



TLM Daily Devotions

March 2020



Intro to the month of March

Lent

As we step into this most holy season of the spiritual year culminating in Easter, the glorious resurrection and assurance of our eternal life, let us have a moment on reflecting about what “lent” should really be filled with. Various ideas about the “how?” are accompanying Christianity, causing disputes among the diverse streams of piety from a very ascetic to a flexibly permitting approach.

A thought of Dr RT Kendall <https://rtkendallministries.com/> can be a simple and clear guide for us today:

“I have known times when God did show up during the time of a fast. But I have had more times when He did not intervene... Spurgeon once put it like this: ‘I looked to Christ and the Dove flew in. I looked to the Dove and He disappeared.’ This means we should look to the Lord Jesus when we are fasting, and not look for any immediate results from it. ...Any fasting we do, then, should be done by seeking God’s face without any feeling that we are doing something pious or that He will necessarily step in as we wish or as soon as we wish.”

May the Dove fly in and fill us all!

Blessed Lent!

Marta



Psalm 20

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

¹May the LORD answer you when you are in distress;
may the name of the God of Jacob protect you.

²May he send you help from the sanctuary
and grant you support from Zion.

³May he remember all your sacrifices
and accept your burnt offerings.

⁴May he give you the desire of your heart
and make all your plans succeed.

⁵May we shout for joy over your victory
and lift up our banners in the name of our God.

May the LORD grant all your requests.

⁶Now this I know:

The LORD gives victory to his anointed.
He answers him from his heavenly sanctuary
with the victorious power of his right hand.

⁷Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

⁸They are brought to their knees and fall,
but we rise up and stand firm.

⁹LORD, give victory to the king!

Answer us when we call!



Hero of life – hero of faith

All across the world, people are talking about Dr Li Wen Liang. He was the doctor who discovered the novel coronavirus and in the early morning of 7 Feb, 2.58 am, he was promoted into glory and went home to be with our Father in heaven. We found out he was in fact a fellow brother in Christ. Our hearts are deeply moved by his sacrificial choice to spread awareness about the virus despite the risks he faced, especially to his reputation and to his own health.

He continued to care for patients up until he was infected himself. What a legacy to leave behind of what it means to be like Jesus to those hurting in a time of crisis.

He chose to be an example of Immanuel, 'God with us' to the people of Wuhan.

Please pray for his family, especially his wife who is also infected and 8 months pregnant with their second child. May God heal them supernaturally and give them grace, peace, strength, comfort during this time.

Dr Li Wen Liang penned a deeply touching Chinese poem below of how he would miss his family, his beloved Wuhan and quoted *2 Tim 4:7-8*: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."*

"I don't want to be a hero.
 I still have my parents,
 And my children,
 And my pregnant wife who's about to give birth,
 And many of my patients in the ward.
 Though my integrity cannot be exchanged for the goodness of others,
 Despite my loss and confusion,
 I should proceed anyway.
 Who let me choose this country and this family?
 How many grievances do I have?
 When this battle is over,
 I will look up to the sky,
 With tears like rain."

"I don't want to be a hero.
 But as a doctor,
 I cannot just see this unknown virus
 Hurting my peers
 And so many innocent people.
 Though they are dying,
 They are always looking at me in their eyes,
 With their hope of life."

"Who would have ever realised that I was going to die?
My soul is in heaven,
Looking at the white bed,
On which lies my own body,
With the same familiar face.
Where are my parents?
And my dear wife,
The lady I once had a hard time chasing?"

"There is a light in the sky!
At the end of that light is the heaven that people often talk about.
But I'd rather not go there.
I'd rather go back to my hometown in Wuhan.
I have my new house there,
For which I still have to pay off the loan every month.
How can I give up?
How can I give up?
For my parents without their son,
How sad must it be?
For my sweetheart without her husband,
How can she face the vicissitudes in her future?"

"I am already gone.
I see them taking my body,
Putting it into a bag,
With which lie many compatriots
Gone like me,
Being pushed into the fire in the hearth
At dawn."

"Goodbye, my dear ones.
Farewell, Wuhan, my hometown.
Hopefully, after the disaster,
You'll remember someone once
Tried to let you know the truth as soon as possible.
Hopefully, after the disaster,
You'll learn what it means to be righteous.
No more good people
Should suffer from endless fear,
And helpless sadness."

*"I have fought the good fight.
I have finished the race.
I have kept the faith.
Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness."
2 Timothy 4:7, Holy Bible"*

RIP

Source: Facebook



The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.

Isaiah 35:1 Isaiah 35 speaks of restoration after exile and is a wonderful picture to illustrate the work of TLM where our motto is to cure, care for and restore the lives of people affected by leprosy.

The chapter begins with a promise of restoration. Our lives can become like the desert wilderness when we face trials of many kinds – dry and fruitless but God promises restoration. James wrote, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

The promise of restoration is followed by the challenge to persevere; to strengthen what is weak, encourage the fearful and remind each other of God’s promise of salvation.

The result of persevering through hardship is healing and wholeness – eyes that see, ears that hear, a strengthened walk, a new voice and new growth

This leads to a new way to walk – the ‘Way of Holiness’ – cleansed, saved, redeemed, returning to the Lord with singing and everlasting joy – that deep joy which helps us face the difficulties of life – and ultimately a promise that sorrow and sighing will be no more – we don’t see this yet but it is a promise that brings hope in the midst of sorrow.

Over thirty years ago two young girls arrived at Anandaban Leprosy Hospital near Kathmandu in Nepal. Their families had discarded them as worthless because they had leprosy but someone had told them they could find help if they travelled to the hospital near Kathmandu. Both of them had anaesthetic feet and hands due to nerve damage caused by leprosy and the journey was a very long one for such young girls alone.

For these girls life indeed seemed like the desert wilderness because of their disease and the rejection of their families but during their time at the hospital the desert of their lives began to blossom – they received treatment for their disease and treatment for their souls as they committed their lives to follow Christ.

At the end of last year I was blessed to return to Kathmandu with a group of Leprosy Mission NZ supporters and while there we met up with both these girls now grown women who have overcome the stigma of leprosy and other hardships in their lives; two women who came as young girls with great despair and no hope, whose lives have truly been cured, cared for and restored not just physically but also mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Thanks be to God

Kathleen Gavin (nee Finlay) New Zealand Physiotherapist with TLM in India, Nepal & Bangladesh 1981-1996. Now an ordained Anglican Priest and Spiritual Director living in Raglan, NZ and member of the Leprosy Mission NZ Board.



Your feelings, please...

Have you got feelings? If so, why are you hiding them?

Along my life so far my ongoing problem in human relationships is when the other party is not expressing his/her feelings. And this is very common and occurs day by day... As in our Western culture “behaviour” is the highest priority... Educational principles and preferences of the middleclass do not permit direct expression of emotions, feelings, but a kind of balanced facelessness. This means that you do not show emotions, feelings, do not react with facial expressions, no tears at all! Keeping yourself on a medium standard of “coolness” either you are on the top of your joy, or in the depth of your pain. Expressing feelings and emotions is simply regarded as childish weakness, something “lower”, and an honourable middleclass adult may not allow him/herself to show these emotions! The result? Masses of uncertain, ambivalent people, unable to react and be reacted to appropriately, needing psychologists to help them know how to treat their emotions and human relationships, or if not being able to use this costly service for themselves: suffering on their own.

I call it “sfinx” – a statue-ish behaviour.

I do like to express my feelings. I do like to tear, I do like to hug, and I do like to express vocally my enthusiasm, joy or sorrow. I do enjoy expressing my feelings if I see something beautiful or hear music (it is always beautiful!) or when I am horrified. I think expressing my feeling is showing the other party who I really am. Giving him/her an open door to my heart. So, when communicating with a sfinx, I always feel myself at a loss. I am not honoured to be allowed to share in his/her thoughts. I am neglected and misled through his/her closed-ness. I am excluded from sincerity, forced to remain on the “lukewarmth of politeness”.

Jesus never hid his emotions or feelings. Have you noticed it? Well, true, he really was not a middleclass! His socialising happened in a carpentry workshop! His father Joseph negotiated with clients, talked with labourers while working, shared daily joys, jokes and tragedies, and Jesus as child had this spontaneous behaviour as role model; rather than the hypocrisy of the upper classes of his society. So he, too, surely full heartedly laughed at the wedding of Cana, he was sad, he wept (*John 11:35*), he was angry, he had enough (!) (*Matt 17:17*), he had fears, he was tired (*Mark 4:38*). If he had been a “sfinx”, the evangelists would not have been able to report all these! But those around him became part of his joy, his anger, his exhaustion, his sadness, because he communicated it and openly expressed it! Simply, frankly, openly, showed the innermost feelings of his heart. We are told a lot about his inner self, his emotions, feelings, and sincere reactions. This was part to his being in human form (*Phil 2,7*). Without that we would have a statue to admire, a kind of Buddha. Nothing is farther from Jesus, than this!

Don't hide please your emotions! Your feelings are who you are YOURSELF! If we take it seriously (and we do) that our final existence is not our flesh, but our spiritual flesh/self, meaning what really makes us individuals and created in the image of God, don't hide your “self” behind a “sfinx”! Take courage and step out of the mask! Life would be much easier and communications would be much safer, our comfort would be much more pleasant if in the area of emotions and feelings, simple openness and straightness would reign.

So... just think on Jesus, and express your feelings, please!



Enabled for righteousness

"I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." Matt 5: 17-37 Reading this passage one is tempted to think Jesus was trying to make things more difficult. Obeying the rules were difficult enough but Jesus seemed to be going deeper than what the law stipulated. To kill another human being, for example, is generally a difficult thing for many people unless the person's conscience is dead and can no longer feel. - Jesus said the law actually doesn't stop there. Wow! Jesus put a new angle to the whole matter of killing somebody. Even to be angry with my brother makes me liable to judgement? He goes on to say similar things about gifts presented to God, adultery, sin, divorce, making vows, revenge and relating with enemies.

God knows that keeping these laws by ourselves is an impossible task. That is why Jesus came to reconcile us to Him by fulfilling the law on our behalf. He is the perfect Lamb whose blood was shed for us to receive cleansing from sin. Our efforts at righteousness are recognized as filthy rags before God (Is 64:6).

However, we can leverage on what Jesus Christ did on our behalf. The first step in this seemingly impossible task is to accept the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf. He said those who believe in Him have been given the right to become children of God (John 1: 12). Without leveraging on what Jesus we cannot begin to attempt to be righteous. The criteria Jesus has put down now is that our righteousness must exceed the one of the scribes and Pharisees. This is possible if we align with the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross for us. It is His righteousness we can hide under and receive grace to obey His commandments.

In Matthew 22:40 Jesus combined all the law into two commandments. In summary, Love of God and Love of our neighbor. However, to obey even this can only come from a heart that has submitted to Jesus Christ and received grace of salvation.

My sisters and brothers, righteousness cannot be achieved by what we do, no matter how good we are our righteousness will still come short of God's standard. Cornelius in Acts 4:10 was a man like that; full of good acts but it did not result in righteousness, and God had to send Peter to show him the way to righteousness in Jesus Christ. Acts 4:12 "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

It is Jesus in us that can give us the grace not to get angry, not to take revenge or look at a woman lustfully, that can help us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Let us come to Jesus and surrender to Him, then our righteousness will surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees.

We could pray thus: Lord, I surrender my heart to you, to receive grace to live righteously and continually reap from the many blessings that abound in You. Jesus, I trust in You.

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



The real goal

¹ *I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.*

² *He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.*

³ *You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.*

⁴ *Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

John 15.1-4

What's the goal? Is it to bear fruit?

We understand that God cuts off the branches that bear no fruit. But he also prunes the branches that bear fruit!

The verb in Greek translated by "prune" also means "clean".

If something needs to be cleaned, it means it is not "perfect".

In verse 3 Jesus said : you are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

This reminds me what Jesus said on the cross: "All is done", he has accomplished everything so we can be perfect as it's written in *Matthew 5.48: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*

God's purpose by pruning the branch is for it to be even more fruitful (v.2).

Jesus didn't say a branch produces fruit but it **bears** fruit; the branch does nothing. He even said "no branch can bear fruit by itself" (v.4).

So what's the key to bear fruit? The branch needs sun, water and the cares from the winegrower. I let you think about what it means to us...

But the most important: "the branch must remain in the vine." By remaining united to the vine, the branch receives what it needs to bear fruit. The canal must be open, clean so the sap can flow.

"Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" (v.4).

So for me the goal is not to bear fruit but it is **to remain in Jesus!**

By remaining in Jesus, I receive what I need to bear fruit. The relationship with him must be clean, strong and close.

John 15 continues: ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit... - by remaining united to Jesus, I align my priorities and my deeds in accordance with his will to bear much fruit.

... apart from me you can do nothing. Let's follow Jesus' example:

"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." John 5.19



Psalm 21

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

- ¹ The king rejoices in your strength, LORD.
How great is his joy in the victories you give!
- ² You have granted him his heart's desire
and have not withheld the request of his lips.
- ³ You came to greet him with rich blessings
and placed a crown of pure gold on his head.
- ⁴ He asked you for life, and you gave it to him—
length of days, for ever and ever.
- ⁵ Through the victories you gave, his glory is great;
you have bestowed on him splendor and majesty.
- ⁶ Surely you have granted him unending blessings
and made him glad with the joy of your presence.
- ⁷ For the king trusts in the LORD;
through the unfailing love of the Most High
he will not be shaken.
- ⁸ Your hand will lay hold on all your enemies;
your right hand will seize your foes.
- ⁹ When you appear for battle,
you will burn them up as in a blazing furnace.
The LORD will swallow them up in his wrath,
and his fire will consume them.
- ¹⁰ You will destroy their descendants from the earth,
their posterity from mankind.
- ¹¹ Though they plot evil against you
and devise wicked schemes, they cannot succeed.
- ¹² You will make them turn their backs
when you aim at them with drawn bow.
- ¹³ Be exalted in your strength, LORD;
we will sing and praise your might.



Psalm 22

For the director of music. To the tune of "The Doe of the Morning." A psalm of David.

¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?
² My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.

³ Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the one Israel praises.
⁴ In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.
⁵ To you they cried out and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

⁶ But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.
⁷ All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.
⁸ "He trusts in the LORD," they say,
"let the LORD rescue him.
Let him deliver him,
since he delights in him."

⁹ Yet you brought me out of the womb;
you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast.
¹⁰ From birth I was cast on you;
from my mother's womb you have been my God.

¹¹ Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.

¹² Many bulls surround me;
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.
¹³ Roaring lions that tear their prey
open their mouths wide against me.
¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.

¹⁵ My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.

¹⁶ Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce my hands and my feet.

¹⁷ All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.

¹⁸ They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.

¹⁹ But you, LORD, do not be far from me.
You are my strength; come quickly to help me.

²⁰ Deliver me from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dogs.

²¹ Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

²² I will declare your name to my people;
in the assembly I will praise you.

²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!

²⁴ For he has not despised or scorned
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.

²⁵ From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;
before those who fear you^[f] I will fulfill my vows.

²⁶ The poor will eat and be satisfied;
those who seek the LORD will praise him—
may your hearts live forever!

²⁷ All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
will bow down before him,

²⁸ for dominion belongs to the LORD
and he rules over the nations.

²⁹ All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;
all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—
those who cannot keep themselves alive.

³⁰ Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord.

³¹ They will proclaim his righteousness,
declaring to a people yet unborn:
He has done it!



No greater love

Elizabeth worries that I'll be attacked when I climb the mountain near our home and sure enough, a few weeks ago, I was set upon – by a Guinea Fowl!

There are loads of Guinea Fowl where we live – we even have a family in my garden and on one of the mountain roads, a resident has taken to feeding them in the evenings. The grateful, boisterous birds flock in their droves to her home at suppertime. As I was walking past, a chick became separated from its mother, and I found myself between hungry chick and angry hen, who launched herself at my head, clobbering me and scratching my face. As I retreated, she shepherded her chicks into the safety of the dense mountain bush. Those of you who know Guinea Fowl will have no trouble imagining the cacophony that accompanied this interlude. I was amazed at the power and strength of the bird and especially impressed at how swiftly and resolutely she came to the defence of her chick. Her attack was ferocious.

I thought about the words of Jesus:

*"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing."
Matthew 23:37*

It is easy to see the tenderness of the love of Jesus for His children in these words – there is something supremely loving and gentle about this image. Yet, having just fended off my angry Avian Assailant, I'm also reminded that there is something fiercely protective about the love of a hen for her chicks. The chicks are safe under her wings, knowing that she will fight on their behalf against any adversary.

When Momma hen had a go at me, she was putting her life on her line for her chicks. For as long as her heart continued to beat, this strange sweaty character in battered hat and scruffy shorts would come nowhere near her chicks. I bear her absolutely no ill will. Indeed, I salute her courage and her unquenchable love for her brood. Nothing could have compelled me to strike out at her.

In Psalm 17:8, we read: "Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings."

When something enters the apple of our eye, we act swiftly to remove it. We know it poses grave danger. Extraordinary as it may sound, it is with that Love that God loves and protects us. We are the apple of His eye. God's love is at once both warmly caring and fiercely protective. He is not slow in coming to our defence.

It may be that today you face some particularly harsh test. If so, seek shelter under His wings and find rest in knowing that He keeps you. Each time I climb the mountain, I notice that the Guinea Fowl chicks are a little bigger, a little stronger. They have found that strength by growing up in the shelter of the wings of a loving mother. May you find strength today under the wings of a loving Father.

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



Are You Dressed for the Weather

During the storms in February a group of young men were rescued from the mountain Ben Nevis. One could ask why they had climbed a mountain when the storm was forecast. But more significantly one could ask why they had climbed a mountain in Scotland in winter, whether they knew about the storm or not, with trainers on their feet, with no map, and with no proper waterproof protection?

Have you ever gone out for a walk, even if only to the shops, and suddenly the weather changes? Maybe the rain comes on and you have no coat or jacket or umbrella; or maybe you are dressed for all sorts of weather and the sun comes out and you are too hot, have no sunglasses or head covering. Either of these can happen especially here in Scotland where we can sometimes have all four seasons in the same day!!

In an outdoor clothing shop in Keswick in the Lake District, there is a thought provoking sign. It reads: *'There is no such thing as bad weather; only incorrect clothing'.*

The right clothing can make the difference between discomfort and enjoyment; between being lost on a mountain or in control of the situation.

I think maybe Paul might have encountered something like this back in his day when he urged the *Colossians (3:12)* to clothe themselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. He knew that when people gathered together there would be a universal tendency for arguments and misunderstandings – even within the church (and even within TLM). Egos and personal views and ambitions begin to get in the way, damaging relationships and hindering worship, fellowship growth, or the true work of evangelism in our troubled world. So Paul urges his readers to 'put on' the caring attitudes of love: compassion, and forgiveness in much the same way as they would put on their clothing for the protection of their bodies.

A soldier would not go on duty without his proper uniform. If in a dangerous situation he would make sure he was properly protected both in his uniform and his weapons. I have seen how long soldiers take to prepare their uniforms and their weapons and marvelled at the meticulous care they give to each item, each button and buckle; each boot, even the boot laces. This is especially true if they are going on parade – they are all dressed up and have someplace to go.

We too, have someplace to go. As we prepare to set out on our journey with God today, as we live today in our community, and as we go about God's business, let's give some thought and attention to whether or not we are wearing the correct clothing.

Let's face the day ahead, dressed in the love of God and knowing that we are dressed, ready for whatever "weather" we might face.

Father, as we face today, whatever the day may bring, help us to put on the correct clothing: those attributes of Christ: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience that we may take your love to all we meet or speak to this day. Amen



‘Biblical Proportions’

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” John 15:13

I heard it again this morning, on the radio news! We’ve been having some heavy rain in UK recently, and someone was interviewed, speaking of the effects in their area as “a flood of biblical proportions”. What do they mean? Why ‘biblical’? It reminded me of times I have heard people say something like “I was treated as a leper”: it’s the kind of careless use of words and ideas which we would want to react against!

In October 1984 journalist Michael Buerk reported ‘a biblical famine’ in Ethiopia; it prompted the Band Aid/Live Aid movement in UK to raise money for relief. Since then the word ‘biblical’ seems to be employed when we run out of extreme adjectives. In May last year a member of the UK Parliament warned of ‘catastrophes of biblical proportions’ in a debate about climate change.

We cannot avoid facing the environmental consequences and suffering resulting from climate change, over-exploitation, etc.. Flood, drought, fire, hurricane, -the effects on human lives should prompt us all to action, no matter how small our responses may seem. But, without making light of such sufferings for a moment, can we really describe them as ‘biblical’?

Yes, there is the flood of Noah’s time, and scripture also records some other extreme climate events, food shortages, migrations, etc., but I’m intrigued that we should use the word ‘biblical’ as a kind of ultimate superlative for human suffering.

It’s similar to use of the phrase ‘act of God’ in legal and insurance matters, to describe ‘a natural hazard outside human control.’ Poor God! He gets the blame! And poor Bible! Both are brought in to describe the awful and the catastrophic!

But the Bible has examples in other, more positive, directions too. So in describing heroism we might point to ‘biblical self-sacrifice’; or characterising an act of kindness we might say, ‘it showed compassion of biblical proportions’. And supremely, in almost all our lives, we could say that we experience love of almost biblical heights, another of God’s gifts to us as we are made in his image with an ability to love.

We are coming into the period of ‘Lent’ in UK, the time when we especially reflect on God’s love for us in Christ. In a foreshadowing of his coming self-sacrifice, the Lord reminded us that there is no greater love than that of giving one’s life for a loved-one (John 15:13). That act of self-giving grace reaches its supreme expression in the giving by God of his only Son, that we might live.

Now that is love of biblical proportions!

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.



Nehemiah – my ideal, my mentor as Christian leader

Nehemiah Chapter 1 - 2

Nehemiah was a man of initiatives. He was interested and had concern for his place and his people. Therefore he took initiative to ask and inquired about them from the people who returned from Jerusalem. Nehemiah came to know from their report that the gate & the wall of Jerusalem are broken and the town is in very bad shape. He was also told know that the condition of Jews living there are in very bad. They are in trouble and in disgrace. He set a good example for us. We must be concern and must take interest for our own people and also for the people we are responsible for, like our employees and congregation. We have to take interest in our family, community, church and also in the affairs of our country.

Nehemiah was man of balance interest. He wept as we he came to know about the bad condition of his people and land. He mourned for days and kept fast. He did not sit idle but he developed interest to do something for the place and people there. He wanted to be involved directly to improve the conditions of his people and place. He was not only interested and concerned about the place, Jerusalem but he was also concerned about the people of Jerusalem. Are we as leader have this kind of balance interest to develop and take care of our people?

Nehemiah was man of prayer: He knew that this problem was big and he alone cannot do anything, therefore from very beginning he started praying to God to help him, about the condition of his people and place. We also came to know that he did not immediately answered to the king but he prayed first to God before answering to King about his problem.

Nehemiah knew all important steps of management: First he convinced King about his desire to do something for his place and people. He also shared his plan and timing to go to Jerusalem. The King approved his travel plan to Jerusalem. Nehemiah also asked letter of recommendations to the Governors for the safe travel to Judah and for the supply of timber to him for the reconstruction purpose.

Nehemiah sets example as best leader. He did not jump on the problem and solution of reconstruction of wall & gate immediately after reaching there. He took three days to gather information and listen to what the people were saying on the situation. Then he went out in the night to see the actual condition of the problems. He shared his plans with others, especially with elders for the reconstruction and rebuilding the wall and took them in confidence. He went out and had a look at the actual situation. He quietly went out in the night time but with Lord. He observed the real situation personally and set the situation before the local leaders. He motivates and strengthens the hands of others.

He deals with opposition very wisely: Internal- Pride 3:5, tired and discouraged 4: 10-12, Isolation 4:20, Injustice 5

External: Lies 2:19, Ridicule and mocking 4:1-3, Attack and threat 4: 7-11, Side track 6:1-4, Lies and fear 6: 5-14

The integrity of Nehemiah rested on the Lord: Chapter 6: 12 listen to Him, 5: 15 Careful with money, 10:13 Risk unpopularity to do the right thing.

I was fortunate to learn from the few lectures on Nehemiah when I was young as administrator in The Leprosy Mission, Nepal. His qualities have always motivated me and helped me to take interest in people and the place given to me by Lord. He remains till date my hero as Christian leader.

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



Do we go too far in our efforts to not conform to this world?

We hear a lot about the fact that Jesus spent time not with saints, but with sinners. He made a point of eating and talking with people that religious society considered to be a little too different.

I was reminded recently of this Christ-like tendency when I was watching footage of the grime artist, Stormzy on [YouTube](#), performing on the main stage at Glastonbury music festival last year.

Glastonbury is the UK's leading music festival, attended by more than 100,000 people and watched by millions online. It is not a church-like place; it is a place that people go to have fun and not a place they go to so they can be preached at.

Yet, into that environment, Stormzy brought God. Not only did he bring God, but he brought God in a way that the crowd could understand and relate to. He sang a song he wrote called 'I'm Blinded by Your Grace'. It's a song about God's grace and redemptive power. For 5 minutes, Stormzy turned a popular music festival into what was unmistakably one of the African-majority churches from his native South London.

The thing that struck me most about this video was the footage of people in the crowd singing along, hands in the air. Probably they didn't really have a full appreciation of what they were singing, but they knew it was about God.

A lot of the people in that crowd won't come across God very often. They probably had an idea of Christianity as being something like a subscription to a worldview that stops you from doing all the things you enjoy in life. Who wants to give up a fun life in exchange for a fanciful idea of their being some deity judging us from on high?

The Christian language of sin is an anachronism; it doesn't belong in the year 2020. Does that idea shock or offend you? I know we hear a lot about these ideas in the Bible, but what was the essence behind those words? What was Jesus' fundamental message? It wasn't about sin, it was about love.

The reason that I was so touched by the footage of Stormzy and the reason it reminded me of Jesus reaching out to people outside of religious communities was because I got to see a young man representing my faith with a message that I knew would resonate. Like with Jesus, the message at Glastonbury was that God's love has the power to affect you and that, in turn, inspires you to reflect that love in your actions with others.

One of the main refrains from the song Stormzy performed is "Lord, I've been broken, and although I'm not worthy, you fixed me". *This* is language that makes sense to young people, to non-Christians, to a generation of internet natives that fights with feelings of inadequacy, of not belonging, of worthlessness.

Do we do a good enough job of displaying our faith as not just rooted in love, but defined by it? Or are we too concerned by what is sinful and what we shouldn't do?

Stormzy was a powerful Christian figure on that stage because he was relatable to the audience. I worry sometimes that we take the Bible's exhortation to 'not conform to this world' a little too seriously and we begin to shy away from communities, places, and people that we fear are sinful or a temptation. With one foot firmly in the Glastonbury world and one foot firmly in the church, Stormzy was able to bridge that gap and demonstrate the power of God's sustaining love in his life in a way that made sense to those listening. I bet that's exactly the power Jesus had when he met with people.



Psalm 23

A psalm of David.

¹The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
³ he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.



Psalm 24

Of David. A psalm.

¹The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;

²for he founded it on the seas
and established it on the waters.

³Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD?
Who may stand in his holy place?

⁴The one who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not trust in an idol
or swear by a false god.

⁵They will receive blessing from the LORD
and vindication from God their Savior.

⁶Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek your face, God of Jacob.

⁷Lift up your heads, you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

⁸Who is this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle.

⁹Lift up your heads, you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

¹⁰Who is he, this King of glory?
The LORD Almighty—
he is the King of glory.



God loved the world so much.

John 3v16

Some years ago I was ill, and found it very hard to sleep because I was in so much pain. As I lay tossing and groaning in bed, I felt as if I needed to do something positive as I was getting very low. So instead of lying wishing sleep would come, I decided to start meditating on God's word. So I thought I would spend one week on one aspect and then change over to another. The easiest seemed to be God's love so I started on this, but after one week I realised there was so much more to learn so I felt I must continue in God's love, and the obvious verse seemed to be John 3 v16. God loved the world so much. God Who is the Lord and Creator of all things. Our Heavenly Father. He who made the world and everything in it, including all of us, we who are not worthy of such love. He loves every single one of us, no matter who we are. This has gone on throughout the ages! Different nations, cultures and colours. It becomes more amazing as you think about it!

Then He made the depth of His love so clear to us. He gave His only Son. Who else would be willing to give their only son? No one can ever love us as God does, as individuals and as a whole, there is nothing we can do to make Him love us more, and nothing that we do will make Him love us less. How deep the Fathers love for us! What a wonderful gift!

That whoever believes in Him shall not perish. Everyone has the opportunity to believe in Him, and it is a very simple thing to do, to believe. Somehow we, in the West anyway, make it very complicated and we often wonder why many more people don't seem to want to believe and follow Him. Also many people around the world don't have the opportunity to even hear the Gospel. But we in The Leprosy Mission have plenty of chances to share the wonderful story of the Lord and His great love.

The gift of believing is that we will not perish but have everlasting life.

There is so much in this one verse in the Bible that opens our eyes to the wonder and depth of Gods love. I spent many weeks meditating on it and I felt there was still more to learn. The more we meditate on His word and listen to Him, the more He reveals of His amazing love for us.

As we look forward to Easter, to remembering Jesus and how He suffered on the cross for our sakes and then the glorious day of Resurrection may the Lord remind us of His great sacrificial love for each one of us.

Mollie Clark, previously Purulia, Bhutan and international Office.



Cost of Following Jesus

Matthew 8:18-22

Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go. (Matthew 8:19)

Jesus started His Ministry with a huge success and we are made to understand that His fame was spread all over cities and towns. Chapter 8 of Matthew gives accounts of healing, deliverance and even a confirmation of the prophecy said about Jesus *'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sickness'*.

We all love success, nobody wants to identify with failure; as soon as Jesus began to make success there were many people who offered to follow Him. Success has a way of attracting crowd or multitude; we notice how the celebrities of this world have so many followers on social media such that when they post pictures or write a statement, (even if it make no any sense), they get thousands of likes and retweet or share. We sometimes wish to be in the shoes of those great men and women, because their close associates also benefit from their wealth and influence.

But this is not so in God's kingdom, where success comes with a heavy cost, heavy responsibilities and not very many people wants to bear the responsibilities attached with success. Jesus was very honest about the cost of following Him to those who express their interest.

In this chapter we first saw a man, we are not given his name but his profession, a scribe, which means he has a career. I assume (may be I'm wrong to think like that) this man thought following Jesus may earn him opportunity to earn more benefit, like housing, child welfare, health benefit or other perks that come with working or associating with a famous guy. But Jesus response to him was very blunt, He said *'foxes have holes and birds of the air have nest but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head'*. Can you imagine been so famous and powerful and yet homeless; this is too hard to comprehend!

Another person said he want to take care of family issues first and then he can follow Jesus, but Jesus also responded that He (Jesus) comes first and family is secondary; *'follow me and let the dead bury their own dead'*.

The message Christ is trying to pass across to the people of His time and to us today is in Matthew 6:33, *"but seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you'*.

Let Jesus be the reason why we follow Jesus, but do not follow only because of the comfort or benefit or perks associated with Him. Our heart must be focused on Christ and we must be able to say like Peter; *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'* (John 6:68-69).

Lord Jesus help us to follow You with sincerity of heart, forsaking our own pleasure and seeking to honour You in spirit and in truth, for it is You only that possess eternal life. (Amen)



Be part of the 10%

"All ten have been healed, haven't they? Where are the other nine?" Luke 17.17

One day Jesus cured ten men of leprosy, a disease that was fatal and incurable at the time. But curiously, only one of them turns around to thank him. What about the other nine? Too busy? No doubt grateful, but in a hurry to leave? Have they forgotten because distracted by something else? Or are they too doubtful to say thank you? Perhaps they think that their healing is not final and that it is better to wait before announcing it, or that Jesus expects from them something in return that they do not want or cannot give him. Or are they too selfish to be thankful? In a way, being sick was easier. Now you have to find a job, take responsibility and play a role in society. Perhaps they are too arrogant and think that over time they would have been healed on their own. In addition, saying thank you implies admitting that there is a need. You don't want to show your weakness when you have an image to defend. As far as this story goes, nine out of ten people have a problem with gratitude, at least when it comes to expressing it. Don't be like them. Be part of the 10%! David begins Psalms 106 and 107 with the same sentence: "Celebrate the Lord, for he is good, because his goodness endures forever." Do not spend a single day without remembering and thanking God for your goodness.

Prayer of the day

Thank you Lord for all your kindness.

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

Faites partie des 10 %

« Tous les dix ont été guéris, n'est-ce pas ? Où sont les neuf autres ? » Luc 17.17

Un jour, Jésus guérit dix hommes de la lèpre, une maladie qui à l'époque est mortelle et incurable. Mais curieusement, seul l'un d'entre eux fait demi-tour pour le remercier. Et les neuf autres ? Trop occupés ? Sans doute reconnaissants, mais pressés de partir ? Ont-ils déjà oublié car distrait par autre chose ? Ou sont-ils trop prudents pour dire merci ? Peut-être pensent-ils que leur guérison n'est pas définitive et qu'il vaut mieux attendre avant de l'annoncer, ou que Jésus attende d'eux quelque chose en retour qu'ils ne veulent ou ne peuvent pas lui donner. Ou sont-ils trop égoïstes pour être reconnaissants ? En un sens, être malade était

plus simple. Maintenant il faut trouver du travail, assumer ses responsabilités et jouer un rôle dans la société. Peut-être sont-ils trop arrogants et pensent qu'avec le temps qu'ils auraient été guéris tout seul. De plus, dire merci implique d'admettre qu'on a un besoin. On n'a pas envie de montrer sa faiblesse quand on a une image à défendre. Pour autant que cette histoire soit révélatrice, neuf personnes sur dix ont un problème avec la gratitude, du moins quand il s'agit de l'exprimer. Ne soyez pas comme elles. Faites partie des 10 % ! David commence les Psaumes 106 et 107 par la même phrase : « Célébrez l'Éternel, car il est bon, car sa bienveillance dure à toujours ». Ne passez pas un seul jour sans vous rappeler la bonté de Dieu envers vous et l'en remercier.

Prière du jour

Merci Seigneur pour toutes tes bontés.

Révérend Elie FOFOLO - Né le 05 Aout 1964, fils d'un Pasteur Baptiste les deux parents sont tous morts. Je suis pasteur de vocation et de formation, en 2001 j'ai eu ma licence en Théologie à l'Université Protestante au Congo (U.P.C). Après avoir travaillé comme Pasteur dans l'Eglise locale de Kingabwa 1 de 2004 à 2011, j'ai fait une rencontre avec Angelika Piefer qui dirigeait la Coordination de la Mission contre la Lèpre en République Démocratique du Congo, de là j'ai eu cette passion des personnes affectées par la Lèpre et j'ai invité Angelika de venir faire la Journée Mondiale Lèpre dans notre église le dimanche 29/01/2012, à Kingabwa. Ce travail nous a emmené à découvrir deux fillettes d'une même famille avec des signes de la lèpre et leur frère aussi a fini par être contaminé mais tous trois ont été soignés et sont en bonne santé. Cela suscite cette passion de travailler comme volontaire dans la sensibilisation, la mobilisation et la relation avec les églises locales de la plateforme "Eglise du Christ au Congo" (E.C.C en sigle). - En juillet 2019, j'ai obtenu le Master en Psychotrauma, à l'Université de Kinshasa, à la faculté de Médecine. Une formation qui me permet de mieux écouter et d'accompagner les personnes qui souffrent des traumatismes et des stress pour une prise en charge biopsychosociale. - Je suis marié à une seule femme, madame Espérance depuis le 16/10/1988. De cette union Dieu nous a donné cinq enfants dont deux filles et trois garçons. - Tout comme Abraham et Sarah, ma femme et moi, sommes disposés de tout abandonner et aller où le besoin de la Mission se fait sentir. - Elie Fofolo est actuellement Pasteur à l'Eglise locale de Masina 3, de la 15^{ème} Communauté Baptiste du Congo à Kinshasa



Devotion to Prayer

Colossians 4: 2-4 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

Are you devoted to prayer? That's a convicting question, isn't it? Almost all of us recognise that our prayer life could use some improvement. Part of the problem is that we're inundated with pressures and activities in this fast-paced world. As a result, prayer often becomes a quick sentence or two before rushing out the door, or it is combined with some other activity in an effort to multi-task.

However, lack of time isn't an excuse for not sitting down quietly with the Lord to read His Word and talk with Him. The real problem is our priorities. We're consumed with the urgent and have lost sight of what's truly important. By neglecting prayer, we forfeit greater love for Christ, a deeper relationship with Him, and His power in our weakness.

But our lack of prayer also affects other people. When Paul told the Colossians to devote themselves to prayer, he requested that they include him and his ministry. As Christians, we have been given the responsibility and privilege of interceding for each other. We have the great privilege at the International Office of The Leprosy Mission and in the member countries and offices of the Global Fellowship around the world to come together and pray each day. This is one of the ways we contribute to God's work in the world. Prayer not only displays our love for the Lord, it also displays our love for fellow believers, people whom we serve and for all of God's creation.

Knowing what is at stake is a great motivation for faithful prayer. To make this a priority in your own personal life, begin by setting aside a time and place to meet with the Lord each day.

Try keeping a written record of your requests and God's answers, and you will see your faith strengthen, your love for Christ deepen, and your devotion to prayer increase.

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

(Inspiration from IN TOUCH)



A Man Born Blind Receives Sight

9 Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. ² And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"³ Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. ⁴ I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." John 9 New King James Version (NKJV)

A simple answer to a simple question, but why I wonder did the disciples need to ask the question? Probably because all their studies of the scriptures had taught them the sins of the fathers would be visited on the children. *Exodus 20:5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me."* Similar references may be found in Deuteronomy and Numbers.

The wise men who wrote Exodus, Deuteronomy and Numbers were people like us. They had eyes to see, and I am sure they noticed that children resembled their parents in many ways. It was to be many years before the genetic code would be mapped, but I suspect the writers of the law had seen enough to make them believe many characteristics of the parents could be passed on to the children. People who live in leprosy endemic countries also see children growing up in families affected by leprosy, and see the infection passed to the children. It is easy to see how fear of leprosy affected people came about. Leprosy is not inherited but recent findings suggest susceptibility to the disease may have a genetic basis.

And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Luke 24:45

Jesus' answer to the disciples was probably easy for them to understand; less easy for the man born blind or those suffering from leprosy to accept.



Psalm 25

Of David.

¹In you, LORD my God,
I put my trust.

²I trust in you;
do not let me be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.

³No one who hopes in you
will ever be put to shame,
but shame will come on those
who are treacherous without cause.

⁴Show me your ways, LORD,
teach me your paths.

⁵Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.

⁶Remember, LORD, your great mercy and love,
for they are from of old.

⁷Do not remember the sins of my youth
and my rebellious ways;
according to your love remember me,
for you, LORD, are good.

⁸Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.

⁹He guides the humble in what is right
and teaches them his way.

¹⁰All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful
toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.

¹¹For the sake of your name, LORD,
forgive my iniquity, though it is great.

¹²Who, then, are those who fear the LORD?
He will instruct them in the ways they should choose.

¹³They will spend their days in prosperity,

and their descendants will inherit the land.

¹⁴The LORD confides in those who fear him;
he makes his covenant known to them.

¹⁵My eyes are ever on the LORD,
for only he will release my feet from the snare.

¹⁶Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.

¹⁷Relieve the troubles of my heart
and free me from my anguish.

¹⁸Look on my affliction and my distress
and take away all my sins.

¹⁹See how numerous are my enemies
and how fiercely they hate me!

²⁰Guard my life and rescue me;
do not let me be put to shame,
for I take refuge in you.

²¹May integrity and uprightness protect me,
because my hope, LORD, is in you.

²²Deliver Israel, O God,
from all their troubles!



Psalm 26

Of David.

¹Vindicate me, LORD,
for I have led a blameless life;
I have trusted in the LORD
and have not faltered.

²Test me, LORD, and try me,
examine my heart and my mind;

³for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love
and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness.

⁴I do not sit with the deceitful,
nor do I associate with hypocrites.

⁵I abhor the assembly of evildoers
and refuse to sit with the wicked.

⁶I wash my hands in innocence,
and go about your altar, LORD,

⁷proclaiming aloud your praise
and telling of all your wonderful deeds.

⁸LORD, I love the house where you live,
the place where your glory dwells.

⁹Do not take away my soul along with sinners,
my life with those who are bloodthirsty,

¹⁰in whose hands are wicked schemes,
whose right hands are full of bribes.

¹¹I lead a blameless life;
deliver me and be merciful to me.

¹²My feet stand on level ground;
in the great congregation I will praise the LORD.



“See, I am doing a new thing!”

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? Isaiah 43: 18-19

When God created the heavens and the earth something brand new happened! *“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep”*. Out of nothing, out of chaos and emptiness, out of compact darkness God created a beautiful and shining creation.

Only God has the ability to create something new. Our enemy has not that power, he can only imitate what God is doing. Mostly he try to destroy or corrupt God’s action.

In the God created salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, something new is coming. To be a Christian is not just to change religion or to start go to church. It’s not to try to improve our character or start to read the Bible. No, it’s a very different and changing experience.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

“Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” John 3:3

To be a Christian is to receive:

- A **new** life: *“just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” Rom 6:4*
- A **new** heart: *“I will give you a new heart; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” Eze. 36: 26*
- A **new** spirit: *“will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them” Eze. 11:19*
- A **new** song: *“He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God” Ps. 40:3*
- **New** strength: *“those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength” Isa. 40:31*
- **New** compassion: *“for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” Lamentation 3:23*
- **Renewed** mind: *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Rom. 12:2*

God is always doing a new thing! He will do something new in our personal lives. He will do something new in The Leprosy Mission in our different countries and something new in our global Fellowship. This is exciting and creates a lot of expectations and curiosity.

One glorious day God will say: *“I am making everything new!” Rev. 21:5*. There will be *“a new heaven and a new earth”*, and God’s original plan and purpose for his creation will be implemented.

Jesus said to his disciples when he shared The Holy Communion: *“Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” Marc 14:25*

Until then, what will God do in my life? What will God do in our country organization? What will God do in our Fellowship? *Probably he will renew us and do something brand new!*



Behold the lamb of God

In the first chapter of John's Gospel, John the Baptist described Jesus to his followers as, *'the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'*, and I have been wondering what picture John the Baptist had in mind when he described Jesus as a young sheep?

John was the son of a priest - he was Zechariah and Elizabeth's son, and probably Jesus's cousin. Zechariah worked in the Temple, so his young son, John, would no doubt have heard lots of stories about the rituals of the Temple, and how every morning and evening a lamb was sacrificed for the sins of the people. Could it be that John was saying that 'in the Temple a lamb is offered every morning and evening, but Jesus, by his death, will be the only sacrifice which can really deliver us from sin'?

Or it may be that John the Baptist, having been steeped in the scriptures, knew all about the lamb that was described in the prophets. Jeremiah wrote that 'I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter And I did not know it was against me that they devised schemes, saying, let us cut him off from the land of the living, so that his name will no longer be remembered.' Isaiah also wrote that 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. Both these prophets had a vision of one who by his sufferings and his sacrifice would redeem his people, who would redeem us. Maybe John's realization was that Jesus was that lamb.

But there is another picture of a lamb which would have been very familiar to the Jews and to John, and which some Bible commentators have suggested might have been the one at the forefront of John's mind. Between the Old and New Testaments there were the days of the great struggles of the Maccabees. In those days the lamb, and especially the horned lamb, was the symbol of a great conqueror. Judas Maccabaeus is described in this way, and the prophet Samuel, and the Kings David and Solomon are too.

The lamb - strange as it may sound to us - stood for the conquering champion of God. It may well be that John's 'lamb of God' is not a picture of gentle and helpless weakness, but rather a picture of conquering majesty and power. Maybe this was what John was thinking as he introduced Jesus as the lamb of God.

There is one more description, that I found in a favourite book of mine on John's Gospel. The writer said, "What does John the Baptist mean when he described Jesus as **the lamb of God**?

Not in this context the lamb who is sacrificed, the innocent lamb whom we offer to God in place of ourselves, but the strong young male sheep who leads the flock.'

The commentator continued, 'I once saw in the Lebanon a shepherd bringing his flock to water, with the leaders of the flock, two male sheep, acting the role which the sheep dog plays in our own country. The shepherd called to them by name. They paraded up and down in front of the flock, keeping them back till the shepherd gave the word, and then leading them to the spring of flowing water.'

So perhaps John the Baptist was picturing Jesus as the lamb of God, who knows the shepherd and is known by him, and in obedience to him he, the lamb, will lead the flock, will lead us, to fountains of living water.

We can take our pick of the four descriptions of what John the Baptist might have been thinking when he called Jesus the lamb of God. But taken all together they give us a very full picture of God's gift to us of his only son.

Glynis Forbes – retired member of TLM

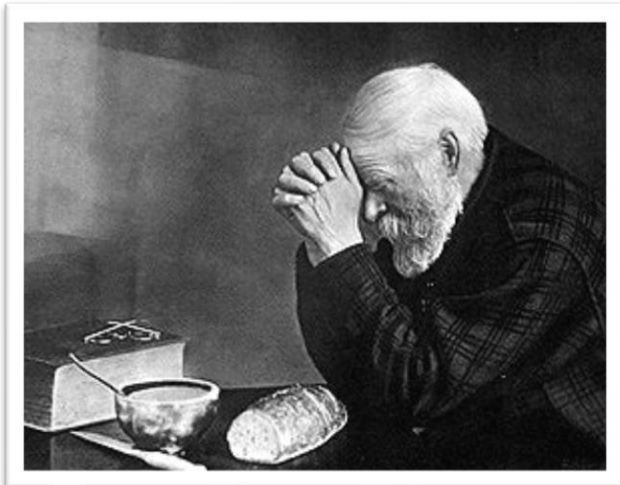
Life to the full

From John 10:10

Since the beginning of the year, every morning I am trying to have a coffee with the Lord. While having breakfast, as a proper Italian with coffee and biscuits, I am taking time to spend with the Lord. I am usually reading on scriptures and comments looking for good inspired intentions for the day.

On one specific morning, I was about to be lazy and skip it for the following day, when I decided to turn on anyway the eBook reader to see what was on for that day. The title for that morning devotion was: **LIFE TO THE FULL.**

As you can imagine I pictured myself Jesus, saying: *“don’t get around, I am here waiting for our morning coffee”*, and felt obliged to read it trough.



The comment was mentioning the image on the left, a picture taken by photographer Eric Enstrom at the end of World War I.

In this picture, we can see a bearded old men sits at a table with his head bowed and his hands clasped in prayer. On the table, there is only a book, spectacles, a bowl, a loaf of bread, and knife. *(Probably, a similar set for many in world I thought).*

Nothing more, but also nothing less.

I stopped my reading and went on google to see the picture itself. At the first glance, I had a bit of disappointment...*not that fancy or artistic picture, not much details to observe, I though.* Then looking into it more carefully, I felt quite the opposite: here is a full life; one lived in gratitude, one you and I can experience as well regardless of our circumstances. When Jesus speaks about life ...to the full, we make great mistake to think about many material things or many experiences and adventures. The fullness Jesus speaks of it is not fell into worldly categories, but rather a heart, mind, soul, and strength overflowing in gratitude that the Good Shepherd gave “his life for the sheep” and cares for us and our daily needs.

This is a full life – enjoying relationship with God – that’s possible for every one of us ... *sometimes it takes only the time for a coffee.*

Some useful personal questions:

1. *Would you say that right now you are living “life to the full”?*
2. *Why or why not?*
3. *Have you had a tendency to equate full with many things?*



THE MINISTRY

(as seen by Chuck Swindoll)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Giving - A Thanksgiving Gift unto God

Apostle Paul says in *2 Corinthians 9:7&11*, “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.”

Very often church congregations are exhorted to give generously to the Church. Some respond to that call out of fear, some out of guilt, some out of peer pressure but some others, joyfully. Very often “why” the believer should give remains ambiguous. In the letters to the Corinthian church by Paul and other scriptures we learn both the “why” and also “how” of Christian giving. It is purposive. It is gratitude in action for God’s grace in giving us Jesus.

The teachers of the Word of God should receive their living from the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14). The recipients of the Word are obliged to meet the needs of their teachers. The teacher is a labourer who deserves his wages “for it is written in the Law of Moses not to muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain” (1 Corinthians 9:9). The teacher is also equally obligated to teach the scriptures based on sound doctrine. Timothy charges them thus, “Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season;” (2 Timothy 4:2). Giving binds the teacher and the pupil into a fellowship. Our giving is in response to and in expectation of receiving true spiritual seed.

Giving enables the gospel to be preached to the unreached. In Paul’s strong commendation of the Corinthian Church for supporting him in the propagation of the gospel, he alludes to a sound reason for giving i.e., supporting missionaries. Non-believers cannot know the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus unless someone preaches it. The missionaries bear a huge responsibility as ambassadors of Jesus. Paul, the missionary often thanked his benefactors for their generous gifts, even though he was content in every situation/circumstance, in Christ (Philippians 4:17-19). By supporting gospel teachers through their giving, the congregation engages itself with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19).

Giving is to meet the needs of the poor and needy. The poor and needy are dear to Jesus. The Church has the responsibility to cater for their needs. In doing so, the Church is manifesting the very character of God, love and compassion. His heart pains at the plight of the hungry, the thirsty and the homeless. Jesus said that whatever we do (give) for such people, we are doing it all unto Him. Such acts of compassion are honored by God (Matthew 25:34-45). Church through its giving demonstrates that Jesus is the hope for the hopeless. The stewards of the Church must perform their duty unto the Lord in diligently using the resources entrusted to them.

Giving is sowing and also for reaping. A sower who sows cheerfully, reaps bountiful. God is never only a receiver. Sowing and receiving is a principle established by God. The financial seed not only produces a positive outcome but also gives more resources to the giver (Malachi 3:8-10). Jesus said “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:38). The sower has the right to reap the harvest. God blesses those who bless others (Proverbs 19:17).

Giving is a joyful act of worship of man in awe, devotion and love to God. Giving, which is a gift, exalts God who is grace in abundance. The revelation of grace makes one exhibit the spirit of generosity. Paul describes the gifts of the Philippian church as, “They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God”

(Philippians 4:18). The extent of giving is voluntary to each believer. It is a matter of the heart. Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). It is the attitude of giving that matters and not the value of the gift (Luke 21:2-4). Paul urges believers to give without grudging but with joy in one's heart.

When the purpose for giving is realized and the extent is determined with peace in one's heart, we cannot but be cheerful givers and doing good for others. Such people please God (Hebrews 13:16).

Our giving is worshipping God and for establishing His kingdom in this world

For His glory, in gratitude.

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



Psalm 27

Of David.

¹The LORD is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?

²When the wicked advance against me
to devour^a me,

it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.

³Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;

though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.

⁴One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:

that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,

to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

⁵For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.

⁶Then my head will be exalted
above the enemies who surround me;
at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the LORD.

⁷Hear my voice when I call, LORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.

⁸My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"
Your face, LORD, I will seek.

⁹Do not hide your face from me,
do not turn your servant away in anger;

you have been my helper.
Do not reject me or forsake me,
God my Savior.

¹⁰Though my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will receive me.

¹¹Teach me your way, LORD;
lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.

¹²Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
spouting malicious accusations.

¹³I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.

¹⁴Wait for the LORD;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD.



Psalm 28

Of David.

¹To you, LORD, I call;
you are my Rock,
do not turn a deaf ear to me.

For if you remain silent,
I will be like those who go down to the pit.

²Hear my cry for mercy
as I call to you for help,
as I lift up my hands
toward your Most Holy Place.

³Do not drag me away with the wicked,
with those who do evil,
who speak cordially with their neighbors
but harbor malice in their hearts.

⁴Repay them for their deeds
and for their evil work;
repay them for what their hands have done
and bring back on them what they deserve.

⁵Because they have no regard for the deeds of the LORD
and what his hands have done,
he will tear them down
and never build them up again.

⁶Praise be to the LORD,
for he has heard my cry for mercy.

⁷The LORD is my strength and my shield;
my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.
My heart leaps for joy,
and with my song I praise him.

⁸The LORD is the strength of his people,
a fortress of salvation for his anointed one.

⁹Save your people and bless your inheritance;
be their shepherd and carry them forever.



A still small voice

1 Kings 19:9-12

How do we discern the voice of God, or how do we know when God is leading us in a specific direction? I'm not sure there's an easy answer to this question, and certainly God will speak or reveal himself in different ways to different people.

For example – I have a friend who tells of the time that she was alone in the kitchen of her apartment, and distinctly heard a voice behind her as if there were someone else in the room. She turned round to check – but then realised there was nobody, and that this was a very precious moment. That voice was the start of her journey into mission which took her first to South America and then to Macau where she spent some years working among drug addicts and sex workers.

I have never heard an actual voice in that way, but there have been times when I have sensed an incredibly strong conviction prompted by something other people have said. My call to offer for mission service came as the result of such an experience (shared in an earlier version of the *Bridge*), as was my call to train to be a preacher.

Then there are times when God offers words of encouragement or comfort, and I recall very distinctly one such occasion when he used some verses in Isaiah at a time when I felt very inadequate while serving as a mission partner in Nepal I (also shared this in an earlier version of the *Bridge*)

So do be encouraged as I share a very recent experience when words of encouragement and comfort came directly from the *Bridge* itself. You may wish to read again Kathleen Gavin's contribution on 13th February. It came just after we had returned home from a 10 day break, and I had to face various issues relating to our local church which were deeply challenging. I really wasn't looking forward to working through these. One of them was in process before we went away, but the other came on the day after we returned – it felt rather unfair and I have to confess that I was a bit angry that they came on top of each other like that!

Then with all these emotions buzzing around me, I read the *Bridge* for that day. The piece from Father Thomas Keating was wonderfully meaningful and inspiring, but the quote from Isaiah 41:10 just floored me. This was the very same verse that came to me when in Nepal on that occasion when I felt very inadequate for the task ahead of me. It was clearly God's word of encouragement to me.

I just praise God for all such moments when we hear that still small voice – in whatever way it comes.

Trevor Durston - General Director from 1993-2006. Now retired and working as a volunteer speaker for TLM.



Corrie Ten Boom

“God does not have problems. Only plans,” proclaimed Corrie ten Boom when a clerical error allowed her to be released from a Nazi concentration camp one week before all women prisoners her age were executed. Her sister and father were also killed at the camp.

Though she was released from the horror of Ravensbruck concentration camp, Corrie continued to live with a remarkable reliance on God, just as her family had as they hid Jews from Nazi terror. Generations of ten Booms held Christian prayer meetings for Israel for 100 years prior to World War II.

Traveling the world as an ambassador of the power of forgiveness in Christ, Corrie later established rehabilitation centres to help other Holocaust survivors.

The main reason I am highlighting Corrie Ten Boom’s story is her act of forgiveness. After the war ended, she returned to Germany to declare the grace of Christ. She came face to face with the Guard at the concentration camp who had killed her sister and father. She recognised him but of course, he could not recognise her as she was amongst thousands of other women prisoners. The Guard had since become a Christian and he knew that God had forgiven him for his cruel acts, but he had come to gain forgiveness from Corrie ten Boom.

The following is what happened next beautifully written by Corrie:

“But forgiveness is not an emotion—I knew that too. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. "Jesus, help me!" I prayed silently. "I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling." And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust out my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.”

Corrie Ten Boom’s quote:

“Forgiveness is to set a prisoner free and to discover the prisoner was you”

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

Authors in Alphabetical Order

Textuarium

Allan Ekstedt	23 March		1 Kings 19,9-12	30 March
Anne-Claude Jonah	6 March		Nehemiah 1-2	12 March
Arianna Bobba	25 March		Psalms 20	1 March
Bunmi Oluloto	17 March		Psalms 21	7 March
Christine Osman	10 March		Psalms 22	8 March
David Beazley	11 March		Psalms 23	14 March
David, king of Israel	1, 7, 8, 14, 15, 21, 22, 28, 29 March		Psalms 24	15 March
Elie Fofolo Rev	18 March		Psalms 25	21 March
Glynis Forbes	24 March		Psalms 26	22 March
Kalpana Shah	31 March		Psalms 27	28 March
Kathleen Gavin-Finlay	3 March		Psalms 28	29 March
Li Wen Liang Dr	2 March		Isaiah 35,1	3 March
Marta Risko	4 March		Isaiah 43,18-19	23 March
Melonie Rajaratnam	19 March		Matthew 5,17-37	5 March
Mollie Clark	16 March		Matthew 8,18-27	17 March
Moses Onoh MD	5 March		Matthew 23,37	9 March
Otto Kingsley	26 March		Luke 17,17	18 March
Peter Laubscher	9 March		John 1,29-30	24 March
Pradeep and Sarah Failbus	12 March		John 3,16	16 March
Raju PLN Dr	27 March		John 9,1-5	20 March
Rosemary Tootle	20 March		John 10,10	25 March
Tim Burton	13 March		John 15,1-4	6 March
Trevor Durston	30 March		John 15,13	11 March
			2 Cor 9,7 and 11	27 March
			Philippians 2,7	4 March
			Colossians 3,12	10 March
			Colossians 4,2-4	19 March
			2 Timothy 4,7-8	2 March

The Bridge - TLM Daily Devotions

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