



TLM Daily Devotions

March 2023





If you're on God's side – don't fret the opposition!

Anyone who annoys you – is teaching you patience and calmness!
 Anyone who abandons you – is teaching you to stand up on your own two feet!
 Anybody who offends you – is teaching you forgiveness and compassion!
 Anything that you hate – is teaching you unconditional love!
 Anything that you fear – is teaching you the courage to overcome your fears!
 Anything you can't control – is teaching you to let it go!
 Any "NO" you get from someone – is teaching you to be independent!
 Any problem you're facing – is teaching you how to get a solution to that problem!
 Any attack you get from someone – is teaching you the best form of defence!
 Anyone who looks down on you – is teaching you to look up to God!

Just keep thanking and trusting God as a priority –

Psalm 26:3 – *"For Your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in Your faithfulness."*

Psalm 69:16a – *"Answer me, O LORD, for Your steadfast love is good;..."*

Psalm 86:13 – *"For great is Your steadfast love towards me;
 You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol."*

Psalm 94:18 – *When I thought "My foot slips," Your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up.*

Psalm 52:9b – *"I will thank You forever, because You have done it.
 I will wait for Your Name, for it is good, in the presence of the godly."*

Psalm 103:17a – *"But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting
 on those who fear Him..."*

Psalm 138:8 – *"The LORD will fulfil His purpose for me;
 Your steadfast love O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of Your hands."*

Psalm 145:8,9 – *"The LORD is gracious + merciful, slow to anger + abounding in steadfast love.
 The LORD is good to all, and His mercy is over all He has made."*

-Amen.



Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

I wonder if you have ever gone, or thought about going, on a pilgrimage. I have been a few times on holidays called pilgrimages. So what is the difference between going on a holiday, going on a journey, and going on a pilgrimage. One dictionary definition of pilgrimage is 'a journey to a sacred place'. That definition certainly covers the pilgrimage holidays I have been on. But I think pilgrimage has a deeper meaning for Christians – it is not a sacred place we are seeking, for me my pilgrimages have been about seeking Jesus in those sacred places.

However, I have not been to Jerusalem so this is not a description of my journey to Jerusalem.

In [Luke 2:41-45](#) we read about 3 pilgrimages relating to Jerusalem:

1. Firstly, we have the 3 day journey (pilgrimage) undertaken annually by Jesus' entire family to celebrate the Passover at the temple. This is certainly a journey to a sacred place to meet with God and to worship Him. Clearly this event was integral to Jesus' childhood marking and shaping His early years, and His view of the world beyond His home town. Perhaps the tradition of singing many of the psalms during their pilgrimage would still have been carried out. Certainly, there would have been times when they stopped that they would have taken time to remind themselves of the reason for the journey.
2. The Passover marked that night in Egypt when the Israelites became a pilgrim people as they journey to the Promised Land – a journey led by God. Truly that was a pilgrimage in the company of God who led them day and night. The Passover was a time for Jesus' family to remember God's goodness and His provision for them. I think it would have been a special time of pilgrimage for Mary and Joseph given what they were both told by the angel before Jesus' birth.
3. Then there is the journey of Mary and Joseph 'searching for Jesus'. It is hard to think of a better definition of a Christian Pilgrimage than this costly journey to a significant sacred place searching for Jesus.

Have you ever been with a group and suddenly find that one of the group is missing? Have you ever "lost" temporarily your child. I was told many years ago that my mother frequently "lost" me when I was an infant – not because I had wandered off but because she was so caught up in her thoughts that she forgot I was with her. I was told the ladies at the local dairy just brought me in to the shop until either my mother realised and came back or one of them had time to take me home.

Mary and Joseph must have been extremely worried when they could not find Jesus in their family group as they journeyed home. We know, with hindsight, that they did not need to be fearful but they loved Jesus and yet still they had lost him. They had to make the long journey back to Jerusalem looking for him all the way.

When Mary and Joseph found Jesus, they did not understand why he was still there at the Temple. They knew Him but they did not always understand Him. Like them we love Jesus but sometimes we 'lose' His presence with us when we let other things distract us – are we distracted by the 'crowd' or by the 'church' and its activities?

Like Mary and Joseph, I know Jesus but I don't always understand His ways. Sometimes I must sit still and listen to what He is saying to me or what He is expecting me to do in a particular situation.

There must have been an enormous effort and expense to Joseph and Mary each year for this annual pilgrimage – the loss of income for those days, three days there, then the celebration and three days to get back home. This year there is the added loss of a further two days journey to find Jesus. Do we, do I, put in the ‘effort’ and ‘expense’ as I follow Jesus – as I journey or as I go on a pilgrimage to that New Jerusalem?

As we continue as pilgrims together on a journey, let’s be reminded that we travel together and share our pilgrimage experiences with the words of the first two verses of a hymn:

*“Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you;
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.
We are pilgrims on a journey, and companions on the road;
We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.”*

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



Shining Stars of the Mission – Part 1

Sadhu Sundar Singh

"For whoever wants to save his own life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for me and for the Gospel will save it." Mark 8,35

On 3 September 1889, Sundar Singh was born in Rampur, in the region of Patiala Northern India. He was raised in the luxury of his family's wealth. As a Sikh, Sundar was taught about Hinduism and came along with his parents to Hindu temples. By the age of seven he had already memorized Bagawadgita, the songs of blissful people, which is a long and intricate verse containing lessons of life. At sixteen, not only had he mastered Veda, the ancient sacred books of Hinduism, but he had also read Koran, the sacred book of Islam. He then got acquainted with some Sadhus who taught him Yoga. A Sadhu is a Hindu who devotes his entire life to his religion and forsakes all the worldly pleasures.

Sundar remained single and jobless. He travelled all over India wearing a yellow robe without any food and without having any permanent residence. He lived only on the charity of others. It was his mother who first encouraged him to become a Sadhu. She once told him, "Do not be selfish and materialistic like your brothers, but seek for your peace of mind and hold steadily onto your faith. Be a Sadhu."

However, he never achieved peacefulness in his meditations. Owing to his mother's connections with some women from a British mission in Rajpur, Sundar was able to enter the school run by the missionaries. It was there that Sundar was first exposed to the Bible. He wasn't interested in the Bible at that time. Instead, he ardently buried himself in the occult art of Hinduism.

His mother died when he was 14 years old. Since then his life changed dramatically. Convinced that what Jesus had taught was completely wrong, he tore the Bible apart and burned it. He even threw stones at preachers and encouraged others to do likewise. Still, however hard he tried, he couldn't find the peace he had been seeking for in his own religion. He reached a point in his life where committing suicide crossed his mind.

Three days after he burned the Bible in front of his father, he woke up at 3 a.m. and said to himself, "Oh God, if you do exist, show me the right way, or I will kill myself." He was thinking of throwing himself in front of a train that usually passed at 5 a.m. every morning behind their house in the hope that he would find peacefulness in his future reincarnation. He repeated his prayer once again. All of a sudden he saw a brilliant light. At first he feared that the room was on fire. But nothing happened. He then thought that it might be an answer to his prayer. While watching the light, he suddenly saw Jesus' figure in the radiance. He then heard a voice in Hindi saying, "How much longer are you going to search for me? I have come to save you. You prayed for the right path. Why have you not followed it?"

At that time, Sundar realized that Jesus had not died and that He was alive. Sundar fell on his knees before Him and experienced an astonishing peacefulness which he had never felt before. The vision disappeared, but peace and joy lingered within him.



Psalm 121

A song of ascents.

¹ I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?

² My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.

³ He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;

⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

⁶ the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.

⁷ The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;

⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.



Psalm 122

A song of ascents. Of David.

¹ I rejoiced with those who said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the LORD.”

² Our feet are standing
in your gates, Jerusalem.

³ Jerusalem is built like a city
that is closely compacted together.

⁴ That is where the tribes go up—
the tribes of the LORD—

to praise the name of the LORD
according to the statute given to Israel.

⁵ There stand the thrones for judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.

⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May those who love you be secure.

⁷ May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels.”

⁸ For the sake of my family and friends,
I will say, “Peace be within you.”

⁹ For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
I will seek your prosperity.



Poverty

I don't remember exactly when it happened, but I do remember being shocked and feeling angry and embarrassed all at the same time.

The cause?

The realisation that more and more people of all ages were begging and sleeping rough on the streets of Glasgow and other cities across the UK.

Having spent many years in India, I had seen hundreds of men, women and children, whole families at times, begging.

But here! Now!

People living on the streets is perhaps the extreme and most visible manifestation of poverty in Scotland today.

Here is just one statistic about poverty today, in Scotland.

Between 2016 and 2020, 10% of people in Scotland were in persistent poverty after housing costs. Persistent poverty rates were similar for children (10%), working-age adults (10%) and pensioners (11%). That equates to over half a million people. ([Persistent Poverty in Scotland 2010-2020 \(data.gov.scot\)](https://data.gov.scot))

I think, as a country, we have a problem with knowing what to do. People in poverty, with their number steadily increasing is neither the vision nor the preferred image of a 1st World country.

The Bible takes the issue of poverty seriously. In Deuteronomy God makes explicit how his chosen people are to respond to the poor in their society.

Deuteronomy 15

⁴ However, there need be no poor people among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, ⁵ if only you fully obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all these commands, I am giving you today.

⁷ If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards them. ⁸ Rather, be open-handed and freely lend them whatever they need. ¹¹ There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to be open-handed towards your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.

The Bible is realistic about poverty, "¹¹*There will always be poor people in the land.*" but then presents the people with a challenge and an outcome to aim for, "⁴ *However, there need be no poor people among you,*" and a responsibility to shoulder, "⁷ *do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards them... ¹¹be open-handed...*"

What do we do with a problem that is so vast and systemic in our society?

We can ignore the issue taking the 'I'm all-right' approach and quote verse 11 out of context.

We can be anguished and indignant and feel empathetic.

We could even write to the papers, our government or parliamentary representatives or post on social media.

Or we could take the Bible's approach.

Acknowledge the reality of poverty.

Accept God's challenge that, ***"there need be no poor people among you."***

Practice the radical generosity Deuteronomy commands to alleviate and eradicate the effects of poverty.

And in the church ensure there is no breach between the rich and the poor. Demonstrating that we are truly one in Christ and not factionalised into rich and poor as is the society in which we live.

I wonder how our nations budgets or fiscal events would be shaped if governments used Deuteronomy 15 to influence policy?

John Twynam – Perkins - Formerly chair of TLM Scotland



The misdeeds of language!

James 3:9 "Through it we bless the Lord our Father, and through it we curse men made in the image of God. From the same mouth come the blessing and the curse. It must not be so, my brothers. Does the spring cause fresh water and bitter water to spring through the same opening?"

The day I started thinking about this topic, I shared it with my daughter Claudia during a walk. It's interesting, she tells me that you mention that. A few days ago, I was talking about education with my work colleague. I told her that when we were children if we did something really stupid, with my mother the correction was immediate, sanctioned by a spanking. With my dad, it was different. He never hit us. I remember one Sunday morning, when we were going to church, we were unbearable. Without saying a word, Dad changes direction and takes us to a campsite where we had a mobile home. When we got there, he simply told us, "You have disappointed me." That sentence hurt me. It left a deep impression on me.

I didn't remember this story at all, but when Claudia told me about it, it really appealed to me. I did not use violent or rude words. By these simple words of reproach, I made my children feel guilty. The words I used were right, they corresponded to my soul at the moment but my approach should not have stopped there. It should have been accompanied by words of forgiveness or reconciliation.

Our use of language can sometimes leave traces that are difficult to erase, which is why the Apostle James uses a whole chapter to talk about it. In the book of Proverbs we read : in ch. 18:21 "The tongue has power of life and death;" in ch. 21:23 "He who watches over his mouth and tongue preserves himself from many anxieties."

James mentions two illustrations. The bit and rudder. Both so small, but can lead to great things because they are under the control of a guiding power – a rider or a captain. Jesus Christ, our captain, has the ability to control us.

Let us thank God for giving us a language, a wonderful tool that allows us to appreciate the good things in life and to be able to communicate with one another.

Let us hand over the mastery of our tongues and language to God daily so that it may bring blessings, encouragement, words of love and a message of hope.

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

Les méfaits de la langue !

Jacques 3 :9 « Par elle nous bénissons le Seigneur notre Père, et par elle nous maudissons les hommes faits à l'image de Dieu. De la même bouche sortent la bénédiction et la malédiction. Il ne faut pas, mes frères, qu'il en soit ainsi. La source fait-elle jaillir par la même ouverture l'eau douce et l'eau amère ? »

Le jour où j'ai commencé une réflexion sur ce thème, j'en ai fait part à ma fille Claudia au cours d'une promenade. C'est intéressant me dit-elle que tu mentionne cela. Il y a quelques jours, nous parlions d'éducation avec une collègue de travail. Je lui disais que lorsque nous étions enfants si nous faisons une bêtise, avec ma maman la correction était immédiat, sanctionnée par une fessée. Avec mon papa, il en était autrement. Jamais il ne nous frappait. Par contre, je me souviens d'un dimanche matin, alors que nous nous rendions à l'église, nous étions insupportables. Sans dire un mot, papa change de direction et nous amène dans un camping où nous avons un moblihome. Arrivés sur place, il nous dit simplement : « Vous m'avez déçu. » Cette phrase m'a fait mal. Elle m'a marquée profondément.

Je ne me souvenais plus du tout de cette histoire, mais lorsque Claudia m'en a parlé, cela m'a fortement interpellé. Je n'ai pas utilisé de mots violents ou grossiers. Par ces simples mots de reproches, je faisais endosser sur les épaules de mes enfants le poids de la culpabilité. Les mots que j'ai utilisés étaient justes, ils correspondaient à mon état d'âme du moment mais ma démarche n'aurait pas dû s'arrêter là. Elle aurait dû être accompagnée par des mots de pardon ou de réconciliation.

Les méfaits de la langue peuvent laisser des traces qui ont de la peine à s'effacer, raison pour laquelle l'apôtre Jacques utilise tout un chapitre pour en parler. Dans le livre des proverbes nous lisons au ch. 18 :21 « La langue a pouvoir de vie et de morts ; » au ch. 21 :23 « Celui qui veille sur sa bouche et sa langue se préserve de bien des angoisses. »

Jacques mentionne deux exemples. Le mors et le gouvernail. Tous deux si petits peuvent diriger de grandes choses parce que eux-mêmes sont sous le contrôle d'un cavalier ou d'un capitaine. Jésus-Christ, notre capitaine, à la capacité de nous faire naviguer en toute sécurité par tous les temps. A nous de lui laisser les commandes de nos vies.

Remercions Dieu de nous avoir donné une langue, organe merveilleux qui nous permet d'apprécier les bonnes choses de la vie et de pouvoir communiquer les uns avec les autres.

Remettons journallement la maîtrise de nos langues à Dieu afin qu'elle soit porteuse de bénédictions, d'encouragement, de paroles d'amour et d'un message d'espérance.



Following Jesus

Matthew 4:18-22

Today, people follow other people, particularly on social media.

Do you know who has the most Twitter followers? It is Barack Obama. Indeed, among the top ten people on Twitter with the most followers, there are 6 pop stars, 2 politicians, 1 footballer and 1 billionaire. What does that say about our world?

You know, Jesus 'repeatedly called people to FOLLOW Him:

Here He commands both sets of brothers, Peter & Andrew, and James & John, to do the same thing: "Follow Me." In Matthew 8 when some men were asking about being His disciples, He gave them that command: "Follow Me!". Then later in Matthew 9, He finds Matthew the tax collector and He told Him: "Follow Me!". In Matthew 19 Jesus meets the Rich Young Ruler and after testing him about his money, He tells him: "Come, follow Me." And at the end of the book of John, after Jesus had been crucified, and buried, and resurrected, and He appeared to His disciples, just before He left earth, He told Peter one last time: "Follow Me."

Over and over and over again, Jesus told those He met: "Follow Me." And this is what He says to us today.

For those first disciples, "following" Jesus meant literally, and physically, leaving where they were and following Him wherever He went. They left things behind, and started following after Jesus. They left their jobs, they left their nets, they left their families, they left their priorities, they left their plans, they left their appointments, they left all kinds of things, to follow Jesus.

"Following Jesus" means a whole lot more than just clicking a button on Twitter, or Instagram or Facebook. It means leaving your old life behind, as you confess Him as the Lord of your life, and base your whole life around Him.

Gordon Brown

Scotland - 2008-2011 Vice Chair of TLM Scotland, 2011-2015 Honorary Treasurer of TLM International. Kindly sending his good wishes to the TLM family!



Naaman the Syrian or how to receive divine healing?

- For individual meditation and/or group discussion -

Naaman is Chief of the Army of the King of Syria. His story is recorded in *2 Kings chapter 5*. Naaman is sick.

1. AGREE TO LEAVE – A STEP OF FAITH

Naaman went to Samaria to meet the prophet

What often blocks us is this first step of faith

Recognize, accept and leave

He left with a lot of things:

300 kg of silver

60 kg of gold

10 spare outfits ...

v3 "The girl said one day to her mistress: Ah! if only my master would present himself to the prophet who is in Samaria. This one would cure him immediately of his leprosy. »

v4 "Naaman went to tell the king about what the little Israelite servant had said: 5 Well," said the king, "go and find the king of Israel with the letter I will give you for him."

Naaman was expecting a big reception! Two lessons:

a) Before God, a man/woman, whoever he or she may be, remains a man/woman.

b) Many people think that it takes the spectacular, the strange, the sensational

vs10 "Let him wash 7 times in the Jordan"

2. ACCEPT TO OBEY

Naaman was taken back by his servants:

"If the prophet had asked you to do something difficult, wouldn't you have done it?"

Naaman listened to the voice of reason then the miracle happened.

3. ACCEPT GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Naaman understood the work God had just done.

Naaman returned to the man of God:

v15 "I recognize that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel"

Prayer of the day: *Lord help me to take the step of faith, to accept to obey and to accept your sovereignty.*

NAMAAN LE SYRIEN ou COMMENT RECEVOIR LA GUÉRISON DIVINE ?

Naaman est Chef de l'armée du roi de Syrie.

Naaman est malade.

-1- Accepter de partir – UN PAS DE FOI

Naaman partit à Samarie pour rencontrer le prophète

Ce qui nous bloque souvent, c'est ce premier pas de foi

Reconnaître, accepter et partir

Il est parti avec beaucoup de choses

300 Kg d'Argent

60 Kg d'Or

10 tenues de rechange ...

v3 « La fillette dit un jour à sa maîtresse: Ah! si seulement mon maître se présentait au prophète qui est à Samarie. Celui-ci le guérirait tout de suite de sa lèpre. »

v4 « Naaman alla parler au roi de ce que la petite servante israélite avait dit: 5 Bien, dit le roi, va trouver le roi d'Israël avec la lettre que je te remettrai pour lui. »

Naaman s'attendait à une grande réception!

Deux enseignements :

a) Devant Dieu, un homme / femme quel(le) qu'il (elle) soit, reste un homme / femme.

b) Bien des gens pensent qu'il faut du spectaculaire, de l'étrange, du sensationnel

« Qu'il se lave 7 fois dans le Jourdain »

-2- ACCEPTER D'OBÉIR

Naaman va être repris par ses serviteurs :

« Si le prophète t'avait demandé de faire quelque chose de difficile, ne l'aurais-tu pas fait ? »

Naaman écouta la voix de la raison

Et le miracle se produisit

-3- ACCEPTER LA SOUVERAINETÉ DE DIEU

Naaman comprit l'oeuvre que Dieu venait de faire.

Naaman retourna vers l'homme de Dieu :

v15 « Je reconnais qu'il n'y a point de Dieu sur toute la terre si ce n'est en Israël »

PRIÈRE DU JOUR *Seigneur aide-moi à faire le pas de foi, à accepter d'obéir et à accepter ta souveraineté.*

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



Shining Stars of the Mission – Part 2

Sadhu Sundar Singh

"Do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too." (Matthew 5:39).

Thereafter his life was transformed. He wanted to be baptized. Although his family tried to prevent him from his intention, he was determined. In 1905, on his birthday, he was baptized in an English church in Simla. At that time, he decided to become a Sadhu Christian, so that he could dedicate himself to the Lord. As a Sadhu, he wore a yellow robe, lived on the charity of others, abandoned all possession and maintained celibacy. He was convinced that this was the best way to introduce the Gospel to his people since it was the only way which his people were accustomed to. In addition, he also wanted to be free to devote himself to the Lord.

Having become a Christian, he was renounced by his father and ostracized by his family. On October 16 1905, Sundar wearing a yellow robe, barefooted and without provisions, resumed his nomadic life from village to village, but this time he followed in Jesus' footsteps. In 1906, he went to Tibet for the first time. That country attracted him, primarily because of the great challenges it presented against evangelism. "There will be very strong opposition and persecution there. High above the tranquil snowclad Himalayan peaks, there will be a lot of time and opportunities to meet God and to read the Bible," he thought.

On his way to Tibet, he met Stoker, an American missionary who also wore a yellow robe. Sometimes they spent the night together under a tree or in a mountain cave at an altitude of 5000 meters above sea level, without enough food. Happily they endured all the hardship for the sake of spreading the Gospel. When Sundar became ill, Stoker got them a place to stay in a house belonging to a European. Inspired by Sundar's faithfulness towards God and sincere love towards other people, the host repented his sins and gave his life to serving the Lord.

Following the advice of his friends, Sadhu enrolled himself in St. John School of Theology in Lahore. After studying for two years there, he resumed his travel. An eyewitness reported his experience with Sundar, "I encountered Sundar Singh as he was walking down a mountain trail to proclaim the Gospel to us. He then sat on top of a tree, wiped the sweat off his face and sang a hymn about the love of Jesus to us. The audience was not impressed by the song. One man came forward from the audience, pulled Sundar down from the tree and knocked him to the ground. Silently, Sundar got to his feet and began praying for these hostile people. He then told us about the love of Jesus who had died to redeem all sinners. Because of that I repented and so did the attacker."

That was not the only time when Sundar won souls for the Lord by adhering to Jesus' instruction which says, *"Do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too." (Matthew 5:39).*

One day in Nepal, Sundar was ambushed by four robbers in the middle of a jungle. One of them brandished a sword. Meekly, Sundar bowed his head thinking that his life was about to end. This attitude surprised the perpetrators. Since he was penniless, they took his blanket away from him and let him go. But then, one of the robbers called him back and curiously asked his name. Sundar introduced himself, opened his Bible and started telling him the story of the rich man and Lazarus the poor. The robber said that the end of the rich man's life was unpleasant and asked what would happen to himself. Sundar then told him about the Gospel and God's forgiveness.

The robber took Sundar home with him and repented.



Psalm 123

A song of ascents.

¹ I lift up my eyes to you,
to you who sit enthroned in heaven.

² As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master,
as the eyes of a female slave look to the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the LORD our God,
till he shows us his mercy.

³ Have mercy on us, LORD, have mercy on us,
for we have endured no end of contempt.

⁴ We have endured no end
of ridicule from the arrogant,
of contempt from the proud.



Psalm 124

A song of ascents. Of David.

¹ If the LORD had not been on our side—
let Israel say—
² if the LORD had not been on our side
when people attacked us,
³ they would have swallowed us alive
when their anger flared against us;
⁴ the flood would have engulfed us,
the torrent would have swept over us,
⁵ the raging waters
would have swept us away.
⁶ Praise be to the LORD,
who has not let us be torn by their teeth.
⁷ We have escaped like a bird
from the fowler's snare;
the snare has been broken,
and we have escaped.
⁸ Our help is in the name of the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.



The light of the world

Matthew 5: 14-15

It may be said that this is the greatest compliment that was ever paid to the individual Christian, for in it Jesus commands the Christian to be what he himself claimed to be. Jesus said, "As long as I am in this world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). When Jesus commanded his followers to be the light of the world, he demanded nothing less than that they should be like himself.

When Jesus spoke these words, he was using an expression which was quite familiar to the Jews who heard it for the first time. Of one thing the Jews were very sure _ no one kindled his own light. Jerusalem was indeed a light to the Gentiles, but "God lit Israel's lamp. The light with which the nation or the man of God shone was a borrowed light. It must be so with the Christian. We must shine with the reflection of his light. The radiance which shines from the Christian comes from the presence of Christ within the Christian's heart.

When Jesus said that the Christian must be the light of the world, what did he mean?

(i) **A light is first and foremost something which is meant to be seen:** The rooms of the houses of Palestine were used to be very dark as there was only a very small window. The lamp was used for light so that people could see things in the room. The primary duty of the light of the lamp was to be *seen*. So, then, Christianity is something which is meant to be seen. A man's Christianity should be perfectly visible to all men. Further, this Christianity should not be visible only within the church. A Christianity whose effects stop at the church door is not much use to anyone. It should be even more visible in the ordinary activities of the world. Our Christianity must be visible in the family, neighborhood, and friends circle. It must be seen how we behave in the shopping mall, in the restaurant and in office and other work places. Jesus did not say, "you are the light of the *Church* ": he said, "You are the light of the *world*," and in a man's life in the world his Christianity should be evident to all.

(ii) **A light is a guide.** One the estuary of any big river near the sea we may the line of the lights which marks the channel for the ships to sail in safety. We know how difficult even the city streets were when there were no lights. A light is something to make clear the way. So then the Christian must make the way clear for others.

That is to say, a Christian must of necessity be an example. One of the things which this world needs more than anything else is people who are prepared to have focus on goodness. There are many people in this world, who have not the moral strength and courage to take stand by themselves, but if someone gives them a lead, they will follow; if they have someone strong enough to lean on, they will do the right thing. It is the Christian duty to take the stand which the weaker brother will support, to give the lead which those with less courage will follow. This world needs its guiding lights; there are people waiting and longing for a lead to take the stand and to do the thing which they do not dare by themselves.

(iii) **A light can often be a Warning light.** A light is often the warning which tells us to halt when there is danger ahead. It is sometimes the Christian's duty to bring to his fellow men the necessary

warning. That is often difficult, and it is often hard to do it in a way which will not do more harm than good; but one of the emotional tragedies in life is for someone, especially a young person, to come and say to us, 'I would never have been in this situation in which I now find myself, if you had only spoken to me in time.' Warnings given, not in anger, not in irritation, not in criticism, not in condemnation, not in the desire to hurt, but in love, then they will be more effective and will have positive results.

- (iv) **The light also shows the *Truth*.** The darkness disappears as soon the light comes. With the presence of light we are able to see the actual and real situation. Light helps us to notice the actual facts and happenings. Light always focuses on truth and it brings the real picture of the facts and happenings. We are not in the darkness any more. We are with the light and see the truth. The Christian lives and walks with light, so his life and activities shows the truth. There are no hidden things and cover up because he lives in the light. He does not live in sin anymore because of light which brings the true story. The light helps us to find and live in truth.

The light which can be **seen**, the light which **warns**, the light which **guides**, and which brings **truth**, these are the lights which the Christian must be.

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



Humanity

Define Humanity before starting the devotion.

When living through difficult times, you must display your humanity. We have to be vulnerable, transparent, and real. We have to exercise our empathy muscles. When I'm convinced that you know how I feel I will be far more open to your influence. When you acknowledge and legitimize my fear, worries and concern, I'll trust you. But if you ignore it, downplay it, brush it off, criticize me for it, or if you seem to be unaware of how current reality is impacting my family and me, I'm going to resist you.

During times of disruption and uncertainty, people need to be counselled or shepherded. Not because they're sheep, but because they're looking to you and me for what sheep look to their shepherds for – protection, security, and reassurance. If you lead in any capacity, shepherding is part of your responsibility.

In times of uncertainty, we have to step into the role of counsellor and shepherd. Along with clarity and moral authority, that's what people need. Even if you do it poorly or awkwardly, the people you're responsible for will be grateful. They will appreciate the fact that you are stepping outside of your comfort zone for their sake, and you're putting them first. According to Jesus, that's what great leaders do. That's what He did. He put other people first.

Here's the posture we are to take as leaders. Speaking of the role of Shepard. Jesus said, *"He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice"* (John 10:3-4)

When it comes to the people looking to you for hope and reassurance, your voice is more important than your words. Your voice is an expression of your humanity. It's not enough for them to read your words. Emails and text are fine for normal times, but during times of disruption and uncertainty find ways for people to hear your voice. When you're tempted to text, call. Your voice conveys your humanity, empathy and genuine interest.

If you're a Jesus follower, this goes beyond just good leadership etiquette. Jesus said, "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). If Jesus was willing to step into that role, we have no choice, as his followers, but to follow.

The Good Shephard puts the sheep first. And the sheep know it. The Good Shepard steps out of his or her comfort zone to ensure the sheep feel comforted. Don't be like a hired hand. Don't be like someone who is there because they have to be, are paid to be, or are supposed to be.

In times of disruption and uncertainty, lead with your humanity, presence, compassion, and empathy. Assure the people who are looking to you that you care. Make sure your humanity is showing.



Salvation meaning; Death to sin, alive in Christ

Study of Roman 6

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Roman 6:23 NIV

Study of Romans 6 vs 1 - 23 gives us not just head knowledge but experiential knowledge of what salvation means:

Vs 1-9 Open up with a challenge that sin has no place in our life once we have received the salvation, the life of sin has been dealt with. So, we cannot keep sinning and expect increase in grace.

- At the cross, human nature (called sin) died with Christ and since it's dead we can no longer live in it; it has no power of control over us.
- We are buried with Christ also (experiential death), through baptism into death.
- We have a **new life** just as Jesus was raised from the dead.
- Since we are united with Christ in death, we are equally united with him in resurrection to a new life.
- The old self that makes us sin has been crucified with Christ so the sin maker is done with (we are separated from the old man) it has no power over us. We are no more slaves to sin, we are free.
- Since Christ has risen from the dead He cannot die again, death has no power over Him, therefore we are also dead to sin and alive in Christ. Sin has no influence over our lives again if we have experienced Salvation.
- We are now free to live for God as Jesus did. Resurrection connects us to God, it makes us alive in God, to respond to God's desires and passion and thought and will.

Vs 12-14 shows our response to the salvation experience; we need to daily live for God; the essence of our living is no more for our old self that produces sin but to God, who produces righteousness in us, our body has now become instrument of righteousness; that means living right at the centre of God's will doing what he asked us to do, following Christ lifestyle. **A believer in Christ does not have sin as his/her master (boss) anymore but having separated from the life of sin He/she now operates under the grace of God.**

Vs 15 – 18 states clearly that whoever you offer yourself to will rule over your life, there is no gap; you are either slave to sin or slave to righteousness. A new life means, the nature of sin has been removed and the life of Christ has now taken over, and grace is supplied daily as fuel to function or operate this new life. You cannot operate a new life without the grace of God, it is the enabler of life of righteousness.

Vs 20 – 23 Explain what the result or outcome of life will be if we yield ourselves to: A Sinful life does not benefit us, rather it brings reproach, shame and it results in death, every quantity of sin committed brings death; the salary, wages, benefit, result, allowance of sin is death (to our relationships, fellowship, friendship, freedom, sickness, mental health, distress, and all sorts of inconveniencies).

But now that we've been set free and become slaves of God, the wages, benefit, result, outcome, allowance,

of living right with God produces; holiness, abundant blessings, and eternal life (it injects life to our fellowship, friendship, family/home, future, peace, security of mind, hope)

May God help us to live for Him so that we can reap the benefit of life.

Bunmi Oluloto A Brother and Servant of Christ planted in Niger Republic as TLM Country Leader for Niger and Chad

We are not perfect at the time of salvation or there after, as long as we live in a physical body and a physical world. This is expressed in Christian theology as "simul iustus et peccator"= same time justified and sinner. Paul suffered from many weaknesses but by grace of God he continued to overcome them (2 Corinthians 12:9).

At salvation our journey to grow into the image of Christ starts, by His grace. We continue to receive His grace upon grace as we consciously fight evil with the enabling power of the Holy Spirit (John 1:16).



Lent devotional – Part 1

Flourish

*Psalms 92:12-15 NIVUK “The righteous will **flourish** like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will **flourish** in the courts of our God. They will still **bear fruit in old age**, they will **stay fresh and green**, proclaiming, ‘The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.’”*

On Sunday as we were leaving the building where we have church in Bridgwater in Somerset a friend in our church who is a ‘tree surgeon’ pointed out to me that the tree in front of us was a Cedar of Lebanon. He also spoke to me about the tree and also palm trees! It was fascinating to hear Ian explaining how so much in these two trees mentioned in this psalm are applicable to our relationship with Our Heavenly Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit in multiple ways.

...planted in the house of the Lord...

What a wonderful **position** to be in! It speaks of permanence, protection and participation.

...they will flourish in the courts of our God.

What a **fabulous** place to be in! It speaks of fruitfulness, faithfulness and facilitating.

...bear fruit in old age...

What an **optimal age** to be living in! It speaks of wise opinions, open hearts and open hands.

...stay fresh and green...

What a **gracious** picture! It speaks of a life of gratitude, grace and generosity.

...proclaiming ‘The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.’...

What **proclamation!** It speaks of partnership, purity and practice.

Lent is the season of **spiritual preparation** before Easter. During Lent, we observe a period of fasting, repentance, moderation, self-denial, and spiritual disciplines.

The **purpose** of the Lenten season is to set aside time for reflection on Jesus Christ to consider his suffering and his sacrifice, his life, death, burial, and resurrection.

Our **participation** can be to build our lives on the pattern Jesus set before us:

...**Obedience** to what his Father asked him to do, living an **unselfish** life, being **sacrificial** to the needs of others and **extremely generous** in every way possible.

Let Lent 2023 fill us with the shalom of God so that we the righteous can flourish, give hope and peace to the many Leprosy sufferers that THE LEPROSY MISSION touches every day around the world.

Proclaiming: The Lord is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.

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.



Lent devotional – Part 2

Righteousness

Lent is a season of **spiritual preparation** before Easter. During Lent, we observe a period of fasting, repentance, moderation, self-denial, and spiritual disciplines and meditations.

*2 Corinthians 5:21 NIVUK "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the **righteousness of God.**"*

What does this mean to us during Lent in 2023?

- The sin in my life was a barrier between God and me.
- But Jesus *who had no sin* took my sin upon Himself so that I can be connected to my Heavenly Father.

1 Corinthians 1:30 NIVUK

*"It is because of Him (our Heavenly Father) that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our **righteousness, holiness and redemption.**"*

One of the byproducts of our salvation through Jesus is that we're **righteous** in the sight of Our Heavenly Father.

What does it mean to be the *Righteousness of God* in Christ?

A **righteous** person is a moral, upright person who follows or does what is right. In this case it means: *Living and doing life God's way!*

- Let's define **righteousness** as the state or condition of being declared upright, moral, just, or virtuous.
- This **righteousness** is not in your own eyes, but in the eyes of Our Heavenly Father and this is noticed by others. We live life very differently to the unsaved.
- We are fully accepted by God because of Jesus.

A few things to know about the Righteousness of God

1. You can not earn it, it's given to us by exchange.

- Jesus did the transaction on The Cross and sealed it when He rose from the dead!
- Being righteous on our own is impossible but through Jesus we become **righteous**.
- **Righteousness** is accredited to us when we become willing to ask for forgiveness of our sins. Then God will take your sin and exchange it for **His righteousness**.

2. It's Not Bought, It was Paid For.

- At the cross when Jesus died for our sins. Jesus purchased **righteousness** for us by shedding His blood.

3. It's Not Temporary, It's Eternal.

- The **righteousness** Jesus paid for carries us into eternity, to the place where there is no more time. Forever in the presence of The Most High God.

“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Because of Jesus Our Heavenly Father sees me: As a **righteous** person who is a moral, upright person who follows or does what is right. In this case it means: *Living and doing life God’s way!*

Does this boggle your mind? It does mine!

*May Lent 2023 cause you to reflect on the magnitude of being made **righteous** because of what our saviour Lord Jesus Christ did for us!*

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.



Psalm 125

A song of ascents.

¹Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion,
which cannot be shaken but endures forever.

²As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the LORD surrounds his people
both now and forevermore.

³The scepter of the wicked will not remain
over the land allotted to the righteous,
for then the righteous might use
their hands to do evil.

⁴LORD, do good to those who are good,
to those who are upright in heart.

⁵But those who turn to crooked ways
the LORD will banish with the evildoers.
Peace be on Israel.



Psalm 126

A song of ascents.

¹When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.

²Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.

Then it was said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”

³The LORD has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.

⁴Restore our fortunes, LORD,
like streams in the Negev.

⁵Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy.

⁶Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.



"Freedom for the prisoners"

Luke 4:18

My uncle spent most of the years of the second world war in labour camps of Nazi controlled Europe. As the fortunes of war changed, the prisoners were moved from place to place.

Work was hard, food rations meagre and living conditions appalling. Most of the prisoners died before the war ended. As he played the mandolin and had a good singing voice, he often had to entertain the officers who rewarded him with scraps of food and helped him to survive.

In 1945 he was in a camp somewhere in the Bavarian alps. Germany was in chaos. Saturation bombing was killing thousands of civilians, wiping out entire cities and destroying the transport and communication infrastructure.

By the time the unconditional surrender was signed, the camp was completely cut off from the outside world.

For 3 weeks after the armistice, prisoners and guards at the camp continued life as captives of a war that had officially ended. During this period, many died of malnutrition and disease. No one had bothered to share the good news.

Two thousand years ago, Christ, by His perfect life, death and resurrection, came to set the captives free. To a humanity suffering in bondage to the results and the power of sin, He proclaimed "It is finished". (John 19:30.) "The war is over, I have won - all those who were prisoners of the fear of death and the power of sin can be free - accept me as your Saviour and share in my victory for eternity."

Two thousand years later, millions have not heard that the war is over, that Christ has won and they can be free. Countless others have heard but have refused the gift of freedom and life. Some have accepted the gift and experienced deliverance but seem to have little motivation to share the good news with others ... and the world continues in its bondage to sin and Satan.

Thought:

- *Have I accepted His liberation? Am I free?*
- *Do I love Him and others enough to share the good news?*



But I trust in your unfailing love

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me. Psalm 13:5 - 6

I went through the nature reserve the other day. It was cold and the trees seemed to huddle together for warmth. As I walked I heard a snatch of bird song. Then a flicker of movement in a bush grabbed my attention. I stood still and waited. Another movement and a flash of red. Just a robin.

He watched me, head tilted, alert, ready to fly. Slowly, I felt for a piece of bread crust in my pocket. Then even more slowly, with no sudden movement, I stretched my arm out with the bread in my open hand. And waited. The robin hopped onto a nearer branch and watched. I waited some more. We both, the robin and I, concentrated on the bread. He hopped nearer, just out of reach.

Then he committed himself. With a flurry of feathers he landed on my hand, almost weightless, took the bread and was off again. He didn't wait to say thank you - or did he? I felt privileged. That moment of trust was thanks enough. Trust takes time to build. The confidence to trust someone, doesn't happen in a flash. It's an act of faith. In trust we surrender something of ourselves to another person. It can be risky but it enriches life.

And that was it. Our encounter was over. The robin flew away with his piece of bread. I went away with a smile on my face, my day brightened by a flash of red, a bit of bird song, and a moment of trust.

Lord, help me to trust today; to take the bread of life your hand holds out to me.

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)



Christian Identity : Restored in Resurrection – Part 2 of 3

Man's identity in Jesus - Redeemed as the Child of God

At the level of my human spirit I have the sinful nature of disobedience to God's Word. It is my inborn disposition. Because of this I am highly vulnerable to Satan's many enticing deceptions in this world. Satan had deceived me not to trust God's Word in the Garden of Eden. That led to God driving me away from His presence/fellowship. I was lost, helpless and hapless without the fellowship of God.

Being born with a sinful nature, I cannot save myself from my sins. I need God's grace to save me. I need a redeemer to redeem me from my sin/separation from God. Out of His abundant love for me God had planned my redemption well ahead. He said that when Jesus, His Son, the Saviour comes into this world, he would crush Satan and deliver me from his clutches (Genesis 3:15, Matthew 5:17).

The Law given to Moses by God in itself did not have the means for my forgiveness/redemption. Like a mirror, it only reflected back to me what a sinner I am. The Law states that the penalty for sin is death. The price for sin has to be paid for before Man is redeemed. Our God is a God of mercy but is equally of justice. Only a sinless person can offer the atoning sacrifice to God for my sin of unbelief and disobedience. It has to be none other than the Triune God Himself.

Apart from God, none is sinless. We all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:22-24). The atoning sacrifice of the sinless Son of God, Jesus, through His death on the cross at Calvary is the only means for the salvation for my soul. Jesus' resurrection is the only assurance of victory over death. Jesus' death and resurrection had delivered me from the curse of the Law (Colossians 3:3, Hebrews 2:9, Galatians 3:13). Both mercy and justice are parts of God's character.

Upon Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and ascension to heaven my redemption was secured. It was a huge sacrifice that God had made. Now it is up to me whether to accept or reject the redemption that God has offered by His grace. The ultimate triumph of God's plan depends on my receiving His grace. God does not force redemption on me since He honors the free will gift He gave me. I receive salvation through faith that Jesus had died and paid for my sins in full. The precious blood of Christ that was shed on the cross had cleansed me of my sins against God, past, present and future. That is how priceless my redemption is; God sacrificed Himself through His Son on the cross. My restoration of sonship with God by His grace is invaluable. I receive it humbly in gratitude (Ephesians 1:4-6).

My identity as the son of God in the first Adam was lost in the Garden of Eden but was restored in the redeeming and substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. I am created by God and redeemed through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Redemption is found through faith in Jesus because the scriptures say, "the just shall live by faith". In redemption I walk over from what I was (a sinner) to what I am (Child of God). It is crossing over from sin to salvation (saved by His grace). When I accept Jesus as my personal Saviour, my spirit is cleansed by the Spirit of God, I am born again. I am no longer under the evil influence of Satan. I am convicted by the Holy Spirit to live in God's Kingdom.

The identity that was once lost; is now restored. I continue to live in the old physical body but am redeemed and renewed in my Spirit. My spiritual identity has been restored giving me once again the privilege to call my Creator God, Abba Father, just as Jesus did. I am no longer separated from the love of God. I no longer fall prey to Satan's deceptions. I exercise my free will to obey my God and do His Will. It is a personal relationship of commitment to God's sovereignty. I am once again the son of the Most High (*Romans 8:17*, John 1:12, Galatians 3:26). I once again enjoy fullness of life with my Father in His presence, protection and provision.

Son of God has redeemed my sonship with God

In gratitude for His grace

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

The first part of this series you might read on the 6th February.



When butterflies go bad

Elizabeth and I love citrus trees, so we were delighted when Julia gave us a lemon and an orange tree at Christmas.

We planted the trees on Boxing Day and watched them flourish over the following weeks.

Imagine our dismay, when, a few days ago, we went out to inspect them and found them stripped of their leaves. On closer inspection, I found a huge caterpillar looking back at me.

I felt deeply conflicted. My garden was awash with beautiful butterflies and I'd do almost anything to keep them, but why of all the many trees and shrubs in our garden, did they choose the two trees that are most precious to us to lay their eggs? [Jonah 4:7]

If you're a farmer, you'll be all too familiar with this situation. As newlyweds, Elizabeth and I worked at a leprosy hospital which was surrounded by lush farm-land. The idea was that the hospital would be self-sustaining. The local monkeys had other ideas. As the crops ripened, the monkeys would launch raids on our fields from the nearby woodlands.

The law of unintended consequences is part of life. Maybe the lovely scent of the citrus proved irresistible to the butterflies? We wanted to provide our patients with wholesome fresh food, but ended up attracting monkeys from far and wide. We dedicate lots of time to planning, but the environment responds to our interventions in unexpected, unpredictable ways.

Can you think of something you have done recently that lead to a surprising result? How did you respond? Choosing between good and bad outcomes may not be too hard, but how do you choose between butterflies and lemons and oranges? Afterall, I can't compel the butterflies to lay their eggs on the trees that aren't important to me.

When Naaman's expectations were unmet, he wanted to storm off, but he was persuaded to heed the words of Elisha [2 Kings 8-14]. Was Elisha surprised by Naaman's initial reaction? We have no way of knowing, but we do know that Naaman was cured. Naaman's pride came close to preventing him from accepting Elisha's free offer of a restored life. He changed his mind, and as a result, we have one of the most amazing conversion stories in Scripture.

We can't anticipate every outcome and we can't plan for every eventuality. So, what do we do? Firstly, I think we should try to avoid being distracted by the unexpected [guilty as charged]. [II Timothy 3: 14] Secondly, remind yourself why you are on this path – sustain your momentum:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the

cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” Hebrews 12: 1-3

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.



Shining Stars of the Mission – Part 3

Sadhu Sundar Singh

In 1912 Sundar decided to imitate Jesus' seclusion and fasting for 40 days even though his friends advised him against it. He failed to fast for 40 days because he became weak. However the experience strengthened his spirit. He could thus overcome all doubts, anger and impatience.

In the following years, he was often persecuted but he was also miraculously delivered by the Lord. In 1914, Sundar preached in Nepal, a country with a very strong root of Buddhism. In the town of Rasa, he was sentenced to death by a local Lama on the grounds of spreading a foreign religion. He was thrown into a dry well the top of which was then covered and locked from the outside. He was without food and drink, naked inside the well together with corpses of executed murderers. He stayed in the horrible well for 2 days until a stranger came and helped him out of the well. After relocking the well, the stranger left without saying anything.

Not long after that, Sundar was recaptured and taken to the Lama. The Lama was very surprised since he had always kept the only key to the well with him. Realizing that Sundar was under the protection of a very powerful God, they became fearful of him and begged him to leave them.

In 1918, Sundar visited Madras where thousands of people gathered to listen to him preach. There Sundar focused his preach on Jesus Christ the redeemer. He testified, "Jesus' presence always brought astonishing peace to me no matter how bad the situations I was in. Whenever I was in a prison, he was always there for me. He transformed the jail into a heaven and the burdens became blessings. There are many Christians who do not feel His glorious presence as something real. Because for them Jesus only occurs in their minds and not in their hearts. Only when someone surrenders his heart to Jesus can he find Him."

Sundar often used parables in his preachings. He once said, "One day after a long journey, I rested in front of a house. Suddenly a sparrow came towards me blown helplessly by a strong wind. From another direction, an eagle dived to catch the panicky sparrow. Threatened from different directions, the sparrow flew into my lap. By choice, it would not normally do that. However, the little bird was seeking for a refuge from a great danger. Likewise, the violent winds of suffering and trouble blow us into the Lord's protective hands."

Sadhu Sundar Singh journeyed much. He travelled all over India and Ceylon. Between 1918-1919, he visited Malaysia, Japan and China. Between 1920-1922 he went to Western Europe, Australia and Israel. He preached in many cities; Jerusalem, Lima, Berlin and Amsterdam among others. Sundar remained modest despite his fame. His attitude made his father repent. Sundar never thought of himself. He only desired to follow Jesus' example: to repay evil with kindness and to win over his enemies by love. This attitude often caused his enemies to feel ashamed of themselves.

Once, he was preaching in a public market when a fanatic from a different religion suddenly punched his right cheek. Calmly, Sundar turned his left cheek towards the assailant. The attacker left. But that night Sundar received a message from the attacker asking for forgiveness.

On another occasion, Sundar told some harvesters about the parable of the weeds. They became annoyed and cursed him. One of them threw a stone at Sundar's head. At that instant, the stone thrower was struck by such a painful headache that he had to lie down on the ground.

Without hesitations, Sundar took over that man's chore and helped them harvest the crops. They soon became friendly to him and invited him home. Their hearts were then open to the Gospel. The next day after Sundar left, they noticed that their harvest became more abundant.

Sundar visited Tibet every summer. In 1929, he visited that country again and was never seen since. Sundar manifested into his life the verse written in Mark 8:35 which says,

*"For whoever wants to save his own life will lose it;
but whoever loses his life for me and for the Gospel will save it."*



Psalm 127

A song of ascents. Of Solomon.

¹ Unless the LORD builds the house,
the builders labor in vain.

Unless the LORD watches over the city,
the guards stand watch in vain.

² In vain you rise early
and stay up late,
toiling for food to eat—

for he grants sleep to those he loves.

³ Children are a heritage from the LORD,
offspring a reward from him.

⁴ Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
are children born in one's youth.

⁵ Blessed is the man
whose quiver is full of them.
They will not be put to shame
when they contend with their opponents in court.



Psalm 128

A song of ascents.

- ¹ Blessed are all who fear the LORD,
who walk in obedience to him.
- ² You will eat the fruit of your labor;
blessings and prosperity will be yours.
- ³ Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots
around your table.
- ⁴ Yes, this will be the blessing
for the man who fears the LORD.
- ⁵ May the LORD bless you from Zion;
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.
- ⁶ May you live to see your children's children—
peace be on Israel.



The Son of Man has come to seek + to save the lost!

Luke 19:1-10

1) On what day was Zacchaeus saved?

a) When his heart ached and yearned...."Come unto Me, all ye who are heavy-laden..."

b) When he 'climbed down'..."Today is the day of salvation, harden NOT your heart.."

c) When he opened his heart...."My son, give me your heart,
and let your eyes observe My Ways." (Prov.23:26)

d) When he did all of this willingly/joyfully/sincerely/with faith and trust....

Psalm 138:3 – "On the day I called, You answered me; You increased my strength of soul."

*Do you/I have such a day of salvation?

2) In whose Name was Zacchaeus saved?

In the Name of Jesus/Saviour/Son of Man/Son of God/Messiah.....!

Matth.1:21 – "She will bear a son, and you shall call His Name Jesus,
for he will save His people from their sins."

Matth.1:23 – "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son...Immanuel (God with us)."

Acts 4:12 – "And there is salvation in no one else,
for there is no other Name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

John 14:6 – "Jesus said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life,
no one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

*Is Jesus your/my only hope/assurance of eternal salvation?

3) How gloriously was Zacchaeus saved?

->He was Real/Repentant/made Restitution/started living acc. to Christ's Righteousness...

Eph.2:8ff – "For by grace you have been saved through faith.

And this is NOT your own doing; it is the gift of God, Not a result of works,
so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ...."

*Have you/I also come out of 'darkness' into His marvellous 'light'? (cf. Eph.5:8)

PS – Who also was saved with Zachaeus on that day?

"Today salvation has come to this house..."

It would seem that each one in his household also found salvation in Christ on that day:

Because of this 'changed from the inside man'! (cf. also the Philippian jailer-Acts 16)

*May many come to Jesus TODAY, just like Zachaeus did, and be saved . –Amen.



A father with an epileptic son – Part 1

Mark 9:14-29 This story is about a father with a disabled son. His son is deaf and unable to speak. In addition, he has what in modern medicine we would describe as epileptic fits. It is not pretty to watch and even dangerous. The boy suffers convulsions and he unexpectedly falls now into the water, then in the fire. It is painful to imagine the damage these incidents must have caused. The boy must have become fearful, his skin contracted where he has been burnt, stigmatized by adults and by his peers. Disabled in more ways than one. Declared possessed by an evil spirit even. These are the labels people attach out of fear, trying to explain a situation that does not make sense. In this case, Jesus confirms the presence of an evil spirit. Healing follows when the evil spirit is driven out. But this does not mean that all disabled children are possessed – far from it.

The father had heard about Jesus and the miraculous healings he performed. Jesus was also known to exorcise evil spirits. So he decided to bring his son to Jesus. When they reached the place, they found that Jesus was not there. But his disciples were there and they continued to minister as Jesus had taught them – preaching, healing and exorcising (Mark 6:12-13). Unfortunately, their efforts failed in this particular case. The boy did not improve. That is where the controversy started. Some of the religious teachers started to question what the disciples were doing and people in the crowd stepped in to accuse or defend. The situation devolved into a heated argument that did nothing for either the father or the son.

Then suddenly Jesus shows up. All discussion stops and everyone turns to him, full of expectation. What does He have to say about all this? But Jesus can sense the scepticism and dissent that is in the air. This is where the father sees his chance to finally talk to the right person, the person with the real authority. He explains his own helplessness and that of the disciples. And he expresses his doubt as well: *If you can do anything, have pity on us and help us!*

Clearly Jesus does not like the situation. He does not want to use his powers to prove himself to sceptical onlookers. Not long before he had said so explicitly: “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it” (Mk 8:12). Here again he refuses to be challenged. He turns the father’s argument around and says: Anything is possible for me, but what about you? Can you receive the blessing I am perfectly able to give you?

This is where the father drops any reservations he may have harboured. He does not step back from Jesus but bares his soul to him: I want to believe but I do not know how – please help me out of this muddle I am in! This is where he connects with Jesus, where he surrenders himself to his grace without holding anything back. Not a victorious faith, hardly a saving faith, but it is enough. Jesus steps in and intervenes, commanding the spirit to leave the boy. As he does so, the spirit manifests wildly and the boy loses consciousness.

At this point the crowd finally grows quiet and the argument stops. It seems as if the boy has died. What good has all the uproar brought now? Even the father is perplexed. Only Jesus is now in control of the

situation. And He is not afraid, not even of apparent death. He steps forward, with everyone looking on. He simply takes the boy's hand and he awakens. He is raised up into a new life.

Johan Velema worked with TLM international office from 1999 to 2011. He then studied theology and is currently working with the Christian & Missionary Alliance in West Africa.

There is a programme in which TLM Netherlands participates called "We are Able". I was asked to contribute Bible study materials to be used in workshops with African pastors about attitudes to disability. The story of the boy with epilepsy was taken up to think through the question of praying for healing for people with disability.



The experience of the disciples - Part 2

Mark 9:14-29

The disciples have been put under pressure to heal the boy. Wasn't that what they were about? Helping the helpless? Do something! Show us what you can do! Of course, healing doesn't work well under pressure and with too many sceptical eyes looking on. The disciples cannot pull it off. And that is where the argument begins. The disciples have no explanation and nothing to offer. That is where Jesus' absence is acutely felt.

It is a situation that occurs still today. Followers of Jesus pray for the sick and persons with a disability and do not always see the desired result. Pastors find themselves embarrassed. Is it God who lacks power in this situation? Of course not! Then what is wrong? That is where we, sinful men and women that we are, start shifting the blame.

When the disciples asked Jesus why they could not have healed the boy, He did not blame it on the boy or on his father. He did not blame it on the people who had started the quarrelling either. In their private conversation afterwards, He squarely pointed at his followers. He did not accuse them or embarrass them further. What He did say was: If you want to be able to resolve this kind of situation, you have to pray.

We have often interpreted this as: You should pray more, with more emotion, louder, longer, more intensely... As if we need to draw God's attention or somehow twist his arm to get him to do something He does not really want to do. But that is not in line with what we know about God, who is good and generous and abundant in grace and love.

Others will say we need to bind the evil powers that destroy the patient's life. True, but how can we do that? I believe this requires not one prayer or a prayer project, but a life of prayer – a prayer career. What the Lord asks of us is that we align ourselves with the spirit of God and with the will of God. That means responding to the promptings of the Spirit who will point to things that are wrong in our lives and setting them right. It means no discrepancy between our words and our actions. It means accepting that God is sovereign and that He alone decides who is healed and who is not. As ministers of the grace of God, we need humility to accept this reality, which may so embarrass us.

We may even need to admit that we ourselves have not grown sufficiently in our spiritual lives and that therefore we are still defeated by powers of evil that are too strong for us. No, that does not reflect negatively on God – anything is possible for Jesus as He clearly points out in verse 23. But we may be limited in our capacity to discern the will of God. We may lack insight into the person we face, into ourselves, into the context... Sometimes the Lord asks us to accept defeat and only many years later do we understand what it was that blocked the free flow of God's grace in that situation.

So when healing does not come instantly in response to our prayers, let us not point at others but turn inward and ask: Lord, what do you want me to learn? As we listen and learn and grow, we will eventually be

more fruitful and bring God more glory. And one day we may even be ready to bring healing where previously we could not.

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Jesus' side of the story – Part 3

Mark 9:14-29

It had been an amazing time up on the mountain top. Jesus had been lifted out of the earthly reality and spoken with heavenly beings. He had prayed for his three closest disciples to see something of that other reality. A reality they could not really grasp. They had seen Jesus as He really is. Now they came down into the valley and find their team mates involved in emotional arguments with a large crowd, including some leaders of the religious establishment.

Jesus does not waste time. He demands to know what is going on and what He hears greatly displeases him. We can only speculate what is going through his mind at that moment. Was He disappointed that his followers had not been able to handle the case by themselves? Was He upset by the critical attitudes of the religious leaders? Was He pained by the way the powers of evil were holding these people in their grasp? Did He think about how the only way to break their power was through his own death? Did He already think about the suffering that was awaiting him?

What Jesus' words identify is the lack of faith He sees in the people before him - the crowd, his disciples, the teachers of the law - and the limited time He will still be with them. He also expresses how this state of affairs pains him, burdens him, brings him to despair: 'How long am I to bear with you?' (9:19, ESV).

Jesus tells them to bring the boy to him. He does not shy away from the confrontation. And the response in the boy is immediate. The evil spirit causes him to convulse, roll around on the ground and foam at the mouth. Not exactly the moment for a relaxed conversation to discuss the case!

Still, Jesus engages the father in conversation. We often see Jesus seeking to connect with the person who is coming to him for healing. He asks Bartimaeus what he wants (Lk 18:41); He gestures to the man who is unable to hear or speak (Mk 8:23); He touches the man who is blind and asks how his sight is changing; He touches the man with Leprosy (Mk 1:41); He stops to hear the story of the woman with menstrual problems (Mk 5:30). In this case, He confronts the father. Jesus scolds this man for questioning his ability to resolve the problem. He challenges the father's faith, trying to provoke him into opening his heart to him. How can He help someone who is not open to receive the resolution He is perfectly able to give?

This intervention is successful. The father now cries out his helplessness, his inability to do what is expected and his realization that Jesus is his only hope. No one else has been able to meet his need. He himself is unable to meet his need. After all the confusion of what has happened, he focusses all his hope on Jesus alone.

It is an important lesson about prayer we learn here. Prayer is about bringing our needs to the Lord, whether great or small, and even our doubts. But the other focus in our prayers must be on the person of Jesus. His interest in answering our prayers is to bring us to a realization of who He really is and to draw us into closer communion with himself.

Furthermore, this episode shows us Jesus' leadership. He takes charge of a chaotic situation, quickly gets to the heart of the problem, cuts off unfruitful debate and brings resolution. We also see Jesus here as the

unique human/divine person who is stronger than the evil spirit that holds the boy in its grip. We see him as the Lord of Life, who chases away evil, wakes the boy and restores him to dignity.

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Thought for meditation/group discussion and prayer:

The greatest disease

“The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy;
it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for.

We can cure physical diseases with medicine,
but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love.

There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread
but there are many more dying for a little love.

The poverty in the West is a different kind of poverty –
it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality.

There's a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God.”

Mother Teresa of Kolkata

Authors in ABC Order**Country****Textuaries in Canonical Order**

<i>Bunmi Oluloto</i>	<i>15 March</i>	<i>Niger</i>		Deut 15,4-11	6 March
<i>Christine Osman</i>	<i>2 March</i>	<i>Scotland</i>		2 Kings 5	9 March
<i>Dan Izzett</i>	<i>16, 17 March</i>	<i>Zimbabwe/UK</i>		Psalms 13,5-6	21 March
<i>David king of Israel</i>	<i>5, 7 March</i>	<i>Israel</i>		Psalms 92,12-15	16 March
<i>Dorothy Owen</i>	<i>14 March</i>	<i>Papua New Guinea</i>		Psalms 121	4 March
<i>+ Eddie Askew</i>	<i>21 March</i>	<i>UK</i>		Psalms 122	5 March
<i>Élie Fofolo</i>	<i>9 March</i>	<i>DR Congo</i>		Psalms 123	11 March
<i>Eric Chollet</i>	<i>7 March</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>		Psalm 124	12 March
<i>Gordon Brown</i>	<i>8 March</i>	<i>Scotland</i>		Psalms 125	18 March
<i>Johan Velema Dr</i>	<i>28 – 30 March</i>	<i>Netherlands</i>		Psalms 126	19 March
<i>John Twynham - Perkins</i>	<i>6 March</i>	<i>Scotland</i>		Psalms 127	15 March
<i>Mother Teresa</i>	<i>31 March</i>	<i>India/Albania</i>		Psalms 128	26 March
<i>Otto Kingsley</i>	<i>1, 27 March</i>	<i>Southern Africa</i>		Matthew 4,18-22	8 March
<i>Peter Laubscher</i>	<i>23 March</i>	<i>Southern Africa</i>		Matthew 5,14-15	13 March
<i>Pradeep and Sarah Failbus</i>	<i>13 March</i>	<i>India</i>		Mark 9,14-29	28, 29, 30 March
<i>Raju PLN Dr</i>	<i>22 March</i>	<i>India</i>		Luke 2,41-45	2 March
<i>Silvano Perotti</i>	<i>20 March</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>		Luke 4,18	20 March
<i>Solomon king of Israel</i>	<i>25 March</i>	<i>Israel</i>		Luke 19,1-10	27 March
				John 10,3-4	14 March
				Romans 6	15 March
				Romans 8,17	22 March
				2 Cor 5,21	17 March
				Hebr 12,13	23 March
				James 3,9	7 March