



The Leprosy
Mission
England and Wales

Give modern medical care to people suffering with leprosy



TRANSFORM Purulia Hospital

WORLD LEPROSY SUNDAY 2017

Lent Devotional

Week 1 – Perseverance

'And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us...'
Hebrews 12:1 (NIV)

When I was about six years old, I learnt to ride a bike. I had a very special 'Aunty', a missionary called Joan Evans, who worked alongside Mum and Dad in India for some years. She had a soft spot for me and one day agreed to help me to ride a bike. But there was a catch. I had to learn in one day, and if I did, she would buy me a bar of chocolate. Now for those of you that don't know me, I am a bit of a chocoholic and in India I don't remember having chocolate that often. In fact, I used to dream of heaven being full of chocolate and chewing gum as both seemed hard to find where we lived in Purulia. Anyway, the day arrived, and Aunty Joan brought a bike over. This was in the days before small bikes and helpful stabilizers, and I remember my legs being too short for me to sit on the seat. There was a gentle grassy slope to the side of the bungalow and she positioned the bike at the top and I got on. I'm not sure how many times I wobbled down the slope before I managed to keep my balance. It felt like all day, but I had this picture of a bar of chocolate fixed in my mind, so I persevered in my race against the clock to master the bike in one day.

I did learn to ride and I managed it within the deadline, so Aunty Joan brought me my reward though interestingly the memory of learning to ride is stronger than the memory of eating the chocolate. I think the process was more fun. That particular 'race' only took one day. Paul talks of our life as a race, urging us on to persevere, to never give up, to follow the example of Jesus. The verse continues, 'for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross.'

Life isn't all about bikes and chocolate, and running our own particular race can be hard, but Jesus urges us on. He knows we can persevere with His help, and He will be there at the finishing line to cheer us on.

Jenny Hawke – Extract from 'Elephants in the Rush Hour'

Let's join in prayer today for the staff at Purulia Hospital, for Dr Joydeepa and Dr Faminka Darlong and their team as they meet the needs of people with leprosy on our behalf this week. Pray for Christ to sustain them, for them to be aware of His presence and peace as they oversee the Out Patients Department, carry out ward rounds, deliver surgery and manage the finance and day to day running of this hospital.

Lord, would you spur me on,
run with me on the flat,
and help me jump the hurdles?
I need to follow your pace
and keep in step with you,
so I don't get breathless
at the first sign of trouble.
This race we run together
has been set by you
and I need to get into my stride.
I hear you urging me on towards
the finishing line,
ready to welcome me home.
Teach me to enjoy the full race
with you,
and not wish it over too soon,
enjoying the scenery,
the wind on my face,
and the horizon stretching away in
front of me.



Week 2 – LOVE

God loves you. Full stop.

'Do you understand what I have done for you?' John 13:12 (NIV)

The honest answer is, 'No we don't.' None of us really understands. We may claim to, but whenever I hear a simple explanation of the life and death of Jesus I come away feeling that the speaker hasn't really understood the question.

There are so many layers of meaning to be peeled away, one by one. We can take the question simply in relation to Jesus washing the disciples' feet, its meaning in terms of service and the way we act towards one another. Beyond that we're asked if we understand his life and ministry. Then from our place in time the question asks if we understand what his death means, and beyond even that whether we really appreciate the power and significance of the resurrection and the activity of the Holy Spirit in the world today.

The question takes us into the core of faith and, for me, the only answer is, "No, I don't understand, but I'm glad it happened." And I'm comforted by the assurance in the same passage that one day we will understand.

But looking at the story I'm drawn back again and again to the thought of Jesus kneeling at Judas' feet. It's a compelling picture which vibrates with an intensity I find hard to bear because it shows starkly the reality of what love must mean. Jesus loved Judas as he loved the other disciples, and nothing Judas could do would alter that. And when Jesus prayed for forgiveness from the cross for all who had harmed him, I'm sure Judas was included.

On a tour of England some years ago, Archbishop Desmond Tutu spoke to some young people. He said, "God loves you, not because you are beautiful, although you may be. God loves you, not because you are good, although you just might be. God loves you. Full stop."

No trait of personality or behaviour can put an obstacle in the way of real love. Wherever we are, whatever we do, Jesus loves us completely, wholly, and utterly selflessly. I don't understand it, but I gladly accept it.

Eddie Askew – Extract from 'Cross Purposes'

Lord... You are too deep for understanding,
my mind too small to encompass you.
There comes a point when thoughts can't
cope, when all the theory and theology lies
threadbare, and the only fit response is to fall
down and worship.



It is the love of Jesus that meets people with leprosy when they arrive at Purulia Hospital in their deepest need and brings hope, help and acceptance. Where the world rejects them because of stigma, disability and fear, Jesus loves them completely. Full stop – thank God.

Week 3 – Friendship

Things aren't always what they seem

'There is no fear in love [dread does not exist], but full-grown (complete, perfect) love turns fear out of doors and expels every trace of terror!' 1 John 4:18 (AMP)

I grew up in India. For the first ten years of my life we lived in a place called Purulia, just west of Calcutta, or Kolkata as it is now known. My older sister and I were free to play outside our large garden, roaming paddy fields, and looking for frogs in the tiny pond over the road.

When Steph was sent to boarding school, I spent more time on my own and loved wandering the dusty road outside our mission house. I don't remember being afraid, or at least not until the time of day when dusk was approaching. I think we used to call it 'Go-dhouli time'. If anyone speaks Bengali, please correct me if I'm wrong, but it was the time of day when the cows came home and I think the expression is translated as 'the dust of the cows in the last rays of the sun'.

The cows would shamble along our road from the fields where they had spent the day, kicking up clouds of dust, picking up some speed, and making quite a noise, or at least it seemed that way to a six-year-old child. The only problem was that I thought they were following me. Convinced they were speeding up with the sole purpose of catching me, I would run for home with my heart pounding in my chest. I wouldn't feel safe until I had opened our large wooden gate and slammed the large metal latch down behind me. I could then watch them pass by in safety.

Looking back I wonder why I never told Mum about my fears. It never occurred to me that the cows were simply going home. It's so easy to feel fearful when we don't need to, when we don't know all the facts and misinterpret the situation. All I needed was to share my fears and someone would have put me right.

The Bible tells us not to be afraid over a hundred times. God places a lot of emphasis on this subject. He knows we are human and open to doubts and fears just as much as we are open to his love and

compassion. I guess growing up, physically and spiritually, means getting a sense of proportion and choosing to turn fear out of doors.

Jenny Hawke – Extract from 'Elephants in the Rush Hour'

Lord, sometimes my fears get the better of me, looming larger than life itself, and blocking my view of the truth. You tell me, 'Do not fear', and I would agree if only I could do it. Lord, help my unbelief, wrap me in your love, take my hand and teach me.

Children like Prem arrive at Purulia and are often in a state of fear. They may have been stigmatised, bullied or badly treated because of leprosy; but they may simply like any of us, be afraid of hospitals, of new places, unwelcome needles or an impending operation. As they meet the wonderful team of doctors and nurses, fears settle. For longer term patients, warm friendship means that children who need to be left by parents returning to work, feel at home. Children's laughter echoes out at times around the wards. This is not just a hospital. Let's pray today that it continues to meet those fearful eyes with love.



Week 4 – PROMISE

Standing on the Promises.

'And the Scriptures give us hope and encouragement as we wait patiently for God's promises to be fulfilled'. Romans 15:4 (NLT)

I went through a hard time a few years back. I had been experiencing chronic pain from a back problem for over three years and had become clinically depressed as a result. Coming out of it, but still experiencing the pain, I found it hard to hold on to a sense of hope.

I was lucky, or I should say, blessed in having good friends and a loving family to support me. One of them said one day, 'Don't forget God's promises to you; stand on the promises.'

I think she was quite brave in saying that to me, but then she is one of my best friends, and has always told me the truth as she sees it. The quote comes from a beautiful old hymn by Russell Kelso Carter, which I remember from my childhood.

'Standing, standing, standing on the promises of God my Saviour,

Standing, standing, I'm standing on the promises of God.'

Some may think it sacrilegious, but I decided to take this literally, so I wrote two Bible verses on small pieces of paper and put one in each shoe. Every day from then on, I was literally standing on the promises of God. It served to remind me of God's words to me in spite of apparent circumstances.

As time went on, I changed the pieces of paper for other verses, and found I was coming out of the darkness. My faith had survived. I have a feeling that God would like us to take Him a little more literally. At least some of the time.

Jenny Hawke – Extract from 'Elephants in the Rush Hour'

Lord, thank you that in the hardest times you were there, through the tears and despair, you brought me through to a better place. For surely I have a delightful inheritance and the lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. Your word is life to me. There is no-one but you.



Pain, loss of hope, depression and darkness. Chronic situations and illness such as leprosy can cloud our vision, making it hard to sense God's love and hope in the midst of the circumstance we find ourselves in. Ismail is being treated for leprosy after arriving at the Out Patients Department at Purulia, and suffers from severe depression due to the reaction in his body and because he hasn't been able to continue his studies yet. Please do pray for him that God would uphold him and restore him during his time at the hospital.

Week 5 – Generosity

If you have a pulse, you're qualified...

'There's a little boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But that's a drop in the bucket for a crowd like this.' John 6:9 (The Message)

I was looking at this passage the other day with some friends of mine. It's funny how you can be so familiar with the story and yet still something new will hit you.

You can imagine it, can't you? The little boy running up to Jesus with his hands full of the family lunch. 'I've got some, here, you can have mine.'

He had overheard the discussion between Jesus and his disciples. He felt he had the answer and so he ran forwards. I wonder, did he ask his mum, or was she watching, with her heart sinking, as she saw the only food they had brought, disappear into the crowd.

Philip looked at the numbers, saw the immediate and incredible need, and the little resources they had. 'Two hundred pennies worth of bread is not enough'. Apparently a sum equal to two months wages. The boy heard Jesus and offered what he had.

How do we explain the mystery of what happened next, except by saying it was miraculous? Jesus took what was offered, blessed it, and thousands were fed.

Neil, the minister of our church, said last week that many of us feel we have nothing to offer God, and therefore feel disqualified from serving him. 'But,' he added, 'if you are a Christian, and you have a pulse, then you're qualified.' What a relief. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I just need to be willing, offer him my loaves and fish, and leave the rest to him.

Jenny Hawke – Extract from 'Elephants in the Rush Hour'

Munia is a young woman with a tragic story. Her mother died, and the rest of her family turned against her due to leprosy. They gave her petrol, telling her it was body oil, and after she had applied it, made her sit in front of the fire. Miraculously she survived the scalding burns she suffered, but they chased her out of her home and village with sticks. She was found at a train station, and a stranger brought her to Purulia hospital Out Patients Department. Dr Joydeepsa says – 'was it a man, or was it Jesus?' Another woman who shares the tragedy of leprosy sits opposite Munia in her hospital bed. Pain etched into her face. She tells me when she arrived with nothing – Munia gave her a pink cardigan. Pray for both these women, and ask God what He wants you to give today.



Lord, I'm ready. No more excuses. Let's go, with the little I have and the power you give, we'll make a good team.



Week 6 – Acceptance

Invited to dine

'Jesus took some bread in his hands and gave thanks for it. He broke the bread and handed it to his apostles. Then he said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Eat this as a way of remembering me!" After the meal he took another cup of wine in his hands. Then he said, "This is my blood. It is poured out for you, and with it God makes his new agreement.' Luke 22:19-20 (CEV)

Leonardo da Vinci's painting of *The Last Supper* is well known. It's a mural – painted directly onto a wall. The twelve disciples are all grouped around Jesus on the far side of the table and down to the ends. The near side, nearest the spectator, is empty.

It's a convention that's used a lot on stage and in films. The side of any table nearest the viewer is left empty, so that nothing is obscured. You can see the faces of everyone involved in the drama. There are no shoulders to look over.

I believe there's another reason too. The viewer takes his place at the table, not just as a spectator, but as a participant. We share in the drama, there's a place at the table for us. That's what makes it real. So, too, with the painting. A great work of art, truly, but rather more. It was painted on the end wall of a refectory – the dining room – of a monastery. When the monks sat down to eat, their tables were a continuation of the table on the wall. They were dining with Jesus. Every meal was with him.

"This is my body, broken for you," said Jesus. Not just for the original twelve gathered around, but for all of us willing to take our place at the table.

We share in the reality, not simply gaze at an interpretation. The host at the table invites us to join him, asks for our involvement.

Eddie Askew Extract – 'Breaking the Rules.' First published 1992

Lord, I hardly dare accept the invitation.

I want to sit with you, to hear your words,

to share the meal.

To stretch across the table, take the bread and wine straight from your hands.

I want to join the others grouped around you.

But something makes me hesitate, hold back,

and wonder at the worth you place on me. That you, God's son, whatever that may really mean, the mystery's too deep for me, should hold an open house for ordinary folk.

Offering your body, coarse ground between the millstones of rejection.

Your blood, trod out beneath shod feet which trample, unconcerned, on holiness.

I'd settle for much less, Lord, some slight acknowledgement, in passing, that you care, but not the lengths to which you go to show your love.

And yet, why should I be content to live on crumbs

from underneath the table, when I can see your love's already set a place across the board, and put my name on it?

And as I start to realise the riches that you offer, I daren't do other than accept.

And as I take my seat, wondering just what to say or do, I understand I'm not a transitory guest, my welcome soon outlived, but one of the family. My place secure, my presence welcomed.

Purulia Hospital in India is a place of welcome, acceptance, equality for those with leprosy so often rejected and excluded from family and working life. It is a place of help and healing that does not judge on appearance. It cannot. The rich and poor alike sit side by side. They will receive the same

concern, care and quality of treatment. The doors are wide open to anyone who needs medical care, many in a shocking state of health. Let's pray that the funding comes in so that those doors can open even wider and deliver the best possible care for those who feel they deserve so little.

Donate or find resources online at www.leprosymission.org.uk or phone 01733 370505

Purchase Gifts for Life, Eddie Askew and Jenny Hawke books at www.tlmtrading.com or call 01233 214501

All painting images courtesy of Jenny Hawke



The Leprosy Mission
England and Wales

The Leprosy Mission England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man
Goldhay Way, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough PE2 5GZ

Tel: 01733 370505 post@TLMEW.org.uk www.leprosymission.org.uk

 The Leprosy Mission England and Wales  @leprosytalk

Registered charity no.: 1050327 Registered company no.: 3140347