

WORLD LEPROSY DAY 2012 sermon notes Theme: TRANSFORMATION

1 Corinthians 15:51 NLT:

***'But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret.
We will not all die, but we will all be transformed!'***

1 Corinthians 15 is a wonderful chapter, opening with a clear statement of what the saving Gospel is all about – that Christ died for our sins, He was buried, and was raised from the dead. Paul sounds out the great refrain over and over again: *Jesus Christ is risen indeed!* Because Jesus lives, we can have a better life now – because Jesus lives we can have everlasting life, someday.

William J Gaither, the American southern gospel singer wrote:

*'Because He lives, I can face tomorrow;
Because He lives all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living
Just because He lives.'*

Paul tells us that Christianity is more than just waiting to die to get something better and to go somewhere better. He wants us to know that believing in Jesus puts us in a position to receive something precious, right now. There is hope for the future and there is hope for today.

Being part of The Leprosy Mission family, gives **you** the wonderful opportunity to give people hope, and to help transform people's lives and restore their dignity through the provision of decent housing, water, sanitation, healthcare, education and support for micro-enterprise development.

As in verse 51:

'But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed!'

Paul has been talking about things that were common knowledge among the believers in Corinth, but is now about to introduce something new – to unveil a secret or mystery, (*NIV*), referring to the secret counsels or the hidden things of God.

What Paul is about to teach the Church is something that was unknown until it was revealed to him – a profound insight from God to be used to teach some enlightening truth.

Paul insists that as we are now, we are not fit to inherit the Kingdom of God. We might well be equipped to get on with our lives in this world, but for the life of the world to come we will not do as we are.

We might be able to run well enough to catch the morning train or bus, but yet need to be very different to be able to run well enough for the Olympic Games!

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We might talk well enough to amuse our family and friends, but yet we need to be very different to hold our own in a circle of real experts.

Paul insists that before we can enter the Kingdom of God we must be changed – transformed.

Verses 52 & 53:

'It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.' (NLT)

The word **moment** comes from the same word that gives us the word **atom** – it refers to “something that is indivisible”. It speaks of the smallest amount of time imaginable. The word **twinkling** (verse 52, NIV) was used to refer to the “flap of a wing; the buzz of a gnat; or the twinkling of a star”.

Scientists have estimated that a blink of the eye takes place in 1/30th of a second. A twinkle of the eye takes place in 1/10,000th of a second. In other words, when Jesus comes, He is coming suddenly! When He does, He will instantly raise the dead and instantly transform the living.

It will not be a process – it will happen so fast it will all be over before we will even understand it has begun. He will come for His people, and He will come unannounced.

To transform (or change) means to cause one thing to cease and another to take its place. Our God is indeed a God of transformation – for He equips and enables us to transform the lives of people with leprosy, not only from a physical point of view, but also emotionally, mentally, holistically and, through His grace, spiritually.

Jesus came to tell us that God **is** love. Love is the fire that nurtures our faith and the light that turns hope into certainty. God's love totally transforms the lives of those people living with the effects of leprosy – a transformation away from rejection and utter hopelessness to love, hope and new life, through the ministry and love of Jesus.

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Lisorio is a small boy, in the first year of school. He lives in Ntele village in Mozambique.

The Leprosy Mission was asked to visit him after his father, Alberto, (who is a maize and cotton farmer) took him to the local health post because he had large discoloured patches on his arms, chest and back.

By feeling the nerves on his elbows and behind his knees and conducting sensation tests of the patches, the team discovered that he had leprosy. They arranged for Lisorio to receive multidrug therapy treatment – the cure for leprosy. With this it is hoped that Lisorio will not suffer any permanent sensation loss.

Without the Mission's work many like him would go undiagnosed and untreated, leaving them vulnerable to developing leprosy-related disabilities that cannot be reversed.



Lisorio's feet are being tested for loss of sensation

The centre of God's being is grace. Jesus is the victory over death, the fear of death being banished in the wonder of God's love.

Jesus defeated all of our enemies when He died and rose again.

Paul closes his thoughts by issuing a challenge to all believers in verse 58:

'Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.' (NIV)

We are encouraged to be firm – we are to be “immovable”, rock-solid in the life and work God has called us to. We are to take our stand for Jesus; live our lives for Him and refuse to move. We have a purpose, we have something to live for, we have a reason to be strong, and we are encouraged to do it.

God has the power to transform and He will exercise it.

Know the Christ who conquered your death, know how He did it, and pray that God will give you peace and strength and a passion for His cause in this world, including what He is doing through The Leprosy Mission.

God knows each and every one of those people affected by leprosy, who are the ultimate purpose for The Leprosy Mission's existence. He calls us to pray for healing, restoration and transformation.

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A vital component in the success of Mozambique's self-care groups is the Community Volunteers. Recruited and trained by The Leprosy Mission, volunteers help with detection of new cases of leprosy and follow them up. They identify opportunities to set up new self-help groups and give advice, providing an essential link between the groups, The Leprosy Mission and Government health posts. Once the new group is established, the community volunteers gradually withdraw and encourage the group to become self-sufficient, but they are always in the background to give advice when it is needed.

Angelica is the leader of a self-care group in Upajo village, Mozambique and was chosen to head the group by its members when the previous leader left. Under her guidance, members can share ideas with the rest of the group. Suggestions for new income-generation projects are often introduced in this way. Self-care groups are places to feel welcomed and valued, to receive advice and to help solve someone else's problem. People affected by leprosy learn to play an active part in planning their own future, instead of depending on others.

Suggested songs

Traditional

Be Thou my vision
And can it be
Great is Thy faithfulness
Amazing grace how sweet the sound

More recent worship songs

Thunder in the skies - Noel & Tricia Richards
Holy One of God - Geoff Bullock
You have broken the chains - Jamie Owens-Collins
Jesus is alive - Ron Kenoly
Happy day - Tim Hughes
There is a day (We will meet Him in the air) - Phatfish
Saviour of the world – Ben Cantalon

Modern worship songs

Because He lives
Seek ye first the Kingdom of God
I, the Lord of sea and sky
Beauty for brokenness

Children's songs

He's got the whole world in His hands
Be bold, be strong