



TLM Daily Devotions

March 2024



Intro to the 100th edition

Dear TLM Family Worldwide,

We reached it! Yes, we reached the 100th edition of The Bridge – an important milestone in all sense!

But we are not the ones who achieved it! God achieved it, as He was who started it! „The Bridge” is an answer on prayer.

I remember how my question had been for long: how that enormous spiritual value which had accumulated along the time in TLM through the faith, dedication and experiences of its people could be mobilised, demonstrated and turned into the daily life of our mission.

God kindly gave His response on the 14th May 2015 (while I was doing some gardening!): „Spiritual portrait gallery – daily devotions written by retired and active TLM-ers - creating a bridge worldwide.”

Geoff Warne and Ken Martin, our by-then international director and chairman of the international board, and our Spiritual Ministry MAWG was happy to hear about a new initiative, and a test-run in Advent 2015 was issued. Allan Ekstedt was ready to be the theological proof, Christine Osman, Joyce Missing, June Nash, Mo Lewis the grammar proofs. Márta Varga, a Hungarian graphic, contributed with the logo. So, it started with a mustard seed.

Praise God for this 100th unit!

Thanks to Everyone, each one of you, contributors, for building “The Bridge” between past and future, North and South, East and West, heaven and earth: for building The Kingdom! Thank you very much in this way, too, for your wonderful contributions to the cause of the spiritual welfare of TLM, across your outstanding commitment to the cause of The Bridge. You all produced the bricks of this construction, one by one, with deep commitment, faith, prayers. Special thanks to Christine and Allan, who all along checked the pieces before their being published. The glue is the Holy Spirit.

I was privileged to be the construction “foreperson”.

But this milestone is also a step of change. After a prayerful and thoughtful consideration, I want to put my role down as voluntary editor, after sending out this 100th edition. It is not a rush decision at all! Sooner or later, it should happen, the baton must be handed over. First, I thought on bringing this decision when approaching the 50th set, then before the 75th. Now as we reached a massive number of 100 months, meaning 8 1/2 years and over 3 000 daily bits behind us, I think that such a round and prestigious milestone is the most suitable moment for such a step to be made.

There is a time for everything. I think now is the right time for a change. The strength and wisdom of "taking up" should be replaced by the strength and wisdom of "putting down".

Since its start, from a personal ministry The Bridge has become for now to be an institution. Letting about my decision know to him, our international director Brent Morgan will make further arrangements for a next 100 or more....

The Bridge is standing and I am sure, will stand, as what has been started by God never fails. And all of us will be happy (including me, too!) to continue contributing!

Thank you once more for the wonderful "bricks" you all have put into the construction of The Bridge so far!

With much blessing and love

Marta Risko - country leader of TLM Hungary (and a "historical piece" in TLM...)





A loyalty test

Peter replied, 'Man, I don't know what you're talking about!' Just as he was speaking, the cock crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: 'Before the cock crows today, you will disown me three times.' ⁶² And he went outside and wept bitterly. Luke 22⁶⁰⁻⁶²

More than 25 years ago, I failed a loyalty test.

I'd been a Deputy Head for a few years and had a very good relationship with my Head Teacher.

We worked well together.

It was at the end of an Teacher Training day, with a long week-end in prospect. The Head and I were checking in and chatting with each teacher.

As we walked together down a corridor, from a few rooms ahead a teacher came out and along the corridor towards us. Simultaneously the facility's manager called me along a side corridor to sign off on some repair work that had been finally completed.

A few seconds later the end of a peaceful day was shattered by screaming, shouting and a torrent of expletives.

The teacher who had been approaching, was verbally abusing and threatening the Head Teacher.

What I should have done I did not do.

Because I, and every other person in hearing distance froze until the shouting stopped.

I am ashamed to this day of my disloyalty and failure to support my friend and colleague.

I should have been by her side not skulking, very studiously examining a repaired waste pipe.

Peter knew he should have been at Jesus' side.

He had publicly declared that he would never leave nor disown Jesus.

But he did.

Peter was so overwhelmed with guilt and shame that he wept uncontrollable and bitter tears.

Regrettably, we can't re-run those moments when we called it all wrong. We can't rewind and choose the right option. We don't live in a 'Sliding Doors*' universe.

So, we must live with the consequences of our decision. With remorse, self-loathing, embarrassment and disappointment all layered on top.

Unless something radical happens.

¹⁵ *When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?'*

'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.' John 21¹⁵⁻¹⁹

Two, maybe three weeks later Jesus dealt with Peter's inner turmoil, his deep regret and spectacular failure.

With love, mercy and grace Jesus forgave Peter and restored him to an intimacy that only deepened and intensified.

It wasn't an easy one-to-one for Peter but one that was necessary for him to become a loyal and trustworthy servant of Jesus and a fruitful under-shepherd to the Great Shepherd. *Peter 5¹⁻⁴*

Jesus still reaches out with that same love, mercy and grace when we fail him. Eager only to restore and reinstate us and to continue to deepen the intimacy.

I learned a painful lesson but also experienced the joy of friendship restored and strengthened.

John Twynam – Perkins - Formerly chair of TLM Scotland

*A 1998 Film. The film alternates between two storylines, showing two paths the central character's life could take depending on whether she catches a train.



Psalm 62

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

- ¹ Truly my soul finds rest in God;
my salvation comes from him.
- ² Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.
- ³ How long will you assault me?
Would all of you throw me down—
this leaning wall, this tottering fence?
- ⁴ Surely they intend to topple me
from my lofty place;
they take delight in lies.
With their mouths they bless,
but in their hearts they curse.[Ⓜ]
- ⁵ Yes, my soul, find rest in God;
my hope comes from him.
- ⁶ Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.
- ⁷ My salvation and my honor depend on God[Ⓜ];
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.
- ⁸ Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge.
- ⁹ Surely the lowborn are but a breath,
the highborn are but a lie.
If weighed on a balance, they are nothing;
together they are only a breath.
- ¹⁰ Do not trust in extortion
or put vain hope in stolen goods;
though your riches increase,
do not set your heart on them.
- ¹¹ One thing God has spoken,
two things I have heard:
“Power belongs to you, God,
¹² and with you, Lord, is unfailing love”;
and, “You reward everyone
according to what they have done.”



Psalm 63

A psalm of David. When he was in the Desert of Judah.

¹You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water.

²I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.

³Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.

⁴I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.

⁵I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

⁶On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night.

⁷Because you are my help,
I sing in the shadow of your wings.

⁸I cling to you;
your right hand upholds me.

⁹Those who want to kill me will be destroyed;
they will go down to the depths of the earth.

¹⁰They will be given over to the sword
and become food for jackals.

¹¹But the king will rejoice in God;
all who swear by God will glory in him,
while the mouths of liars will be silenced.



Servant Leadership Part 1

When you face the impossible

The angel Gabriel told two unlikely women they were about to conceive. Elizabeth's problem was that she was well past child-bearing years; Mary was an unmarried virgin. How could they possibly become pregnant?

The two NIV translations render Gabriel's words in Luke 1:37 in complementary ways:

"For nothing is impossible with God." (1984 NIV)

"For no word from God will ever fail." (2011 NIV)

I like both translations. When God works, he accomplishes the impossible. Equally, when he speaks, his words define and establish what will come to pass.

He delivered on his promise to the women, not just for their own happiness, but also for the good of mankind. The two children would be John the Baptist and Jesus.

This leads to a few questions to ponder:

1. What "impossible" challenge are you facing right now?
2. What is God saying to you about it?
3. What are you saying to Him about it?
4. What good could He accomplish in you through this thing?
5. How will your perseverance bring glory to God?

Take some time to think through your answers. As you ponder, ask God to give you wisdom and a clear path forward for whatever issue you're facing.

Strong servant leaders trust in God's leading and seek his wisdom.

Extra Bible Key Scriptures

Luke 1:37

Psalms 48:14

Romans 8:28

Proverbs 3:5-6

Dorothy Owen - Administration & Logistics Assistant, *On behalf of The Leprosy Mission Papua New-Guinea Team*



Servant Leadership Part 2

Strength in Clarity

We can develop leadership strength through clarity.

Clarity is rarely a conscious goal for leaders, yet every leader is consciously aware when it is absent.

How do I define clarity? In this context, it is a state of mind first achieved by the leader, spreading to the followers, then rippling out to customers and constituents. Another way to look at it is being *“sure of what we hope for”* (Hebrews 11:1).

This state of mind is achieved by the leader who constantly seeks it in all aspects of his or her daily work.

Consider all the following areas where it's necessary:

- Clarity in relationships
- Clarity in job descriptions and assignments
- Clarity in vision
- Clarity in delegation
- Clarity in communication
- Clarity in conflict
- Clarity in celebration
- Clarity in strategy
- Clarity of authority

If ambiguity rules in these areas, people will feel like they're not being led well. They naturally seek clarity, even if unconsciously so. They like to know what they're supposed to be doing and where they should be going.

Not that they want to be micromanaged, of course. The clarity they desire is an understanding of expectations and purpose.

Clarity is better than simplicity. Simple is good, but not necessary. If an employee understands a new concept, it may still seem complex to outsiders, but now we can help them understand it, too.

Clarity is not necessarily obvious. It stands on its own. It is fact. It is truth. It is memorable. It is easily memorized.

It is a journey from complexity, chaos, falsehoods, confusion, and conflict to comprehension. To "Aha!"

It is a process of removing obstacles that demotivate, demoralize, and derail.

Clarity sells.

Clarity motivates.

Clarity is clear vision.

Clarity cuts through the clutter.

Clarity clears the air.

Clarity removes the cloud so you can see the mountaintop.

Ultimate clarity is coming, but "Now I know in part; then I shall know fully..." (1 Corinthians 13:12).

From **Dorothy Owen** – On behalf of TLMPNG
Preventative Health and Community Empowerment Programmed – (PHACE)



Citizen of Heaven

If I am openly honest - of all the facets of being a Christian, Heaven is the one I sometimes have doubts about. I wrestle with it. Maybe I am not alone in this.

It's the only part of the Apostle's Creed that I sometimes question - that last sentence that states "and the life everlasting". And I think it is because we believe in a place that you cannot see, feel, touch, or otherwise comprehend using your five senses. Heaven, by definition, lies beyond the veil of this visible, seen, touchable, tangible, extremely real-to-us world. And since this world is the only world we are sure of, how can we say or believe or imagine that there is another world out there somewhere, beyond the horizon, not provable by any of the means we ordinarily use when we talk about proof? I mean, how do we know there is a heaven?

Well, over the years, when I go through that doubting phase, I have always found it helpful to turn to Hebrews 11. If you study [Hebrews 11:13-16](#), you quickly see that it appears in this chapter as a kind of parenthesis, as if the writer has been extolling the faith-virtues of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah (vv. 4-12), and then suddenly thinks to himself, "People will never believe this so I'd better explain it."

That's what's going on here. The writer wants us to consider why certain people do what they do, why they decide to live in a way that seems radically different from the rest of the world. That heaven is about something better. Something that will last forever.

That's a good description of heaven. It's better than anything we have on earth. And unlike the things on earth, heaven lasts forever. So we give up what we have here because we can't keep it anyway and we know we've got something better coming that will never be taken away from us.

In Beijing, there is an inscription on the reverse of the large sign that marks the centre run by the English Language Institute of China. As you approach the building, you see the sign that announces the building. But as you exit the building, you see inscribed on the back of the sign the famous words of Jim Elliott, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose." It is precisely that spirit that has animated the spread of the Christian gospel for 2000 years, and it explains as well as anything can, why Christians live the way they do.

Christians are truly "not from around here." That's the whole point of verse 13. We are from somewhere else, a realm not visible or touchable. We've got a passport that says, "Citizen of Heaven."

Charles Spurgeon has a marvellous sermon on these verses called 'Go Back, Never!' In that sermon he says of this world - "This is our inn, not our home. We tarry here a night; we are away in the morning."

Or as the old gospel song says, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through !!"



Christian mottos from 2 Corinthians

1) CHRISTIAN OLD AGE HOME MOTTO –

2 Cor.4:16 – “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.”

2) CHRISTIAN FOOTBALL CLUB MOTTO –

2 Cor.5:9 – “So whether we are at home(home game) or away(away game), we make it our aim to please Him(less fouls and more sportsmanship).”

3) CHRISTIAN RUBBLE REMOVAL COMPANY MOTTO –

2 Cor.6:3 – “We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry.”

4) CHRISTIAN POLICE FORCE MOTTO –

2 Cor.6:14 – “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?

Or what fellowship has light with darkness?”

5) CHRISTIAN MINISTERS’ FRATERNAL MOTTO –

2 Cor.6:16 – “What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God has said, ‘ I’ll make My dwelling among them and walk among them and I’ll be their God and they shall be My people.’”

6) CHRISTIAN POLITICAL CIVIL SERVANT MOTTO –

2 Cor.9:8 – “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”

7) CHRISTIAN INTERCESSORS’ MOTTO –

2 Cor.10:4 – “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but have divine power to destroy strong holds.”

8) THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES’ MOTTO –

2 Cor.10:5 – “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”

9) HEALTHY CHRISTIAN FAITH MOTTO –

2 Cor.13:5 – “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the Faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless you fail to meet the test!”

10) ‘BOTTOM LINE’ CHRISTIAN MOTTO –

2 Cor.13:11 – “Finally, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.” -Amen.



There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

We've just redecorated the kitchen. Barbara wanted something bright and sunny so she chose a warm yellow emulsion to lift the mood. It looked good and a bright yellow tablecloth completed it. But walking round a furniture store the other day we saw a wall clock. A clear design and the plastic surround was yellow. A good match for the walls and it was cheap. We bought it.

So what to do with the old clock? It was still working. "I know," I said, "I'll put it in my studio. There's no clock there and I've got a space on the wall it'll just fit." I found the hammer and a picture hook, grabbed the steps and then... I paused. "Why on earth do I need a clock in my studio?" I asked myself. That's where I paint and write my books. I don't want to look up for the time when I'm painting my next masterpiece. (That'll be the day!)

Some things can't be ruled by the clock. I'm all for punctuality when it's important. Getting to work on time, or not keeping friends waiting by turning up half an hour late. But we need moments - and longer than moments - when time takes second place and we allow ourselves to relax.

The poet T.S.Eliot wrote about "a still point in the turning world." A store from which the world gets its energy. A virtual place where we can drop the rushing around, where we can meet ourselves and be ourselves and renew our energy and inspiration. Some of us call that still point God.

*Timeless Lord, I meet you most easily in the quiet of the day.
Help me to find you in the crowded moments too.*

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)



Psalm 64

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

¹ Hear me, my God, as I voice my complaint;
protect my life from the threat of the enemy.

² Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked,
from the plots of evildoers.

³ They sharpen their tongues like swords
and aim cruel words like deadly arrows.

⁴ They shoot from ambush at the innocent;
they shoot suddenly, without fear.

⁵ They encourage each other in evil plans,
they talk about hiding their snares;
they say, "Who will see it?"

⁶ They plot injustice and say,
"We have devised a perfect plan!"

Surely the human mind and heart are cunning.

⁷ But God will shoot them with his arrows;
they will suddenly be struck down.

⁸ He will turn their own tongues against them
and bring them to ruin;
all who see them will shake their heads in scorn.

⁹ All people will fear;
they will proclaim the works of God
and ponder what he has done.

¹⁰ The righteous will rejoice in the LORD
and take refuge in him;
all the upright in heart will glory in him!



Psalm 65

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

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



Paul, the purpose driven Apostle!

Titus 1:1 "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness."

An apostle is one who is sent forth with a message. He is only a carrier. The message is given to him. It is not his. He cannot add or delete anything from the message. He must truthfully communicate the message to whom it was meant.

To expound the message of grace of God one requires the revelation knowledge of the scriptures. The true import of the message can be assimilated only when revealed by the Spirit of God/Truth. Knowledge of God must be revealed; it cannot be acquired. When it underpins apostleship, grace will manifest in people's lives. The message is purposed to transform the lives of its recipients.

God's promise of eternal life for mankind was brought to fruition through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Restoration of man's holy relationship with God (ie., salvation) is the central issue. That is the truth. All the promises of God rest in the born again believer. Paul was not just conveying the theology of grace but the very person of Jesus Christ. In essence Paul, the servant had represented the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. His desire was to increase the faith of the believers in Jesus so that they grow into His likeness, be godly.

Paul's life resonates with the end time parable recorded by apostle John where the master leaves His servants in charge of His house till He returns from a long journey. That was narrated in the context of the second coming of Jesus. The master assigned specific duties to his servants to be performed with diligence during his absence. The scriptures are emphatic that we are accountable to the responsibilities and talents God gives us. They must be used to save souls and glorify God.

Out of his servanthood flowed Paul's apostleship, the carrier of the Good News of eternal life through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. At times he even confronted the other apostles regarding the content and methods used to share the gospel. He was passionate and fearless. He knew why he was commissioned by God as a servant missionary. He was not an also-ran preacher. Paul, the apostle was diligent in the responsibility given to him. He was effective. He was the single largest contributor to the New Testament writings, nearly 50% of them.

From the Book of Acts one can infer that Paul went to more parts of the world preaching the gospel than any other apostle. He also experienced many tests and trials, including multiple shipwrecks. The purpose of being part of the mission to save souls from damnation in hell had led Paul from place to place, community to community and from one hostile audience to another.

Paul was willing to go through all the troubles and travails and consider them as pure joy for the sake of the gospel. Since his foundation was rooted deep in Jesus Christ, nothing could dissuade Paul from carrying out his mission. It was not a job. It was a mission for the salvation of others. In it there was no self-glorification, but only glory to the living God, his personal saviour, Lord Jesus Christ. The love of Jesus was the eternal spring of living waters from which Paul quenched his thirst. He let his faith take deep roots in the living Word of God and be nourished by it.

Paul had a purpose for his ministry. He preached eternal life through Jesus Christ. It provided the opportunity for people to accept Jesus as their personal Saviour and be redeemed to God.

Paul had a purpose for his ministry, Jesus Christ!

In gratitude for His grace

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



What a Friend we have in Jesus

Once when I was preaching in my church, at the end of my sermon I invited the congregation to sing the old well known song 'What a Friend we have in Jesus'. Some weeks later, a friend came to me saying : I know that you are able to read in English. You certainly would be interested to read this book written by Kenneth W. Osbeck entitled 101 hymn stories. I was fascinated to discover who had written the song mentioned above. The author is Joseph Scriven, 1819-1886. He was born of prosperous parents in Dublin, Ireland. He was a graduate of Trinity College. At the age of 25, he decided to leave his native country and migrate to Canada. His reasons for leaving his family and country seem to be two-fold : the religious influence of the Plymouth Brethren upon his life estranging him from his family and the accidental drowning of his fiancée the night before their scheduled wedding.

From that time Scriven developed a totally different pattern of life. It is said that he gave freely of his limited possessions, even sharing the clothing from his own body, and never refused to help anyone who needed it.

'What a Friend we have in Jesus' was never intended by Scriven for publication. Upon learning of his mother's serious illness and unable to be with her, he wrote a letter of comfort enclosing the words of this text. Some time later when himself was ill, a friend who came to call on him chanced to see the poem scribbled on scratch paper near the bed. The friends of Port Hope read it with keen interest and ask Scriven if he had written the words. Scriven, with typical modesty, replied : 'The Lord and I did it between us'.

After the death of Joseph Scriven, also by accidental drowning, the citizens of Port Hope, Ontario, erected a monument with the text and these words inscribed :

Four miles north, in Pengally's Cemetery, lies the philanthropist and author of this great masterpiece, written at Port Hope in 1857.

The composer of the music was Charles C. Converse.

I was impressed by this testimony of Scriven. The simply stated truths of 'What a Friend we have in Jesus', have brought solace and comfort to countless numbers of God's people since it was written.

I like walking every day. This is for me a time to relax, to pray and to sing. And very often I sing 'What a Friend we have in Jesus'. These words still speak to me and encourage me. What a privilege we have to walk in confidence with Christ !



Boulders

There's a beach near my home which is famous for its towering boulders. As a child, who was petrified of heights, these boulders terrified me. My legs would turn to jelly watching the other children scramble to the top of them. Well, it's been a long time since I was a child, but, those boulders still scare the daylights out of me, especially the one I call the Tower of Doom, which lures youngsters to the top with the promise of an exhilarating plunge into the icy waters of False Bay below.

When I walked past the Tower a few days ago, a group of adolescents were perched on the top, egging each other on to jump. Most of them would shuffle nervously to the edge, look down and then shuffle backwards, repeating this ritual several times before mustering the courage to throw themselves forward. There was lots of encouragement, cajoling and advice from the group. I suppose you could have called it pier pressure.

In some cases, the only way the person could be persuaded to jump was if someone jumped alongside them. It's as if they borrowed a bit of bravery from their friend, which is no bad thing.

Have there been instances in your life when you've said to a friend, "I want to do this, but I need someone to go with me." Maybe there've been occasions when someone has asked you to go with them – where they've wanted to lean on your bravery, perhaps making us feel braver than we really felt.

Can you think of instances in the Bible when God promises to be with his people when they are called to jump?

Once of the best-known passages occurs in Exodus 33, a time of crisis in the journey to the Promised Land:

"For how then can it be known that I have found favour in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?"
Exodus 33:16

Yes, that's what makes you unique. That's what makes you stand out. Not your nationality, your education, your role, your social rank. He goes with you. That is your distinguishing characteristic.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." John 16:7

For Moses and his people, there was uncertainty. Would God go with them? The thought of entering the land of the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, even with an angel going before them, was terrifying, if God Himself did not go with them.

What a joy it is for us to live without that uncertainty. Jesus promised: "I will send Him." And so He has.

When we plunge into the icy waters today, we do so hand-in-hand with Him, and therefore, we "do not worry beforehand". Mark 13:11

*If you're standing on the edge of a boulder today, with the surf churning below you,
remember, He is indeed with you.*

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.



Contend for the faith

Dear friends, ..., I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people. (Jude 3 NIV)

As we all know we live in the last days and the return of our Lord Jesus Christ is imminent. Looking around us we will see various signs predicted many years ago by our Lord have come to pass. We are therefore waiting for the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jesus Christ return. While we are waiting for His return, we need to continue to contend for the faith we have received from Christ. Because the world system is doing all they can to make us, doubt God and His word or make us completely ignore Christ. How do we contend for the faith we've received. This can be done when we:

- Know the word of God concerning us (Joshua 1:8-9). Never get discouraged: we should hold on to God's word and never change our opinion irrespective of the circumstances. Prepare to eat and drink the word of God daily; maintain a deep communion with God, an unbroken relationship, a personal altar of worship and prayer (1King 19:7-8). Let the word of God strengthen us for the journey ahead.
- Faithful even in the little tasks given to us (1 Sam 17:34 David has been taking care of his father's sheep). It is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2). This will make us experience miracles and the supernatural power of God from the little responsibilities we do without boasting.
- Maintain unwavering faith in God no matter the circumstances. Jesus Christ said we should hold fast to what you have till I come, anyone who overcomes and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations. (Rev.2:25-26). An unwavering faith in God will grant us courage to confront and overcome challenges that would make ordinary men run away. We will not shift ground for the enemy; we can never be intimidated by the challenges facing us because we believe that the God who is with us is able to do exceedingly and abundantly beyond their imagination and He is faithful to preserve our lives that we have entrusted to Him until He appears.
- Follow God wholeheartedly irrespective of our condition or circumstances; we are ever prepared and eager to go where ever the Lord open doors of opportunity, nothing catches us by surprise we should ever be ready to confront challenges and established God's kingdom and His will wherever we are placed.
- Promote unity and never give up in fellowship with one another as we see the days approaching Hebrew 10:25.
- Finally let us with prayer take in the instruction from the book of Jude in verse 20 – 25.

But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. ²² Be merciful to those who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. ²⁴ To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— ²⁵ to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

May God be praised continually in our lives from now until eternity.



"He touched me"

"Jesus reached out and touched the man ..." Mark 1:41

Dozens of men, women and children crowded around the doctor and medical staff at the leprosy control clinic under the tree in the mountain valley in Nepal. It was a beautiful morning and most people were cheerful as they chatted and waited for their turn to be examined.

He was in his mid-40's and stood forlornly about 50 metres from the crowd, looking wistfully in the direction of the doctor. His sad, tired, resigned expression identified him as someone whose life had not been easy. The deformed, clawed hands testified to the tragic results of years of untreated leprosy and neglect.

Asking the interpreter to accompany me, I went to chat with the man. Knowing that in some cases it was now possible through reconstructive surgery to restore mobility and usefulness, I took his hand in mine and examined his fingers. Unfortunately, the degree of muscle absorption and general damage was such that, humanly speaking, very little could be done to help him.

Looking into his face to explain the situation, I was surprised and startled to see tears rolling down his cheeks. Realising that his hands had become totally insensitive to feeling or pain, I knew that I could not possibly have hurt him, so I asked "Why are you crying?".

His response was significant "You are the first person in 9 years that has touched me. The gods have cursed me with leprosy, my wife and children have left me. I am just an outcast rejected by all. Why did you touch me? Are you not afraid?"

We shared the good news of God's love and referred to Jesus' willingness to reach out and touch all people in need. Regardless of our physical state or social status we all need to find forgiveness and life in Him.

He received Christ as his saviour and for many years he went from village to village telling people "God does not want us to be punished for our sins, He took them upon Himself in Christ Jesus. He touched me and made me clean and He can do it for you too."

Thought. Have I experienced His cleansing touch? If not, am I willing to come to Him knowing that He is willing and able to transform my life? If yes, am I reaching out and touching others in His name?

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.



Psalm 66

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

- ¹ Shout for joy to God, all the earth!
² Sing the glory of his name;
make his praise glorious.
- ³ Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
So great is your power
that your enemies cringe before you.
⁴ All the earth bows down to you;
they sing praise to you,
they sing the praises of your name."
- ⁵ Come and see what God has done,
his awesome deeds for mankind!
⁶ He turned the sea into dry land,
they passed through the waters on foot—
come, let us rejoice in him.
- ⁷ He rules forever by his power,
his eyes watch the nations—
let not the rebellious rise up against him.
- ⁸ Praise our God, all peoples,
let the sound of his praise be heard;
⁹ he has preserved our lives
and kept our feet from slipping.
- ¹⁰ For you, God, tested us;
you refined us like silver.
- ¹¹ You brought us into prison
and laid burdens on our backs.
- ¹² You let people ride over our heads;
we went through fire and water,
but you brought us to a place of abundance.
- ¹³ I will come to your temple with burnt offerings
and fulfill my vows to you—
- ¹⁴ vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke
when I was in trouble.
- ¹⁵ I will sacrifice fat animals to you
and an offering of rams;
I will offer bulls and goats.
- ¹⁶ Come and hear, all you who fear God;
let me tell you what he has done for me.
- ¹⁷ I cried out to him with my mouth;
his praise was on my tongue.
- ¹⁸ If I had cherished sin in my heart,

the Lord would not have listened;
¹⁹ but God has surely listened
and has heard my prayer.
²⁰ Praise be to God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!



Psalm 67

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

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



Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart

*Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the Holy One;
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son.
Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the Holy One;
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son.
And now let the weak say 'I am strong',
Let the poor say 'I am rich',
Because of what the Lord has done for us.*

Sometimes we really forget to say Thank You to God for all that God does day by day in our lives, for all the wonderful answers to our prayers, for all of His creation. As we read our Bibles, we are constantly reminded about giving thanks – think of how often we find the Psalmists giving thanks and praise to God for what He has done. We are reminded too by Paul who frequently gives thanks to God not just for all He has done but also for the people God has placed in Paul's life. In *Ephesians*, Paul writes in 5:20 *"And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"*.

In the days at the end of 2023, I was unexpectedly challenged by a little book I was reading. I had picked it from the pile waiting to be read because it was so slim and for every reflection the facing page was a picture. It wouldn't take long to get through this one. Well.... My challenge came with the introduction to the book where the author wrote "Receiving each moment for what it really is: holy, ordinary, amazing grace. A gift." Those words really resonated with me – every moment is a gift from God. She had been dared by a friend – a dare is something you can't ignore – to write a list of 1,000 things she loved. As I read further into the book, I realised that each of the reflections, the things she loved, that she had included in the book were things for which she was giving thanks to God.

So, I decided to start a new journal for 2024 to write 1,000 things for which I give thanks to God. Yes, I am still adding to that journal (although I lost it for a few weeks when I moved some furniture into my study and couldn't reach my desk! – I am back on track now).

As I was thinking what to send to Marta for her 100th edition of The Bridge, I thought I would challenge us all to be sure to give thanks and praise and glory to God for the things that come into the moments of our lives. Here I would like to share a very few that I think are relevant at this time: The Bridge; the faithfulness of Marta and the many contributors to this wonderful resource and inspiration; the opportunity to share the thoughts God has put in my heart; the comfort and the challenge of the thoughts of the other contributors; the links across the world in the TLM family; the friendship of Marta over many years (long before the Bridge came into being).....

At our church Prayer Meeting last evening we sang "Give thanks with a grateful heart" and I have quoted that at the start of this reflection and I have included at the end a YouTube link if you want to listen to it.

As we are now in Lent and preparing for the events of that first Easter and the special joy of Easter Day when we are reminded that CHRIST IS RISEN, I thought I would include these Thank You thoughts which I think have been quoted before in The Bridge:

*Thank you, God, that you created me in your image.
Thank you that I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Thank you that you know me intimately.
Thank you that you love me unconditionally.
Thank you that nothing can separate me from this love.
Thank you that nothing can distance me from your presence.
Thank you that I can stand unashamed before you.
Thank you that your favour is upon me.
Thank you that your mercy is unending.
Thank you that your Holy Spirit lives in me.
Thank you that your Son died for me.
Thank you that He rose from the dead for me.
Amen*

Give thanks with a grateful heart.

https://youtu.be/Bk_7wUR2Wdg

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



The priorities

“What is important to me is to go to the end of my mission” Acts 20.24, BFC

This is the story of a rich woman aboard the Titanic. When the ship hits the iceberg, she is booked into a lifeboat and given three minutes to return to her cabin. Ignoring the money and gems spilled on the ground, she takes three oranges and returns to the bridge. Circumstances have upended her values and changed her priorities.

The question is not whether the agenda is filled, but what fills it. If we are wise, we will consult God to know the right priorities and always have them in mind (see Pr 3.6).

In a survey, people over 90 were asked: "If you could live your life again, what would you do differently?" » Three answers often came up:

- 1) I would spend more time with my family and friends.
- 2) I would try more things and take more risks.
- 3) I would dedicate myself to a noble cause. Trivial things are time-consuming.

We live with bad priorities. If we disperse ourselves, we cannot do everything God asks. Paul understood this well. He affirms: “What matters to me is to go to the end of my mission, and to complete the task entrusted to me by the Lord Jesus”.

A life where everything is permitted is a useless life. The biggest challenge is to think and do the things that matter. The Bible says: *“With a little wisdom they would understand where all this is leading them”* (Deut. 32.29, BFC).

Les priorités

« CE QUI M'IMPORTE, C'EST D'ALLER JUSQU'AU BOUT DE MA MISSION » ACTES 20.24, BFC

C'est l'histoire d'une femme riche à bord du Titanic. Lorsque le navire heurte l'iceberg, on lui réserve une place dans un canot de sauvetage et on lui accorde trois minutes pour retourner dans sa cabine. Ignorant l'argent et les pierres précieuses renversées sur le sol, elle prend trois oranges et retourne sur le pont. Les circonstances ont bouleversé ses valeurs et modifié ses priorités. La question n'est pas de savoir si l'agenda est rempli, mais ce qui le remplit. Si on est sage, on va consulter Dieu pour connaître les bonnes priorités et les avoir toujours à l'esprit (voir Pr 3.6).

Lors d'une enquête, on a demandé à des personnes de plus de 90 ans : « Si vous pouviez revivre votre vie, que feriez-vous de différent ? » Trois réponses reviennent souvent :

1) Je passerais plus de temps avec ma famille et mes amis.

2) Je tenterais plus de choses et prendrais plus de risques.

3) Je me consacrerai à une noble cause. Les choses insignifiantes sont chronophages.

On vit avec de mauvaises priorités. Si on se disperse, on n'arrive pas à faire tout ce que Dieu demande. Paul l'avait bien compris. Il affirme : « Ce qui m'importe, c'est d'aller jusqu'au bout de ma mission, et d'achever la tâche que m'a confiée le Seigneur Jésus ». Une vie où tout est permis est une vie inutile. Le plus grand défi est de penser et de faire des choses qui importent. La Bible dit : « Avec un peu de sagesse ils comprendraient où tout cela les mène » (De 32.29, BFC).

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



Born in prayer...

Genesis 33:14 - I will go with you and give you rest

Genesis 32 and 33 are critical chapters in the narrative of the Exodus as the crisis of the golden calf looms, and Moses pleads with God to make atonement for the Israelites' great sin. God tells Moses to move on, but strangely, says that he will not go with them "because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way." As the dialogue between Moses and God continues Moses prays "If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favour with you. Remember that this nation is your people." After which God relents and says to Moses: "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

As we move through our 150th year of dedicated service to people affected by leprosy, we must never forget our roots – if we let our spiritual guard down it is at our peril. As Wellesley Baily put it when reflecting on his 43 years of service with the mission: "The Mission has been born and cradled in prayer. It has been brought up on prayer; it has been nourished on prayer; and prayer has been at the bottom of its success since the first moments of its life."

We never know what is round the corner – surely the COVID pandemic has taught us that! There may be times of prosperity for the mission, but there may also be times of great challenge. In fact, some parts of the mission may even now be facing challenges of which I know nothing. But one thing I do know, that if we are to remain faithful to our call and to our roots we need God's presence to go with us and lead us in all that we do.

This edition of the Bridge is the one hundredth, and thanks to Marta and her team has kept going, feeding us every day with an extraordinary variety devotional material and contributions from all over the world. Here is our opportunity as regular readers to use this material wisely and continue to reflect and pray for the work of the mission each day.

During my time as General Director there were some special moments when I felt God powerfully demonstrating his presence with us, lifting us out of difficult situations, placing in our midst highly competent people to serve in this work (no I won't mention names!). I still see this in the small role I play as one of the Mission's Pension Fund Trustees.

God has been good and faithful to us. We must continue in our faithfulness of prayer to seek his guidance every step of the way.



The great commandment – Part 1

Matthew 22: 37 -39

1. Love the Lord your God.....
2. Love your neighbour.....

It is easy to understand the meaning of command one, love your God but it is not easy to for everyone at once to understands clearly command two, Love your neighbour. The main reason for not understanding part two command is that we do not really understand here when Jesus says, the meaning of neighbour. We do not really know the real meaning what Jesus meant by neighbour. We understand as per our worldly and day today meaning, the neighbour is the person who lives in the next house of our house. But Jesus did not mean that, he had much more wider meaning and understanding of this word neighbour than our own thinking. Our thinking and meaning of neighbour are narrow and limited.

Therefore, Jesus gave the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Who is my neighbour?

Luke 10: 30 -37

To understand this story in meaning way, we have to understand the background of this. That in those days Jewish people used to have no dealings with Samaritans. They used to look down the Samaritans. The Samaritans knew about this feeling of Racism of Jews against them. They accepted these particular behaviors of Jews against them; therefore, they also did not keep any relationship with Jews.

Jesus purposefully used the character of Jew and also the Samaritan travellers in this parable. This helped the reader to understand the real meaning of neighbour, what Jesus really wanted to teach.

Let us look at the *characters*.

a) There was the *traveller*, most probably he was Jew from Jerusalem. He seems a reckless character, otherwise he would have not travelled alone on the route. In those days people seldom attempted the Jerusalem to Jericho Road alone if they were carrying goods and valuables. In most cases such travellers used to go in groups in convoys or caravans. But this person wanted to go alone on this dangerous route which had many dacoits. They used to loot, physically harm or use to kill the travellers.

b) There was the *priest*. The priest saw this inured man but did not come forward to help him. He was not kind and helpful to this injured traveller. As per their custom touching injured or dead person will make him unclean. He was more worried about his position than the urgent needs of this injured man. No doubt that he was remembering that he would be unclean after touching this wounded man, to touch him would mean losing his turn of duty in the temple; and he refused to risk that. He gave preference to his duty to perform rituals in the temple than helping this wounded person by touching and helping him. He set the claims of ceremonial above those of charity. The temple and its liturgy meant more to him than the pain of this injured man.

c) There was the *Levite*. He seems to have gone nearer to this man before he passed on. The bandits were in the habit of using decoys. One of their number would act the part of a wounded man; and when some unsuspecting traveller stopped over him, the others would rush upon him and overpower him. The Levite was a man whose motto was "safety first." He would take no risks to help anyone else. The *Levite* also did not provide any help.

d) There was the *Samaritan*. When we read this, we thought that the Samaritan would not help this wounded Jew because of their bad relationship. The Jews were unkind to Samaritans. But in reality, when this Samaritan saw the wounded Jew, he took pity on him and developed desire in his heart to help him in this condition. Even though he must have been hesitating in the beginning because the Samaritan knew the injured Jew would not like take any help from him because being Samaritan. The situation was very awkward, first the Jew would have not liked to have any help from this Jew because of their superior feelings.

This was also not easy at that time for the Samaritan to provide the help to the needy Jew because of the ill treatment he and his community has been receiving from Jews for a long time.

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



The great commandment – Part 2

Matthew 22: 37-39

1. Love the Lord your God.....
2. Love your neighbour.....

But the Samaritan did not keep all those things in his mind but took initiative to help this wounded Jew. He ignored all the bad behaviors of Jews towards them. Then at once the Samaritan took action to touch this wounded Jew and provided the bandage with the oil, he had with him; and whatever way it was possible to provide help to him at that time.

Then he provided help him to walk towards his donkey. Finally helped him to travel on his donkey to place to rest, to a comfortable Inn. The Samaritan knew the Inn keeper well and requested to take care of the wounded Jew. He even paid some money in advance and promised to settle all the total expenses, in taking care of the Jew, on his return journey.

I feel Jesus gave the example to Samaritan helping the injured Jew in this parable with a meaningful purpose. Jesus was setting an example, **who is my neighbour** that time to all concern there. This was very typical example to have the real understanding of our neighbor.

This helps us to understand, who is my neighbour? We come to know here that the real neighbour are not only the persons with whom we get along well or are friendly within our day today life. The real neighbours are people of not of our locality, our religion, our community and race. The real neighbours could be beyond the boundaries of our countries, from the enemy areas and race.

The real neighbour could be the person with whom we do have any relationship, he could be the person we do not like him at all. It could be that he did not like us at all in the past. He could be from our enemy's side. He could be the person who had hurt us most in past or had brought great loss to us in past.

So, the question comes to us as real Christians, what will be our response to a person who did not like us at all in past or he is not in talking terms with us at present or it could be vice versa, that we do not like him and are not in talking terms with him. The situation could be that the needy person has nothing to do with us. What will be our response in such situations? Are we going to help such needy person who is not known to us?

Jesus's answer involves three things.

1. We must help a man even when he has brought his troubles on himself, as this traveller has done.
2. Any man of any nation who is in need is our neighbour. our help must be as wide as the love of God.
3. The help must be practical and not consist merely in *feeling* sorry. No doubt the priest and the Levite felt a pang of pity for the wounded man, but they *did* nothing. Compassion, to be real, must issue in deed.

What Jesus said to the scribe, he says to us – "Go you and do the same."



Psalm 68

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

- ¹ May God arise, may his enemies be scattered;
may his foes flee before him.
- ² May you blow them away like smoke—
as wax melts before the fire,
may the wicked perish before God.
- ³ But may the righteous be glad
and rejoice before God;
may they be happy and joyful.
- ⁴ Sing to God, sing in praise of his name,
extol him who rides on the clouds;
rejoice before him—his name is the LORD.
- ⁵ A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in his holy dwelling.
- ⁶ God sets the lonely in families,
he leads out the prisoners with singing;
but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.
- ⁷ When you, God, went out before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness,
- ⁸ the earth shook, the heavens poured down rain,
before God, the One of Sinai,
before God, the God of Israel.
- ⁹ You gave abundant showers, O God;
you refreshed your weary inheritance.
- ¹⁰ Your people settled in it,
and from your bounty, God, you provided for the poor.
- ¹¹ The Lord announces the word,
and the women who proclaim it are a mighty throng:
- ¹² “Kings and armies flee in haste;
the women at home divide the plunder.
- ¹³ Even while you sleep among the sheep pens,
the wings of my dove are sheathed with silver,
its feathers with shining gold.”
- ¹⁴ When the Almighty[☩] scattered the kings in the land,
it was like snow fallen on Mount Zalmon.
- ¹⁵ Mount Bashan, majestic mountain,
Mount Bashan, rugged mountain,
- ¹⁶ why gaze in envy, you rugged mountain,
at the mountain where God chooses to reign,
where the LORD himself will dwell forever?
- ¹⁷ The chariots of God are tens of thousands

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



Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

Matthew 21 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

⁵ “Say to Daughter Zion,
 ‘See, your king comes to you,
 gentle and riding on a donkey,
 and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”⁶

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

“Hosanna⁷ to the Son of David!”
 “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”⁸
 “Hosanna⁹ in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰ When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

¹¹ The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Jesus at the Temple

¹² Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ¹³ “It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’¹⁴ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’”¹⁵

¹⁴ The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant.

¹⁶ “Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him.

“Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read,

“‘From the lips of children and infants
 you, Lord, have called forth your praise’¹⁷?”

¹⁷ And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.



'Surely this man was the Son of God'

Mark 15,39 *"...when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"*

It was one of the hardest and most gruesome things a Roman soldier had to do, crucifying people; -a barbaric way of executing those judged to be no longer worthy of life. It is said that the only way Roman soldiers got through this 'duty' was to get drunk. Our history -and indeed our religion- had equally vile ways of killing people, and sadly, instances are still to be found around the world today.

American novelist and minister Lloyd Douglas wrote a story called 'The Robe' in which he imagined the fortunes of the soldier who won the lottery for Jesus' seamless garment (John 19:23-24). So, what might we imagine about another of those soldiers, the centurion who perceived something exceptional about the One they were crucifying?

The gospels vary: Matthew (a disciple who would have heard immediately from those who were there) and Mark (who may have been there himself) remember it differently from Luke's witnesses, who recall the words as, *"Surely this was a righteous man."* John was there, but doesn't mention it.

Other details also vary. Matthew speaks of the soldiers guarding Jesus being terrified and all exclaiming this recognition (Matthew 27:54); Mark says the centurion was *"in front of Jesus"*, and that he alone spoke. Both gospels say the women were *"watching from a distance"*; could they have overheard the centurion's words? Mark adds that the centurion *"saw how he died"*; -did he cry out loudly enough to be heard *"from a distance"*? Or did he mutter it as he led his men away, sickened by the whole business (he had probably remained sober). Notice, by the way, he says *"the Son of God"*, not *"a"*. Luke adds the detail that the centurion *"praised God"* (Luke 23:47); - we can only guess at his belief before and after this experience.

Whatever the scenario, one thing seems clear: that more than by other crucifixions he had seen, this hardened soldier was deeply affected by Jesus' death, and by the manner in which he died. We can conclude that for our benefit, and that of millions of gospel readers over the centuries, God gave him an insight and words -no doubt beyond his usual expression- to declare a truth the depth of which he could hardly have understood.

So, this Roman soldier becomes part of God's salvation story: an unnamed, probably non-believing, gentile, through whom God still proclaims a timeless truth: *"this was the Son of God"*. It would be easy, for those who wish to, to explain it away as a mis-heard add-on to the story. But the centurion was there, and so were those who heard him, and so was the God who elsewhere said *"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."* (Matthew 3:17). The Father uses this man to proclaim again His truth.

I like to think that the centurion reflected deeply on what had happened. I wonder whether he ever met Cornelius (Acts 10); they would have had much to talk about! We might even wonder whether, on his death years later, this centurion met the Lord in resurrected life, and knew that his words had been true.

God bless,

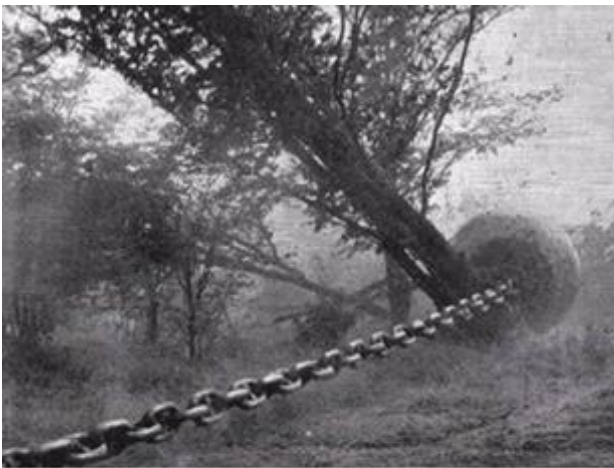
David Beazley began involvement with The Leprosy Mission in 1992 when he came as Minister to a Church near the International Office in Brentford. He acted as an informal 'chaplain' to the Office, and served on the International General Council for some years. At the same time he became a member of TLM England and Wales Board, serving as Chairman for six years and on various committees. He chaired the Spiritual Ministry MAWG, and is also able to serve TLM by leading retreat days and other such things as opportunity allows. He has recently retired from the pastorate but continues as a volunteer speaker for TLM

The Chain Link

The other evening I watched a documentary on making chains. The factory where it was filmed was making a chain for a cargo boat. The steel used was massive, my guess 200 or even 250 mm in diameter. My estimate is that each link could have weighed 100kg at least! All I know the links were huge, heavy and had to be handled by machines and guided by heavily protected workmen.

As the links were being manufactured they were interlinked to each other. This too was an operation that needed heavy machinery, white hot metal being bent together and welded into a chain. Although the heavy duty machines did the hard work it still needed somebody to link them together. Somebody needed to guide the machines to link the links together!

In my life I've had the opportunity to work on civil engineering projects that needed to do "bush clearing". We used powerful bulldozers that pulled massive chains that were tethered together with other bulldozers and as the chains were dragged through the bush, trees were toppled and uprooted. Often the chains would break under usage and had to be repaired or replaced.



LAND THAT WILL BE INUNDATED BY THE KARUMBA LAKE WAS BEING CLEARED TO MAKE WAY FOR FISHING GROUNDS



2. above Clearing the bush: steel balls being pulled by giant bulldozers.

Why?

"A chain is only as strong as the weakest link"!

The Bridge, as edited by Márta has and I believe will continue to be a "chain" that has linked so many of us around the world. When we may have felt weak, a message, a thought or a word brought new strength to us and we've been able to carry on! We've never had to carry all the load alone! Encouragement has always been at hand.

Our linked-chain The Bridge has been wrapped around the world, link by link, writer by writer, country by country and person by person to bring stability, strength and saturated us with the Word of God.

Márta you have been diligent year after year, month by month, article by article building a chain that's stretched around the world. You have gathered together other links to help you build this chain. The many links have made an effective, multipurpose, productive useful chain. You've guided us to be strong in the Lord and trust His Word.

Romans 15:1-2 ESV "We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up."

Galatians 6:2 ESV "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

These verses I believe is what The Bridge has done!

"A chain is only as strong as the weakest link"! Let's keep making each other strong!

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.



Lord, you know all!

John 21, 17 When I was a Child seeking a Path, “God knows all” meant FEAR. “To us you may lie, but God knows all! From Him you cannot hide anything!” - what a great task Christian parents have, introducing their children to God, the final one to be respected and carve His commandments into the heart!

When I was a Teenager seeking Truth, it meant JUSTICE. Facing much injustice, where human truth would never be revealed, “God knows all” meant a stable hope for justice: “Yes!! Maybe not here, but at least at the last judgement His truth will become visible for everyone! God knows all!” This knowledge meant comfort, compensation, and helped me to accept many injustices. - What a treasure it was to find peace in the God of Justice, as ultima ratio!

When I was a Grown up seeking Perfection, it meant PROTECTION. I am breakable, limited, but confronted with uncertainties, slippery situations, where the good was not really good and the bad was not clearly bad – it meant safety to think on: “God knows all, and He is able to make the crooked straight and the deep high! In simple questions of daily life, what direction to follow.” How good it was, not to depend on my own limited knowledge, but make discoveries simply trying to rely on Him, the ultima ratio!

When I was a Superman (or woman) seeking Healing, it meant the MERCY of mercies (1 John 3,20). With too many heavy things in my baggage, so many wrongs I cannot make right, mistakes I cannot correct – I placed myself higher (yes, higher!) than God: condemning myself: “I cannot (yes, I!) pardon this for myself!” How gentle He was, knowing even this! He knows the years of unpardonable wrongs, the mistakes not able to be corrected, the cries, the tears, the fears, the scandalous thoughts, the furies, the depths, yes all of these! He shouted to me in dark nights: “Look, my mercy is greater than your heart, stop condemning yourself! I am not condemning you, go with peace!”

When I was Broken seeking Heaven, it meant THE SECRET. I see this scene, Jesus and Peter, how that rough, smelly fisherman confidently, closely ... Romeo and Juliet surrounded by roses ... whispers into Jesus' ear... what I am whispering, too:

“You know... Lord... that ***I. a.m. I.o.v.i.n.g. y.o.u!*** What they know is just a fragment, some years, some events, a part of the way, some sins, or some heights, a single piece of the puzzle, 10 degrees, 30 degrees, what I condemn in myself, dark spots, depths, 60 degrees... But Lord, you see perfectly, globally, you see the 360 degrees, you see depths and heights, lengths and widths, you know past and future, you are Creator and Controller - you are the Only One who knows ALL, indeed! Lord, you alone, you see the whole picture, that despite smelly fragments, dirty details, despite the fact that all that men see with their eyes may be a mess: ***I. a.m. I.o.v.i.n.g. y.o.u!*** This is our secret, Lord! No one understands it, they judge, they measure, they compare, they condemn, I condemn - but you, Lord, you, who are the Lord of Hearts, you are even greater than their hearts, even than my own heart!, the only one who truly, indeed and perfectly know ALL, you know and you understand our secret: that ***I. a.m. I.o.v.i.n.g. y.o.u!***”

P.S. Keep our secret safe, please, Lord, until that day when I come to your throne! Thank you!



The Last Supper

Matthew 26

¹⁷ On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

¹⁸ He replied, “Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.’” ¹⁹ So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

²⁰ When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹ And while they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.”

²² They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?”

²³ Jesus replied, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”

²⁵ Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?”

Jesus answered, “You have said so.”

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

²⁷ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

³⁰ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial

³¹ Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written:

“I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.”

³² But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

³³ Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."

³⁴ "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."

³⁵ But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

I knelt at the foot of the cross



I lifted my eyes and saw His precious bleeding feet nailed to an old rugged blood stained cross

Feet that carried good news to broken hearts

I saw a pierced side releasing water and His precious Blood giving birth to His Bride

I saw shed Blood from a lacerated back for healing

I saw outstretched bleeding healing hands nailed to the cross beams of an old rugged cross

I saw a bruised beaten up face but oceans of love, compassion beaming out of His loving eyes

I saw a Blood stained brow pierced by thorns, The King of kings bedecked with emblems of the curse.

I saw His precious shed Blood for my mental and emotional stability, a Blood washed renewed mind my reward

I looked around - the grave was empty! I saw a grave stone slab with an angel at each end covering His mercy seat

Then I heard angelic voices saying "He is risen"

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.



Matthew 27

The Burial of Jesus

⁵⁷ As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. ⁵⁹ Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. ⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

The Guard at the Tomb

⁶² The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³ "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' ⁶⁴ So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

⁶⁵ "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.



Jesus Has Risen

Matthew 28 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

²There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

⁸So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

The Guards' Report

¹¹While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹²When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, ¹³telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ ¹⁴If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

The Great Commission

¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Hallelujah! Amen!!

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

<i>Bunmi Oluloto</i>	<i>14 March</i>	<i>Niger/Nigeria</i>		Genesis 33,14	<i>20 March</i>
<i>Christine Osman</i>	<i>18 March</i>	<i>Scotland</i>		Exodus 33,16	<i>13 March</i>
<i>Dan Izzett</i>	<i>26, 29 March</i>	<i>Zimbabwe/UK</i>		Psalms 62	<i>2 March</i>
<i>David Beazley</i>	<i>25 March</i>	<i>UK</i>		Psalms 63	<i>3 March</i>
<i>David, king of Israel</i>	<i>2, 3, 9, 10, 16, 17, 23 March</i>	<i>Israel</i>		Psalms 64	<i>9 March</i>
<i>Dorothy Owen</i>	<i>4, 5 March</i>	<i>Papua New-Guinea</i>		Psalms 65	<i>10 March</i>
<i>Eddie Askew +</i>	<i>8 March</i>	<i>UK</i>		Psalms 66	<i>16 March</i>
<i>Élie Fofolo</i>	<i>19 March</i>	<i>DR Congo</i>		Psalms 67	<i>17 March</i>
<i>Eric Chollet</i>	<i>12 March</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>		Psalms 68	<i>23 March</i>
<i>Gordon Brown</i>	<i>6 March</i>	<i>Scotland</i>		Ecclesiastes 3,1	<i>8 March</i>
<i>John Twynam-Perkins</i>	<i>1 March</i>	<i>Scotland</i>		Matthew 21	<i>24 March</i>
<i>Marta Risko</i>	<i>27 March</i>	<i>Hungary</i>		Matthew 22,37-39	<i>21 and 22 March</i>
<i>Matthew, evangelist</i>	<i>24, 28, 31, 31 March</i>	<i>Israel</i>		Matthew 26	<i>28 March</i>
<i>Otto Kingsley</i>	<i>7 March</i>	<i>Southern Africa</i>		Matthew 27	<i>30 March</i>
<i>Peter Laubscher</i>	<i>13 March</i>	<i>Southern Africa</i>		Matthew 28	<i>31 March</i>
<i>Pradeep and Sarah Failbus</i>	<i>21-22 March</i>	<i>India</i>		Mark 1, 41	<i>15 March</i>
<i>Raju PLN Dr</i>	<i>11 March</i>	<i>India</i>		Mark 15,39	<i>25 March</i>
<i>Silvano Perotti</i>	<i>15 March</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>		Juke 1,37	<i>4 March</i>
<i>Trevor Durston</i>	<i>20 March</i>	<i>UK</i>		Luke 22, 60-62	<i>1 March</i>
				John 21, 17	<i>27 March</i>
				Acts 20,24	<i>19 March</i>
				Romans 15,1-2	<i>26 March</i>
				Ephesians 5,20	<i>18 March</i>
				Titus 1,1	<i>11 March</i>
				Hebrews 11,1	<i>5 March</i>
				Hebrews 11,13-16	<i>6 March</i>
				Jude 3	<i>14 March</i>