wait* for the coming of the Holy Spirit and they chose to use that time, those long days of waiting, to further their relationship with God in prayer.

These days of lockdown are not easy for anyone. I count myself very blessed that I have a lovely roomy flat, a beautiful view and am able to go out. I have always been an early riser so I go out early in the morning and walk along the prom – not many people around at 7.30am (I can’t go any earlier as the shop I go to would not be open) – and call in it a small supermarket to pick up anything I need before walking back. I have written before about my walks along the prom that I use as prayer walks with various places leading me to pray for different people around the world. I pass the end of one road where there is a care home and every morning I pray for them at that point – they have had no infection either in residents or staff!! God is protecting them and their management is thorough, doing their part. Going back to my university days, I remember being told that you should never start your prayers with requests, but rather with praise and thanksgiving to God – I find my walks lead naturally to that as I admire His wonderful creation all along my walk. I meet very few people, mostly dog walkers, and we all keep a very healthy distance apart but always greet each other. I occasionally have a chat with a friend as I pass her flat – she stays at the door to her balcony and I am in the roadway. These contacts however brief and at a distance are a great help reminding me that I am not the only one in this situation – they also give me more people to pray for, even those whose names I don’t know.

For the rest of my day I am housebound (OK I can now have a second walk) but have a sort of programme for the day. I tune in to the church I attended when I lived in the South of England and join with their rector and his wife in Morning Prayer - I enjoy a coffee and toast at the start of that time of worship. The rest of my day is taken up with household tasks, time of Bible Study, time of Prayer, time of telephone calls, and lots of time for reading. I have no fixed times for any of these but I always include them in my day – apart from Sunday which for me continues to be a day of joining in worship. There is a sequence to that as well. First I listen to a service on the Radio at 08.10, then I tune in to Morning Service at 10.00 on YouTube (with the same church as Morning Prayer), then there are two consecutive services on TV. The first of these is from England, from one of the English or Welsh Cathedrals – usually with the clergy and one other person giving reading, prayer and reflection with hymns from previously recorded events. The other is from Scotland which is from a studio with two speakers who read each read a passage and the other one gives a reflection on that passage. The music for that is again from previous recordings plus one instrumental piece live. Later there is ‘Songs of Praise’ on TV – now mostly clips from previous recordings. In their own way, each of these services brings God’s word alive and give me the opportunity to join with others in prayer and also new people to pray for. I have a minister friend not far from where I live who kindly sends me her morning service as a video and also in document form (so that I can pass it on to someone else) and that video becomes my evening service. I really enjoy my Sundays and find real blessing from them.

So lockdown, a time of waiting, for me has been a time of real reflection, study and prayer – a time of waiting on the Lord and for Him to show the way forward. In that room, in constant prayer, the disciples did not really know or understand what lay ahead of them, but they trusted Jesus. In our time of waiting, we also do not really know or understand what lies ahead – can life ever go back to the way it was? Should it? Are we waiting with trust, expectation and hope for God to lead us out of Lockdown and into life in His way – maybe a different way. Let me close by sharing a reflection by Thom Shum– ‘Help us to see’:

We look for you straining our eyes into the far country but our vision is disrupted by the least, the lost, the littlest, the last among us.

We race after you trying to catch up and turning the corner, find only a homeless family in our path.

We wander the streets yearning to find you calling your name, but it is only a single mother who turns and wearily smiles, a street person who whispers hello, a little girl who pirouettes and takes our hand

Gone but you are still here Lord. Help us to see.

Help us to understand, help us to wait

Ours is not a waiting society; we put the emphasis on busyness and activity.

But the Bible is insistent that it is in waiting that we will most clearly understand who we are and what God can do with us.

Waiting time is not wasted time.

Christine Osman, formerly Treasurer of TLMI



Psalm 51

For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
- 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.
- 5 Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
- 6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
- 7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
- 8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
- 9 Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.
- 10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- 11 Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
- 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.
- 14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
- 15 Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- 16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
- 17 My sacrifice, O God, is^[a] a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.

18 May it please you to prosper Zion,
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.
19 Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,
in burnt offerings offered whole;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.



Psalm 52

For the director of music. A maskil of David. When Doeg the Edomite had gone to Saul and told him: "David has gone to the house of Ahimelek."

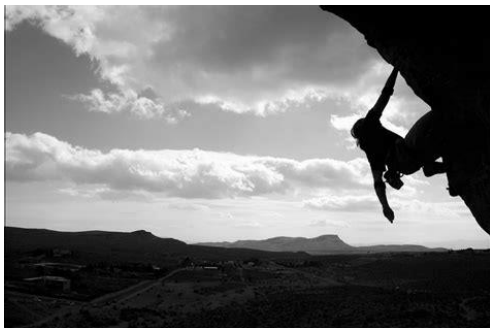
- 1 Why do you boast of evil, you mighty hero?
Why do you boast all day long,
you who are a disgrace in the eyes of God?
- 2 You who practice deceit,
your tongue plots destruction;
it is like a sharpened razor.
- 3 You love evil rather than good,
falsehood rather than speaking the truth.^[c]
- 4 You love every harmful word,
you deceitful tongue!
- 5 Surely God will bring you down to everlasting ruin:
He will snatch you up and pluck you from your tent;
he will uproot you from the land of the living.
- 6 The righteous will see and fear;
they will laugh at you, saying,
- 7 "Here now is the man
who did not make God his stronghold
but trusted in his great wealth
and grew strong by destroying others!"
- 8 But I am like an olive tree
flourishing in the house of God;
I trust in God's unfailing love
for ever and ever.
- 9 For what you have done I will always praise you
in the presence of your faithful people.
And I will hope in your name,
for your name is good.

“...for the good...” – Part 22

Why you fear? Don't you have yet faith?

If I need to think about one real and simple good thing while in lockdown, I would say going for a 15 minutes nap while putting to sleep my daughter just after lunch. With a two years old toddler time and schedule are quite easy to follow, and this definitely helped me to establish quickly a new routine in the new way of living. I normally don't fell asleep every day, but sometimes it's simply unavoidable.

Once it has been a particular one. While in drowsiness I had a vision of me rock climbing. During my university studies



I was practising quite passionately rock climbing, now unfortunately it can only be a dream. In my vision I was in a very difficult move, hard to describe it in English for me. However, I can assure you, I was feeling the precipice under my body. The all situation was indeed real as I knew that mountain wall, I once climbed with a friend. I was feeling unsecure and stressful as I knew I had to click the gear correctly otherwise it would have been “fatal”.

Nevertheless, in that exact moment of despair, I felt a hand pushing my back, helping me to click the gear into the ring and secure myself to the rock. I felt immediately safe, with a sense of achievement, ready for the next climbing move...and I woke up.

As I woke up I felt a bit strange, but pleased that after so many years I was feeling again the thrill of climbing. It has been only after few days that I realised that hand coming from nowhere was the hand of the Lord. As in real rock climbing, there are always two people: one person is going up, while the second one is securing the rope to avoid as much as possible bad consequences of a possible fall. This time my climbing mate was the Lord, telling me: *why you fear? Don't you have yet faith? (Mark 4: 38-40), I am here, right behind you.*

As I realised the meaning of my vision I felt so sinful and miserable, thinking of the Lord seeing my inner doubts, hesitation and lack of faith. At the same time, I also felt so happy and reassured, understanding that the Lord is next to me keeping me safe on this particular journey, we are all having. The Lord was backing up my uncertainties and insecurities on the rock, no matter my fears and worries.

“¹³ Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:10-20).

Dear brothers and sisters, I wanted to share with you this story to tell you, that if your faith or motivation is shaking like mine on the rock, be reassured that the Lord has never stopped to cheer us up. Once the climbing will be over, on the top of the peak, we will feel a refreshing wind. Only then, we will know that our *wings are stronger than the storm* (E. Askew).



“...for the good...” – Part 23

4 things to be aware of as we emerge from a pandemic.

Extracted from a webinar by Bishop Simon, Bishop of Tonbridge (Church of England)

1. We are more socially contagious than the virus is biologically contagious

Epidemiological research done by Professor Nicholas Christakis when he was at Harvard University and summarised in his book ‘Connected’ shows how our personal influence over the lives, health and well-being of others can reach up to eight thousand people. Helping western Christians understand they are highly infectious in their faith has been an uphill struggle. In showing how contagions spread exponentially from one person, the virus has modelled the Gospel’s reach, offering unexpected inspiration.

2. Caring for the human body generates lasting trust

The London-based political scientist William Davies has done some interesting research into trust levels across the UK’s professions in his book *Nervous States*. The professions whose trust levels have dipped most in the last decades are those who work round words: politicians, journalists, estate agents. He could have said clergy, but didn’t. The professions whose trust levels have held up best are those who work round the human body: to heal, protect and develop it: doctors, nurses, the armed services, teachers. Words are becoming worthless in a culture saturated with lies. So to build trust, those who work round words must be seen to care about the bodies of other people. In the early Church, the words of the Apostles were supported by care for the bodies of others through acts of healing and charity. Authentic evangelism has to be surrounded by practical demonstrations of love.

3. We may finally get mental health

Anyone who says the virus hasn’t impacted on them emotionally is surely lying. But its impacts vary. Some of those who have been exposed to it, especially on hospital wards and in care homes, are likely to face long-term mental health problems. Some of those locked down face life-changing violence and abuse. Mind, the UK-based mental health charity, carried out a lockdown poll that found a third of 4000 people surveyed described their mental health as ‘poor or very poor’. Younger generations are more open about their mental health than today’s leaders in society and the Church and when they assume public power, it will be treated in an entirely new way. But the virus may speed this process. The health of our minds might finally become a political priority. There will be a boom in therapy coming out of the virus. Millennials in particular, the cohort the church longs to reach, value honesty and authenticity. We haven’t been especially honest or open about mental health in the Church, but the virus might change that.

4. The return of the Sabbath

In the mid-1990s, the UK finally jettisoned Sunday as a Christianised sabbath. But in an ironic twist, we have just had a truck load of sabbaths dumped on us, demanding self-disciplined, home-based rest. The cumulative effect is bewildering and for those at risk of abuse, devastating. But it has led some to ask:

wouldn't we benefit from slowing down? Where we unplug one day a week to connect with family and friends? There will be huge pressure to make up for lost time when the crisis abates, but to hit the ground walking, not running may be wiser.

Could we manage that? The Church's leaders are hopeless at this, on the whole. But younger generations seem to want better balance and harmony in their lives than they see in their parents'. The slow movement started some time ago, but it's moment might have come.

The full transcript of the webinar (which featured a further 7 points) can be found here: <https://bit.ly/Bridge0720>

Tim Burton - Senior Officer, Communications TLMI



“...for the good...” – Part 24

A moment of change ‘for good’

It has been remarked that COVID-19 has given us a chance to reflect, as under lockdown we are all reflecting on what really matters for example:

- People are appreciating Creation more as they can hear the birdsong without traffic noise and can see the stars without air pollution
- People are more interested in spiritual matters, with a large increase in online church attendance from young people who do not normally go and an increase worldwide in people googling ‘prayer’
- People are appreciating their family and friends more now they are not able to visit them, with more effort put in to regularly connect, even though that may now be by letter, phone or online.

People have said life will not be the same again, Amanda Jackson Director of the World Evangelical Alliance’s Women’s Commission has noted that: “We don’t want life to go back to how it was, we want to do things differently, as we appreciate some of the good things that have come out of lockdown!”

In TLM too we need to be thinking about what do we want TLM to look like after lockdown as John Baxter-Brown Director of Global Connections asks: “How do we renew our missiology” as we plan our operations into the future post-COVID?

I think this is an important question for TLM to be asking, I do not believe we should be looking at just returning to ‘normal’ post COVID or the old status quo. Rather we should be looking to revisiting our mission and implementing ‘lessons learnt’ in development speak:

- How do we care more for God’s Creation now that we have become more aware of it in recent weeks? In the words of the 5th Mark of TLM’s Mission in the Global KPIs how can we increasingly: ‘Respect God’s creation, ensuring that our activities do not have consequences which would increase environmental degradation or climate change, as this would disproportionately affect poor leprosy affected communities, which rely on natural resources for their wellbeing.’
- How can TLM in its fundraising and use of volunteers harness the generosity, social involvement and the deconstruction of the ‘myth of scarcity’ as people have given in various ways of their time, money and resources in response to the coronavirus crisis to support the vulnerable and raise money for health services despite their own economic and health concerns?
- How can we build on the switch to digital and use it more in fundraising and connection with supporters?
- Far larger numbers of staff have been attending zoom morning devotions than previous physical meetings at TLMEW at least and recently Zoom prayer meetings for people from across the Global Fellowship were started. How can we continue the involvement of people in prayer and devotions that build unity between ourselves and relationships together as well as with our God?
- As lockdown restrictions have not allowed staff from ‘supporting countries’ to visit ‘implementing countries’ and staff from national head offices to visit field offices, we need to improve capacity of our staff at all levels to ensure sustainability whatever the circumstance. We need indigenisation of leadership, programme management, monitoring and feedback story collection capacity. How can we increase capacity of our staff at country level, regional and field level – so they can fulfil these tasks well without such a need for international and national head office visits?

- During lockdown I have used Zoom, Teams, Ring-Central, and Google-meet for the first time as well as the usual Go-to-meeting, Skype and WhatsApp tools to connect with colleagues around the world successfully. We have learnt that there is much that can be done through virtual meetings and using online tools such as Sharepoint and Glasscubes without the necessity of physical meetings. We need to look at how we can continue to use such tools to better connect to discuss and develop projects and strategy?
- Global Partnership for Zero Leprosy response to COVID-19 has placed a high priority on listening to the voices of people affected by leprosy and getting their input. In the past they have not been very involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of our work. How can we keep their involvement at this higher level and focus on their priorities?
- The need for pastoral support has also surfaced during the crisis and has been given greater attention. How can TLM build resilience, improve inner wellbeing and peer counselling capacity?
- A greater realisation on our need for relationship and connectedness had come to the fore through the COVID crisis. How can we help supporters, volunteers and partners to feel more a part of our fellowship and ministry?
- How can we build on the unity that has strengthened between us in the Global Fellowship that the COVID crisis has fostered?

There is currently a moment of choice, a liminal space, much of what we thought was important has been shown to be not so important, our assumptions have been challenged, we have learnt new ways to do things, grown together in a stronger way, we have a real opportunity, to make changes -our new normal should be built on what we have learnt and experienced during the COVID crisis.

Reference

This reflection was inspired by a webinar hosted by All Nations Christian College that can be watched at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zv6V3txFLIs&feature=youtu.be>

James Pender – TLM England and Wales, Programmes and Advocacy Officer - Asia



“...for the good...” – Part 25

...for the good...

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” Rom. 8:28

One of the very best illustration of this biblical truth is the exciting story of how the Jewish shepherd boy from Hebron became the Prime Minister of Egypt. The story of Joseph is one of the greatest in the world literature and a very important story in the Bible. The Bible uses 14 chapters to tell us how God can give a vision to a person and how he is able to fulfill his purpose under difficult circumstances. And it's also a prophecy about the coming Savior, Jesus Christ. At the end of his dramatic life Joseph could conclude: *“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” Genesis 50:20* When we follow the story of the young man Joseph for thirteen years of his life we cannot see anything but hardship. He was betrayed by his brothers, falsely accused and forgotten in prison. For most of the best years of a young man's life he was a slave and a prisoner and probably he often asked himself: “Where is God?”

“The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master” Genesis 39:2 “The LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.” Genesis 39:21 Other people couldn't see it, he himself couldn't realize it, but God was with him to guide and direct him towards God's plan for his life. The message of this story is that if we give our lives to God – we will never be alone. God will go with us! With God, our lives are not depending on chances, coincidences or fate, but on God's divine plan and faithfulness. God was with Joseph:

1. In his calling and dreams to fulfill the spiritual vision given to him early in his life even when his family misunderstood everything
2. In his ordinary life. 13 years are 4745 days and every single day God was there
3. In his temptations. Joseph choose not to take any shortcuts in his life but to live a clean life
4. In his loneliness, 2 years in a dark prison forgotten by men, but not by God

As one of the most powerful persons in his time, Prime Minister of Egypt, Joseph could look back and conclude that God's sovereign plan has been realized and fulfilled in his life. Through hardship, problems and difficulties God had guided him. He was blessed to bless others. He was in the right position, the right place at the right time to be a blessing for the whole world: *“Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.” When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere. “Because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been*

famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no ploughing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.” Genesis 45:5-8

Let us as TLM Fellowship be faithful to God he will lead us even in difficult times and he will make us a source of blessings for the whole world.

Allan Ekstedt, country leader TLM Sweden



“...for the good...” – Part 26

Concentrate on the eye!

In my country we are blessed with a surprisingly easy outcome of the pandemic so far. Thankful and happy for that, though professionals and those with responsibilities continue to warn of a possible “comeback”, and despite of removing the former strict lockdown several regulations continue to be valid and in place. For instance wearing masks in public places: transport, shops, offices, church, etc. We all do it from children to grandparents, priests and cleaning ladies, all over the country. A whole fashion for masks appeared - between, funny, or frightening models, of every colour and design.

Meanwhile behaviour also is changing. Normally our appearance is not a very smiling one in public contacts. In India everybody is full smile, and in the UK everybody will greet you in a village at least with a very warm smile... We usually keep static face in offices, shops, in the street, the tube, neutral sight, a kind of “civil coolness”.

Since the mask-era this has been changing fundamentally, and...: for the good!

As almost the entire face: the nose, mouth, facial muscles, cheek are covered, the only narrow surface left free are the eyes. We need to say it all with them. We may not touch the child, may not shake hands, or even give a polite smile – all these are not possible. Just the eyes, can function, and they do! We are trying to concentrate on our eyes to express the least kindness, or joy, or appreciation in a shop, so that pair of eyes in these days starts to develop a multifunctional role: not just looking with them, but all the emotions, reactions, feelings and mood are expressed through them.

Eye is called as “mirror of the soul”. In extreme cases as psychiatric illness it is obvious, but also in daily life as reaction to fear, anger, joy, love, tiredness. Our sight is a weapon of great power. My maternal grandfather, a strict teacher, disciplined all through his career a legion of generations growing up as well as his own 6 children purely with his eyes, having the motto: “my looking at you is enough!” (imagine that in our days!)

In the Bible we have several precious mentions of the eye. *“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”* Hebrews 4:13. Jesus teaches in *Matthew 6:22* that *“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”* God looks at everything differently to we humans: *“The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”* 1 Sam 16:7. Therefore we should pray with Elisha like this: *“Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see.”* 2 Kings 6:17. Not a single word, but just the sight of Jesus was sufficient for Peter to break and come to the understanding of his sin: *“The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter*

remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: 'Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly." Luke 22:61-62

God so lovingly promised: *"I will counsel you with my loving eye on you."* Psalm 32:8. This we can easily follow as recipe and consciously develop our sight. My prayer and hope is that this culture of smiling eyes will survive Covid-19, and create a warmer, more comfortable and kinder sphere in the monotone daily routine!

Marta Risko — country leader TLM Hungary



Psalm 53

For the director of music. According to mahalath. A maskil of David.

- 1 The fool says in his heart,
“There is no God.”
They are corrupt, and their ways are vile;
there is no one who does good.
- 2 God looks down from heaven
on all mankind
to see if there are any who understand,
any who seek God.
- 3 Everyone has 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 God.
- 5 But there they are, overwhelmed with dread,
where there was nothing to dread.
God scattered the bones of those who attacked you;
you put them to shame, for God despised them.
- 6 Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!
When God restores his people,
let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!



Psalm 54

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A maskil of David. When the Ziphites had gone to Saul and said, "Is not David hiding among us?"

1 Save me, O God, by your name;
vindicate me by your might.

2 Hear my prayer, O God;
listen to the words of my mouth.

3 Arrogant foes are attacking me;
ruthless people are trying to kill me—
people without regard for God.

4 Surely God is my help;
the Lord is the one who sustains me.

5 Let evil recoil on those who slander me;
in your faithfulness destroy them.

6 I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you;
I will praise your name, LORD, for it is good.

7 You have delivered me from all my troubles,
and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.



“...for the good...” – Part 27

In God's Time

There are two verses that always raise much discussion:

Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord”

James 1:2 “Consider it pure joy...when you face trials of many kinds”.

Timing, and God's timing in particular is something we often think about. Over the years, God has shown his timing to each of us in a number of different, and often remarkable ways. Here is an example to think about:

You are an avid follower of cricket and you are watching a game on satellite TV whilst in bed. It has just turned midnight and you don't want to turn the TV off before the last wicket has fallen because only one wicket is required for England to win – it could be one minute away or one hour away. Do you turn off the TV as you need to get up early in the morning and be properly refreshed from your sleep? You ask God to tell you when the last wicket will fall and into your mind comes 12.26. OK you think so you continue to watch but keeping an eye on the clock. As the clock moves to 12.26, the last wicket falls!!! Well. I remember coming out of a prayer meeting onto a wet, dark Glasgow street one Friday evening to find I had a flat tyre.

Well, before I was taught to drive, I had to demonstrate that I could change a tyre. I was silently asking God why this had to happen, but I opened the car boot, got out the jack and the spare wheel. I was struggling to loosen the first nut even just a little bit, when a young chap, someone I had never seen before, appeared and said “stand aside and I'll do that”. Resisting the temptation to tell him I was quite capable of changing a wheel, I did as I was told. In an amazingly short time he had changed the wheel and put the flat in the boot. Before he did the same with the jack, he asked me to check all the nuts were tight – did he know that was one of the questions in my mind. As I stood up he quickly walked away, I had to shout my thanks and got a wave back acknowledging he had heard me. God's provision for my need, God's timing or a lesson that I should rely on God and not on my own abilities?

God's timing does not always work as smoothly as that and sometimes we feel that He does not act when we think He should or when we ask him to. But as we look back over our lives, we can see God's hand at work bringing His plans to fruition at just the right time – I know I can but I also know that I didn't see that when I was struggling with changing circumstances in my life, I didn't see it when I thought I was going along fine and something put a spanner in the works.

What about in these times of pandemic, of lockdown or the fears of coming out of lockdown? I am sure that God is working at bringing His plans for these days to fruition at just the right time – His time. I am writing this just after Pentecost. The disciples were in lockdown waiting for God's release from that. I am sure they were fearful as well as expectant for the future – but what a future. I watched on line on Sunday a minister trying to demonstrate Pentecost with a balloon and a birthday candle – God ended that lockdown with a “violent wind...and tongues of fire” and the birth of the church. Whatever the end of lockdown means for each one of us, I pray that we will again know what it means for us to burn with fire – the fire of His Holy

Spirit – that we might serve Him again with all of our being – body, mind and spirit – and demonstrating His love for us.

Let's make this a time of "Pure Joy". Last evening I witnessed the most magnificent colours of sunset and they certainly brought joy to my heart – what picture is God painting in your surroundings to inspire you today?



Christine Osman, formerly Treasurer of TLMI



“...for the good...” – Part 28

Peace

John 14:1-27 ('peace I leave with you')

The joy of music is one of the most profound human experiences. Recent archaeological digs have discovered flutes carbon dated to over 40,000 years old. There is even evidence which suggests these flutes would have relied on a deeper tradition of music-making, possibly going back to the very first humans. But whatever we come to find about archaeology or anthropology, it is indisputable that music has the power to affect us in extraordinary ways. Music is mentioned throughout the Bible in various stages of the history of humanity: after the Israelites escaped Pharaoh's chariots, the Book of Exodus records Moses as leading them in a song to the Lord; the prophet Amos chastises Israel for lounging around playing music when they should be bringing justice to the poor and innocent, and particularly to women; in Paul's letter to the Colossians, he exhorts them to sing hymns together with gratitude; and there is no shortage of musical references across the Psalms. Chances are that in the past two weeks most – if not all – of us have listened to some kind of music while stuck at home. Sometimes we listen to music in the background, barely noticing what we hear but nevertheless finding comfort or energy in the harmonies and rhythms. Sometimes we listen to music deliberately: for example, the first time I heard Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring* as a teenager, I immediately had to listen to it all over again, undisturbed, with headphones on.

The joy of music can be so powerful that we cannot stop ourselves from praising God for the gift of such an experience. For those of you who have ever attended a Choral Evensong service, you will know that music is the primary medium through which the congregation engages in worship to God. One of the collects – or structured prayers – that the congregation says together in the service is called the Collect for Peace. It goes like this: O GOD, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed; Give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that by thee, we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen. The Collect for Peace is inspired by the words of Jesus in John chapter 14. Jesus is talking about the promise of the Holy Spirit which is to come on the Day of Pentecost. He says to his disciples *'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.'*

It is natural in the present circumstances to fear what is going to happen next. As the outbreak of covid-19 continues and we see the numbers of people infected and dying, the uncertainty can feel overwhelming. It seems more and more of us know someone who has been infected, and in a few tragic cases knowing of someone who we have recently lost. Where can we take comfort? One of the things that strikes me about the Collect for Peace is the line 'by thee, we, being defended from the fear of our enemies'. Notice how the prayer does not say 'being defended from our enemies', but 'being defended from the fear of our enemies'. Jesus does not promise us an easy life. Almost all of us have, and will, fall on hard times. Whether the enemy we imagine is a person, a political power, or a plague, we are not promised to never have enemies. But we do know that, following the words of Jesus, we can take confidence in the Spirit that Our Father in Heaven gives.

'Peace I give to you'. 'Do not be troubled and do not be afraid'. In Christ, and by the Holy Spirit, we can live without fear, even – if not especially – when the world looks as though it is about to collapse. I recently read a story about a Nigerian called Ikoli Whyte who was diagnosed with leprosy 100 years ago. At the time there was no cure for the

disease; people with leprosy were feared, and themselves were living in fear. As a result, he was effectively quarantined inside a leprosy colony in South East Nigeria. It was there that Whyte met the Christian medical missionary Thomas Frank Davey, a musiclover and pianist. Dr Davey's passion for music incited the same love in Whyte, who learnt everything he could from him. Over time, Whyte found his own style and began writing his own music. Taking courage from the love of Christ expressed to him in the life of Dr Davey, Whyte remained in the leprosy colony to create and lead a choir of leprosy patients. By the end of his life, Ikoli Whyte had composed well over 200 hymns. That gift of joy in music given to him was turned into praise. Even today, there is a Leprosy Mission children's choir in Nigeria, where the songs of Whyte can be heard.

May we too find peace in Christ, a peace that only he can give, and may the gift of joy in music and in all things lead us back to him in praise. Amen.

Jarrett Wilson-Gray - Regional manager for the London and the South East of England, TLM England and Wales



Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly

My father lived by the dictum that if you needed a helping hand, you'd find it at the end of your arm. Accordingly, he had a workroom which roared into life every weekend and most weeknights too. From his workbench, a tsunami of furniture, boats and toys flooded local homes, schools, theatres and shops. When, in 1905, Max Weber coined the phrase "Protestant work ethic," it was my Dad he had in mind! As far as Dad was concerned, a workbench was meant for working, not for looking pretty. It had to be robust. And robust it most certainly was, as he had made it from railway sleepers that he had salvaged from the local goldmine. For seventy years, those sleepers easily withstood the onslaught of chiselling, hammering, sawing and drilling.

I no longer need this workbench and decided to use the recent lockdown as an opportunity to convert it into a patio table. Dad had told me that although the sleepers looked rough, they were made from a high-quality hardwood – a type of mahogany. After much huffing and puffing, I managed to disassemble the sleepers. I staggered outside under the weight of them, where I was relieved to drop them with a dull thud on the lawn. In the harsh light of day, the words of Macbeth came to mind:

"But now I am cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in
To saucy doubts and fears"

Seven decades of hard work meant that the sleepers looked rough indeed. Was something good really hidden below all those layers of paint and glue? Only one way to find out. I wrangled the first sleeper onto the trestles and set my plane spinning, to be instantly rewarded by a shower of wood chips, the colour of a rich red wine. At the end of the day, covered from head to toe in sawdust, I was both the scruffiest and happiest person in Cape Town. The sleepers glowed warmly in the light of the setting sun. They were going to make a very fine table indeed. I was slightly disappointed that the process of sanding had ended, as I had so enjoyed watching the beautiful wood grain emerge from its blanket of gunk. Dad was always way too busy preparing for the next project to waste time cleaning his workbench! That night I ate my supper under the stars along with my sleepers. Apparently, woodchips are not a welcome addition to our dining room, no matter how good they look or smell.

The Scriptures are full of accounts of people who to the world appeared unpromising, but who in the sight of the Lord, were full of potential. I think especially of the prophets. Take Isaiah for example. Even in his own estimation, Isaiah was not worthy to serve the Lord: *"Woe is me ... for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."* Accordingly, one of the seraphim touched his lips with a burning coal from the altar. From then on, Isaiah ministered with what we might call a disfigured face. Yet with that scarred mouth, Isaiah addressed kings, nations and peoples yet to be born, [and you and me] proclaiming some of the most profound passages in the Scriptures.

When we look at ourselves, we may feel as I did when I looked at those sleepers – "This won't work."

Let's learn to see ourselves and each other as He sees us. There is great beauty buried below the surface, but His transforming love is needed to bring it to the fore. In the case of Isaiah, that intervention was exceedingly painful and probably terrifying. I take comfort in the words of Isaiah: *"He has wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities."* Isaiah 53,5

Jesus died that we might be set free from our ghastly cloak of sin. Let His righteousness permeate your words and work this day. Prior to sanding the sleepers, I wouldn't have given them a second look, so rough was their appearance after their long years of duty underground and as a workbench, but now that the rich red mahogany has been revealed, my eye is continuously drawn back to them.

May peoples' eyes be drawn to Christ, as they see His riches revealed in us; we who have been cleansed by that reddest of Blood that flowed at Calvary.

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.



The day the sun stood still

Joshua 10 v 1-15

Joshua needed a special act from God to enable him to claim the victory the Lord had promised. And because he had seen God's hand at work time and time again, he had the boldness to pray what might be the most audacious prayer contained in the Bible. This was bigger than making a mountain move. This was bigger than making dry land out of the Red Sea. This was a request to alter time itself.

And that is what happened - the sun, and the moon, stood still. We don't know how God did it. But He did. The world watched as time stopped and allowed the people of God to protect their new allies.

That's an amazingly bold prayer, isn't it? It was born out of Joshua's experience as an eyewitness to God's power throughout his own personal history.

When Joshua saw an opportunity for God's fame to be spread through His people, Joshua asked the impossible. And he and his troops kept fighting, confident that God was going to do what He said He would do.

I don't know about you, but I want that kind of faith! I want the kind of faith that can make the mountains crash into the sea. I want the kind of faith that can make the sun stand still.

But that can only happen if I get out of my comfort zone. That can only happen if I step out in faith and become the person God has planned for me to be. That can only happen if I allow Him to work on me, in me, and through me.

God is calling all of us to follow Him with audacious faith. That might mean we look ridiculous at times. People might question our sanity. But asking the sun to stand still isn't exactly the most sane prayer, is it? It breaks every law of physics, and time, that we know of – doesn't it? But God is a big enough God to alter time and space for His own. So the real question is this - do we really believe God is God? Or do we just believe in a safer, more comfortable version of Him?

Is there an area of your life where God is calling you to look ridiculous? When you look at what you're sensing God is inviting you to do, it can be easy to focus on that which cannot be done. The challenge is to take the opportunities that God has offered us and audaciously live our lives in boldness for Him – wherever He may lead.

Gordon Brown - Scotland - 2008-2011 Vice Chair of TLM Scotland, 2011-2015 Honorary Treasurer of TLM International.

Kindly sending his good wishes to the TLM family!



‘one step enough for me’

“Your word is a lamp for my feet; a light on my path.” Psalm 119:105

John Henry Newman (1801-1890), wrote some well-known English hymns, such as *Praise to the holiest in the height...* and *Lead Kindly Light...* . He had an unusual spiritual journey, and I wonder if we would all be entirely ‘happy’ with him, because he went from being an Anglican curate to a Roman Catholic cardinal! For some people in the 19th century he was ‘swapping sides’, and in the wrong direction! He was a brilliant thinker and writer on spiritual themes, but also a rather stormy character, so he was loved or hated according to where people were coming from, resented by some for his meteoric rise to being a cardinal!

A few years ago I read Newman’s biography at a time when I was working through whether, when and how to leave the church in Brentford (near TLM’s International Office) where I’d been so long and gone so deep. What resonated with me about Newman were some of the feelings and soul-searchings he went through in the decisions he made, whatever direction they were in. I wasn’t going to make the kind of change he made, but the *need* for change, and the seeking of God’s will in our own decision-making, were important to me.

Newman’s hymn, *Lead, Kindly Light* was written in 1833 as a poem entitled “The Pillar of Cloud”, referring to the guiding presence of God in cloud and fire in the desert of the Exodus. The key idea Newman picked up was that *we are only given enough light for the next step*, and only then the next. It is a key truth in all our Christian lives and guidance. To want to see all the steps ahead is futile and demoralising. So the hymn embodies profound personal resolution to trust in God, even in the dark. Newman portrays the pilgrim as in gathering gloom, far from home, through crag and torrent, looking to God for just one more step.

The third verse implies the pilgrim’s faith is failing; he has ‘lost awhile’ the faith in God’s power to lead, and his care through angels who will keep guard over us wherever we go. That is why a more positive fourth verse was added later by another writer. Here is Newman’s hymn (with the last verse!):

*Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom, lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home; lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.*

*I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will. Remember not past years!*

*So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still will lead me on.
O’er moor and fen, o’er crag and torrent, till the night is gone,*

*And with the morn those angel faces smile, which I
Have loved long since, and lost awhile!*

*Meantime, along the narrow rugged path, Thyself hast trod,
Lead, Saviour, lead me home in childlike faith, home to my God.
To rest forever after earthly strife
In the calm light of everlasting life.*

With my good wishes and prayers,

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 55

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A maskil of David.

1 Listen to my prayer, O God,
do not ignore my plea;
2 hear me and answer me.
My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught
3 because of what my enemy is saying,
because of the threats of the wicked;
for they bring down suffering on me
and assail me in their anger.
4 My heart is in anguish within me;
the terrors of death have fallen on me.
5 Fear and trembling have beset me;
horror has overwhelmed me.
6 I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest.
7 I would flee far away
and stay in the desert;
8 I would hurry to my place of shelter,
far from the tempest and storm."
9 Lord, confuse the wicked, confound their words,
for I see violence and strife in the city.
10 Day and night they prowl about on its walls;
malice and abuse are within it.
11 Destructive forces are at work in the city;
threats and lies never leave its streets.
12 If an enemy were insulting me,
I could endure it;
if a foe were rising against me,
I could hide.
13 But it is you, a man like myself,
my companion, my close friend,
14 with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship
at the house of God,

as we walked about
among the worshipers.

15 Let death take my enemies by surprise;
let them go down alive to the realm of the dead,
for evil finds lodging among them.

16 As for me, I call to God,
and the LORD saves me.

17 Evening, morning and noon
I cry out in distress,
and he hears my voice.

18 He rescues me unharmed
from the battle waged against me,
even though many oppose me.

19 God, who is enthroned from of old,
who does not change—
he will hear them and humble them,
because they have no fear of God.

20 My companion attacks his friends;
he violates his covenant.

21 His talk is smooth as butter,
yet war is in his heart;
his words are more soothing than oil,
yet they are drawn swords.

22 Cast your cares on the LORD
and he will sustain you;
he will never let
the righteous be shaken.

23 But you, God, will bring down the wicked
into the pit of decay;
the bloodthirsty and deceitful
will not live out half their days.
But as for me, I trust in you.



Psalm 56

For the director of music. To the tune of "A Dove on Distant Oaks." Of David. A miktam. When the Philistines had seized him in Gath.

- 1 Be merciful to me, my God,
for my enemies are in hot pursuit;
all day long they press their attack.
- 2 My adversaries pursue me all day long;
in their pride many are attacking me.
- 3 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.
- 4 In God, whose word I praise—
in God I trust and am not afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?
- 5 All day long they twist my words;
all their schemes are for my ruin.
- 6 They conspire, they lurk,
they watch my steps,
hoping to take my life.
- 7 Because of their wickedness do not^[e] let them escape;
in your anger, God, bring the nations down.
- 8 Record my misery;
list my tears on your scroll^[d]—
are they not in your record?
- 9 Then my enemies will turn back
when I call for help.
By this I will know that God is for me.
- 10 In God, whose word I praise,
in the LORD, whose word I praise—
- 11 in God I trust and am not afraid.
What can man do to me?
- 12 I am under vows to you, my God;
I will present my thank offerings to you.
- 13 For you have delivered me from death
and my feet from stumbling,
that I may walk before God
in the light of life.



“...for the good...” – Part 29

Water your lawn.

The beneficent soul will be satisfied, And the one who waters will himself be watered. Proverbs 11:25

I have the impression that our tendency to dissatisfaction is amplified during this period of confinement. And then, I think it's a little bit the same for everyone: we spend a lot more time watching the lives of others on social networks. It's a kind of window on the outside.

When you look at how it works in others, what they do in their area of expertise, you can be impressed. We can say that we should have thought about it ourselves. We can say that they have a sacred organization, those! You can tell they look more fulfilled. We can say that they are really more gifted than us.

This tendency to dissatisfaction leads us to always believe that it is better elsewhere.

I like to remember this quote from Robert Pulghum:

"Grass is not always greener elsewhere. It is greener where it is watered."

If you want your field to progress, maintain it.

If you want your marriage to be well, take time for each other.

If you want your business to grow, take the time to develop it.

Me, I'm really not good at gardening: my garden can look like a battlefield, aha. But rather than telling me that the others have magnificent gardens, I just have to decide to maintain mine!

So water your lawn. It has the same potential as that of the garden next door.

Arrose ta pelouse.

L'âme bienfaisante sera rassasiée, Et celui qui arrose sera lui-même arrosé.

Proverbes 11:25

J'ai l'impression que notre tendance à l'insatisfaction est amplifiée pendant cette période de confinement.

Et puis, je crois que c'est un peu pareil chez tout le monde : on passe beaucoup plus de temps à regarder la vie des autres sur les réseaux sociaux. C'est une sorte de fenêtre sur l'extérieur.

Quand on regarde comment ça se passe chez les autres, ce qu'ils font dans leur domaine de compétence, on peut être impressionné. On peut se dire qu'on aurait dû y penser nous-même. On peut se dire qu'ils ont une sacrée organisation, ceux-là ! On peut se dire qu'ils ont l'air plus épanouis. On peut se dire qu'ils sont vraiment plus doués que nous.

Cette tendance à l'insatisfaction nous pousse à toujours croire que c'est mieux ailleurs.

J'aime me rappeler cette citation de Robert Pulghum :

"L'herbe n'est pas toujours plus verte ailleurs. Elle est plus verte là où elle est arrosée."

Si tu veux que ton domaine progresse, entretiens-le.
Si tu veux que ton couple aille bien, prends du temps pour l'autre.
Si tu veux que ton entreprise grandisse, prends le temps de la développer.

Moi, je ne suis vraiment pas doué en jardinage : mon jardin peut ressembler à un champ de bataille, aha.
Mais plutôt que de me dire que les autres ont des jardins magnifiques, il faut juste que je me décide à entretenir le mien !

Alors arrose ta pelouse. Elle a le même potentiel que celle du jardin d'à côté.

Reverend Elie FOFOLO - Born on August 5, 1964, son of a Baptist Pastor, both parents died. I am a pastor of vocation and formation, in 2001 I had my degree in Theology at the Protestant University in Congo (U.P.C). After working as a Pastor in the local Church of Kingabwa 1 from 2004 to 2011, I had a meeting with Angelika Piefer who headed the Coordination of the Mission against Leprosy in the Democratic Republic of Congo, from where I had this passion for people affected by Leprosy and I invited Angelika to come to World Leprosy Day in our church on Sunday 29/01/2012, in Kingabwa. This work led us to discover two girls from the same family with signs of leprosy, and their brother ended up being infected, but all three were treated and in good health. This sparked this passion to work as a volunteer in raising awareness, mobilization and the relationship with the local churches of the platform "Church of Christ in Congo" (E.C.C in acronym). - In July 2019, I obtained the Master in Psychotrauma, at the University of Kinshasa, at the Faculty of Medicine. Training that allows me to better listen to and accompany people who suffer trauma and stress for biopsychosocial care. - I am married to only one woman, Madame Espérance since 16/10/1988. From this union God gave us five children including two girls and three boys. Just like Abraham and Sarah, my wife and I, are willing to give up everything and go where the need for the Mission is felt. - Elie Fofolo is currently pastor at the local church of Masina 3, the 15th Congo Baptist Community in Kinshasa



They Met Jesus – “Gone Fishing”

Scripture reading: Mark 1:16-20

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. Mark 1:17-18

Simon, Andrew, James, and John met Jesus. When Jesus saw these two sets of brothers working, he told them to come and follow him. The words in Mark 1 show the sense of urgency in this call: verse 18 says that Simon and Andrew left their nets *“at once,”* and verse 20 says that Jesus called James and John *“without delay.”* Following Jesus is a very important calling!

Following Jesus is so important that it means leaving other things behind. Simon and Andrew left their nets to follow Jesus, and James and John left their father and other workers in the fishing boat to follow Jesus.

To show these first disciples what it meant to follow him, Jesus used a fishing image that they would understand. He said to them, *“I will send you out to fish for people.”*

Does this mean that all people who follow Jesus should leave their jobs and become professional missionaries? Does it mean that people who follow Jesus should not go fishing for fish? No, this means that in whatever we do, followers of Jesus focus on loving people first because that’s what Jesus does.

So, in whatever situation we are in, let’s join Jesus in showing his love and sharing his good news of salvation, bringing people to full life in the family of God.

*Dear Jesus, you draw people in with your deep love for us all. Give us faith to follow you,
serving you first in whatever we do, sharing your love always. Amen.*

Dorothy Owen — Administration - The Leprosy Mission Papua-New-Guinea



Being steadfast & stable.

We live in a world that is overloaded with distractions. The cyber environment has produced a kaleidoscope of activities that can & do distract us from our intimacy with God. You can access any subject, entertainment, news etc. Because it is instantly available at the touch of a finger.

Can this & does it affect our relationship with Our Heavenly Father? Only you can answer that question for yourself. For me it's a constant battle. So my heart cries out today: *Holy Spirit help me to be steadfast, steady my heart & mind, direct my steps and help me stay focused on You!* I've prayed, I've asked this, what now?

In my walk with God I've always tried to define the line of His part & my part in our relationship. I've found it's not a straight line! Each is a new day, each day I need to pray: *Holy Spirit help me to be steadfast, steady my heart & mind, direct my steps and help me stay focused on You!*

His part: *2 Peter 1:3-4 NIVUK "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."*

My part: *2 Peter 1:5-8 NIVUK "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

I can remember walking on a swing bridge that was stretched over a deep river & because it was my first time to do this I felt a little afraid of the height & the swinging motion of the bridge. To make me feel safe I held onto the ropes on each side of me, they brought stability to me that built my confidence in my ability to walk across the swing bridge.

His part & me doing my part creates stability to my Christian walk. Embrace what God will & can do for you, coordinate it with your part & bring steadfastness & stability to life.

It's not how high you jump on a Sunday, it's how straight you walk for the rest of the week.

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.



My PROVERBS

Proverbs Ch.1-9 on knowledge, wisdom and integrity)

'TOP 10 HIT-PARADE'!

- 10) Prov.1:7 – “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”
- 9) Prov.3:1-12 – “My son, do not forget my teaching...for length of days...they'll add to you. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you,...so you'll find favour... Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and...bones. Honour the LORD with your wealth...then your barns will be filled with plenty... do not despise the LORD's discipline...for the LORD reproves those He loves...”
- 8) Prov.3:27 – “Don't withhold good from those to whom it's due, when it's in your power to do it.”
- 7) Prov.4:18 – “The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.”
- 6) Prov.4:23 – “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”
- 5) Prov.6:6-11 – “Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest. How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands... and poverty will come upon you like a robber...”
- 4) Prov.6:16-19 – “There are 6 things that the LORD hates, 7 that are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.”
- 3) Prov.6:32 – “He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.”
- 2) Prov.8:13 – “The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and evil ways and perverted speech I hate.”
- 1) Prov.9:10 – “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.”

-P.T.L.!! – Amen.



"Christian love of one's fellows".

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 1 Corinthians 13 King James Bible

The word *charity* originated in late Old English to mean a "Christian love of one's fellows". The older Douay-Rheims and King James versions of the Bible translate instances of "*agape*" (such as those that appear in 1 Corinthians 13) as "*charity*", modern English versions of the Bible typically translate "*agape*" as "*love*." I find the older versions easier to understand.

On 14 June 2017, a fire broke out in the 24-storey Grenfell Tower block of flats in North Kensington, West London, at 00:54 BST; it caused 72 deaths, including those of two victims who later died in hospital. More than 70 others were injured and 223 people escaped. It was the deadliest structural fire in the United Kingdom since the 1988 Piper Alpha disaster and the worst UK residential fire since the Second World War.

I watched an interview on television with a woman who had escaped from the fire. She and her family had managed to escape without serious injury, but had lost their home and all their possessions. While she was still unable to contemplate where to begin to rebuild her life and her family's, someone said to her, "Just think how many people would love to be in your position." I am not sure I would have used those words under the same circumstances. For this woman those words were exactly what she needed to hear at that particular time: she and her family were alive. She will always be grateful for those few words which stopped her feeling sorry for herself and started her on the path to rebuilding her life.

A friend's adult son became quadriplegic in a freak trampoline accident. Sometime afterwards I wrote to enquire how the family were coping. She replied at some length explaining the raw emotions of the whole family, and their feelings about the help and support they were receiving. One thing she said made a deep impression on me, never say "I know how you feel". You don't know, you can never know without going through the same experience. Something to bear in mind when speaking to leprosy affected persons.

Anyone working with persons affected by leprosy needs to be able to communicate with words. First the medical staff have to deal with compliance. It is not easy to persuade anyone to take medication for six to twelve months, and somehow the patient has to be motivated. The motivation is different for each patient. Then comes the counselling and self-help groups, and the economic problems. We do not know exactly how these people feel. To help us find the right words, to completely empathise, we need to experience "Christian love of one's fellows".

**Psalm 57**

For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." Of David. A miktam.] When he had fled from Saul into the cave.

1 Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me,
for in you I take refuge.

I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings
until the disaster has passed.

2 I cry out to God Most High,
to God, who vindicates me.

3 He sends from heaven and saves me,
rebuking those who hotly pursue me—
God sends forth his love and his faithfulness.

4 I am in the midst of lions;
I am forced to dwell among ravenous beasts—
men whose teeth are spears and arrows,
whose tongues are sharp swords.

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
let your glory be over all the earth.

6 They spread a net for my feet—
I was bowed down in distress.
They dug a pit in my path—
but they have fallen into it themselves.

7 My heart, O God, is steadfast,
my heart is steadfast;
I will sing and make music.

8 Awake, my soul!
Awake, harp and lyre!
I will awaken the dawn.

9 I will praise you, Lord, among the nations;
I will sing of you among the peoples.

10 For great is your love, reaching to the heavens;
your faithfulness reaches to the skies.

11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
let your glory be over all the earth.



Psalm 58

For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." Of David. A miktam

- 1 Do you rulers indeed speak justly?
Do you judge people with equity?
- 2 No, in your heart you devise injustice,
and your hands mete out violence on the earth.
- 3 Even from birth the wicked go astray;
from the womb they are wayward, spreading lies.
- 4 Their venom is like the venom of a snake,
like that of a cobra that has stopped its ears,
5 that will not heed the tune of the charmer,
however skillful the enchanter may be.
- 6 Break the teeth in their mouths, O God;
LORD, tear out the fangs of those lions!
- 7 Let them vanish like water that flows away;
when they draw the bow, let their arrows fall short.
- 8 May they be like a slug that melts away as it moves along,
like a stillborn child that never sees the sun.
- 9 Before your pots can feel the heat of the thorns—
whether they be green or dry—the wicked will be swept away.
- 10 The righteous will be glad when they are avenged,
when they dip their feet in the blood of the wicked.
- 11 Then people will say,
"Surely the righteous still are rewarded;
surely there is a God who judges the earth."

Authors in Alphabetical Order

Textuarium

Allan Ekstedt	16 July	Joshua 10,1-15	23 July
Arianna Bobba	13 July	Psalms 41,1-3	1 July
Asaph	5 July	Psalms 49	4 July
Christine Osman	10, 20 July	Psalms 50	5 July
Dan Izzett	29 July	Psalms 51	11 July
David Beazley	24 July	Psalms 91,5-7	2 July
David, King of Israel	11, 12, 18, 19, 25, 26 July, 1, 2 August	Psalms 52	12 July
Dorothy Owen	28 July	Psalms 53	8 July
Élie Fofolo Rev	27 July	Psalms 54	19 July
Eric Chollet	8 July	Psalms 55	25 July
Gordon Brown	23 July	Psalms 56	26 July
James Pender	14 July	Psalms 57	1 August
Jarrett Wilson-Gray	21 July	Psalms 58	2 August
Johan Velema Dr	1 – 3, 7 July	Psalms 119,99	7 July
Marta Risko	17 July	Psalms 119,105	24 July
Nancy Goudie	9 July	Proverbs chapters 1-9	30 July
Otto Kingsley	30 July	Proverbs 11,25	27 July
Peter Laubscher	22 July	Isaiah 53,5	22 July
Pierina d'Souza	6 July	Jeremiah 29,11	20 July
Rosemary Tootle	31 July	Jeremiah 29,11-12	6 July
Sons of Korah	4 July	Matthew 6,22	17 July
Tim Burton	15 July	Matthew 11,28	8 July
		Matthew 25.40	3 July
		Mark 1,16-20	28 July
		Mark 4,38-40	13 July
		John 11	9 July
		John 14,1-27	21 July
		Acts 1	10 July
		Romans 8,28	16 July
		1 Cor 13	31. July
		2 Peter 1,3-8	29 July

The Bridge

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