

The Bridge

May 2022





Intro to the month of May

As one year ago, now in 2022, too, The Leprosy Mission-family will come together online on a Day of Prayer.

This is to happen on the **11th May, Wednesday**.

Each one of our worldwide family is most welcome to join!

For making your participation easy, read below the invitation of our International Director from the past year, and act accordingly!

“Dear Praying Friends and Family,

We would love you be involved! You can take part in one or more of the following ways;

∅ By contacting your local TLM office to see what they have planned and finding out how you can take part in their activities on the day.

∅ By praying for the day itself – that it will be a special time of praise, petition, listening and encouragement.

Thank you for your prayers and support for TLM and its ministry. We look forward to you joining us for the Day of Prayer.

With God’s blessing at this time.

Brent Morgan - International Director”



Psalm 65

For the director of music. A psalm of David. A song.

- ¹ Praise awaits you, our God, in Zion;
to you our vows will be fulfilled.
- ² You who answer prayer,
to you all people will come.
- ³ When we were overwhelmed by sins,
you forgave our transgressions.
- ⁴ Blessed are those you choose
and bring near to live in your courts!
We are filled with the good things of your house,
of your holy temple.
- ⁵ You answer us with awesome and righteous deeds,
God our Savior,
the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas,
- ⁶ who formed the mountains by your power,
having armed yourself with strength,
- ⁷ who stilled the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
and the turmoil of the nations.
- ⁸ The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders;
where morning dawns, where evening fades,
you call forth songs of joy.
- ⁹ You care for the land and water it;
you enrich it abundantly.
The streams of God are filled with water
to provide the people with grain,
for so you have ordained it.
- ¹⁰ You drench its furrows and level its ridges;
you soften it with showers and bless its crops.
- ¹¹ You crown the year with your bounty,
and your carts overflow with abundance.
- ¹² The grasslands of the wilderness overflow;
the hills are clothed with gladness.
- ¹³ The meadows are covered with flocks
and the valleys are mantled with grain;
they shout for joy and sing.



The Magnificence of the Cross of Calvary

Part 1 of 6 - Challenges and Choices at the Cross

1 Corinthians 5:21 "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"

Luke 23:46 "Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last."

The cross is at the heart of Christian faith. More important than beauty, power or the economy of the world is the death (and then the resurrection) of Jesus. To be on the cross was the apex moment in Jesus' life. The crucifixion was the culmination of paying in full for the sin of man from the time of his disobedience in the garden of Eden.

The 'messenger can not be detached from the message'. Jesus, the Messiah must go through the import of the message He brought to the world. There is no broad way to heaven. The path is narrow. God willed it that way. Jesus went to the cross to redeem man in accordance with God's will. The same is true for each of us when we share the gospel. There is no substitute for sacrifice.

The cross most vividly pictures a life that is totally surrendered to the purpose of God when we witness Jesus on the cross and observe what He ministered from it. Often what easily comes to our mind is the sacrifice and suffering of Jesus on the cross. But Jesus also served God from the cross.

The three men hanging on their crosses at Calvary was not a mere historical event. It was set up by God for man to draw precious lessons on eternal life. On either side of Jesus' cross were criminals, each of them had said something specific Jesus, to satisfy their individual needs. Their statements were profound. They tell a story of 'joy of gratitude' and 'pain of ingratitude'. They contrast two attitudes, one of confrontation and another of confession out of conviction.

The cross provides an opportunity to minister which can impact the eternity for everyone who approaches it in humble submission. Whatever be one's circumstance, at the cross we get an opportunity to serve others so that they experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. The cross shines a ray of hope for the one who cries out for salvation.

People around us at times mock, challenge or test our faith instead of facing their reality. Jesus gives us the power to persevere when we totally surrender ourselves to the Holy Spirit, no matter how severe the circumstances are. The cross reassures God's love and the answer to our prayers in times of deep pain/trials. Our hope to face present challenges in life, suffering and death, is the end result of the work of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection. If we will look unto Jesus in our hour of need, it is of great encouragement to know that all hope is not lost.

A journey to the cross of Jesus is a journey to connect with the love of Christ and the rediscovery of the path that lays ahead, one of perseverance, faith, mercy and kindness. The cross reveals the mind of God, His compassionate love and justice.

God is a loving God who will heed our prayers if we go to him regardless of the state and time of our challenge. Jesus on the cross is a picture of God, who answers us in our situations of desperation if we look up to him and not shift the blame on to others.

As I look up unto the cross, I am inspired to live for Jesus.

In gratitude, for His glory.

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



Judas Iscariot – Part 1

Matthew 26, 20-29

The story of Holy Week compels us to confront the person of Judas Iscariot whose betrayal of Christ led to Christ's death.

The Rev Lucy Winkett, Rector of St James, Piccadilly in the heart of London invites us to consider Judas from perspectives that we may not have previously considered in one of the sermons included in her book, *Reading the Bible with your feet*.¹

In a sermon preached on the Sunday after Easter 2021 Winkett tells the story of a conversation with a man who had been sleeping on London's streets for many years. Frustrated with outreach workers who he says promise much but are never quite able to help in the way he wants, he told her a story of a well-meaning worker who approached his tent one evening as he was bedding down for the night. He pretended to be asleep but the person persisted.

'What's your name?' she asked.

'What's yours first?' he replied

'What's your name?' she repeated. 'For our records'

'Ok,' he said 'my name is Dweller.'

Dweller, she wrote down. 'Is that your first name or your second name?'

'My second name,' he said. 'My first name is Tent. Now go away.'

'Dweller's' conversation with Winkett ended with a thought-provoking question from him directly to her as a priest.

We've just celebrated Easter, he reminded her. Assuming that Jesus and Judas were both necessary for the salvation of humankind, what did she think of this: Jesus suffered on the cross for a short time and is now worshipped in all eternity. Judas received a small amount of money which he didn't have time to spend, and is now damned for all eternity. In the service of salvation, who has made the greater sacrifice?

David Parry - David Parry was a member of the TLM England and Wales Board from 1990 to 2002 and its Chairman from 1995 to 2002, and a member of the TLM International Board from 2001 to 2013 and its Chairman from 2009 to 2013. He is currently enrolled on a Certificate in Theology course at St Albans Cathedral, England where he has been a Guide since 2009.

¹ Winkett, Lucy (2021) *Reading the Bible with your feet*. Norwich UK, Canterbury Press



Judas Iscariot – Part 2

Matthew 26, 17-26

Two images in particular of Judas Iscariot have remained with me from my various readings during Holy Week this year.

The first was the response of a lecturer who, when asked by a student what Jesus was doing when, in the words of the Apostle's Creed, 'he descended into Hell', replied that he was looking for Judas.

The second concerns the artist Mark Cazalet who, having been commissioned by a convent in London to paint a set of Stations of the Cross, reflected with the Mother Superior of the Convent on what Mary would have done on the evening of Good Friday. Together they imagined that she would have gone to visit Judas's mother. Two women, sitting together at the end of a terrible day, remembering their sons, both dead in the service of salvation.

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Story of Change

My name is Vasnathakumary, I live in Chavukkadi village, Sri Lanka, with my husband and three young children.

For a long time I had a patch on my hand with no feeling, but I did not know what it was. I went to many local temples and asked priests to pray for this patch to go away. I then began to lose feeling in my hand, so I went to the local hospital and they suggested I go to the general hospital.

When I finally made up my mind to visit the hospital, the government imposed lockdown due to Coronavirus. I was very upset and felt depressed. Then I went once again to the local temple and vowed that I would offer a hen if God would cure my hand. Nothing changed.

At that time, despite lockdown, KKM team (Kaveri Kala Mantharam, TLM Partner in Northern Sri Lanka) visited our village along with the PHI (Primary Health Inspector). They were conducting a leprosy awareness programme following all covid precaution. During that programme, I realised that I may have leprosy. I then attended a leprosy screening program and was diagnosed with MB leprosy and grade 1 disability. I am taking MTD regularly with help of the local KKM volunteer. I am also participating in self-care training regularly.

I am now working with my temple priest & my local village people to spread leprosy awareness. KKM and leprosy association have provide me leadership and skills training. Under my leadership 14 MTD patients are currently supporting each other to compete treatment and carefully practicing self-care to prevent any disability from leprosy.

I am growing well in community service.

Vasanthakumary, Sri Lanka



Blowing Bubbles

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 1 Corinthians 13:11

A stream of coloured bubbles came past the window from the children playing next door, reminding me how I enjoyed the same pastime when I was a child. As an adult I looked at the bubbles and saw surface tension forces holding them together and white light split into different wavelengths at the refractive surface. The bubbles were still pretty and a bit of extra knowledge did not spoil my enjoyment. When I was a child and I looked in a mirror I saw myself. Now I can look in a mirror and contemplate the way my cells are aging. However, one of my blind spots is large quantities, add too many noughts either side of the decimal point, and I switch off. The Leprosy Mission Purulia is not troubled by light pollution so on a clear night you may star gaze, and as you gaze you see more and more stars. Some of the stars are already extinct and all you can see is their light still travelling to earth. And beyond what you can see are more stars and what else?

My blind spot regarding large quantities come into play here. There is no way I can understand how my molecules of DND relate to the size of the universe, but this does not worry me. I am more than happy to rely on 1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

Psalm 19_The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

In biblical cosmology, the firmament is *the vast solid dome created by God on the second day of his creation of the world to divide the primal sea into upper and lower portions so that the dry land could appear.*

Rosemary Tootle volunteer Purulia 1968-69. Volunteer International Office for last 20 years



Psalm 66

For the director of music. A song. A psalm.

- ¹ Shout for joy to God, all the earth!
² Sing the glory of his name;
make his praise glorious.
- ³ Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
So great is your power
that your enemies cringe before you.
⁴ All the earth bows down to you;
they sing praise to you,
they sing the praises of your name."
- ⁵ Come and see what God has done,
his awesome deeds for mankind!
⁶ He turned the sea into dry land,
they passed through the waters on foot—
come, let us rejoice in him.
⁷ He rules forever by his power,
his eyes watch the nations—
let not the rebellious rise up against him.
- ⁸ Praise our God, all peoples,
let the sound of his praise be heard;
⁹ he has preserved our lives
and kept our feet from slipping.
¹⁰ For you, God, tested us;
you refined us like silver.
¹¹ You brought us into prison
and laid burdens on our backs.
¹² You let people ride over our heads;
we went through fire and water,
but you brought us to a place of abundance.
- ¹³ I will come to your temple with burnt offerings
and fulfill my vows to you—
¹⁴ vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke
when I was in trouble.
¹⁵ I will sacrifice fat animals to you
and an offering of rams;
I will offer bulls and goats.
- ¹⁶ Come and hear, all you who fear God;
let me tell you what he has done for me.
¹⁷ I cried out to him with my mouth;
his praise was on my tongue.

¹⁸ If I had cherished sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened;
¹⁹ but God has surely listened
and has heard my prayer.
²⁰ Praise be to God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!



Psalm 67

For the director of music. With stringed instruments. A psalm. A song.

- ¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face shine on us—
² so that your ways may be known on earth,
your salvation among all nations.
³ May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.
⁴ May the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you rule the peoples with equity
and guide the nations of the earth.
⁵ May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.
⁶ The land yields its harvest;
God, our God, blesses us.
⁷ May God bless us still,
so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.



Are you a Tychicus-type?!

I don't know for how many years you've worked under Dr. Stanley Browne, Dr. Paul Brand, Bill Edgar, Eddie Askew, Trevor Durston or Brent Morgan, and what sort of service you've rendered to leprosy sufferers in that time.

Tychicus always gave of his best!

For at least ten years he was a co-labourer with the apostle Paul.

These verses testify of his impacting contribution towards the Early Church:-

1) HE WAS A CHOICE MISSIONARY!

Eph.6:21 – “So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. I have sent him to you for this very purpose.....and that he may encourage your hearts.”

2) HE WAS A DEPENDABLE EMISSARY!

Col. 4:7,8 – “Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you.....that he may encourage your hearts.”

3) HE WAS A WORTHY SUBSTITUTE!

2 Tim. 4:12 – “Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.”

4) HE WAS A READY AND WILLING TEAM-PLAYER!

Titus 3:12 – “When I send Artemas and Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me.....”

A CLOSING THOUGHT FOR YOU AND ME-

1Cor.15:14ff – “For the body does not consist of one member, but of many..... the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable..... if one member suffers, all suffer together.....Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.”

Amen.



Do everything with love

1 Peter 4:8 : Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

Usually, I think that love is something that everyone feels and is very easy to practice in everyday life, but it is very challenging to love in the same way when others are suffering or sick.

My mother was sick and complications for almost 6 months meant her body was helpless and less active. As a family, we had to take care of every single part of her daily routine from eating, taking medicine, bathing and helping her to walk. Sometimes I felt tired because I had the double task of taking care of my mother and my boy together. I felt that my own body and mind were so tired because I have less rest. One day I sat back and I personally reflected, I realized that what I was doing for my mother was very, very small and cannot be compared to what she has done and continues to do for me until today, especially she was able to let me live from her womb, nurture and raise me, , sometimes I asked my mother, "Mommy when I was little you were probably very tired of me," Mom answered me with just a smile. It is so selfish of me.

I learned that Love requires sacrifice, faithfulness, and serving gladly as the Lord Jesus has taught us through His faithful love to us when He was willing to sacrifice His life to suffer on the cross for our sins.



The Leprosy Mission Global Day of Prayer

John 17:21-23: ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— ²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.



Mission Impossible – Part 1

There are times when our Heavenly Father calls us to do things that seem beyond our abilities & resources.

- 👂 The lost thousands of Leprosy sufferers not receiving treatment. How do we reach them?
- 👂 How do we make up lost momentum because of the pandemic?
- 👂 How do we maintain our Christian testimony in an increasing hostile world towards us?
- 👂 How Lord...?

Key:

Our Heavenly Father would not expect us to do the impossible, when He asks, directs & sends because

- He knows that He will enable us to do and complete the task He's requested us to do.

👂 He asks us to do the seemingly impossible because He wants us to:

- obey Him, trust Him & display our trust in Him by using our faith in Him and His abilities.
- 👂 So that we can demonstrate & extend His Kingdom.
- 👂 So that people can see His love for them.

John 6:1-7, 9-14 (Feeding the 5000)

"Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing those who were ill. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Festival was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?' He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. (Mission impossible) Philip answered him, 'It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!'

⇨ Three keys Jesus was looking for in His disciples:

⇨ *Obedience* - ⇨ ⇨ *living trust* - ⇨ ⇨ ⇨ *active faith*

Jesus had just asked Philip & His disciples to do what they thought was the impossible - naturally it was impossible!

This is how the disciples explained *Mission impossible* to Jesus:

- 👂 There are lots of people - 5000 men-people, without counting women & children?
- 👂 We have not got enough money to buy all the food we need

⇒ Key #1 - very important: *Obey* when God instructs us to do something!
There was something that the disciples did not know or understand:

He (Jesus) asked this only to test him, for He already had in mind what He was going to do.

If you read what Jesus was doing before this part of the story it will give you an idea of what - the abilities of Jesus are:

...great crowd of people followed Him because they saw the signs He had performed by healing those who were ill

Never forget Jesus created the universe!

- He created, made everything!
- Jesus had just performed many miracles for all to see!

Just like the disciples of old - we so often forget what Jesus has done for us - sometimes even what He did yesterday or even this morning!

🧐 Never forget there's a good chance that when Jesus asks you to do something - *He knew, before He even asked you, what He is going to do!*

😊 He wants you to jump into action & *obey* Him!

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to Him, to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?"

1 Samuel 15:22

"But Samuel replied: 'Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.'"

⇒ Key #1 - very important: *Obey* when God instructs us to do something!

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 ALM and TLM. We have relocated to the UK to live with our children.



Mission Impossible – Part 2

⇌ ⇌ Key #2: Trust - God that when He gives us an idea or instructs us to do something, He expects us to do it!

- ☹️ It's a huge project feed 5000 people, with no money!
- 🤔 Has God even given you a project bigger than yourself?
- 😊 Who told you to do it? Yes God!
- 🤔 Now we *just* need to *trust* Him & do it!

Proverbs 3:5-7

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil."

⇌ ⇌ Key #2: Trust God that when He gives us an idea or instructs us to do something, He needs us to do it!

⇌ ⇌ ⇌ Key #3: Walk, obey, talk & trust using "active faith"!

Hebrews 11:1

*"Now faith is **confidence** in what we hope for and assurance about what we **do not see**."*

Hebrews 11:6

*"And without faith it is **impossible** to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."*

2 Corinthians 5:7

For we live by faith, not by sight."

2 Corinthians 4:18

*"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is **unseen**, since what is seen is temporary, but what is **unseen is eternal**."*

What is active faith?

...confidence -

Because God has instructed us to do something- we can do, we have confidence in Him not in our abilities!

...He rewards those who earnestly seek Him

When God asks us to step up & out He knows how He is going to do it!

...not by sight. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen

We obey! Start walking, start doing!

⇒ ⇒ ⇒ Key #3: Walk, obey, talk & trust using "active faith"

Will you let God speak & direct you?

Will you *obey*?

Will you **trust** Him?

Will you walk in *faith*?

Grab what Our Heavenly Father has called you to do. Dive into your community - take Jesus to your area of calling...

🌐 When you do this the *Mission Impossible* becomes the *Mission Possible!*

⇒ Three keys Jesus is looking for:

⇒ Total obedience - ⇒ ⇒ Absolute living trust - ⇒ ⇒ ⇒ Pro-active faith

We are called to *obey, trust* and use *active faith*:

⇒ *Mission Possible*

⇒ *Demonstrate & extend His Kingdom*

⇒ *To show our Heavenly Father's love for people*

There's a world of leprosy & NTD sufferers out there who need us to heed the call from Jesus to us to:

"Cleanse those with leprosy!"

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Psalm 68

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm. A song.

- ¹ May God arise, may his enemies be scattered;
may his foes flee before him.
- ² May you blow them away like smoke—
as wax melts before the fire,
may the wicked perish before God.
- ³ But may the righteous be glad
and rejoice before God;
may they be happy and joyful.
- ⁴ Sing to God, sing in praise of his name,
extol him who rides on the clouds;
rejoice before him—his name is the LORD.
- ⁵ A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in his holy dwelling.
- ⁶ God sets the lonely in families,
he leads out the prisoners with singing;
but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.
- ⁷ When you, God, went out before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness,
- ⁸ the earth shook, the heavens poured down rain,
before God, the One of Sinai,
before God, the God of Israel.
- ⁹ You gave abundant showers, O God;
you refreshed your weary inheritance.
- ¹⁰ Your people settled in it,
and from your bounty, God, you provided for the poor.
- ¹¹ The Lord announces the word,
and the women who proclaim it are a mighty throng:
- ¹² “Kings and armies flee in haste;
the women at home divide the plunder.
- ¹³ Even while you sleep among the sheep pens,
the wings of my dove are sheathed with silver,
its feathers with shining gold.”
- ¹⁴ When the Almighty[®] scattered the kings in the land,
it was like snow fallen on Mount Zalmon.
- ¹⁵ Mount Bashan, majestic mountain,
Mount Bashan, rugged mountain,
- ¹⁶ why gaze in envy, you rugged mountain,
at the mountain where God chooses to reign,

where the LORD himself will dwell forever?
17 The chariots of God are tens of thousands
and thousands of thousands;
the Lord has come from Sinai into his sanctuary.
18 When you ascended on high,
you took many captives;
you received gifts from people,
even from^{the} the rebellious—
that you,^{the} LORD God, might dwell there.
19 Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior,
who daily bears our burdens.
20 Our God is a God who saves;
from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death.
21 Surely God will crush the heads of his enemies,
the hairy crowns of those who go on in their sins.
22 The Lord says, “I will bring them from Bashan;
I will bring them from the depths of the sea,
23 that your feet may wade in the blood of your foes,
while the tongues of your dogs have their share.”
24 Your procession, God, has come into view,
the procession of my God and King into the sanctuary.
25 In front are the singers, after them the musicians;
with them are the young women playing the timbrels.
26 Praise God in the great congregation;
praise the LORD in the assembly of Israel.
27 There is the little tribe of Benjamin, leading them,
there the great throng of Judah’s princes,
and there the princes of Zebulun and of Naphtali.
28 Summon your power, God;
show us your strength, our God, as you have done before.
29 Because of your temple at Jerusalem
kings will bring you gifts.
30 Rebuke the beast among the reeds,
the herd of bulls among the calves of the nations.
Humbled, may the beast bring bars of silver.
Scatter the nations who delight in war.
31 Envoys will come from Egypt;
Cush^{the} will submit herself to God.
32 Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth,
sing praise to the Lord,
33 to him who rides across the highest heavens, the ancient heavens,
who thunders with mighty voice.
34 Proclaim the power of God,
whose majesty is over Israel,
whose power is in the heavens.
35 You, God, are awesome in your sanctuary;
the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people.
Praise be to God!



Psalm 69

For the director of music. To the tune of "Lilies." Of David.

¹ Save me, O God,
for the waters have come up to my neck.

² I sink in the miry depths,
where there is no foothold.

I have come into the deep waters;
the floods engulf me.

³ I am worn out calling for help;
my throat is parched.

My eyes fail,
looking for my God.

⁴ Those who hate me without reason
outnumber the hairs of my head;
many are my enemies without cause,
those who seek to destroy me.

I am forced to restore
what I did not steal.

⁵ You, God, know my folly;
my guilt is not hidden from you.

⁶ Lord, the LORD Almighty,
may those who hope in you
not be disgraced because of me;

God of Israel,
may those who seek you
not be put to shame because of me.

⁷ For I endure scorn for your sake,
and shame covers my face.

⁸ I am a foreigner to my own family,
a stranger to my own mother's children;

⁹ for zeal for your house consumes me,
and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.

¹⁰ When I weep and fast,
I must endure scorn;

¹¹ when I put on sackcloth,
people make sport of me.

¹² Those who sit at the gate mock me,
and I am the song of the drunkards.

¹³ But I pray to you, LORD,
in the time of your favor;
in your great love, O God,
answer me with your sure salvation.

¹⁴ Rescue me from the mire,
do not let me sink;
deliver me from those who hate me,
from the deep waters.

¹⁵ Do not let the floodwaters engulf me
or the depths swallow me up
or the pit close its mouth over me.

¹⁶ Answer me, LORD, out of the goodness of your love;
in your great mercy turn to me.

¹⁷ Do not hide your face from your servant;
answer me quickly, for I am in trouble.

¹⁸ Come near and rescue me;
deliver me because of my foes.

¹⁹ You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed;
all my enemies are before you.

²⁰ Scorn has broken my heart
and has left me helpless;
I looked for sympathy, but there was none,
for comforters, but I found none.

²¹ They put gall in my food
and gave me vinegar for my thirst.

²² May the table set before them become a snare;
may it become retribution and a trap.

²³ May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see,
and their backs be bent forever.

²⁴ Pour out your wrath on them;
let your fierce anger overtake them.

²⁵ May their place be deserted;
let there be no one to dwell in their tents.

²⁶ For they persecute those you wound
and talk about the pain of those you hurt.

²⁷ Charge them with crime upon crime;
do not let them share in your salvation.

²⁸ May they be blotted out of the book of life
and not be listed with the righteous.

²⁹ But as for me, afflicted and in pain—
may your salvation, God, protect me.

³⁰ I will praise God's name in song
and glorify him with thanksgiving.

³¹ This will please the LORD more than an ox,
more than a bull with its horns and hooves.

³² The poor will see and be glad—
you who seek God, may your hearts live!

³³ The LORD hears the needy
and does not despise his captive people.

³⁴ Let heaven and earth praise him,
the seas and all that move in them,
³⁵ for God will save Zion
and rebuild the cities of Judah.

Then people will settle there and possess it;
³⁶ the children of his servants will inherit it,
and those who love his name will dwell there.



Jeremiah's letter to the Exiles – Part I

29 v 1-14

11 For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

Introduction - A Displaced people.

This is one of those passages where one can easily take a phrase to encourage one and not think much about the context. I see it as a visual parable, and once had children acting it. We were in the old Sunday school at PLH Salur, Andhra Pradesh, India.

Jeremiah sat in front of the congregation at a table writing his letter, he gave it to a runner who belted out the side door of the Classroom, ran round the side of the building in the back door and up the aisle to appear breathless before a group of exiles. I guess the sermon was based on being content where one is even if only for a few weeks.

The book covers a period of the fall of the kingdom. Some fled to Egypt and others as we are reminded were taken into exile as the kingdom fell apart.

When this letter is written the temple had been destroyed, the king, his mother, nobles and other elite had been taken into exile. Without the temple they could no longer offer sacrifices to God, the God of Israel,

Jeremiah 29 These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. 2 This was after King Jeconiah, and the queen mother, the court officials, the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the artisans, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem. 3 The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiyah, whom King Zedekiah of Judah sent to Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. It said: 4 Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. 8 For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, 9 for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the Lord.

10 For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place. 11 For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. 12 Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. 13 When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, 14 I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile

Many today have either fled, or been expelled from their homes. Those taken in exile may only look back at the destruction of their land. How can they be encouraged? Can gloomy Jeremiah help. In English we are sometimes reminded that a person who is full of gloom and doom is a right Jeremiah.

This positive letter is a contrast, yet still the time they are to stay in exile is long.

Then there is the wondrous hope in v 14 I will bring you back from the place I sent you, hang onto that when things are bad.

Elisabeth Barnett retired Occupational Therapist, Living in France



Jeremiah's letter to the Exiles - Part 2

29 v 1-14

2 - The Purpose of the letter

The letter doesn't mince words. Jeremiah, the writer must have heard of what the exiles were or at least weren't doing, maybe they hadn't any desire to live. Had lost all hope in need of encouragement to get moving. Even a simple house can't be built in a day so looks as though they won't be returning home tomorrow.

5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

After house building there are to establish gardens. When staying somewhere a short time is it worth getting involved with life there. Growing fruit and vegetables means I will start to take the question « Will I see the fruit of my work? » The fruit trees we from are not only for us they will be there for the next generation or two.

Doing something gives one things to think and talk about other than the home and culture we miss. For these deported people the Temple the centre of their worship had been destroyed. Their reason for existence and then Jeremiah, writing from Jerusalem is instructing them to get out of themselves, settle down where you are to find a wife have children. Have something to look forward to.

It is not just looking after themselves, thinking of their children and their children's children, the generations to come; 1st, and even to the 3rd generation. Returning is not easy then, maybe the 1st generation aren't too keen to settle down, as instructed in the letter. And it isn't going to be for a few weeks, or months it is 70 years. Pointing out that those of you who are adult now will not return so you must get involved. Get involved with local life. Not east to get involved, Ok at work but at home and even worst if it is your enemy; *But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. V 7*

The purpose to tell them that they need to settle where thy are,

Elisabeth Barnett retired Occupational Therapist, Living in France



Jeremiah's letter to the Exiles - Part 3

29 v 1-14

13 When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile

3 – Their reaction and our reactions

The exiles weren't too happy with the news, their stay is going to be 70 years meaning that really all the adults will not go back to Jerusalem. Later in the chapter there is a letter sent back to the priest in Jerusalem complaining that Jeremiah has not been rebuked for sending this bad news. It is as if his prophecies are not what they want to hear they can't possibly be true.

It is to think that the encouragement is for now, but they are not

It is so easy to take a few words from this text and think wonderful, but in reality it isn't like that. There is often a difference between His plans and ours. It isn't always easier to take in hard news, these are clear instructions there is no mincing of words. You will be staying there for the rest of your life;

11 For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Many love this verse and interpreted that it is saying we will be guarded from difficulties and harm, is that really Jeremiah's intention. Isn't that we need to know God's plans are not ours, that things do not go as expected; This text was used as a theme for this year's World Day of Prayer celebration which was the first day of March. Round the world women were shocked by the war in Ukraine, and yet we could sense the need to look to a future ahead,

If you have a moment read the whole passage slowly and try and imagine that you are a yard, are a garden, and a messenger arrives and you go to hear the letter read out; then slowly read this text

« You hear the rest of the letter. "Those who tell us that we will return soon, it is completely false. They do not come from the Lord. The Lord says we must wait seventy years!

When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile

Elisabeth Barnett retired Occupational Therapist, Living in France



Rejection and retribution

Mark 12 (1-12)

It is interesting to note that Jesus is giving this parable in His very last days, of course the venue and audience were very perfect and appropriate. Jesus in this parable was talking in pictures which were part and parcel of Jewish thought and imagery. The story itself is of what might well happen in Palestine in the time of Jesus. The country had much labour unrest and there were many absentee landlords.

The owner of the vineyard is God: the vineyard itself is the people of Israel. The cultivators stand for the rulers of Israel throughout the history of the nation. The servants whom the owner sent stand for the prophets. The son is Jesus himself.

Even on the spur of the moment the hearers could have made these identifications because of the thoughts and the pictures were all so familiar to them.

This parable is so full of truths that we can note them in the briefest way.

It tells us certain things about God.

1. It tells us of *the generosity* of God. The vineyard was well equipped with everything that was necessary to make the work of the cultivators easy and profitable. God is generous to us in our life and in the world that he is given to men.

2. It tells us of *the trust* of God. The owner went away and left the cultivators to run the vineyard themselves. God trusts us enough to give us freedom to run life as we choose. As someone has said "The lovely thing about God is that He allows us to do so much for ourselves.

3. It tells us of *the patience* of God. Not once or twice but many times the master gave the cultivators the chance to pay the debt they owed. He treated them with a patience they little deserved.

4. It tells us of the ultimate triumph of the *Justice* of God. Men might take advantage of the patience of God but in the end comes judgement and justice. God may bear long with disobedience and rebellion but in the end He acts.

This parable also tells us something about Jesus.

1. It tells us that Jesus regarded himself *not as a servant but a son*. He deliberately removes himself from the succession of the prophets. They were servants of God. He was the son of God. In him God's last and final word was being spoken. This parable was a deliberate challenge to the Jewish authorities because it contains the unthinkable claim of Jesus to be Messiah.

2. It tells us that *Jesus knew that he was to die on the cross*. The cross did not come to him as a surprise. He knew that the way he had chosen could not have any other ending. It is the greatness of his courage that he knew that and still went on.

3. It tells us that *Jesus was sure of his ultimate triumph*. He also knew that he would be maltreated and killed, but he also knew that would not be the end that after the rejection would come the glory.

This parable tells us something about man.

1. There could be only one reason why the cultivators thought they could kill the son and then enter into possession of the vineyard. They must have thought that the owner was too far away to act, or that he was dead and out of the reckoning. Men still think that they can act against God and get away with it. But God is very much alive. Men seek to trade on their own freedom and their patience, but the day of reckoning comes.
2. If a man refuses his privileges and his responsibilities, they pass it to someone else. The parable has in it the whole germ of what was to come -- the rejection of the Jews and passing of their privileges and responsibilities to the Gentiles.

The parable closes with an old Testament quotation which became very clear to the Church. The quotation about the stone that was rejected is from Psalms 118:22,23. The rejected stone had become the stone that bound the corners of the building together, the keystone of the arch, the most important stone of all.

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



Psalm 138

Of David.

¹ I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
before the “gods” I will sing your praise.

² I will bow down toward your holy temple
and will praise your name
for your unfailing love and your faithfulness,
for you have so exalted your solemn decree
that it surpasses your fame.

³ When I called, you answered me;
you greatly emboldened me.

⁴ May all the kings of the earth praise you, LORD,
when they hear what you have decreed.

⁵ May they sing of the ways of the LORD,
for the glory of the LORD is great.

⁶ Though the LORD is exalted, he looks kindly on the lowly;
though lofty, he sees them from afar.

⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve my life.

You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes;
with your right hand you save me.

⁸ The LORD will vindicate me;
your love, LORD, endures forever—
do not abandon the works of your hands.

...and with the lovely music of Daniel Donahaye:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&ik=540ec24d35&attid=0.1&permmsgid=msg-f:1724176410321021311&th=17ed814f634ae97f&view=att&disp=safe>

Daniel Donahaye - I am 85 years old and for the last year have been putting my poetry to music, having launched my first cd in June in support of the Australian Leprosy Mission. I am happily married having met my wife in Israel in 1957. I was born in France but grew up in England, where I spent most of my working life. We retired to live in Queensland in 1999. Our children and grandchildren are spread across the world, and so I would sum up by saying that I am a citizen of the world with a deep concern for my fellow human beings.



Psalm 70

For the director of music. Of David. A petition.

¹ Hasten, O God, to save me;
come quickly, LORD, to help me.

² May those who want to take my life
be put to shame and confusion;
may all who desire my ruin
be turned back in disgrace.

³ May those who say to me, "Aha! Aha!"
turn back because of their shame.

⁴ But may all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who long for your saving help always say,
"The LORD is great!"

⁵ But as for me, I am poor and needy;
come quickly to me, O God.

You are my help and my deliverer;
LORD, do not delay.



Psalm 71

- ¹ In you, LORD, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
- ² In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me;
turn your ear to me and save me.
- ³ Be my rock of refuge,
to which I can always go;
give the command to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
- ⁴ Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked,
from the grasp of those who are evil and cruel.
- ⁵ For you have been my hope, Sovereign LORD,
my confidence since my youth.
- ⁶ From birth I have relied on you;
you brought me forth from my mother's womb.
I will ever praise you.
- ⁷ I have become a sign to many;
you are my strong refuge.
- ⁸ My mouth is filled with your praise,
declaring your splendor all day long.
- ⁹ Do not cast me away when I am old;
do not forsake me when my strength is gone.
- ¹⁰ For my enemies speak against me;
those who wait to kill me conspire together.
- ¹¹ They say, "God has forsaken him;
pursue him and seize him,
for no one will rescue him."
- ¹² Do not be far from me, my God;
come quickly, God, to help me.
- ¹³ May my accusers perish in shame;
may those who want to harm me
be covered with scorn and disgrace.
- ¹⁴ As for me, I will always have hope;
I will praise you more and more.
- ¹⁵ My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds,
of your saving acts all day long—
though I know not how to relate them all.
- ¹⁶ I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, Sovereign LORD;
I will proclaim your righteous deeds, yours alone.
- ¹⁷ Since my youth, God, you have taught me,

and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.

¹⁸ Even when I am old and gray,
do not forsake me, my God,

till I declare your power to the next generation,
your mighty acts to all who are to come.

¹⁹ Your righteousness, God, reaches to the heavens,
you who have done great things.

Who is like you, God?

²⁰ Though you have made me see troubles,
many and bitter,

you will restore my life again;
from the depths of the earth
you will again bring me up.

²¹ You will increase my honor
and comfort me once more.

²² I will praise you with the harp
for your faithfulness, my God;

I will sing praise to you with the lyre,
Holy One of Israel.

²³ My lips will shout for joy
when I sing praise to you—
I whom you have delivered.

²⁴ My tongue will tell of your righteous acts
all day long,

for those who wanted to harm me
have been put to shame and confusion.



Nostalgia isn't what it used to be

During April, we took the historical steam train from Cape Town's waterfront to the apple growing town of Elgin. If you've ever eaten an apple from South Africa, the chances are good that it came from this region. The journey comes alive as the train passes through Somerset West and begins the ascent of Sir Lowry's Pass, which includes the fabled Soap Bubble Loop, where, if you are in the rear most carriage, you can almost lean out of the window and shake hands with the engineer as the class 19D locomotive labours its way past you, headed in the opposite direction.

Near the top of the pass, you're rewarded with sweeping views of False Bay and then, after rumbling through a short tunnel, you are plunged into another world, where, amidst a sea of Grabouw stone, the Atlantic ocean seems as remote as yesterday and the weather changes from Summer to Winter in the blink of an eye. It was at this point that our train squealed to a halt. Cows on the tracks. Sadly, one cow was less nimble than the rest of the herd...

When steam travel was at its height, a track was supposed to have branched off from this line to the coastal resort of Hermanus, whose genteel burghers, horrified at the thought of being overrun by city dwellers at the weekend, vetoed the extension. By this stage, the Hermanus railway station had already been completed and there it stood for many decades, a forlorn and unlovely face-brick sentinel to a bygone era.

In our case, the train terminated alongside an elegantly converted apple-packing warehouse, rumoured to have been built by Italian prisoners of war, which now serves as a graceful home to numerous farm and craft producers in the region.

For many of us on the train, it was a reminder of a time when rail-travel was common and railway stations bustled with activity. There was an annual competition for the best-kept station in the country. Now, most of the branch lines lie abandoned and even some of the main routes are infrequently used. Many stations have been vandalised. Hardly anyone travels long-distance by train anymore. Not all of my memories are fond. That school trip to the coast, the windows closed, the heater going full blast in the compartment to keep the icy Highveld winter at bay, and the smell of that tub of broiled chicken which Hennie had smuggled aboard twelve hours earlier...

Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?" For it is not wise to ask such questions.

Ecclesiastes 7:10

Why does the Word warn us against nostalgia? I'm not sure. Maybe you have some ideas? Probably one reason is that it is so easy for us to be distracted, to dwell on 'what could have been'; and our memories play tricks on us. We run the risk of being trapped by and in the past. Asking questions like this is the practise of the unwise. So, what then are the questions which you, as a wise person, should be asking? I think a clue is found at the end of Ecclesiastes in chapter 12 vs 13: '*Honour God and obey His commands*'. Turn that into a question and you could ask: 'Is what I am doing honouring to God?'; 'What could I do that would bring honour God?'; 'What is the Godly way to deal with this situation?'

Easy questions to ask; tough questions to answer, not least because the answers may run contrary to our natural inclinations. Ecclesiastes discourages nostalgia because we are apt to seek refuge in a former time which we imagine to be better than the present, whereas the Lord desires a future for us where we are free of the past and its poor choices, where we are able to live lives that are filled with purpose – His purpose.

A purpose which we can only discover when we step, in faith, out of the false comfort of the past into His certain promise for the future.

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.



Poor excuses

The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside; I will be killed in the streets!" Proverbs 22:13

Excuses are bad habits in disguise. They are there all the time, just waiting for an opportunity to show themselves. Excuses for behaviour can vary from the outrageous to the mundane -- but, regardless of the rationalizations, they serve to justify behaviour that cannot be excused. Excuses create a behaviour of avoidance rather than responsibility.

When I joined as domain head, I was pleased that a senior staff with years of experience was my deputy. I would expect he would initiate and finish a certain task, but he would wait for routine instructions. Me: "... but you know this task entails these activities". Deputy "I know! but YOU didn't send the mail". It would be frustrating for me. These refrains "you didn't tell me, "no one told me", "I didn't know I was supposed to" are familiar. These are poor excuses and by transferring the responsibility, they think they can get away. It is a common encounter with such colleagues and staff in all organizations. Which side of the table are you on?

In Matthew 20:1-16, the parable of the vineyard workers gives a fine example of such people. The Master of the Vineyard made 4 trips to the marketplace. In his last trip, almost towards the end of the day, at the 11th hour he finds men standing there doing nothing. They had arrived late, past the routine time of hiring. The Master's drives home the truth "why are you doing nothing?" Their response was a bad excuse, shifting the blame, disguising their laziness and complacency, "No one hired us".

Excuses are a psychological method of shifting the blame to keep self-image intact. As I meditate, I have found myself guilty. You also probably will. The Bible tells us to refrain from such poor excuses at our workplace. This is a wrong behaviour that needs to be rectified through introspection and humility. Let us be responsible, diligent, and honest workers. You do not want the Master to say, "why did you do nothing"?

Father, forgive me for the multiple times I have given excuses to cover up my shortcomings. Teach me diligence that will honour your Name at my workplace.

Joydeepa Darlong Dr Head of Knowledge Management, The Leprosy Mission Trust India. A Family Physician, worked as Consultant and Deputy Superintendent for 15 years at The Leprosy Mission Hospital, Purulia, West Bengal, India.



Why me ?

"The Lord has done everything for a purpose, Even the bad guy for the day of misfortune." Proverbs 16, 4.

"Why me?"

"What did I do to deserve this?"

"I've had enough of suffering!"

"How come the problems don't let me go?"

"Yet I'm doing my best!"

"Where is God in all of this?"

The truth is that:

- life is not a long calm river, neither is the Christian life,
- faith does not prevent trials,
- life is hard and unfair,
- moreover, sometimes even the fact of believing in God can cause additional challenges and sufferings.

HOWEVER, here is what you can count for certain:

God will ALWAYS deliver you from ALL your difficulties.

It is common for us to add suffering to our ordeal by:

- feeling guilty,
- forgetting that, since the fall, we are all affected by trials,
- considering that the test is an anomaly since we have faith,
- refusing to forgive,
- believing that God punishes us by trial
- by being angry with oneself, with others and even with God...

All these conceptions and attitudes are shameless lies of the enemy, Satan, who wants to separate you from God and His blessings.

Jesus himself teaches us that pain is the lot of everyone, including those who follow him. But He promises his disciples absolute victory over each of his problems.

"I have told you these things so that you may have peace in me. You will have tribulations in this world; but take heart, I have overcome the world!" John 16.33

So know that:

- the difficulties you experience are, most of the time, not your fault,
- even if you put yourself in danger or made mistakes for which you pay the consequences, God is greater than your mistakes or your bad decisions,
- through the cross, you triumph with Christ,
- the test also reaches those who have faith,
- forgiveness will always deliver you,

- God does not punish or teach by trial but he uses it to change evil into good,
- if you make peace with God, you will find inner peace and also peace with others.

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

Pourquoi moi ?

l'Éternel a tout fait pour un but,
Même le méchant pour le jour du malheur.
Proverbes 16, 4.

"Pourquoi moi ?"

"Qu'ai-je fait pour mériter ça ?"

"J'en ai assez de souffrir !"

"Comment se fait-il que les problèmes ne me lâchent pas ?"

"Je fais pourtant de mon mieux !"

"Où est Dieu dans tout cela ?"

La vérité est que :

- la vie n'est pas un long fleuve tranquille, la vie chrétienne non plus,
- la foi n'empêche pas les épreuves,
- la vie est dure et injuste,
- d'ailleurs, parfois même, le fait de croire en Dieu peut occasionner des défis et souffrances supplémentaires.

CEPENDANT, voilà ce que tu peux compter pour certain :

Dieu te délivrera TOUJOURS de TOUTES tes difficultés.

Il est fréquent de rajouter de la souffrance à notre épreuve :

- en nous culpabilisant,
- en oubliant que, depuis la chute, nous sommes tous atteints par les épreuves,
- en considérant que l'épreuve est une anomalie puisque nous avons la foi,
- en refusant de pardonner,
- en croyant que Dieu nous punit par l'épreuve
- en étant en colère contre soi, contre les autres et même contre Dieu...

Toutes ces conceptions et attitudes sont des mensonges éhontés de l'ennemi, Satan, qui veut te séparer de Dieu et de ses bénédictions.

Jésus lui-même nous enseigne que les douleurs sont le lot de tout un chacun, y compris de ceux qui le

suivent. Mais il promet, à ses disciples, la victoire absolue sur chacun de ses problèmes.

"Je vous ai dit ces choses afin que vous ayez la paix en moi. Vous aurez des tribulations dans ce monde; mais prenez courage, j'ai vaincu le monde !" Jean 16.33

Alors sache que :

- les difficultés que tu vis ne sont, la plupart du temps, pas de ta faute,
- même si tu t'es toi-même mis en danger ou que tu as fait des erreurs dont tu paies les conséquences, Dieu est plus grand que tes erreurs ou tes mauvaises décisions,
- par la croix, tu triomphe avec Christ,
- l'épreuve atteint aussi celui qui a la foi,
- le pardon te délivrera toujours,
- Dieu ne punit ni n'enseigne par l'épreuve mais il l'utilise pour changer le mal en bien,
- si tu fais la paix avec Dieu, tu vas trouver la paix intérieure et aussi avec les autres.



Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven

1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach **2** until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. **3** After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. **4** On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. **5** For John baptized with^[a] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with^[b] the Holy Spirit.”

6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. **11** “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

12 Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk^[c] from the city. **13** When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. **14** They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Acts 1, 1-14



A Conversation with God

A few years ago I wrote a devotional for Bridge called “Talking Helps”.

Today I return to that same theme of talking with God. Recently I have been studying again the life of Abraham, or as much as we have of it in the book of Genesis. Abraham was a very interesting man and there is a lot that we can learn from him of what it means to have a relationship with God. The last time I had a real good look at Abraham my study was from the perspective of the miles he travelled as he walked with God. This time I started with no clear idea of what I was going to learn – I had an open mind and was ready to let God direct my thoughts through these chapters of Genesis.

I have been drawn to his recorded conversations with God – and I am sure he had many others which are not recorded. One thing I noted in passing is that Abraham does not seem to have been good at saying sorry for the things he got wrong - or maybe those are some of the unrecorded or private conversations he had with God. Maybe all of us would like to keep those conversations private too.

One particular conversation really made me think again about Abraham and his chats with God and maybe come to a different perspective. In *Genesis chapter 18* we read of Abraham discussing with God the fate of the city of Sodom. So often I have read verses 16 to the end of the chapter as Abraham trying to persuade God to be lenient with the people of Sodom. But is that really what this is about? Was Abraham thinking about his nephew Lot and his family who were now living in Sodom? Abraham understood the need to punish the wicked, but he wanted to know how far an innocent minority will affect the punishment of the majority. Was Abraham really trying to challenge God to save the city of Sodom or rather he was trying to understand in human terms how God’s plan of action would relate to his own family?

As Abraham was still trying to work out what he thought God would do – he was still thinking in terms of the city being saved - God does something different. He saves Abraham’s family and destroys the city punishing the wicked.

I know I often have some challenging conversations with God – and sometimes I tell Him my thoughts and then I find it really difficult to sit quietly, read His Word, and wait (sometimes for a long time) for His response. I am sure many of you have similar experiences. There seem to be so many challenging circumstances around all the time affecting each one of us or our friends or our family members: family difficulties, church difficulties, financial hardships, illness, wars, persecution... Take your thoughts and troubles to God, leave them there with Him and quietly let Him take over those burdens and deal with them in His way and in His time. It is amazing how often I come away from those conversations with God feeling my heart so much lighter, knowing that God is dealing with the problems – even when He has shown me that I need to follow through with some action that He has prompted.

That leads me to another lesson I learned from my study of Abraham and his conversations with God, a reminder that God’s plans and His answers to our prayers can come as a real surprise to us. It is easy to ask God for the solution in our prayer rather than waiting for His solution. Recently I have been challenged by

how some others deal with what they see as significant issues. I have seen anger, frustration and even a turning away from God when solutions expected from God do not materialize and I have seen how those reactions have affected others involved. It is indeed difficult to take our problems to God and to be patient for His answers in His time.

Today pray for those you know who face difficult, maybe even dangerous, situations that they might be able to talk with God about those problems and yet have the courage and patience to let God provide the solutions – maybe even unexpected solutions.

As you pray, perhaps I can remind you again of the words of an old chorus – we used to sing it in my youth!! The words seem too simplistic but think about them...

*“A little talk with Jesus makes it right, all right.
A little talk with Jesus makes it right, all right.
Troubles of every kind.
Thank God, I’ll always find
That a little talk with Jesus makes the burden light.
May it be so for you today.*

Christine Osman – Scotland - formerly Treasurer of The Leprosy Mission International



Psalm 72

Of Solomon.

- ¹ Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.
- ² May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.
- ³ May the mountains bring prosperity to the people,
the hills the fruit of righteousness.
- ⁴ May he defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy;
may he crush the oppressor.
- ⁵ May he endure as long as the sun,
as long as the moon, through all generations.
- ⁶ May he be like rain falling on a mown field,
like showers watering the earth.
- ⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish
and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.
- ⁸ May he rule from sea to sea
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
- ⁹ May the desert tribes bow before him
and his enemies lick the dust.
- ¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores
bring tribute to him.
May the kings of Sheba and Seba
present him gifts.
- ¹¹ May all kings bow down to him
and all nations serve him.
- ¹² For he will deliver the needy who cry out,
the afflicted who have no one to help.
- ¹³ He will take pity on the weak and the needy
and save the needy from death.
- ¹⁴ He will rescue them from oppression and violence,
for precious is their blood in his sight.
- ¹⁵ Long may he live!
May gold from Sheba be given him.
May people ever pray for him
and bless him all day long.
- ¹⁶ May grain abound throughout the land;
on the tops of the hills may it sway.
May the crops flourish like Lebanon
and thrive like the grass of the field.

¹⁷ May his name endure forever;
may it continue as long as the sun.

Then all nations will be blessed through him,
and they will call him blessed.

¹⁸ Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel,
who alone does marvelous deeds.

¹⁹ Praise be to his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory.

Amen and Amen.

²⁰ This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse.



Psalm 73

A psalm of Asaph.

- ¹ Surely God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.
- ² But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;
I had nearly lost my foothold.
- ³ For I envied the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- ⁴ They have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and strong.^[a]
- ⁵ They are free from common human burdens;
they are not plagued by human ills.
- ⁶ Therefore pride is their necklace;
they clothe themselves with violence.
- ⁷ From their callous hearts comes iniquity^[b];
their evil imaginations have no limits.
- ⁸ They scoff, and speak with malice;
with arrogance they threaten oppression.
- ⁹ Their mouths lay claim to heaven,
and their tongues take possession of the earth.
- ¹⁰ Therefore their people turn to them
and drink up waters in abundance.^[c]
- ¹¹ They say, “How would God know?
Does the Most High know anything?”
- ¹² This is what the wicked are like—
always free of care, they go on amassing wealth.
- ¹³ Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
and have washed my hands in innocence.
- ¹⁴ All day long I have been afflicted,
and every morning brings new punishments.
- ¹⁵ If I had spoken out like that,
I would have betrayed your children.
- ¹⁶ When I tried to understand all this,
it troubled me deeply
- ¹⁷ till I entered the sanctuary of God;
then I understood their final destiny.
- ¹⁸ Surely you place them on slippery ground;
you cast them down to ruin.
- ¹⁹ How suddenly are they destroyed,
completely swept away by terrors!

²⁰ They are like a dream when one awakes;
when you arise, Lord,
you will despise them as fantasies.
²¹ When my heart was grieved
and my spirit embittered,
²² I was senseless and ignorant;
I was a brute beast before you.
²³ Yet I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.
²⁴ You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will take me into glory.
²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion forever.
²⁷ Those who are far from you will perish;
you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.
²⁸ But as for me, it is good to be near God.
I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge;
I will tell of all your deeds.



Risky business

Scripture Reading: Matthew 4:1-7

The Lord's angels will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

Psalm 91:12

Some people are risk-takers. They climb mountains. They fight fires. They have more children. They follow Jesus and there are many more. People may take a risk for the adrenaline rush. Or because something compels them: a principle, a duty, a commitment.

In today's Scripture, the devil pushes Jesus to take a risk. While Jesus stands at the highest point of the temple, the devil whispers in his ears, "Go ahead. Jump off!" Then the devil recites a verse from *Psalm 91*. That psalm is all about God protecting the people who trust in him. So, in other words it's a test for Jesus: by quoting from the bible "Do you trust God to protect you? Then prove it!"

Well, of course Jesus trusts God. But there is more to it than that. You see, it's never right to say, "I'm going to do something foolish just to test God's protection." So, Jesus tells the devil to take a leap—well, not exactly. He responds to the devil's craftiness by quoting another text: "*Do not put the Lord your God to the test.*"

Jesus is already in the middle of a bigger risk. He is facing off against the devil. And that is dangerous. Human beings have a challenging track record in those confrontations. But the Spirit has sent him into battle. So, Jesus takes the risk and confronts the devil head-on. He does it with confidence, because he trusts God to protect him. With Psalm 91 to encourage him, Jesus doesn't fall or fail.

So, the question that I want to ask is, if or when we are taking the risk can we do it alone or seek God's protection.

Prayer

Jesus, please help me to trust you enough to take the risk of following you. Even when that looks foolish, it's still the wisest thing to do. Amen.

Dorothy Owen — On behalf of The Leprosy Mission Papua New-Guinea



The wonder of creation

How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

Psalm 104:24

I went to the vet the other day. Not for myself – I'm not quite as disillusioned with the National Health Service as that – I took one of our dogs. While I was waiting I picked up a leaflet – "Caring for Elderly Dogs".

The leaflet began by describing old dogs and the more I read the more it sounded like me. "Greying round the muzzle" – yes, that's me. "Changes in body shape" – I'm afraid so. "Stiffness in the joints" – certainly in my knees. "Reluctance to take exercise" – yes, I admit it. "Bladder problems"... I'll stop right there otherwise it might get a bit personal. And I know people say that dog owners get to look like their pets but that's taking it a bit far.

It made me think though. The similarities remind me that we humans are as much part of God's creation as anything else and, if we realised that, we might begin to treat the earth and other living things a bit differently.

Of course we are different from animals in some ways – in being able to talk, to think, to imagine. And in our feelings for the spiritual. To wonder what life is about, and to realise there's more to it than just what we can see and measure. And that more is God, who created you and me, and my dogs, and wants the best for all of us.

And if we can begin to take that into account we may find it easier to live in harmony with each other, the world about us, and with the God who made us.

Extract from Slower than Butterflies, first published 1997.

*Lord God, Creator, all life is yours.
All that has come to be has come through you.
Lives in your energy, takes breath because you willed it.
Is clothed in your beauty, your dignity.
Part of your world. Valued and loved.*

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Eddie Askew (1927-2007) devoted half a century to leprosy and its consequences. In 1950 he and his wife Barbara set sail for India. Eddie's first placement was in Purulia, West Bengal. In 1965 Eddie took up the post of executive secretary at TLM's office in London. His first overseas visit in this new role was to Ethiopia, where he learned of plans to set up a leprosy training centre that would benefit patients and medics throughout Africa. He offered to become a founding member and signed TLM up to support what was to become ALERT (All Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre). The following year, the organisation now known as the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP) was set up. In 1974 Eddie became general director of TLM. He was keen to develop TLM's work elsewhere, and took a team into the closed land of Bhutan in response to a request from its government. - Inspired by his travels and his Christian faith, Eddie found an outlet for his creativity in painting and poetry. He retired in 1987. From 1998 until his death he was TLM- vice-president, and in 2000 he was awarded an OBE. (Fiona Spence)

Authors in ABC Order

Country

Textuarium in Canonic Order

<i>Asaph, psalmist</i>	<i>29 May</i>	<i>Israel</i>	<i>Genesis 18</i>	<i>27 May</i>
<i>Christine Osman</i>	<i>27 May</i>	<i>Scotland</i>	<i>Psalm 65</i>	<i>1 May</i>
<i>Daniel Donahaye</i>	<i>20 May</i>	<i>Australia</i>	<i>Psalm 66</i>	<i>7 May</i>
<i>David Parry</i>	<i>3, 4 May</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>Psalm 67</i>	<i>8 May</i>
<i>Dorothy Owen</i>	<i>30 May</i>	<i>Papua New-Guinea</i>	<i>Psalm 68</i>	<i>14 May</i>
<i>Dr Ella</i>	<i>10 May</i>	<i>Timor Leste</i>	<i>Psalm 69</i>	<i>15 May</i>
<i>Eddie Askew</i>	<i>31 May</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>Psalm 70</i>	<i>21 May</i>
<i>Élie Fofolo</i>	<i>25 May</i>	<i>DR Congo</i>	<i>Psalm 71</i>	<i>22 May</i>
<i>Elisabeth Barnett</i>	<i>16, 17, 18 May</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>Psalm 72</i>	<i>28 May</i>
<i>Joydeepa Darlong Dr</i>	<i>24 May</i>	<i>India</i>	<i>Psalm 73</i>	<i>29 May</i>
<i>King David</i>	<i>1, 14, 15, 20, 21 May</i>	<i>Israel</i>	<i>Psalm 104, 24</i>	<i>31 May</i>
<i>King Solomon</i>	<i>28 May</i>	<i>Israel</i>	<i>Psalm 138</i>	<i>20 May</i>
<i>Luke evangelist</i>	<i>26 May</i>	<i>Israel</i>	<i>Proverbs 3,5-7</i>	<i>13 May</i>
<i>Otto Kingsley</i>	<i>9 May</i>	<i>Southern Africa</i>	<i>Proverbs 22,13</i>	<i>24 May</i>
<i>Peter Laubscher</i>	<i>23 May</i>	<i>Southern Africa</i>	<i>Ecclesiastes 7,10</i>	<i>23 May</i>
<i>Pradeep and Sarah Failbus</i>	<i>19 May</i>	<i>India</i>	<i>Jeremiah 29,1-14</i>	<i>16,17,18 May</i>
<i>Raju PLN Dr</i>	<i>2 May</i>	<i>India</i>	<i>Matthew 4,1-7</i>	<i>30 May</i>
<i>Rosemary Tootle</i>	<i>6 May</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>Matthew 26,17-26</i>	<i>4 May</i>
<i>Vasanthakumary</i>	<i>5 May</i>	<i>Sri Lanka</i>	<i>Mark 12,1-12</i>	<i>19 May</i>
			<i>Luke 23,46</i>	<i>2 May</i>
			<i>John 6,1-14</i>	<i>12 May</i>
			<i>John 16,33</i>	<i>25 May</i>
			<i>John 17,21-23</i>	<i>11 May</i>
			<i>Acts 1,1-14</i>	<i>26 May</i>
			<i>1 Cor 13,11</i>	<i>6 May</i>
			<i>1 Cor 15,14 ff</i>	<i>9 May</i>

The Bridge

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