



# **TLM Daily Devotions**

**October 2023**





## **Intro to the month of October**

As we are turning pages of days, weeks and months, we realize our smallness, weakness and fragility. How few is in our hands and how much we are in dependances...

At the same time God's faithfulness is shining even more brightly, despite our limits. He remained faithful in each moment to each one of us personally, and collectively as well, to our worldwide mission-family.

He is the Only One on whom we may build trust tomorrow and beyond.

He is our Mighty Fortress – as we shall read it on the last day of this month, too...

Blessed Bridge - reading to all!

**Marta**



## Psalm 28

### Of David.

<sup>1</sup>To you, LORD, I call;  
you are my Rock,  
do not turn a deaf ear to me.  
For if you remain silent,  
I will be like those who go down to the pit.

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

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

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

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

<sup>6</sup>Praise be to the LORD,  
for he has heard my cry for mercy.

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

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

<sup>9</sup>Save your people and bless your inheritance;  
be their shepherd and carry them forever.



## The World's biggest killer

<sup>1</sup>In 1990, Robin Marantz Henig started researching a book about viruses. A year earlier, more than 200 virologists had gathered at a conference in Washington DC to consider future threats and to counter a complacency that seemed to exist about the possible emergence of a virus that could cross oceans and cause a pandemic.

In 2020, Henig phoned Stephen S Morse, a virologist who had chaired the 1989 conference and featured prominently in her book. He was dismayed by the world's failure to heed his warnings. He shared with Henig his favourite quote, from a management guru called Peter Drucker, who was once asked, "What is the worst mistake you could make?" According to Morse, Drucker replied: "To be prematurely right."

As disciples of Jesus, we are intimately acquainted with a 'virus' that has criss-crossed oceans and has been at pandemic levels for millennia.

We know too, the lethal effect of this virus and, if unchecked, the final outcome of its action on humanity. But that outcome need not be inevitable because there is a wholly effective cure that will stop the virus in its tracks.

Furthermore, there is a day coming when the virus will be destroyed. Totally!

As followers of Jesus, we know this virus by its everyday name, sin.

We know what sin does to us as individuals, what it does to our relationships, what it does to our world, animate and inanimate.

We know its effect at the micro and macro level.

But we also know the Good News of God's grace, that Christ died for our sins.

We know that sin brings death, but Christ brings new life in all its fullness.

To use Drucker's words we are, 'prematurely right' about the particular viral pandemic of Sin.

But there is no mistake in knowing this.

We know it for a reason, for a purpose, for a calling, for a responsibility.

As Paul writes,

*... "Everyone who calls, 'Help, God!' gets help."*

*But how can people call for help if they don't know who to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven't heard of the One who can be trusted? And how can they hear if nobody tells them? And how is anyone going to tell them unless someone is sent to do it? That's why Scripture exclaims, A sight to take your breath away! Grand processions of people telling all the good things of God!' Romans 10<sup>13-15</sup> The Message*

Neither need we be dismayed.

*<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. <sup>8</sup> We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 2 Corinthians 4<sup>7-8</sup>*

*With God's enabling we have work to do in warning our world and of telling it of the one who brings healing and restoration, about the one who has defeated sin.*

**John Twynam – Perkins** - Formerly chair of TLM Scotland

<sup>1</sup>From an article in the Guardian by Simon Usborne, 4.3.2023 about people who predicted many of the disasters that have befallen the world this century.



## The witness.

Christ's last words after His resurrection and just before His ascension were: Acts 1:8 *"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

He went to heaven leaving a mandate for us on earth to be His witnesses until He returns.

The witness is the one who testifies that what he has seen or experienced is true. To be a credible witness, you have to be authentic. You have to leave aside your personal assessments. We must be satisfied with the facts seen or experienced. Admittedly, this can involve risks. The witness may pay dearly for his testimony, in certain circumstances, facing challenge, danger, persecution or even death. Stephen paid with his life for wanting to be the witness of Christ.

We find this witness mandate described by the prophet Isaiah in chapter 43:10 "It is ye who are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "and my servant, whom I have chosen, that ye may know, believe, and acknowledge who I am. You are therefore my witnesses, declares the Lord, that it is I who am God."

It is wonderful and a great honor to see that God Himself associates us with this role of witness. The role of the witness is decisive. It is there to show the way like those yellow signs that we find on walking paths. It points in the right direction. What a relief when we walk to find from time to time an indication that we are not lost. Sometimes in our walk, we are discouraged, time is long. And now a sign comes to stimulate us to persevere.

*Let us be encouraged in our mandate as witnesses.*

## Le témoin.

Les dernières paroles du Christ après sa résurrection et juste avant son ascension ont été : Actes 1 :8 « *Vous recevrez une puissance lorsque le St-Esprit viendra sur vous, et vous serez mes témoins à Jérusalem, dans toute la Judée, dans la Samarie et jusqu'aux extrémités de la terre.* »

Il est parti au ciel en nous laissant un mandat à nous qui sommes sur la terre, celui d'être ses témoins jusqu'à ce qu'il revienne.

Le témoin est celui qui atteste que ce qu'il a vu ou vécu est vrai. Pour être un témoin crédible, il faut être dans l'authenticité. Il faut laisser de côté ses appréciations personnelles. Il faut se contenter des faits vus ou expérimentés. Certes, cela peut comporter des risques. Le témoin peut payer cher son témoignage, dans certaines circonstances, être confrontés à la contestation, au danger, à la persécution, voire même à la mort. Etienne l'a payé de sa vie d'avoir voulu être le témoin du Christ.

Ce mandat de témoin, nous le trouvons décrit par le prophète Esaïe au ch. 43 :10 « C'est vous qui êtes mes témoins, déclare l'Eternel, ainsi que mon serviteur, celui que j'ai choisi afin que vous sachiez, croyiez et reconnaissez qui je suis... Vous êtes donc mes témoins, déclare l'Eternel, que c'est moi qui suis Dieu. »

C'est merveilleux et un grand honneur de voir que Dieu lui-même nous associe à ce rôle de témoin. Le rôle du témoin est déterminant. Il est là pour montrer le chemin comme ces panneaux jaunes que nous trouvons sur des chemins pédestres. Il indique la bonne direction à suivre. Quel soulagement lorsque nous marchons de trouver de temps à autre une indication qui nous montre que nous ne sommes pas perdus. Parfois dans notre marche, nous sommes découragés, le temps est long, Et voilà qu'un panneau vient nous stimuler à persévérer.

*Soyons encouragés dans notre mandat de témoin.*

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



## Diet sheet #7

### Preamble to the “Let us” Diet series.

Let’s talk about going on diet!

- Have you ever felt the need to go on a diet? There are multiple reasons for dieting, you need to loose a few kilos, as a spiritual discipline or even to change an eating habit.
  - Namely slowing down & less activity because of age, disability or circumstances.
- That’s the physical aspect of life

What about our spiritual life?

- Have you got bored “doing” by doing the same routine every day?
- Have you listened to too many forwards from others, podcasts, prophetic words...
- Given your attention to different conspiracy theories?
- Have you lost a few spiritual kgs, put on unnecessary spiritual ideas?

The book of Hebrews has a “**Let-us**” diet!

### Thought 7

#### Elementary teaching 4

*...the laying on of hands,*

There are many examples of laying on of hands in the Bible, let’s look at a few but these not all the examples.

For bestowing a blessing.

*Mark 10:16 NIVUK “And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.*

For healing. *Luke 4:40 NIVUK “At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of illness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.”*

For the receiving the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues and prophesying. *Acts 8:17 NIVUK “Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”*

*Acts 19:6 NIVUK “When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.”*



For being ordained into ministry. *Acts 6:6 NIVUK "They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.*

The biblical practice of laying on of hands is very important. I'm sure that you could find many more.

**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.



## Diet sheet #8

### Thought 8

#### Elementary teaching 5

*...the resurrection of the dead,*

Every person born on earth is going to live as long as God! That is forever!

- Either with Him for eternity or separated from Him for eternity!
- Everyone who lives on earth will eventually die or not die because one day Jesus will return and those who are alive on earth will be caught up and will not die.

The key teaching here is that there is life after death!

- There is a life after death!

God **will** resurrect **every person born on earth** no matter how they died.

*John 5:21, 25, 28-29 NIVUK*

*“For just as **the Father raises the dead** and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.*

*...Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come **when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God** and those who hear will live.*

*... Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are **in their graves will hear his voice and come out** – those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.”*

*Revelation 20:13 NIVUK*

*“The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done.”*

The reference to the *sea literally* means the sea but I believe it includes the sea of humanity, no matter how they died or how they were buried.

*Acts 26:8 NIVUK - Paul*

*“King Agrippa... **“Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?”***

All of mankind will at some point in time will be raised from the dead!

- Ready or not Jesus is coming again!
- Eternity is real!

**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.



## Listen to the sweet little voice

*“There was the sound of a light breath” 1 Kings 19.12, BFC*

Threatened by Jezebel, Elijah flees into a cave. It was there that God said to him: “Come out, [...] you will stand on the mountain, before me; I will come. Immediately a great wind blew, with such violence that it split the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord; but the Lord was not present in this wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake; but the Lord was not present in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire; but the Lord was not present in the fire. After the fire, there was the sound of a light blowing. As soon as Elijah heard it, he covered his face” (v.11-13).

God can speak to me anywhere and anytime. But he often shares his biggest ideas when I'm alone with him. To hear the still small voice of God, there are two conditions.

1) Be alone and silent.

I need to close myself off from everything and focus on God. Not everyone will understand or appreciate what I do but hearing him speak to me is essential.

2) Get closer to God.

We exchange on average between fifty and one hundred messages per day. If I am willing to take the time to listen to others but not God, my problems will not be solved, and my situation will not change. Songwriter Everett W. Sugg put it this way:

*“Alone with God in a secret place, there in the Spirit seeing his face,  
gain more power to go on the journey with him, oh I long to be alone with God. “*

## Écouter la douce petite voix

*« Il y eut le bruit d'un léger souffle » 1 ROIS 19.12, BFC*

Menacé par Jézabel, Élie s'enfuit dans une grotte. C'est là que Dieu lui dit : « Sors, [...] tu te tiendras sur la montagne, devant moi ; je vais passer. Aussitôt un grand vent souffla, avec une violence telle qu'il fendait les montagnes et brisait les rochers devant le Seigneur ; mais le Seigneur n'était pas présent dans ce vent. Après le vent, il y eut un tremblement de terre ; mais le Seigneur n'était pas présent dans le tremblement de terre. Après le tremblement de terre, il y eut un feu ; mais le Seigneur n'était pas présent dans le feu. Après le feu, il y eut le bruit d'un léger souffle. Dès qu'Élie l'entendit, il se couvrit le visage » (v.11-13).

Dieu peut me parler n'importe où et n'importe quand. Mais il partage souvent ses plus grandes idées lorsque je suis seul avec lui. Pour entendre la douce petite voix de Dieu, il y a deux conditions.

1) Être seul et silencieux.

Je dois me fermer à tout et me concentrer sur Dieu. Tout le monde ne comprendra pas ou n'appréciera pas ce que je fais, mais c'est indispensable pour l'entendre me parler.

2) Se rapprocher de Dieu.

On échange en moyenne entre cinquante et cent messages par jour. Si je suis prêt(e) à prendre le temps d'écouter les autres mais pas Dieu, mes problèmes ne seront pas résolus et ma situation ne changera pas. L'auteur-compositeur Everett W. Sugg l'a dit en ces termes :

*« Seul avec Dieu dans un endroit secret, là dans l'Esprit voyant son visage,  
gagner plus de puissance pour faire avec lui le voyage, oh j'aspire à être seul avec Dieu. »*

**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



## Psalm 29

### A psalm of David.

- <sup>1</sup> Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
- <sup>2</sup> Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;  
worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.
- <sup>3</sup> The voice of the LORD is over the waters;  
the God of glory thunders,  
the LORD thunders over the mighty waters.
- <sup>4</sup> The voice of the LORD is powerful;  
the voice of the LORD is majestic.
- <sup>5</sup> The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;  
the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
- <sup>6</sup> He makes Lebanon leap like a calf,  
Sirion like a young wild ox.
- <sup>7</sup> The voice of the LORD strikes  
with flashes of lightning.
- <sup>8</sup> The voice of the LORD shakes the desert;  
the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh.
- <sup>9</sup> The voice of the LORD twists the oaks  
and strips the forests bare.  
And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"
- <sup>10</sup> The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;  
the LORD is enthroned as King forever.
- <sup>11</sup> The LORD gives strength to his people;  
the LORD blesses his people with peace.



## Psalm 30

**A psalm. A song. For the dedication of the temple. Of David.**

- <sup>1</sup> I will exalt you, LORD,  
for you lifted me out of the depths  
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
- <sup>2</sup> LORD my God, I called to you for help,  
and you healed me.
- <sup>3</sup> You, LORD, brought me up from the realm of the dead;  
you spared me from going down to the pit.
- <sup>4</sup> Sing the praises of the LORD, you his faithful people;  
praise his holy name.
- <sup>5</sup> For his anger lasts only a moment,  
but his favor lasts a lifetime;  
weeping may stay for the night,  
but rejoicing comes in the morning.
- <sup>6</sup> When I felt secure, I said,  
“I will never be shaken.”
- <sup>7</sup> LORD, when you favored me,  
you made my royal mountain stand firm;  
but when you hid your face,  
I was dismayed.
- <sup>8</sup> To you, LORD, I called;  
to the Lord I cried for mercy:
- <sup>9</sup> “What is gained if I am silenced,  
if I go down to the pit?  
Will the dust praise you?  
Will it proclaim your faithfulness?”
- <sup>10</sup> Hear, LORD, and be merciful to me;  
LORD, be my help.”
- <sup>11</sup> You turned my wailing into dancing;  
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
- <sup>12</sup> that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent.  
LORD my God, I will praise you forever.



## Peace and hope – Part 1

Hello, my name is Ezequiel A. de Deus Gomes. I am a medical doctor (GP,) I work in Misaun Leprosy Timor-Leste as an M&E coordinator. I am very glad to have this opportunity to share my life story according to the Bible. As normal in Misaun Lepra Timor-Leste before starting activities for the day, we start with a morning devotion sharing experiences according to the Bible.

When it was my turn to lead the devotion to share my experience of life, I chose the Rome chapter 5 verse 1 to 5 where it says:

### Peace and Hope (5)

*“<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup>perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup>And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”*

With that holy word I want to tell you the reason the I became a doctor. When I was a child, I lived in a village called Lihu in Railaco sub-municipality with my parents in 2005 to 2012. My dad is a nurse and he is a hard-working nurse who loves his patients until today. At that time it was a very difficult situation due to the lack of medical personnel and limited ambulance availability. My dad worked day and night, he always went to visit the patients who needed control due to the seriousness of their condition and many times people called my dad for any health emergency. I am the eldest son of the family; I loved going with my dad when it was not my school schedule, even at night I would go with my dad just to accompany him.

One night my dad and I as his companion just to accompany him went to help a pregnant woman in labour of giving birth in a place that is far from the city and there was no doctor at this time. We returned home very late at night through a lot of rain, we went on a motorcycle. My mom was angry because she was afraid for me in those conditions and I needed to study and go to school tomorrow. My mom spoke to my dad in a slightly loud voice that I could hear. While my dad and I were at the table having a very late dinner, I asked my dad; what is happening? Because my dad realized that I knew the answer to this question, so he simply told me, **when someone relieves pain through our help, it's a privilege.** Don't expect anything in return for what you do for other people.

*Just think of God and hope that God will give you what you need most.*





## Peace and hope – Part 2

Hearing this, these phrases immediately became my keywords for this life. And from that moment I decided to be a medical doctor. Seeing what my dad did inspired me a lot to become one of his team in the future. I put a lot of effort into studying, preparing myself until I had the privilege of being the valedictorian at the high school graduation where I was chosen to study medicine. I am very grateful to God for having chosen me according to my dream.

Becoming officially a medical doctor in 2021, I told myself that I am ready and happy with a lot of desire and a big heart to do my job. Carrying that principle with me “**when someone relieves pain through our help, it's a privilege**”, I started my first government contracted job as a General Practitioner (GP) in the emergency department of Dili-Comoro CHC. One day while I was doing by job there was an old woman came to the Clinic with her granddaughter, the old woman was in a severe condition with an asthma attack and complications due to her age and it had taken too long to reach the clinic. I received them and admitted the old woman for treatment and observation, her condition was getting worse at that moment. For better and further treatment, I decided to send her to the national hospital. While I was writing her referral history, she with the low voice asked me, “hey son I am all alone with my granddaughter everyone in the family went to the district and will come back tomorrow, I need some money can you help us?” Because at that moment I had not been working even for a month so I didn't have enough money to give, but I told her that my home is near I will go and bring some money and come back to give it to her before sending her with her granddaughter to National Hospital. Every morning we have medical meeting so I finished her referral history and I went to the meeting for couple of minutes, when I came back to see her, my doctor colleague had already sent her to National hospital and just a few minutes later the ambulance driver informed us that the patient passed away 5 minutes after arriving in the national hospital.

I was very stressed and it hurt me a lot. I wished at least I could have offered her money that might have saved her life but I couldn't at that moment. I felt like I broke my principle even although I knew that it would have been her outcome anyway. So, from this experienced it gives me more strength to have my principle in me. Every time I see people suffer, I cannot hold back but need to help them with whatever I can do.

*I hope that one day some of my children will take this principle for his/her life.*

Prepared by

**Ezequiel A. de Deus Gomes** - M&E coordinator TLM Timor Leste



## Yes, life is often perplexing – but don't stop pursuing God!

Psalm 13 queries 4x, *“How long...”, and then the perplexed David goes on to say, “...answer me, O LORD my God...lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.”*

Thankfully David concludes his psalm with renewed faith and commitment to God: *“But I have trusted in Your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because He has dealt bountifully with me.”*

In life there are things that perplex us – these are things that are out of our control:

Past; future; outcomes; God's timing; changing people; other's actions; people's perceptions of me; when growth happens; etc.

However, in life there are also things that I can do something about:

Taking my thoughts captive; what I focus on; believing God's Word; my actions; walking by Faith; bold prayer; loving people; resting in the LORD; etc.

Remember, that we as Bible believers, are in life together, to overcome loneliness, bitterness, resentment, discontentment, broken relationships, etc.

Concentrate on your eternal and imperishable inheritances (1Pet1:3-9; Psalm2:8):

God; the Kingdom of God; Eternal Life in Christ; Christian service; the Nations; etc.

Also remember, that Christian family behaviour includes vulnerability, openness, transparency, accountability, understanding, support, forgiveness, etc.

John the Baptist lived in a bewildering way in the wilderness and then in a perplexing way in prison (Matth.3:11;11:3), but he kept faith in God!

Learn to live in God's overflow for your life – learn to live Jesus' GOLDEN RULE:

Matt5:16 – *“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father Who is in Heaven.”*

Matth.7:12 – *“So whatever you wish others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”*

Rom.15:2 – *“Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, to build him up.”*

Read also Philippians 2:12-18.

– Amen.



## Lord, slow me down

*“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God” 1 John 4:7*

I was driving down University Boulevard in the slow lane. Actually there wasn't a fast lane. It was rush hour, which meant that everything was going very slowly. A strange use of language isn't it? Anyway, my lane was slower than the other.

There was a milk cart in front of me, speeding along at about five miles an hour. In a good moment the driver accelerated recklessly to about ten, the milk bottles rattling excitedly in their crates. But not for long. Soon we were back to the crawl. Then I noticed the name on the back of the cart. “Express Dairy”. My dictionary defines express as *“operating at high speed”*. Not much express about that cart. Or me, stuck behind it.

Words can mean different things at different times. Take the word love. It's used to mean anything from a one-night-stand to a lifetime of commitment. One definition I like is *“desiring another's good”*. Going into a relationship not for what we can get out of it but for what we can put into it. Giving more than receiving. The great thing is that in some mysterious way the more we do put in the more we get out of it anyway.

So instead of rushing around today trying to clear other people out of our way, maybe spending a little time in the slow lane with someone we love will pay dividends.

One more thing - my dictionary says there's another meaning for express - we express ourselves by *“putting something into words”*. So if you love someone say it.

*Lord, slow me down and give me time for those I love.*

**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)



## Blessed to be a blessing

My daughter Emma is ten days into the 'Camino Frances', the most famous route of all the 'Camino de Santiago' options. Who would have thought, one of my children with a love for hiking?

I discovered that in days gone by, people would pay someone to undertake the Camino pilgrimage on their behalf. This looks to me what the kids these days call a great 'side hustle'. When I mentioned this to Elizabeth, she offered to be my first patron - "It will be a win-win."

Near the start of the Camino Frances is the town of Beilari, the Basque word for pilgrim, which can be literally translated as "one who awakes." I like that.

How are we doing? What does our pilgrimage look like today? Are we more awake than we were yesterday? Leadership gurus say that the trend is more important than absolute numbers. If we're able to look back at our pilgrimage and identify a trend of increasing 'awakening', then we have reason to be filled with hope.

As far as I know, the word 'pilgrim' does not appear in the Authorised English translation of the scriptures, but the concept of a pilgrim, defined as a 'person who journeys to a sacred place for religious reasons' is certainly there. The annual return to Jerusalem [Acts 2 vs5] comes to mind. Can you think of other examples?

For a handful of my friends, a literal journey to a 'sacred place' is high on their list of priorities, but I think that for most of the people I know, the concept of pilgrimage is detached from visiting a place with spiritual significance. Pilgrimage for them is metaphorical rather than geographical. For most of the people I know, the priority would be to go to places where the Gospel is not known and to make them 'sacred places'. That may mean crossing the road [Acts 18:7] or crossing a continent [Romans 15:24].

It seems that we have two strands of pilgrimage – in one instance, we travel to a place of holiness to deepen our faith [and the journey itself is so much part of, if not the greatest part, of the strengthening process, otherwise we'd take the bus to Santiago de Compostela - we could think of it as an infilling]; and on the other hand, we strengthen our faith when we travel to places to give our faith away – we could think of it as an overflowing.

The day lies ahead of us: where will seek our infilling and what will we give away?

*"Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Genesis 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.



## Psalm 31

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

- <sup>1</sup> In you, LORD, I have taken refuge;  
let me never be put to shame;  
deliver me in your righteousness.
- <sup>2</sup> Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue;  
be my rock of refuge,  
a strong fortress to save me.
- <sup>3</sup> Since you are my rock and my fortress,  
for the sake of your name lead and guide me.
- <sup>4</sup> Keep me free from the trap that is set for me,  
for you are my refuge.
- <sup>5</sup> Into your hands I commit my spirit;  
deliver me, LORD, my faithful God.
- <sup>6</sup> I hate those who cling to worthless idols;  
as for me, I trust in the LORD.
- <sup>7</sup> I will be glad and rejoice in your love,  
for you saw my affliction  
and knew the anguish of my soul.
- <sup>8</sup> You have not given me into the hands of the enemy  
but have set my feet in a spacious place.
- <sup>9</sup> Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress;  
my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief.
- <sup>10</sup> My life is consumed by anguish  
and my years by groaning;  
my strength fails because of my affliction,<sup>[b]</sup>  
and my bones grow weak.
- <sup>11</sup> Because of all my enemies,  
I am the utter contempt of my neighbors  
and an object of dread to my closest friends—  
those who see me on the street flee from me.
- <sup>12</sup> I am forgotten as though I were dead;  
I have become like broken pottery.
- <sup>13</sup> For I hear many whispering,  
“Terror on every side!”  
They conspire against me and plot to take my life.
- <sup>14</sup> But I trust in you, LORD;  
I say, “You are my God.”

<sup>15</sup> My times are in your hands;  
deliver me from the hands of my enemies,  
from those who pursue me.

<sup>16</sup> Let your face shine on your servant;  
save me in your unfailing love.

<sup>17</sup> Let me not be put to shame, LORD,  
for I have cried out to you;  
but let the wicked be put to shame  
and be silent in the realm of the dead.

<sup>18</sup> Let their lying lips be silenced,  
for with pride and contempt  
they speak arrogantly against the righteous.

<sup>19</sup> How abundant are the good things  
that you have stored up for those who fear you,  
that you bestow in the sight of all,  
on those who take refuge in you.

<sup>20</sup> In the shelter of your presence you hide them  
from all human intrigues;  
you keep them safe in your dwelling  
from accusing tongues.

<sup>21</sup> Praise be to the LORD,  
for he showed me the wonders of his love  
when I was in a city under siege.

<sup>22</sup> In my alarm I said,  
“I am cut off from your sight!”  
Yet you heard my cry for mercy  
when I called to you for help.

<sup>23</sup> Love the LORD, all his faithful people!  
The LORD preserves those who are true to him,  
but the proud he pays back in full.

<sup>24</sup> Be strong and take heart,  
all you who hope in the LORD.



## Psalm 32

**Of David. A maskil.**

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the one  
whose transgressions are forgiven,  
whose sins are covered.

<sup>2</sup> Blessed is the one  
whose sin the LORD does not count against them  
and in whose spirit is no deceit.

<sup>3</sup> When I kept silent,  
my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.

<sup>4</sup> For day and night your hand was heavy on me;  
my strength was sapped  
as in the heat of summer.

<sup>5</sup> Then I acknowledged my sin to you  
and did not cover up my iniquity.

I said, "I will confess  
my transgressions to the LORD."

And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore let all the faithful pray to you  
while you may be found;  
surely the rising of the mighty waters  
will not reach them.

<sup>7</sup> You are my hiding place;  
you will protect me from trouble  
and surround me with songs of deliverance.

<sup>8</sup> I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;  
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

<sup>9</sup> Do not be like the horse or the mule,  
which have no understanding  
but must be controlled by bit and bridle  
or they will not come to you.

<sup>10</sup> Many are the woes of the wicked,  
but the LORD's unfailing love  
surrounds the one who trusts in him.

<sup>11</sup> Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous;  
sing, all you who are upright in heart!



## A task unfinished

*Ecclesiastes 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.*

This may seem an unlikely verse for a contribution to the Bridge, but I was reminded of it recently as I followed the Lectio 365 App (if you've not discovered this wonderful phone app it's a great way to start the day – a short 10 minute devotional!)

The verse sent me right back to my school days in the 1960s. Like many schools in secondary education we had a system of prefects who were chosen from among the boys and given various responsibilities like watching over a class before the first lesson began and taking a register to identify absentees or late comers. We could even issue mild punishments to boys who were out of line – usually writing out boring lines. But our headmaster always had a little investiture ceremony when each new prefect was appointed. He would bring them to the front of the school assembly and before handshakes of congratulations were made, he would say these words to them:

*“To you who are now made a prefect, a position of trust and authority is given.*

*What you find to do, do with all your might.*

*Using your powers for the good of your house and the good of your school.*

*Without selfishness and without fear”.*

It was only decades later during my time at the International Office of TLM that I realised that the second line was a quote from Scripture (thank you Joyce!) – it somehow made this curious tradition come alive with added meaning.

Maybe it's obvious – that we should all work hard at the various tasks given to us within the mission's work, but maybe it also reflects themes we find in the New Testament as well. For example, when Jesus sent his disciples out on mission work into the villages to proclaim the Gospel, or when he gave them his Great Commission just before his ascension. The theme is also taken up by Paul in his final words to the Ephesians): *“My only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me” (Acts 20:22-24.* Or in the letter to the Hebrews where the writer urges his readers *“And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1)*

As we approach the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of TLM we are rightly reminded of our history, but also that we are in this for the long haul. We are working to defeat leprosy across the world – leprosy defeated, lives transformed. This is not a sprint, it's a marathon, and a long one too, so the writer of Ecclesiastes has a useful message for us: *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might!*

*The sooner we crack this terrible disease the better.*





## The messengers of the king

### *Matthew 10: 1-4*

Few months ago I happened to watch the Christian Television series THE CHOSEN; I was able to watch only few series not all. This made to think and developed my interest on the Disciples of Christ. I read the passages about them in New Testaments few times and took help other Christian books to know more about them. This has helped me to prepare this write up.

It is clearly understood that when a great leader is about to embark upon any great undertaking, the first thing is that he must do is to choose his staff. On them the present effect and the future success of his work both depends. Here Jesus is choosing his staff, his right-hand men, his helpers in the days of his flesh and also those who would carry on his work when he left this world and return to his glory.

There are two facts about these men which are bound to strike us at once.

1. They were very ordinary men. They had no wealth; they had no academic background; they had no social position. They were chosen from the common people, men who did ordinary things, men who had no special education, men who had no social advantages. It has been said that Jesus is looking, not so much for extraordinary men, as for ordinary men who can do ordinary things extraordinarily well. Jesus sees in every man, not only what man is, but also what he can make him. Jesus chooses these men not only what they were, but also what they were capable to become under his influence and in his power. No man need ever think that he has nothing to offer Jesus, for Jesus can take what he most ordinary man can offer and it for greatness.
2. They were most extra ordinary mixture. There was for instance, Matthew, the tax collector, who was hated by many. All men would regard Matthew as a quisling, as one who had sold himself into the hands of his country's masters for personal gain, the very reverse of a patriot and lover of his country. And with Matthew there was Simon the Cananaean. Luke calls him (Luke 6; 16) Simon Zealots, which means Simon the Zealot.

The plain fact is that if Simon the Zealot had met Matthew the tax collector anywhere else than in the company of Jesus, he would have stuck a dagger in him. Here is the tremendous truth the men who hate each other can learn to love each other when they both love Jesus Christ. Too often religion has been a means of dividing men. It was meant to be –and in the presence of living Jesus it was – a means of bringing together men who without Christ were sundered from each other.

3. We may ask why Jesus chose *twelve* special apostles. The reason is very likely because there were *twelve* tribes; just as it is in the old dispensation there has been twelve tribes of Israel; so in the new dispensation there are twelve apostles of the new Israel. The New Testament itself does not tell us very much about these men. But, although we do not know them, The New Testament is very conscious of their greatness in the church. These men, simple men with no great background, men from many differing spheres of life, belief, were very foundation stones on which the Church was built.

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## The making of the messengers

### Matthew 10: 1-4 (Continued)

When we put together the three accounts of the calling of the Twelve (Matthew 10; 1-4, Mark 3; 13-19, Luke 6; 13-16) certain illuminating facts emerge.

1. **He chose them.** Luke 6:13 says the Jesus called his disciples, and choose from them twelve. It is as if Jesus 'eyes moved over the crowd who followed him, and smaller band who stayed with him when the crowd had departed, and as if all the time he was searching for the men to whom he could commit his work. As it has been said, "God is always looking for hands to use." God is always saying, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us? ( Isaiah 6 :8 )  
There are many tasks in the Kingdom, the task of him who must go out and the task for him who must stay at home, the task of him who must use his hands and the task of him who must use his mind. And always Jesus 'eyes are searching the crowd for those who will do his work.
2. He *called* them. Jesus does not compel a man to do his work; he offers him work to do. Jesus does not coerce; he invites. Jesus does not make conscript; he seeks volunteers. As it has been put, a man is free to be faithful and free to be faithless. But to every man there comes the summons which he can accept or refuse.
3. He *appointed* them. The Authorized Version has it that he ordained the (Mark 3:14). The word which is translated *ordain* is the simple Greek word *poiein*, which means *to make to do*; but which is often technically used for *appointing a man to some office*. Jesus is like a King, appointing his men to be his ministers.
4. These men were appointed *among the disciples*. The word disciple means *leaner*. The men whom Christ needs and desires are the men who are willing to learn. The shut mind cannot serve him. The servant of the Christ must be willing to learn more every day. Each day he must be a step nearer Jesus and a little nearer to God.
5. The reasons why these men are chosen are equally significant. They were chosen *to be with him* (Mark 3; 14). If they were to do his work in the world, they must live in his presence, before they went out to the world; they must go from the presence of Jesus into the presence of men.

No work of Christ can ever be done except by him who come from the presence of Christ. Sometimes in the complexity of the activities of the modern church we are so busy with committees, courts and administration and making the wheel go round that we are forgetting that none of these things matters, if it is carried on by men who have not been with Christ before they have been with men.

6. They were called to be *apostle* (Mark 3: 14); Luke 6: 13). The word apostle literally means who is sent out; it is the word for an envoy or an ambassador. The Christian is Jesus Christ's ambassador to men. He goes forth from the presence of Christ, bearing with him the word and the beauty of his Master.
7. They were called to be the *heralds* of Christ. In Matthew 10:7 they are bidden to preach. The Christian is the herald Christ. That is why he must begin in the presence of Christ. The Christian is no meant to bring to men his own opinions: he brings a message of divine certainties from Jesus Christ. – and he cannot bring that message unless first in the presence of Christ he has received it.

Let us take time to think on these disciples by Christ and their qualities. Let us examine our life and follow the qualities of these Disciples of Christ. And pray to God that slowly we also become like them.

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## How do I live a purpose filled joyful life?

Joy filled life is anchored in our personal relationship with Jesus and consequently what we do in our relationships with people. True joy in life is found in being immersed in 5 aspects of serving God.

### Part 5 - Serving (ministry of servanthood)

Jesus came into this world to accomplish His Father's Will to save sinners by serving them (Matthew 20:28). In what he said and did, Jesus has set for us the context and the model of serving people. We can anchor our Christ like service in the two greatest commandments that Jesus gave us summing the Mosaic Law (Matthew 22:35-40). On the vertical dimension, we love God intimately. On the horizontal dimension, we love our fellow men and women with Christ like love (John 13:34) in order to bring them to the knowledge of the saving grace of God, in Jesus Christ.

To serve us, Jesus humbled himself to be a man (*Philippians 2:7*). He sacrificed His position as the Son of God to be born as a man. He had established that with humility so we can empathize with others. He washed the feet of his disciples, as a servant does, to prepare them for their servant ministry. No amount of theological teaching could have prepared them for that task. By His one act, Jesus Christ has set the model for his disciples (us) in their (our) journey with Him (John 13:4-5).

One's worthiness is not in one's position of authority but in one's attitude to serve others selflessly and humbly (Matthew 20:26-28). For Jesus, the act of mundane service like washing the feet of the disciples was not inconsistent with His authority but rather part of that. The master served His servants so that they serve others as servants. Jesus' selfless service is our motto as his ambassadors (Ephesians 3:7). We must emulate the selfless servanthood of Jesus Christ. A great leadership lesson.

Jesus served with purpose. Jesus said that he came for (serving) the sinners (the lost) and not for the righteous (Luke 5:31-32). He shared God's grace and served to restore man's fellowship with God. Service touches a positive chord in the heart of sinners. He served by forgiving the sinners and not condemning them. He convicted the hearts of sinners to turn to God as was in the case of the repentant criminal on the cross at Calvary. Jesus met the need for a saviour in Zacchaeus' heart when he had invited himself to Zacchaeus' house for a meal. His service saved the soul of Zacchaeus.

Jesus served everyone with compassion in every circumstance, every location, every class in the society without discrimination. For having kept the company of sinners and outcasts, Jesus was not treated kindly by the social and religious elite of the day. He had to face personal reproach. His service eventually led him to the cross. He served sacrificially. Serving in Jesus' name would mean making many personal sacrifices as was evident in the life of Paul and other apostles.

We serve the Lord within and outside the Church through evangelism, discipleship, fellowship and meeting physical & emotional needs of people living at the margins in the society. Jesus told his disciples that serving the marginalized in the society pleases God (Matthew 25:35-36, 40). Through us people experience the love of Christ. Hope is given to those who have lost all hope, the lonely are given company, the hungry are fed etc.. God rewards those who serve Him (Proverbs 19:17).

Our service is to bring people to God through knowing Jesus Christ, in whom there is eternal life (1 John 5:11, Romans 6:23, John 3:36). Scriptures say that God has already prepared the good works of service for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). Service is a privilege given by God to bring glory and honor to Him. Serving is an attitude of gratitude for God's grace (Colossians 3:23-24). We serve Jesus with joy.

*Serve the Lord to save souls - purposefully, humbly, willingly, faithfully, sacrificially and joyfully!*

In gratitude for His grace

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



## Our forefathers about prayer

*“Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” Matthew 17,20*

“The prayer power has never been tried to its full capacity...if we want to see mighty wonders of divine power and grace wrought in the place of weakness, failure and disappointment, let us answer God's standing challenge, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."

**James Hudson Taylor** (21 May 1832 – 3 June 1905) was a British Baptist missionary to China and founder of the China Inland Mission. Taylor spent 54 years in China. The society that he began was responsible for bringing over 800 missionaries to the country who started 125 schools and directly resulted in 20,000 Christian conversions, as well as the establishment of more than 300 stations of work with more than 499 local helpers in all 18 provinces.

“This Mission was born and cradled in prayer, it has been brought up in prayer, it has been nourished in prayer, and prayer has been at the bottom of its success since the first moments of its life.”

**Wellesley Cosby Bailey** (1846-1937) was the founder of The Leprosy Mission (1874).

For reflection/discussion:

*When/how did I experience it recently in my faith-journey?*

*What have I missed recently because of my lack of prayer?*



## Psalm 33

- <sup>1</sup> Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous;  
it is fitting for the upright to praise him.
- <sup>2</sup> Praise the LORD with the harp;  
make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.
- <sup>3</sup> Sing to him a new song;  
play skillfully, and shout for joy.
- <sup>4</sup> For the word of the LORD is right and true;  
he is faithful in all he does.
- <sup>5</sup> The LORD loves righteousness and justice;  
the earth is full of his unfailing love.
- <sup>6</sup> By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,  
their starry host by the breath of his mouth.
- <sup>7</sup> He gathers the waters of the sea into jars;  
he puts the deep into storehouses.
- <sup>8</sup> Let all the earth fear the LORD;  
let all the people of the world revere him.
- <sup>9</sup> For he spoke, and it came to be;  
he commanded, and it stood firm.
- <sup>10</sup> The LORD foils the plans of the nations;  
he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.
- <sup>11</sup> But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever,  
the purposes of his heart through all generations.
- <sup>12</sup> Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,  
the people he chose for his inheritance.
- <sup>13</sup> From heaven the LORD looks down  
and sees all mankind;
- <sup>14</sup> from his dwelling place he watches  
all who live on earth—
- <sup>15</sup> he who forms the hearts of all,  
who considers everything they do.
- <sup>16</sup> No king is saved by the size of his army;  
no warrior escapes by his great strength.
- <sup>17</sup> A horse is a vain hope for deliverance;  
despite all its great strength it cannot save.
- <sup>18</sup> But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him,  
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,



<sup>19</sup> to deliver them from death  
and keep them alive in famine.

<sup>20</sup> We wait in hope for the LORD;  
he is our help and our shield.

<sup>21</sup> In him our hearts rejoice,  
for we trust in his holy name.

<sup>22</sup> May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,  
even as we put our hope in you.



## Psalm 34

**Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelek, who drove him away, and he left.**

- <sup>1</sup> I will extol the LORD at all times;  
his praise will always be on my lips.
- <sup>2</sup> I will glory in the LORD;  
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.
- <sup>3</sup> Glorify the LORD with me;  
let us exalt his name together.
- <sup>4</sup> I sought the LORD, and he answered me;  
he delivered me from all my fears.
- <sup>5</sup> Those who look to him are radiant;  
their faces are never covered with shame.
- <sup>6</sup> This poor man called, and the LORD heard him;  
he saved him out of all his troubles.
- <sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him,  
and he delivers them.
- <sup>8</sup> Taste and see that the LORD is good;  
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.
- <sup>9</sup> Fear the LORD, you his holy people,  
for those who fear him lack nothing.
- <sup>10</sup> The lions may grow weak and hungry,  
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.
- <sup>11</sup> Come, my children, listen to me;  
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
- <sup>12</sup> Whoever of you loves life  
and desires to see many good days,  
<sup>13</sup> keep your tongue from evil  
and your lips from telling lies.
- <sup>14</sup> Turn from evil and do good;  
seek peace and pursue it.
- <sup>15</sup> The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,  
and his ears are attentive to their cry;
- <sup>16</sup> but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil,  
to blot out their name from the earth.
- <sup>17</sup> The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;  
he delivers them from all their troubles.

<sup>18</sup>The LORD is close to the brokenhearted  
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

<sup>19</sup>The righteous person may have many troubles,  
but the LORD delivers him from them all;

<sup>20</sup>he protects all his bones,  
not one of them will be broken.

<sup>21</sup>Evil will slay the wicked;  
the foes of the righteous will be condemned.

<sup>22</sup>The LORD will rescue his servants;  
no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.



## "Destination"

*"Our citizenship is in heaven" Philippians 3:20*

Many of the old churches also contain cemeteries on the church grounds.

After visiting a church in England I took time to walk through the burial area, read the names and study the inscriptions.

One of the tombstones that captured my attention had the following text :

*"Where you are now, I used to be*

*Where I am now, you too shall be.*

*So be prepared to follow me."*

Somebody had placed a board next to the stone on which was written :

*"To follow you, I'd be content*

*If only I knew the way you went."*

The original inscription was perfectly accurate, we all have to die, but the pertinent question is : are we sure of our destination and on what basis?

Peter declared *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you ..."* I Peter 1:3 & 4a

Can you echo Peter's words and say :

*"Praise God?"*

**Silvano Perotti** . Secretary for Europe then Deputy International Director and Director for Support and Development TLMI  
Born in Italy - retired in Switzerland.  
Worked with TLMI until 1990.



## Contentment - Part 1

This principle belongs to the hardest ones in our daily attitude and Christian practice, penetrating the totality of our person, personality, work, behaviour, career, entire life. Contentment is like a mirror: reflecting our approach to ourselves, to the outward world surrounding us, and our approach to God as well. Let us observe these three areas from the perspective of contentment.

### Contentment with myself

It is a large area needing constant development, from our birth on. Appraisal, love, expression of appreciation is vital to build up a healthy person with a normal and healthy level of contentment. Without this the entire personality will be damaged. Underestimation and devaluation of self will be the result, depriving the individual of ambitions, growth, sense of healthy fighting, etc.

At the same time contentment with myself is the large area of temptations, too. Satan wants me to believe that all is in order. I am so fine. Finished and perfect. I am regularly checking myself and I find everything OK. I know myself best, there is no sign of anything being wrong!

But apostle Paul says: Philippians 3,<sup>13</sup> *Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it (that means: my perfection). But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*"

Zero compromise! No stopping! No rest! No contentment with myself! It is endless battle and permanent fight till the end. That is what Paul proclaims, until Jesus Christ I will see face to face.

### Contentment with the outside world

My continent, my nation, and country I was born into and stuck into. My determination for a hard or an easy life, the perspectives of my children and grandchildren, financial circumstances...etc. Ups and downs, huge differences from each other, no transition from this world to that other world, captivated in it in a sense. And what to say about those millions we are serving, in the meantime trying to help in the depth of depths of their hopeless situation – I have not the least of idea how it is possible for our friends and colleagues to cope with this feeling over there, in many countries, day by day, hour by hour. At the same time surrounded by the massive and scandalous injustices of this world and its lords...

What to say about contentment in these situations? In my own small world and in the wider world, too? How can I reach contentment in my lifelong flying on the highs, OR struggling just to exist?

Paul's advice is Philippians 4, 11-13." *I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> I can do all this through him who gives me strength."*

He calls it to be a secret. Humanly it is impossible. It lies outside of human understanding. It is not possible to achieve. It needs God's intervention and strength to solve it and to achieve it in the innermost part of my own heart. On my own it is not possible. This is why contentment belongs to the secrets of God, among many others, surpassing human understanding.

*(Devotion for the TLM country leaders' meeting, Sept 2023)*

**Marta Risko** – country leader TLM Hungary



## Contentment – Part 2

### Contentment with God

Let us put the emphasis on this area. Maybe you say: it is too bold... Paul says in 1Tim 6,6: *“Godliness with contentment is great gain”*.

Can godliness exist without gain? Yes, this phrasing of the apostle suggests that godliness is NOT a great gain by itself, or in itself! A surprising truth. This phrasing of Paul suggests if godliness with contentment is great gain, then godliness without contentment is NOT a gain.

What does it mean? How can godliness exist without contentment with God?

It can. Someone can be pious, with zeal, doing big things in the name of God - but same time with no contentment with God at all in the bottom of the heart. They are not content with Him. Not content with His behaviour. Not content with His grace: finding it either too little, or too much. They are not questioning the existence of God. They are not immoral persons, distanced from Him, but are just NOT contented with Him.

What is in the deepest pockets of my own heart? What are my most secret feelings about God? Apart from my conventional and decent confessions? Have I secret arguments with Him? Am I finding His grace too little? Finding God to be too slow? To be late? In a crisis or in emergency? Where is He? Is he letting the momentum go? Not intervening? Like in the wedding of Cana – not noticing the urgent need? Is God seeming to be too passive for me? Should He act and solve all the problems, they are so many? If I look around, I see nothing just unsolved and unsolved problems worldwide...

Or am I just the opposite: like the prophet Jonah was? Why did he struggle and argue all along with God? Because in his eyes God was too merciful. God was too good for him. Wanting to save Ninive, all those wicked people? This is no truth, to save such ones. Even in the last scene, when he finally, after so many adventures, reaches Ninive, he is not calling them to repent, but is just shouting: *“Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.”*

Jonah was a prophet of God. A professional and anointed. Serving Him, acting in His name, tiring himself in God’s business. But without any contentment with God at all. God was too good in Jonah’s eyes.

Or: the prodigal son’s brother! How is it possible to the father to take back that useless younger brother? How on earth can he be happy about that? How can he treat him even better? What an unjust person he is! - A good boy. Staying all along at home. Obeying the father, serving him. Submitting himself to him. With the least contentment, with a heart full of complaints and approaches against the father...

*Summary:*

In the case of contentment with myself the recipe of Scriptures is *to be prepared* for a permanent, hard and never ceasing, lifelong fight. This is the best approach I can do.

In the case of contentment with the surrounding world, *I am strengthened* that it is truly impossible for me to achieve, let me not be dreaming about that. But through a miracle it is!, with the power of Jesus Christ. I must fully rely on Him,

In the case of contentment with God *I am given the greatest of promises*: this peace and obedience being the key to a real godliness, meaning great gain in this world and in the one to come.

*(Devotion for the TLM country leaders' meeting, Sept 2023)*

**Marta Risiko** – country leader TLM Hungary





## Listening to Understand – Part 1

### *Luke 24:13 – 35 – Journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus and back again*

Many people, including myself, will tell you that this is a favourite passage from the New Testament. We don't know who these two people are but we do know that they were two very disappointed and disillusioned people – as were the other disciples of Jesus. They had apparently been with the disciples when the women and then Peter and John had come back with the news that Jesus was risen. But they did not really understand what had happened. In your mind, join these two despondent folks as they trudge home. Imagine, if you will, their feelings – it is as if everything they had hoped for has been suddenly swept away and yet .... Maybe there is some hope?? Imagine their conversation and maybe even the periods of silence. A third person joins them on the road – probably not an unusual occurrence, they don't seem really to look at him so caught up are they in their own thoughts and grief.

Still, they don't see...and so this stranger tells them how slow is their understanding and he goes back over the OT pointing out that all these things had been predicted about the Messiah – why, oh why can they see who He is, why can they not understand what Jesus is saying to them? Jesus simply gets alongside the two and quietly and without fuss, He comforts them, entering their grief and despair.

Yes, here we are, they have reached home again tired and hungry and emotionally not knowing whether they are on their head or their heels. As they stop at the doorway, the stranger makes as if He would continue his journey, no, you must come in and have a rest and something to eat, they say. See here at the door is the jug of water to refresh your tired feet, then come in and have a seat while a simple meal is prepared and laid on the table. You watch as the bread and the wine are set out and now what is the stranger doing? He lifts the bread and breaks it – suddenly their eyes are open wide and they at last recognise Jesus, but where has He gone? – vanished from their sight. In their joy, they jump up, the meal is left unfinished – they must return to Jerusalem and tell everyone about this. Maybe you spot them catching up the bread and some olives as they run out of the house again. They are too excited to be tired, too excited to think about the dangers on the road in the dark.

This is the beginning of a new journey, not just the rush journey to return to Jerusalem but a new journey of faith, a new future. What a journey back to meet the others – they can't get there quickly enough – no more trudging despondently, they are in a hurry!! Can you see them bursting into the upper room to meet the other disciples still trying to catch their breath after their journey...how quickly can you cover 7 miles?? As they recount their journey and subsequent events they have switched to the deity pronoun (as they had journeyed earlier on the road they used the normal masculine pronoun).

How would you try to explain to the others in the room what has just happened to them? Would anyone really listen to you as you tell your garbled story? Is that your experience of being so excited about what Jesus is doing in your life that it is hard to make others understand what you are telling them? These two people didn't recognise Jesus walking with them on their way to Emmaus.

But what has this journey meant to me, to you? What about my life's walk with Jesus, what about your life's walk with Jesus? Do we look for Jesus on the road we are on? Are we so caught up in our thoughts, our activities, our disappointments, our joys to recognise Him because, yes,

*He IS there but often we can only see Him when we look back over the days that have passed.*

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



## Listening to Understand – Part 2

*Luke 24:13 – 35 – Journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus and back again*

Yes, He is talking to us as we travel along the road but often, we are slow to understand and even slower to obey.

We all walk amazing journeys when we walk with Jesus at our side to lead and to guide and to explain the way to us. It is wonderful to read of some of your journeys in the Bridge. eyes. Think about how Jesus walks with you along your life's journey and give thanks to Him for the ways He has led you and for the times when He has opened your eyes and you have been so aware of His presence.

Yet, how often in our lives have we lost hope, felt disappointed or let down when things don't happen as we expect, or as we have prayed for them. Yet as we despair, as we go forward reluctantly dragging our feet in the sand, as we come to terms with what we see as disappointment, how often do we fail to see God walking by our side – listening, caring, and longing that we would see beyond our own feelings and see the opportunity He is opening up for us. Do we just use the masculine pronoun for Jesus or do we really see Him as God?

In his book, John Humphreys suggests that Jesus can renew and strengthen our faith for three reasons:

First ***He is a good listener.*** He listened to the two walkers hearing their sense of disillusionment, their doubts, and their fears. He will listen to and hear you too.

Second ***Jesus comes to us as an honest friend.*** He tells us the situation as it is. He tells the two travellers they're being thick-headed. He takes them to task for misunderstanding the scriptures. What is He saying to you about your situation?

Third ***Jesus is the Risen Lord.*** As we meet Him on our journey in the Scriptures, He ignites a fire in our hearts and He enters our lives.

As I come to this passage, there is always something to challenge me and something new to learn of the story. This time I reflected on the words *"Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread."* It must have been so exciting for these two disciples to have been the first to break bread with Jesus after resurrection – what a privilege and that privilege is our too as we share the fellowship of communion.

*As you walk with Jesus through this day, listen for Him speaking and as you listen understand what He is saying and where He is leading you. God bless you.*



## Psalm 35

Of David.

<sup>1</sup> Contend, LORD, with those who contend with me;  
fight against those who fight against me.

<sup>2</sup> Take up shield and armor;  
arise and come to my aid.

<sup>3</sup> Brandish spear and javelin  
against those who pursue me.

Say to me,

“I am your salvation.”

<sup>4</sup> May those who seek my life  
be disgraced and put to shame;  
may those who plot my ruin  
be turned back in dismay.

<sup>5</sup> May they be like chaff before the wind,  
with the angel of the LORD driving them away;

<sup>6</sup> may their path be dark and slippery,  
with the angel of the LORD pursuing them.

<sup>7</sup> Since they hid their net for me without cause  
and without cause dug a pit for me,

<sup>8</sup> may ruin overtake them by surprise—  
may the net they hid entangle them,  
may they fall into the pit, to their ruin.

<sup>9</sup> Then my soul will rejoice in the LORD  
and delight in his salvation.

<sup>10</sup> My whole being will exclaim,  
“Who is like you, LORD?”

You rescue the poor from those too strong for them,  
the poor and needy from those who rob them.”

<sup>11</sup> Ruthless witnesses come forward;  
they question me on things I know nothing about.

<sup>12</sup> They repay me evil for good  
and leave me like one bereaved.

<sup>13</sup> Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth  
and humbled myself with fasting.

When my prayers returned to me unanswered,

<sup>14</sup> I went about mourning  
as though for my friend or brother.

I bowed my head in grief  
as though weeping for my mother.  
<sup>15</sup> But when I stumbled, they gathered in glee;  
assailants gathered against me without my knowledge.  
They slandered me without ceasing.  
<sup>16</sup> Like the ungodly they maliciously mocked;  
they gnashed their teeth at me.  
<sup>17</sup> How long, Lord, will you look on?  
Rescue me from their ravages,  
my precious life from these lions.  
<sup>18</sup> I will give you thanks in the great assembly;  
among the throngs I will praise you.  
<sup>19</sup> Do not let those gloat over me  
who are my enemies without cause;  
do not let those who hate me without reason  
maliciously wink the eye.  
<sup>20</sup> They do not speak peaceably,  
but devise false accusations  
against those who live quietly in the land.  
<sup>21</sup> They sneer at me and say, "Aha! Aha!  
With our own eyes we have seen it."  
<sup>22</sup> LORD, you have seen this; do not be silent.  
Do not be far from me, Lord.  
<sup>23</sup> Awake, and rise to my defense!  
Contend for me, my God and Lord.  
<sup>24</sup> Vindicate me in your righteousness, LORD my God;  
do not let them gloat over me.  
<sup>25</sup> Do not let them think, "Aha, just what we wanted!"  
or say, "We have swallowed him up."  
<sup>26</sup> May all who gloat over my distress  
be put to shame and confusion;  
may all who exalt themselves over me  
be clothed with shame and disgrace.  
<sup>27</sup> May those who delight in my vindication  
shout for joy and gladness;  
may they always say, "The LORD be exalted,  
who delights in the well-being of his servant."  
<sup>28</sup> My tongue will proclaim your righteousness,  
your praises all day long.



## Psalm 36

**For the director of music. Of David the servant of the LORD.**

<sup>1</sup> I have a message from God in my heart  
concerning the sinfulness of the wicked:  
There is no fear of God  
before their eyes.

<sup>2</sup> In their own eyes they flatter themselves  
too much to detect or hate their sin.

<sup>3</sup> The words of their mouths are wicked and deceitful;  
they fail to act wisely or do good.

<sup>4</sup> Even on their beds they plot evil;  
they commit themselves to a sinful course  
and do not reject what is wrong.

<sup>5</sup> Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens,  
your faithfulness to the skies.

<sup>6</sup> Your righteousness is like the highest mountains,  
your justice like the great deep.

You, LORD, preserve both people and animals.

<sup>7</sup> How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!  
People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

<sup>8</sup> They feast on the abundance of your house;  
you give them drink from your river of delights.

<sup>9</sup> For with you is the fountain of life;  
in your light we see light.

<sup>10</sup> Continue your love to those who know you,  
your righteousness to the upright in heart.

<sup>11</sup> May the foot of the proud not come against me,  
nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.

<sup>12</sup> See how the evildoers lie fallen—  
thrown down, not able to rise!



## Who are thou, Lord?

“Very often I ask people to come to our home for the dying — we have a big place in Calcutta and in the twenty-one years we have picked up over twenty-seven thousand people from the streets — and I ask the people not to come and to give things, things I can get for the asking. But I want their presence just to touch them, just to smile on them, just to be present there — it means such a lot to our people: some time for our lepers, for our crippled, for our unloved, uncared for children, it is the same need. They need love, that compassion, that touch, as the priest touches the Host during Mass and he touches of the body of Christ on the altar — it is that touch, with that love, with that faith, we have to touch the body of Christ in the poor. It is the same Jesus who meets Saul on the way to Damascus, who was on his way to disturb, to kill, to destroy the Christians, and He asks, ‘Saul, Saul why dost thou persecute Me?’ And Saul asks, *‘Who are thou Lord?’ ‘I am Jesus Christ thou persecutest.’*”

And today it is the same cry, the same cry, the same Jesus, the same today in our poor people who are unwanted, unemployed, uncared for, hungry and naked and homeless. They are useless, so to say, to society and nobody has time for them, and it is you and I as Christians, burdened with that love of Christ if our love is true, we must find them, we must help them, we must bring them to Him. They are there for the finding and here in this city, great city of London, there is so much, so much that you and I can do. The first time I was here in London and we went out at night it was a terrible cold night and I found the people on the street. And there was an old man, a well-spoken man, shivering with cold. And this gentleman would say, ‘Take me, take me anywhere. I am longing to sleep between two sheets.’ He was a well-spoken man, he must have had better days and yet there he was.

And if we look round we will see many, not as many as in Calcutta, not as many maybe as in other places, but here there are many. Even if it is one, he is Jesus, he is the one that is hungry for love, for care, and as it is written in the scripture, ‘I looked for one to care for me and I didn’t find one.’ How terrible it would be if Jesus had to say that to us today, after dying for us on the cross.”

**Mother Teresa of Kolkata**



## Our mighty fortress

### Psalm 46

Ecclesia semper reformanda est (Latin for "the church must always be reformed", often – as usual in Latin – shortened to Ecclesia semper reformanda) is a phrase first greatly popularized by Karl Barth in 1947, allegedly deriving from a saying of St. Augustine.

The church as body of Christ is a living one. Therefore needs refreshments, revivals, same as every living body does.

Today we remember Martin Luther, the German reformator, who on this very day became pioneer of a strong revival called "Lutheran Reformation" in 1517. The starting act was his publishing this day in Wittenberg the "95 Theses" as statements of faith.

Luther was a talented poet, too, author of several powerful hymns. This one like a "sound of trumpet", is perhaps the best known of all:

*A mighty fortress is our God  
A mighty fortress is our God,  
a bulwark ever failing.  
Our helper He, amid the flood  
of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe  
doth seek to work his woe,  
his craft and power are great  
and armed with cruel hate,  
on earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide,  
our striving would be losing,  
were not the right man on our side,  
the man of God's own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is he,  
Lord Sabaoth is his name,  
from age to age the same,  
and He must win the battle.*

*And though this world, with devils filled,  
should threaten to undo us,  
we will not fear, for God hath willed*



*his truth to triumph through us.  
The Prince of Darkness grim,  
we tremble not for him,  
his rage we can endure,  
for lo! His doom is sure  
one little world shall fell him.*

*That word above all earthly powers  
no thanks to them abideth,  
the Spirit and the gifts are ours  
through him who with us sideth,  
Let goods and kindred go,  
this mortal life also:  
the body they may kill  
God's truth abideth still,  
His kingdom is for ever.*

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

<i>Christine Osman</i>	<i>26, 27 October</i>	<i>Scotland</i>		Genesis 12,1-3	13 October
<i>Dan Izzett</i>	<i>4, 5 October</i>	<i>Zimbabwe/UK</i>		1 Kings 19,12	6 October
<i>David, king of Israel</i>	<i>1, 7, 8, 14, 15, 22, 28, 29 Oct</i>	<i>Israel</i>		Psalms 13	11 October
<i>Eddie Askew</i>	<i>12 October</i>	<i>UK</i>		Psalms 28	1 October
<i>Élie Fofolo</i>	<i>6 October</i>	<i>DR Congo</i>		Psalms 29	7 October
<i>Eric Chollet</i>	<i>3 October</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>		Psalms 30	8 October
<i>Ezequiel A. de Deus Gomes MD</i>	<i>9, 10 October</i>	<i>Timor Leste</i>		Psalms 31	14 October
<i>John Twynam-Perkins</i>	<i>2 October</i>	<i>Scotland</i>		Psalms 32	15 October
<i>Marta Risko</i>	<i>24, 25 October</i>	<i>Hungary</i>		Psalms 33	21 October
<i>Martin Luther</i>	<i>31 October</i>	<i>Sachsen, Germany</i>		Psalms 34	22 October
<i>Mother Teresa of Kolkata</i>	<i>30 October</i>	<i>Albania / India</i>		Psalms 34	22 October
<i>Otto Kingsley</i>	<i>11 October</i>	<i>Southern Africa</i>		Psalms 35	28 October
<i>Peter Laubscher</i>	<i>13 October</i>	<i>Southern Africa</i>		Psalms 36	29 October
<i>Pradeep and Sarah Failbus</i>	<i>17, 18 October</i>	<i>India</i>		Psalms 46	31 October
<i>Raju PLN Dr</i>	<i>19 October</i>	<i>India</i>		Ecclesiastes 9,10	16 October
<i>Silvano Perotti</i>	<i>23 October</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>		Matthew 10,1-4	17, 18 October
<i>Trevor Durston</i>	<i>16 October</i>	<i>UK</i>		Matthew 17,20	20 October
				Matthew 25,35	30 October
				Luke 24, 13-35	26, 27 October
				John 5,21	5 October
				Acts 1,8	3 October
				Acts 8,17	4 October
				Romans 5,1-5	9, 10 October
				Romans 10,13-15	2 October

			Philippians 2,7	19 October
			Philippians 3,13-14	24 October
			Philippians 3,20	23 October
			1 Timothy 6,6	25 October
			1 John 4,7	12 October

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