



a partnership
of churches
in mission

Rise to Life

Sundays
with **CWM**

Devotional Book 2022

3rd Quarter
Jul - Sep



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Vision & Mission Statements

Our Vision

“Life-flourishing Communities, living out God’s promise of a New Heaven and a New Earth.”

This vision articulates CWM’s conviction that the life-giving alternative that characterised the mission of Jesus is the basis of our hope. In naming life-flourishing communities as our vision, CWM sees the unfolding of a restored and renewed creation, an experience of a different world in our lifetime, where human dignity is protected, poverty eradicated, climate catastrophe abated, ideologies of supremacy demolished and peace reigns. The vision statement captures the essence of subversive imagination of a different world, where the Earth and all that is in it serve and sustain all of God’s creation; and where the people of God envision this new life for now.

Our Mission

“Called in Christ to radical and prophetic discipleship, working in partnership with churches and the ecumenical community to resist life-denying systems, affirm peace, do justice and enable life-flourishing communities.”

In our theology statement we declare that “We seek, as an organisation and as a partnership of churches, a life rooted in obedience to God’s mission focused on:

Rising with the risen Jesus whose resurrection is insurrection and proclamation that Babylon is as fallen as the tomb is empty; and

Responding in radical discipleship where we live out the New Heaven and New Earth in the midst of a violent, abused and grieving world as signs of transforming love.”

In this mission statement, the emphasis is on naming this “violent, abused and grieving world” that ought to be replaced with life-flourishing communities, based on justice and peace. The means to that end is a clear sense of call to partnership with churches and the ecumenical community in which radical and prophetic discipleship is expressed in transformative and loving action to resist, affirm, support and enable life-flourishing alternatives.

The Council for World Mission (CWM) is a worldwide partnership of 32 churches, committed to sharing their resources of people, skills, insights and money to carry our God's mission.

CARIBBEAN

GCU	Guyana Congregational Union
UCJCI	United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

AFRICA

CCM	Churches of Christ in Malawi
FJKM	Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar
UCZ	United Church of Zambia
UCCSA	United Congregational Church of Southern Africa
UPCSA	Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

EAST ASIA

GPM	Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia
HKCCCC	Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China
PCK	Presbyterian Church of Korea
PCM	Presbyterian Church of Myanmar
PCS	Presbyterian Church in Singapore
PCT	Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

EUROPE

CF	Congregational Federation
PCW	Presbyterian Church of Wales
PKN	Protestantse Kerk in Nederland
URC	United Reformed Church
UWI	Union of Welsh Independents

PACIFIC

CCCAS	Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa
CCCS	Congregational Christian Church in Samoa
CUNZ	Congregational Union of New Zealand
EKT	Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu
EPM	Etaretia Porotetani Maohi
KUC	Kiribati Uniting Church
NCC	Nauru Congregational Church
PCANZ	Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
UCPNG	United Church in Papua New Guinea
UCSI	United Church in the Solomon Islands

SOUTH ASIA

CNI	Church of North India
COB	Church of Bangladesh
CSI	Church of South India
PCI	Presbyterian Church of India

Foreword

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ Jesus,

Greetings of Peace and Joy from the Council for World Mission (CWM) in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we enter the new year, we are still grappling with various challenges and uncertainties caused by the ongoing Covid-19 global pandemic. The Pandemic also unveiled various social, political, and economic inequalities, and we continue to struggle with the structures that create these inequalities.

Nevertheless, it is my prayer that this year be kind to us, allowing us to meet one another and worship together. As people of God and as we walk by faith, we continue to hope that the power of God's resurrection will provide us strength to overcome all these challenges.

I am pleased to present to you the '**Sundays with CWM**,' a weekly devotional booklet intended to assist you as a resource to use during your personal, family or congregational gatherings to worship God. In the context of CWM celebrating 40 years of Training in Mission (TIM) programme, this year's devotional booklet is a compilation of meditations written by the former TIM participants, most of whom are upcoming young leaders of our member churches.

As the former TIM participants, the contributors in this booklet share their faith, various missional experiences, and aspirations. I believe these meditations will help rekindle our faith and trust in the Lord. They provide us new insights and prayers for our weekly worship gatherings as we move towards transforming our families and congregations into life flourishing communities as part of the theme of our strategic framework, '**Rise to Life: Confessing witness to life-flourishing communities**.'

Keeping the ongoing pandemic and the challenges of printing and distributing the booklets in mind, we proceed with the e-booklets instead of the printed version. I would like to thank all the contributors of weekly devotions as well as our CWM staff for their commitment and hard work in bringing these devotional booklets available to all of us.

Wish you all a blessed and joy-filled year 2022.

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum
General Secretary

July



Reflection

From death to life

There are moments in our lives when we feel desperate and hopeless. Our faiths are always shaken, by the many challenges we face in this world. It seems that the sky has fallen on the top of our head. There is no way and place to escape. We are like a bird with broken wings, unable to fly or even move just lying there ready to die. But we seek help and healing.

These past three years the Covid-19 pandemic has devastated the world, taken millions of lives. Our everyday living, work, businesses, and even Church life have been affected by the pandemic. People have to be locked in their homes. Freedom and rights to move and travel are just dreams. Companies and shops were out of business. Work has to be done remotely from homes. It was impossible for people to gather in houses of worship. And the list of disadvantages to humans can continue.

But the Psalms teaches us that amidst all these sufferings, inside the pit of death the Lord is there. The God of life, the Creator, the Redeemer would not let his servant, his people down. He hears and listens to our cry for help. He wants us to be closer to and to seek refuge in Him. For those who put their trust in the Lord death is not the end. His steadfast love is forever and his grace is new every morning. There is always day after the dark. Jesus is our light, the light of the world. He has come to rescue us from our suffering and heals us.

Let the world know that the Lord God is our only help. He is the only one who brought us out of darkness and puts us in the wonder light. Death and its foes have no power over our life anymore. Our help comes from the Lord who made the heaven and Earth. Our life must be full of praise and thankfulness as He is the only one who has already taken us from death to life, the everlasting life in Jesus in his Kingdom. Do not forget his grace for us. For he is the only one who has the Kingdom, the power, the glory for ever and ever. Give thanks to Him that you are alive and may your living be a foretaste of the eternal life in God's Kingdom.

Rev. Lala Rasendrasahina, Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar

Prayer

God helps us to deeply understand his path, and everything that happens in our life. We always glorify the Lord for ever as He is the only one who has already turned out mourning into dancing through Jesus Christ. The world will be healed from any sorts of diseases.

10 July

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture

**Luke 10: 25 – 37;
Matthew 25: 31 - 46**

Reflection

So Visible Yet Unseen - In Agony Yet Unheard Of

The Good Samaritan story is one that has been read over the ages by Christians and the more it is told the more we take its meaning for granted. It is only in times when we are in dire situations in life that we ponder on when the Good Samaritan would come around.

The world we now live in is falling apart with its multifaceted problems ranging from impacts of climate change and rising sea-levels, the increasing rate of crimes and corruption in societies, communities, governments, churches, and even within family units, the food insecurity, increasing rate of unemployment and poverty, to the problems of war - all creating the feeling of chaos, hopelessness, uncertainty and desolation. These are all human-induced problems that are generated from our own human greed and arrogance!

As a result, many individuals, families and communities have fallen victims that even Christians also ponder on when the Good Samaritan should intervene!

The Priest as well as the Levite in this parable walked by the half-dead man but yet did not 'see' they have a part to save the man beside the road. The Good Samaritan on the other hand "saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'"

In Kiribati and the world today, there are so many broken homes with unemployed mothers struggling to feed their families, rate of alcoholism and homelessness increasing to alarming levels, violence against women remains on the rise yet our Churches today, like the Priest and the Levite, do not see these as their core responsibilities. Our churchly active programmes today are more geared embracing the existing members as its prime goal but with little reach out to women and children stricken by bullying men, those trapped in alcoholism, and broken families, and many other broken souls. These are the victims lying beside the road of our Christian journey everyday - so visible yet unseen - crying in agony yet unheard of. But the Jesus we believe in never did walk past injustice without making it right. Jesus never walked past suffering without soothing it with compassion. Jesus never walked past an empty heart without filling it (Matt.25:42-44).

While you and I aren't Jesus nor a Good Samaritan, He expects us to do the same within our own capabilities and with His help.

Prayer

Betarim Rimom, Kiribati Uniting Church

Lord please help me open my eyes and ears to see and hear the pains of the stricken people around me and the power to help restore and help them - guiding them to your loving embrace and salvation. May my act of reaching out show your light to the victims and transformation love to the oppressors. In Jesus' name I pray.

Reflection

Be Still and know that I am God

The gospel reading for this week takes us to Bethany and to the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Jesus didn't have a home, and Bethany would have been a safe and comfortable place where he could rest and relax with friends.



In this passage, Jesus has arrived in Bethany and the first thing we learn is that Martha welcomes him to their home. This did not only mean being welcoming in spirit, but in practical terms it meant preparing more than enough food for everyone as well as a comfortable place to rest. In Cymru (Wales) we like to drink tea! And if someone calls at your home, it is polite to ask; 'fasa chi'n hoffi panad?' (would you like a cup?) which means a cup of tea! I imagine that this is true of most cultures around the world; we like to welcome people to our home not only with our words but practical hospitality. When I was a part of TIM 97-98 I spent seven months in Tamil Nadu being hosted by CSI. I learnt early on about the warm hospitality and welcome offered to us by Indian families and communities. And this meant being offered a lot more than a cup of tea! We would often visit poor rural villages, but the food that was offered to us was so generous. I was a young woman, far from home, but experiencing this welcome meant so much and really helped me settle in to life in South India.

Back in Bethany, to Martha, offering hospitality was so important however, that she became rather pre-occupied with the task in hand. Once she realised that Jesus was to be their guest, she hastened to make sure that everything was ready. As Jesus was such a special guest, she naturally wanted everything to be perfect. Martha soon realised that she needed help – but her sister Mary was nowhere to be seen. When she realised that Mary was listening to Jesus teaching, she was not best pleased. But rather than being angry with Mary, Martha approaches Jesus; "Lord, are you not bothered that my sister has left me with all the work – tell her to come and help!" I'm sure that Martha would have been quite surprised with Jesus' answer. "Martha, Martha! You are worried and troubled over so many things, but just one is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be taken away from her."

Being part of Jesus' ministry and mission today is a big responsibility. Here in Cymru as in other parts of the world we face many challenges and sometimes this responsibility weighs heavily on us. This can sometimes cause us to work and 'do' constantly so that we neglect to spend enough time at the Lord's feet; listening to his word and just being still and being renewed by being in His presence. While Jesus needs his disciples to work diligently like Martha, Mary teaches us the importance of spending time in prayer and meditation. If we chose the right thing; being in God's presence, then it will enrich our work and witness.

Prayer

Reverend Mererid Mair Williams, Union of Welsh Independents

Let us thank God for welcoming communities and especially those who welcome refugees and asylum seekers to their cities, towns and villages.

Let us remember in our prayers today those who are burdened by their responsibility as Jesus' disciples and for those who are tired and disheartened.

We pray that they will find peace and renewal in God's loving spirit. AMEN

*Reflection****Liberating Gomer***

In the midst of many world atrocities women continue to suffer in the hands of men. Many actions have been taken to stop this prejudice. I believe one of the most contributing factors to the mistreatment of women in our societies today is our interpretation of biblical text. It is hard enough to try and abstract an interpretation that will not see the abuse of women when reading text like Hosea 1: 2 – 10. But if we do not liberate the culture behind the text, we can never find liberation at all in our work for justice, especially with regard to gender inequality.

It is easy to read and say that this comparison of Gomer to Judah's unfaithfulness in a common language is seen across the bible. Even in the New Testament the language of the bride of Christ signifies the bride as somewhat inferior to Christ shows the dominance of masculinity in the Christian faith. The same worldview we use to read the rest of scripture and we find no problem when Gomer is prostituted in order draw a spiritual underpinning.

Why can't Hosea as a prophet, a leader of his people in religious matters, or the priests, the Kings, who were leaders be used to demonstrate Judah's unfaithfulness to God? What about Gomer, a woman? Is it because she cannot protest? Is it because whatever has been decided for her comes from a gender that believe they are superior?

Gomer needs to be liberated. For the sake of our mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters, we must liberate Gomer from such human-made divine authority that enslave women. If we cannot do this, the Hosea text will never be liberating.

Kimere Riuteti, Kiribati Uniting Church

Prayer

-  Pray for the women of this world who are suffering from male domination and injustices.
-  Pray for Christians to find new liberating ways of interpreting the scripture, and to read it in a way that is life-giving and liberating.
-  Pray for young women who are being trafficked for profit, human greed, and male-comfort
-  Pray for women who have come to believe that they are indeed inferior, pray for a change of mindset.

Scripture

**Hosea 11:1-11 and Psalm 107:1-9,
43 Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-23,
Psalm 49:1-12, Colossians 3:1-11
Luke 12:13-21**

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Reflection

Sharing Precious Inheritance

The recent past people around the world have become fearful and uncertain wondering who and which country or community will be next? To say the least it is depressing to watch the news and talk shows. After long months focusing on the COVID19 global pandemic the media and social networks shifted their daily focus to the tragic war in Ukraine; two different ugly “attacks” taking countless innocent lives in swift and cruel ways. Not forgetting, the coup in Myanmar and far too many public shootings in schools, shops and church even. Lord Have Mercy are constant words in my heart.

July, the month designated for this contribution, holds several significant dates for me; it is the month the Presbyterian Church of Wales (PCW) commissioned me as its missionary partner in preparation to serve the Lord in Taiwan! Reflecting on the assigned scriptures and trying to make sense of all the current global turmoil my mind shifted to other important family dates. My father Cyril Humphreys, was born in July and as it happened also died in July. Dad was born in 1918 the year World War I ended! A war referred to as “the war to end all wars” (H. G. Wells) because of the great slaughter and destruction it caused. Ironically on his coming of age in 1939, dad’s 21st birthday “gift” was call-up for military service just as WWII was declared; he immediately handed back the house key to his parents and did not return home until the war was over and so-called victory declared. “V” for Victory such a strange word - all I see is “V” for Victims there is no celebration in war.

Between the pandemic and tragic war in Ukraine and especially the growing concern could this escalate to WWII? Several times I found myself uttering a prayer of gratitude my parents, have not had to witness these current events of sorrow and pain. They, Cyril and Nancy grew up in the aftermath of one war, thankfully survived WWII, met and married, struggled to raise a family on a working man’s weekly wage and their entire married life lived in rented council (social) housing. Like others of their generation, they sacrificed much for freedom, peace and a better world - they hoped for a happier life for my four siblings and me, and later their five grandchildren. Certainly they did not want us to face the horrors of war nor encounter lean years as they had. If still with us, it would pain them to think world war three was even a possibility and they would be following the news intently and keeping a watchful eye on Asia.

When my dad passed and later my mother, there was no material inheritance to distribute, basically all they owned were few humble personal belongings and household furniture.

Instead of earthly possessions they left us far richer inheritance in terms of Christian, human values, security, love, dignity, respect of life, and opportunity to decide our faith journey. As Luke reminds us “life does not consist in an abundance of possessions”. My father did arrange one special bequest – upon his passing we were entrusted the task of donating his brain for an Alzheimer’s research programme he had been randomly chosen to be part of. His remains were duly cremated but minus his brain – his precious inheritance continued its journey to contribute if only in small way towards providing quality of life for others.

July is also the month their first grandchild Emma, was born, my favourite niece! Nearly eight years ago our family was deeply humbled and immensely proud of her as she made a selfless decision to be a living donor to her then fiancé Pete, who was dealing with critical kidney issues. Amazingly they were a match and the transplant operation a success. They are now happily married and healthy having exchanged not only vows but also a kidney! I have never asked if her grandfather’s bequest influenced her or not but her values are certainly similar – respect

and dignity of human life. In such bleak times it is a joy to witness both my parents’ characteristics and attributes, the most precious family inheritances, being passed on through the next generation and restoring hope in the future - I am most grateful.

Carys Humphreys,

Presbyterian Church of Wales



Emma Humphreys-Jones and spouse Peter Jones – having exchanged a kidney and vows! (14 April 2018)

Prayer

LORD HAVE MERCY
CHRIST HAVE MERCY
LORD HAVE MERCY

We live in confusing and cruel times, hiding from sight your light, hope, and love. Yet Lord, despite the darkness by your grace I somehow manage to cling to the truths I was taught and chose to embrace, the spiritual inheritance and human values passed down through generations.

Lord thank you for those who nurtured me and taught that people matter more than possessions, that peace is more precious than gold, humility and servanthood more valuable than power and vain glory.

Lord thank you for each individual that touches my life showing through their example dignity and respect towards not only human life but also stewardship of creation and all created things.

Lord in your mercy, help me fulfill your will that I too may pass on the precious inheritance entrusted to me so others may live. Amen

August



Aug 07

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture
Luke 12:32-40

Reflection

Expect Less, Seek Your Purposes & Serve God Joyfully

The book of Luke chapter twelve speaks of the parable that reflects the foolishness of attaching too much importance to wealth. It is introduced by a member of the crowd listening to Jesus, who tries to enlist Jesus' help in a family financial dispute: One of the multitude said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.

The Father delights to give us the kingdom. We need to sell our possessions and give them to those in need in order to store up treasures in heaven.

Like servants awaiting the return of their master from a wedding, we need to be ready the moment Christ returns. He will reward those who are ready by Himself serving them.

If a home owner knew when the burglar was coming he would not let the robber in. We must also be prepared for the son of man.

The work of the kingdom of God must always be our first priority. If possessions are a distraction we must get rid of them in order to invest in God's kingdom.

Jesus could turn up at anytime for a surprise inspection! What will He find when He checks on my life?

This is not supposed to fill us with dread. If Jesus checks in with me today and finds I am serving His purposes then He will reward me perhaps serving my needs.

This is a mystery of the kingdom. We work hard to serve the Lord, but along the way we find such fellowship with Him that He is blessing us. The task we thought we had to do becomes joy.

To God Be The Glory.
Amen!

Joshua Iagata, United Church in Papua New Guinea

Prayer

Gracious God In Heaven.

Give us the willing heart to serve you joyfully and diligently. Help and direct us to give with an open heart to those who are in need of our help and stand by us always so that we do what the kingdom requires us to do.

With your love, Mercy and your Guidance your will shall be done.

In Jesus name Amen.

Reflection

Working Together with the Owner of the Vineyard

The polarizing opposite of what the owner of the vineyard worked for and the result of his work is evidence of the reality of human life. Metaphorically referring to Israel as the vineyard, the prophet Isaiah narrows down on why Judah are suffering. As a matter of fact, it is the will of God that life abundant is experienced by Judah. God did not just will it, he also worked on fulfilling this goal.

A question is asked in verse four: “Now you dwellers of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it?” God clearly states that he works for the good of his people. I believe God continues to work for the good of all of the earth today, as it was from eternity past. But it seems that what God is doing is not enough to create an opportunity for wellness. There is always a problem.

Towards the end of the text we see that self-destruction is the ultimate result of disobedience. Disobedience comes in the form of not welcoming the strangers, greedy conscience that dwell on accumulating more and more, and care less about the people. Each person for his or her own. A similar picture of what we now see in our world today. People care less about others than themselves.

We have a vineyard to care for. We have vines to prune and dress. Our pruning and dressing must go hand in hand with that of God, the owner of the vineyard. God is not just working on the earth – he is also working on our lives. Our lives and all that surrounds is supposed to produce the best of wine.

We work together with God. We are co-workers with God.

Sepola Matusi, Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu

Prayer

Help us Lord to see the working of your hand in our lives, and also in creation as a whole. Invite us through the working of your Holy Spirit to partake in that work. We want to produce the best of life can offer to our neighbours and surroundings. But we need your help.

We pray for the world, suffering and in great need. May they also see your loving and merciful hands at work so that we, together with you, will establish your Kingdom in places where it has not been felt, seen, or heard. In Jesus name. Amen.

August 21

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture

**Psalm 71: 1-6;
Luke 13: 10 - 17**

Reflection

Our lives depend on You

No one can deny the fact that our lives are fragile regardless of what we do with it. Therefore, the Psalmist experience is similar to ours in most ways. For instance, the Bible says that “In you, O LORD, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me. Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress (Ps 71:1-3). You see, our confession is similar to the praise of Psalmist because we have our struggles, pain, and tears that are sometimes not visible to the naked eye. Therefore, we need God’s righteousness and strength to give us hope and trust.

In the context of COVID-19, we re-think God and what s/he has done for us. We ask the question, where is God in our fragile lives. In our belief system, God is everywhere with those who are voiceless and vulnerable. However, to be honest, it seems that God is not here with us. Rather God seems to disappear in our struggle against COVID-19. Is there really no hope for us to give us resistance against such pain, even though the Psalmist says that Lord is hope?

The title of Luke 13:10-17 is that Jesus heals a crippled woman. We read that there is a woman who has been crippled for eighteen years, meaning religious leader would attend to her spiritual need. Unlike the religious leaders, Jesus saw her and said “Woman, you are set free from your ailment.” As the Bible has written, she immediately stood straight when Jesus laid his hands on her! As far as I am concerned, in the passage, his hands are actually righteous (and strong) hands that makes possible removing us from our struggle, pain, and wipe our tears. The Bible has invited us to take into account His/Her righteous (and strong) hands and to depend on it.

The Bible has stressed that salvation is in God’s hands. That is why we should take into consideration salvation from God’s hands. In biblical scholarship, the Greek word used for salvation, is the same word used for healing and recovering from sickness. That mean that in healing the sick woman Jesus gave her life through the extension of salvation. The most important thing of all is that Jesus pay attention to and her condition, and proclaiming that there is hope – and it came from his righteous hands.

I would love to ask you which hands we should seek as Christians. How do we confess our beliefs if our lives depend on God’s hands? What does it mean to stand for God’s power in our daily lives? I hope that we will be considering God’s hands because our lives depend on Lord.



Yosep Won, Presbyterian Church of Korea

Prayer

We pray for those who are voiceless, speechless, and vulnerable to structured sins. We pray for for all existences that need God's righteous hands in Climate Change, Crisis, and Collapse.

*Reflection****For the Glory of God through Christ Jesus***

The letter to the Hebrews was written to try and persuade the Jews that the Messiah they were waiting for has come. The Jews were faithful and staunch followers of the Mosaic Law and in so practicing it missed the opportunity to recognize the saving work of God through Jesus Christ. Their lives were weighed down by the dos and don'ts of the law - those simple acts of avoiding evil and controlling structures which robbed them of their freedom.

It is the intention of the author of the Hebrews that the Jews see that Jesus is the fulfilment of the Law of Moses. The heart of the message is for the Jews to see and be on board with the saving work of God. One of the problems seen here is the blindness religiosity can cause us making us miss the simple details of God's grace and saving work.

We preoccupy ourselves with our religious formalities that many around us who want to live are neglected. Our sense of salvation is corrupted by our own religiosity. This is what Christianity has come down to nowadays. There are just too much formalities. The rules we employ to our faith is overbearing at the most. Many Christians can't find breathing spaces within the faith. Christianity has been reduced to a set of rules and laws. And many Christians are leaving the faith, especially young generations.

The question we must ask is why do we miss the simple act of grace God is trying to show us? Like the Jews to whom the letter to the Hebrews was addressed, we missed out because we do not want to let go of the norms of our Christian faith. We have become comfortable where we are. We turn a blind eye to changes needed to bring life into our situations. And, we just don't want to change.

God through Jesus Christ worked for the salvation of the whole world. The new order Jesus Christ brought to the world is one without discrimination. It welcomes all and challenges the order of hierarchical structure that manipulate the laws that governs the lives of the people. So, the challenge really is not so much for the day-to-day Jew as it is for the religious leaders who are enjoying the power they have to control people's lives. The prophet Moses whom the Jews respected did not have in mind his own dominance. He saw himself as an agent of change who is divinely ordained to carry out God's will in freeing people. He was faithful to his calling. He bears witness to the glory of God's work that lies ahead. We should do likewise, becoming witnesses of God's grace. If we do that, we will not miss the love of God. we will be able to see it and appropriate it in its right time.

Arieta Mariko, Kiribati Uniting Church

Prayer

Father God, help us to see your grace. Help us not to miss the important details of our faith. Help us to see you, and not our own religiosity.

September



Reflection

You are the Clay in the hands of the Potter

This metaphor underlines the key message of Jeremiah, the eight century Prophet. We are like the Clay, in the hands of God, who is, the master Potter. What Prophet Jeremiah saw in the Potter's house offers us lessons for personal transformation.

The clay in the hands of the Potter had gone through a process in order to reach its final stage. Working at his wheel, the Potter made the pot from the marred clay. Jeremiah saw that the Potter noticed a lump of clay that seemed uncooperative, it was defective, not perfect, it was flawed so the Potter decided to start again, working at his wheel, and decided to shape it or form it into another pot, making something that seemed good to the Potter to make. This twisted or marred lump of clay failed to express the potter's thought and imagination and vision. Although the marred clay failed to express the Potter's thought and imagination there is still good news! The good news is, the marred clay was never abandoned! The Potter had removed the excess and smoothened the rough edges by the grinding wheel. Finally, he places it in the fire to seal the mended parts to make it exceptional.

The wisdom of God's word teaches us that personal change and transformation begins when we recognize that God is able and has the ability to transform us. We must be willing to be the clay in the hands of God, the Master Potter. Amidst your adversities and life's journey of failures, deficiencies, disappointments, and setbacks God still loves you.

The Psalmist knows this experience of personal change and transformation begins from the knowledge of the self (Psalms 139:1-18). We must become aware and conscious of who we are in relation to God. God is willing and is always ready to help us. There is a second chance. God is a God of second chances. God is ready to mould and shape you. Take the positive side of your adversities which God often uses in situations to grind out the rough edges and to remove the excess within us because they are not part of God's will for our lives. We must allow space and room within ourselves for change, growth and transformation to be exceptional persons.



Rev. Koloma's children

Reverend Koloma Make, United Church in Papua New Guinea

Prayer

-  Pray for personal change and transformation of the self.
-  Pray for Chaplains in churches to develop empowerment programs for men, women, and students in special education schools, tertiary and University campuses within CWM family.

Reflection

God Empowers Us for Ministry



Saul was born in Tarsus in Cilicia. His parents were Pharisees-fervent Jewish nationalists who adhere strictly to the Law of Moses. He was a highly learned man. Saul was zealous for his faith, and this faith did not allow for compromise. It is this zeal that led Saul down the path of religious extremism. He had a Jewish education, a Jewish way of life and abided by the Law of Moses.

He described his past state in Philippians 3: 5-6, Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, and a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee.

Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. He did not consider what he was doing as blasphemy, persecuting and injurious, because he was just being Jewish, zealous for his faith. He knew that Jesus was condemned as a blasphemer and put to death. But after the conversion he realized that he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man. He considered himself as a chief sinner and Christ Jesus saved him. It is noticeable here Paul is saying he was a blasphemer because he did not believe Jesus and did not listen to Jesus: but he obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Paul reiterated to Timothy how he was ushered into ministry. He mentioned in his letter, "I thank Christ Jesus who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry". Paul absolutely emptied himself; he did not reveal himself but revealed Christ Jesus. He shared the message of salvation with Timothy that he is also chosen by Christ Jesus into the ministry. We are the ministers, meaning we are the servants in service. Our ministry is not bringing glory to us but glory to God. Jesus said, I am not to be served, but to serve. Other than being written instructions or guidelines, it is also a letter of encouragement.

What is most significant about Paul is that he has realized he was a sinner and confessed it openly. Sometimes we are unable to realize that we are sinning and continue in the same sin overtime. By doing this we have strangled the humanity we have. We have forgotten the difference between good and evil.

We have to realize that God has called us into ministry. God chose us as we are. Whatever we do, we have to do it whole heartily and for the good of humankind. God is in us. So, when we serve one another, we serve God. Service to one another is an act of worship. Everything we find our hand to do, and from wherever we are, whether in parenting, being a good neighbour, a good friend, a co-worker, an executive, a preacher, pastor, or a leader in the very spectrum of life. Everyone is called into ministry in their own context. God will call us, enables us, and send us out into ministry.

I was born and brought up in a Christian family in the remote rural area of Bangladesh. I am an introvert. My parents were not able to provide me with proper education. But everything was done for me. My Church; Church of Bangladesh has provided education, training for me with the help of KNH, CWM, Kerk in Actie, CMS and USPG and put me into this ministry. I have been equipped for the ministry I am doing now. I was completely unworthy for it but God has me, counted me and put me into the ministry.

The 11 months spent in TIM 1993-94 changed my life. It has shaped me and given me a wider view on those around me. I have since used the valuable lessons I have learned (see, analyse, act, evaluate). I thank my church for giving me the opportunity to learn and flourish through TIM, friends I made, and those I have worked with during that period. Finally, I am grateful to God for his everlasting love and care.

Sourendrow Mondol, Church of Bangladesh

Prayer

Our Father we are grateful to for your love and grace in our lives. We have nothing on our own. You revealed and are glorified in our lives. Use us for your service that we may be able to accept others, love others and engage ourselves in the service of others. May your will be fulfilled, not ours. Lord, help us to find you in the creation and to fulfill your desires through human service.

Reflection

A Faithful Manager "God own it, I manage it."

The parable is a Jesus' gentle way to say that we have to deal with life as it is. One must not be anxious about earning and saving, but trustworthy service and spending.



In the parable a rich man called his manager to give an account of his dealings. The rich man had heard that the manager was not handling the wealthy owner's finances wisely. In Jesus' day managers were always hired by wealthy people to care for the finances of their estates. Such a manager would be comparable to a modern-day financial planner or trustee who controls the finances of an estate for the purpose of making more money for that estate. The money did not belong to the manager but was his to use for the estate. Apparently the manager was wasting those goods.

The rich man viewed his manager as irresponsible rather than dishonest (16:2). The manager was fired. But then, in order to make friends, the ex-manager charged the rich man's two debtors less than what they actually owed. When the rich man heard what he had done, he commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. The dishonest manager had not done a good thing. But he had been careful to plan ahead, using material things to insure a secure future.

16:8b-13. In three ways Jesus applied the parable. **First, one should use money to win people in to the Kingdom.** When we build good relationships with other people, we come to have a good relationship with God. Wise utilization of wealth would help to lead others to believe the message of the Kingdom and bring them to accept that message.

Jesus' second application is in verses 10-12. If one is faithful in his use of money, then he can be trusted with greater things. True riches seem to refer to the kingdom's spiritual riches of which we will partake.

The third application Jesus drew from the parable was that a person cannot serve both God and money (v.13). Love for money will drive one away from God (1 Tim.6:10); conversely, loving God will cause one not to make money his primary concern in life. The point of this passage is in the commendation of the dishonest manager, not for the moral quality of his behaviour, but for his worldly prudence in using the things of this life to ensure his future in this life. We should behave with prudence to ensure our eternal future.

Rev. Lopa Mudra Mistry, Church of North India

Prayer

Loving God, I pray that I might not stay with what can cause endless discussion and argument but might be invited, with Jesus, to go deeper and to find wisdom. Amen.

*Reflection***What are you going to Do about It?**

Verse one of our texts today sets the tone for the whole chapter. It is the message that embeds all that follows. Every single activity that is spelled out in the chapter is intrinsically tied to the first verse. In other words whatever activity that transpires in Israel is a product of what is happening in verse one – COMPLACENCY.

Complacency simply put is knowing without acting upon that knowledge. It is seeing without seeing. It is eating as in indulging without tasting. Your being present is as equal to your absence. – COMPLACENCY.

This act of complacency gives us a peek into the depravity the human soul can be. Some may argue it is because of concerns of security that some become indifferent to what is going around them. We have called this ‘mind your own business.’ But minding our own businesses at the cost of many lives or at the thriving of evilness is to partake in those evil doings. We cannot be neutral really in many life-depending issues. Our concern is important.

We feast and celebrate life knowing full well that people are suffering. We eat and drink, dance to the beats of life while millions are dying – and not just people but other species as well. People are living comfortable lives while nature is suffering. Complacency can also be the result of comfortability. We become numb to the pain and suffering of others because it is not us who are suffering. Like Israel we lie on our comfortable beds and dress like rich people. We eat and drink excessively while many are suffering.

Our complacency in being silent over issues that matter is louder than the noises around us. We, without or with knowledge of the fate of others become one with the perpetrators of evil deeds. Another thing that is mentioned in the reading is that the consequences faced by the oppressors also befall us because like them, we chose to turn a blind eye giving a loud statement that we are with them in their evil doing, even without verbally saying it.

We must be careful of the sin of complacency. Never turn a blind eye on the evil doings of others. We are part of them. Whatever happens to them happens to us too. The question of what are we going to do about it is a genuine question for every Christian in this present age where there is so much evil. Will you do something about it? Or, will you care less?

Temukisa Tuliaupupu, Congregational Christian Church in Samoa

Prayer

There is a lot of suffering in this world dear God. Many are crying out for help. But many of us are engulfing ourselves with ourselves. We love our comfortability more than we care for others. We live and work for ourselves only, not caring for others. We watch silently as people suffer. We are so disconnected from others.

Forgive us Lord. And help us to care, to see, to feel, and to act upon what we see needed to be acted upon. Lord this is our prayer, offered unto you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.



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