



Trumpet's Sound

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Cover photos: Gyumri youth in Yerevan,
May 2024.



Prayer points

- Pray that the much-needed gospel will be preached by all believers.
- Pray for the poor and needy families in Armenia and Lebanon.
- Pray for those who will join the mission team to Armenia in September 2024 and that the Lord will use them for His glory.
- Pray for the children's summer camps to be held by ACM and CEF. Pray that the gospel will be clearly presented, and that many will come to know Christ.
- Pray for wisdom and strength for our team in Armenia, as they seek to help the many sick and poor.

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who donate out of the generosity of their hearts.*

Where are the poor?

Some years ago, I had a call from a representative of a humanitarian organisation who wished to visit Armenia while I was there. He came to see me from Africa to assess the condition of the poor.

I was able to take him to Vanadzor, a village where the poor lived in metal containers. These containers had been there for much more than 30 years. They had completely rusted and had no base left in them. People lived in total poverty.

After seeing the conditions, the visitor said that this was the worst he had seen. I commented that he had just come from Africa and asked how could you say that. His response was to ask that if winter is below 30 degrees and summer is above 40 degrees how do you live?

The problem is not just in Armenia. Over 800 million people go to bed hungry every night. This number went up by 46 million last year. Who is responsible? We are all comfortable here in Australia. What does the Bible teach? What did Jesus teach?

In Luke 16:19-31 we read about the story of the rich man and poor Lazarus. The rich man lived in his palace, and daily saw the poor who had been placed beside his gates. Lazarus was there daily hoping to feed himself on the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.

I believe God puts a poor man outside every rich man's door. They are there for us to care for.

The parable continues by saying that the poor men went to heaven, but the rich to hell. He was not in hell because he was rich, but because he never cared for the poor. He went to hell because he never loved his brother. He went to hell for disobeying God.

Who is the poor at your gate? Will you stretch out your helping hand? Will you follow Jesus' command to love your brother as yourself?

HK

The Fruit of the Spirit is Longsuffering

We have now come in our meditation to the first of the second three graces, which deal chiefly with our conduct towards others.

It might be well to commence with a word of definition. Although longsuffering and patience are closely allied and are sometimes interchanged, they are generally distinct. The difference, according to Dr Lightfoot, is that longsuffering indicates the self-restraint that does not hastily retaliate a wrong, and is the opposite of wrath or revenge; while patience is the temper which does not easily succumb under suffering. Thus, longsuffering refers principally to our relation to other people, while patience has chiefly to do with our reaction to things.

We could not speak more highly of longsuffering than to say that it is one of God's attributes. In Exodus 34:6 God revealed Himself to Moses as "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Attempts are often made to show that the God of the Old Testament is different from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; so it is well to notice this epoch-making declaration.

God's longsuffering was previously shown at the time of the flood. It is recorded that God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). Judgment was inevitable, but "the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the Ark was a preparing" (1 Peter 3:20). A period of grace was given that the people might be warned and a refuge provided.

It was seen again in the destruction of the Canaanites. That has often been a difficulty with Bible students. The awfulness of the judgment appals. Nevertheless, we must not forget that God was longsuffering. He told Abraham that the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full (Genesis 15:16). So God waited in grace and patience until the

cancerous growth was well-nigh fatal, and only then did the divine surgery perform its merciful work.

Paul expressed the same thought in Romans 9:22, when he wrote that God endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. In the next verse, the Apostle said concerning the vessels of mercy, that God prepared them unto glory. He did not say that God fitted the vessels of wrath to destruction. No, they fitted themselves. while God bore with them in infinite longsuffering and grace. "Love suffers long and is kind" (1 Corinthians 13:4). If a soul is lost it is in spite of God's longsuffering love.

The same principle applies today. Peter has written "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness: but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). If some of us had the reins of government in our hands things would soon be different. We would make short work with sinners. That is because we are so unlike God, who is longsuffering.

The Jews told a delightful story to illustrate the longsuffering of God. They said that once Abraham at the door of his tent saw an old man, a stranger, who was bowed down with age and hardship, for he was a hundred years old. Abraham received him kindly and washed his feet and gave him supper, and made him sit down. However, he saw that the stranger ate and gave no thanks and therefore asked him why he did not worship the God of heaven. To which he replied that he worshipped the fire-god only. At this Abraham grew angry and thrust him out of his tent into the cold. When the old man had gone, God called Abraham and asked him where the old man was. "I thrust him out because he did not worship you," was the reply. God answered, "I have suffered him for these hundred years, though he dishonoured me. and would you not endure him one night when he did you no hurt?"

A natural inference from the foregoing is that longsuffering should be a characteristic of God's people. James spoke of the prophets as being an example of longsuffering (5:10). Paul too, said that he ob-

tained mercy that in him “first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him, to life everlasting” (1 Timothy 1:16). How full the writings of the great apostle are of exhortations to longsuffering! Consider a few of them.“ (Ephesians 4:1-2). Again, in Colossians 3:12, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering”. Then in 2 Timothy 4:2, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine”.

A story is related concerning the early days of the Assemblies. At a meeting in Bath a prominent leader was charged with having acted hastily in a certain matter. To which he replied, "I waited six weeks." Thereupon, that man of God, Robert Chapman, answered, "Dear brother, if it had been at Barnstable, we would have waited six years." Far better to wait six years than to make spoil of the people of God. How much happier the Assemblies would be, if brethren at all times had remembered that the fruit of the Spirit is longsuffering.

Finally, longsuffering may go hand-in-hand with joy. It would be a depressing article if all we could expect were a life of longsuffering stoically endured: but Christ offers more than that. In Colossians 1:11 Paul wrote “Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.” Longsuffering will be accompanied by joy as the Holy Spirit indwells us and we are submissive to Him. We shall have the mind of Christ, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross and despised the shame (Hebrews 12:2).

“Be patient [or longsuffering] therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient: stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:7-8).

Tom Carson

Prophecies about Jesus: He would be the Messiah

People often have job titles at work like manager, supervisor, or team leader. King Charles III, President Biden, and Pharaoh Tutankhamun are known as the King, the President and the Pharaoh.

Did you know that Jesus had a job title? And it wasn't the sign that was put on His cross – “The king of the Jews”. He was known as the Christ, the Messiah or the Anointed One. How did this come about?

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew verb “to anoint” meant to set someone apart for a role like a prophet, priest or king. For example, Samuel anointed David to be a king (1 Samuel 16:1-13). Elijah anointed Elisha to be a prophet (1 Kings 19:16). And Moses anointed Aaron and his sons as priests (Exodus 30:30; Leviticus 8:10-12). They poured perfumed olive oil on the head of the person (Exodus 30:22-32) to show they were set apart or holy to serve God. The anointed one then spoke, served or ruled as God's representative to His people. The anointing was part of a public ceremony to show everyone that God had chosen this person for a special task. David refused to harm Saul because Saul was “the anointed of the Lord” (1 Samuel 24:6).

The person anointed was called the “anointed one”. The English word “Messiah” comes from the Hebrew noun for “anointed one”.

In Daniel 9:25-26, Daniel had a revelation from the angel Gabriel about a coming ruler called the “Anointed One” or the “Messiah”, who will be put to death. The English word “Christ” comes from the Greek noun for “anointed one”. So “anointed one”, Messiah and Christ all have the same meaning.

When Jesus was in Nazareth He read Isaiah 61:1-2a, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prison-

ers and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:16-21 NIV).

Then Jesus said, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing". He was applying a verse in Isaiah to Himself. He said that He was the anointed one described in Isaiah as the one who could solve all their problems. He also told the Samaritan woman that He was the promised Messiah (John 4:25-26). Of course, He wasn't anointed with oil, but with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:37-38).

Both Jesus and Paul taught from the Old Testament that Jesus was the Messiah who would die and rise from the dead (Luke 24:46; Acts 17:2-3). When Peter declared that Jesus was the Christ (or Messiah), Jesus ordered the disciples not to tell anyone because the Jews were looking for a leader to rescue them from the Romans. Instead, Jesus identified Himself as the Son of Man. But later at His trial Jesus told the high priest that He was the Messiah (Mark 14:61-62).

Jesus fulfilled the role of prophet, priest and king. His role was divinely appointed. Like a prophet, His teaching was from God the Father (John 7:16). Like a priest, He reconciles us to God and intercedes for us (Hebrews 7:21). And like a king, He rules at the right hand of God (Philippians 2:9-11). His role was foreshadowed by the prophets, priests and kings of Israel in the Old Testament. They are types or pattern prophecies of the anointed one.

The Messiah was "anointed" first to rescue His people spiritually from sin and Satan (John 8:31-36). He accomplished this salvation through His death and resurrection (John 12:32; John 3:16). Later, He will deliver His people from their physical enemies, when He sets up His kingdom on the earth (Isaiah 9:1-7).

The Messiah of the Old Testament is associated with promises to restore Israel and set up a righteous kingdom over all the world ruled by a descendant of David (Jeremiah 33:6-26). At the second coming of Christ and the millennial kingdom His role as a king will be evident to all.

Prayer

Father God, we give thanks for the examples of the prophets, priests and kings in the Old Testament and the promise of a Messiah who would fulfill these roles. Thank You for sending Jesus as the Anointed One, the Messiah, and the Christ with the special task of being both God and human in order to rescue us spiritually by taking the punishment that we deserve. That's good news and deliverance for us all. We thank You that He has visited once as a prophet and a priest and is coming again to rule as king. And we can serve Him today as Lord of our lives. In Christ's name, Amen.

George Hawke

God's love; the world's hate

John 15

We remember why John wrote his letters and his Gospel: "I want you to have full joy, I want you not to sin, and I want you to know that you have eternal life." In His love, God sent Jesus to save, reassure and guide us. In this chapter John discusses three relationships: the vine and the branches, friends, and witnesses.

Vine and branches

The vine was a symbol for Israel but almost always of unfaithful Israel. This vine was special to God. Isaiah describes it as "a choice vine" (Isaiah 5:2). But Jeremiah saw it as "a degenerate plant of a strange vine." God had a purpose for this vine: "You brought a vine out of Egypt," says Psalm 80:8, but in verse 16 it says that "Your vine is cut down". Jesus however, is the true, real, genuine vine, unlike the nation. In this discourse, He is telling his followers, "Being part of the nation will not save you." Only a personal relationship with Jesus saves. Think of all the "I am" sayings of Jesus. (I am the good shepherd; the bread of life, the light of the world, the door to eternal life; the resurrection and life; the way, truth, & life.) He is everything

to the one who accepts Him. Salvation and meaning in life are all and only about Him”.

Now notice what verses 2 and 5 tell us. We are part of this vine. A vine – any vine, but also this vine – will need lots of attention. Grapevines produce lots of luxuriant and beautiful leaves, but in such density, they are worse than useless. You see, they look attractive, but they cover up the flowers that will produce fruit only if they get sunlight. The vinedresser has to clean the vine so that it can in fact bear fruit. It is an allegory of the Christian life in fellowship with the Saviour. He has to prune, to clean us up! Living in this world, our lives produce a lot of stuff that looks OK, even attractive, but which in fact will interfere with our spiritual growth and usefulness to the Master. So, staying close to the Lord is imperative.

Verse 4 says “Remain in Me and I in you”. This is the secret of a fulfilled Christian life. Jesus is our example. Note how He often withdrew for fellowship with His Father. “But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16). The Holy Spirit had descended on Him as on no other, and yet He needed to withdraw to His Father often. We need to arrange our lives in such a way that every day we deliberately ensure time for prayer, listening to His Word, and being silent before Him.

In verses 9-10 we read of the Father’s love for the Son and the Son’s love for His brethren. Then in verse 11 we learn why Jesus is telling us this. There are two reasons:

First, it was so that we will have joy: You may know about William Wilberforce, who fought for many social justice issues and devoted 46 years of his life to the abolition of slavery in England. He suffered from a debilitating eye condition, made worse by morphine poisoning prescribed by his doctors for severe ulcerative colitis; he had curvature of the spine that obliged him to wear a metal brace to be able to straighten himself and hold up his head. Yet for all of that, he radiated joy! At his funeral, Joseph Brown said, “He was also a most cheerful Christian... his sun appeared always to be shining.” Dorothy Wordsworth wrote of him, “Though shattered in constitu-

tion and feeble in body he is as lively and animated as in the days of his youth.”

Second, it was so that we may go out into the world in love. The kind of love that sacrifices itself for others – as Jesus was to do. We are to go into the world and bear fruit. We are to be in such fellowship with Him through the Father that He makes our lives useful to Him. We produce fruit that will remain. That is what we are to ask Him for and that is what He promises to give. We are to be his partners in ministry – His ambassadors, the people He has sent.

Friends (verse 14)

Friends have access. In the ancient world, a slave had no access to the master. By contrast, Abraham was a friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7). And Job (29:4) spoke of “intimate friendship” with God. He also saw that he had an intercessor with God who was his friend. Moses (Exodus 33:11) spoke with God “as one speaks to a friend” – although he called himself the slave of the Lord (Deuteronomy 34:5).

“You did not choose me. I chose you and appointed you to bear fruit.” (16). We are chosen, not for our own sake, but for His and the world’s – to be His ambassadors. The knight who came to King Arthur’s round table and was chosen to be a member did not come to enjoy the luxury of the court, but to go out and achieve great and noble exploits for the master and for the fellowship. So with us in our calling to God’s work and the service of the Master. Read verse 16 again.

If the world hates you...(18). All we have said is inspiring and motivating and challenging and exciting. But the reality is that people have always resisted the call of God. When John wrote these words of Jesus, he knew only too well how true they had proved to be in the lives of Christians under the rule of Rome. The rejection of Jesus’ message and His offer of fellowship with God and participation in His eternal Kingdom was first rejected in Him and, as he said, “if they hate you, remember that they hated me first!” (John 15:18). And there is no reason for it. It fulfills what was said in the Old Testament

so long ago, “They hated me without reason” (Psalm 35:19). “Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause” (Psalm 69:4).

The Romans hated the Christians because they confessed a higher loyalty than to Rome. Christians did not refuse their obligations as citizens, but they maintained a higher loyalty still. Loyalty to Rome was supposed to be the highest good. Rome had not demanded their loyalty. The people demanded it, for Rome had brought them peace, law, security, and prosperity. The people had offered loyalty. But the later emperors took this power to themselves. They demanded that they be regarded as embodying the spirit of Rome and be worshipped as the God of Rome. Every Roman signed off to this idea by offering incense to Caesar with the words “Caesar is Lord”. Apart from that, everyone was free to worship whom they liked. But no Christian could offer that. Perhaps it is the same today. The good times seduce us into accepting that economics, and social conformity will save us – or at least, they are enough. But no Christian can agree. Persecution always comes to the man who insists on putting Jesus first. Not just God, but Jesus, God’s anointed one, His King.

And of course, the public did not understand the faith of Christ so they believed the rumours and had fanciful and false ideas about what being a Christian might mean. Anyone different faces opposition. Jonas Hanway was the first man to use an umbrella in London and he was mocked and harassed for doing it. The world hates difference. The world hates non-conformity, and that is precisely what Jesus calls us to. And people hate anyone who seems to live a better life than they. “Be holy as I am holy” says the Father. And holy means “different”, “having a special purpose”, different from the common life. John tells us, either Christ or the world. Not both.

Witnesses (verse 26)

This is our responsibility in the power of the Spirit. Jesus sends His Spirit to us from the Father so that we can testify. The Holy Spirit witnesses to the truth about Jesus because He is the Spirit of Jesus in us. He comes to us when we commit to Christ. Romans 8:9-11 tells

us that to have Christ in us is to have the Spirit in us. That is why we want to tell about Jesus. (2 Corinthians 4:13) "It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." Since we have that same spirit of faith, we also believe and therefore speak". Why must we speak for Him? Simply because we have known Him. "You have been with me from the beginning."

So that is the nature of our relationship with the Lord Jesus: participants in His life, growing in Him, friends, and witnesses to His goodness and mercy.

Dr Paul Whiting

Real Competence

When I was a young Christian, I used to have a rather imaginative picture in my head about what life would be like when I had finally developed into a mature Christian. What a dream! I visualised a day when I would have accumulated such a vast database of Bible knowledge and experience, that I would never again be puzzled or confused when life presented its various challenges. How I looked forward to that day when I would always know just what to do when difficult problems came along. I would be in a position where I could simply look back through my fund of Bible wisdom and experience, find the appropriate biblical truth or past experience and know just how to handle things. I do not need to tell you that day has not come. In fact it seems further away than ever. I have come to recognise that what I thought would be a great vision was in fact an illusion.

There is something seductive about the fantasy that all problems are solved by becoming better qualified, upgrading Bible knowledge or ministry skills. One more course or seminar should do the trick. Maybe this is the book that will pull everything together and give all the answers. Please don't misunderstand me. I'm all for the pursuit of

excellence in Bible knowledge and ministry skills. Courses, seminars and books are vital tools if we are serious about growing. However, the question is what we expect our improved knowledge and skills to do for us. Do we think that mere competence is the answer to the baffling mystery of why nothing, including church life, works quite the way we think it should? More knowledge, better techniques, higher qualifications, do these in themselves provide answers? They certainly do in the material world.

Competence is the first we look for in a doctor or an airline pilot. We are also right in expecting competence in our Bible teachers, pastors and elders. But no amount of Bible knowledge and maturity will ever reduce our need for moment by moment, personal, nurturing connection with the living Christ through His Spirit.

God will never co-operate with any process that tends to reduce our need for personal, dependent relationship with Him. In fact, if life experience is anything to go by, God seems more interested in increasing our dependence than increasing our competence. There is nothing like a few puzzles and some baffling situations in life to achieve this! His goal is not to make us so bullet-proof with knowledge and skills that we need Him less. True knowledge and maturity will enable us to see with startling clarity, that our dependence on Him is actually far greater than we had ever imagined. We move on from seeing God merely as someone who helps us from time to time through life to someone without whom life and effective ministry would be both impossible and unthinkable. For those who seek to be competent so they can safely control their lives, this insight brings a sensation so they can safely control their lives, this insight brings a sensation that could only be described as terror. The words of Jesus take on a new dimension, "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

It can be frightening to think that there is no qualification, technique or formula that will protect us from having to live dangerously on the knife-edge of moment by moment dependence on God's intimate involvement with us. Real competence will enhance our dependence, not reduce it. Dependence leads us to Him. Christ does not

merely give us life, He is our life. "Christ, who is your life" (Colossians 3:4). Seeing that, changes everything.

Rex Dearlove

ACM in Armenia

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (1 Peter 2:2).

We praise the Lord that over the years, we have not only preached the 'gospel to the poor', but also continued to encourage, build up and bring comfort to many in teaching the word of God.

On May the 17th this year, a team of 11 young people aged between 14 and 19 left Gyumri for 3 days. Among them were 8 girls and 3 boys. Ashod and Hasmik who went with daughter Anna were able to oversee and guide the team. Martun, Angela and our volunteers were able to plan and assist in the logistics of this special effort.

The thrust of this trip was to encourage one another in the Christian life with an emphasis on preaching and teaching. Martun was the main speaker. He was led to encourage the youth in various aspects of Christian growth and the importance of the word of God.

The team members were able to contribute on Sunday at the local brotherhood church in Yerevan, with singing and testimonies. They also visited some interesting sights in the city and surrounding areas. Finally, there was no lack of sporting activity which the youth were thrilled to participate in.

We were also very blessed to see another activity with regards to the importance of the word of God. Our friends from the CMI AID (Christian Mission International AID) based in Moldova have started a postal Bible school in Armenia and we were able to provide a room at our Paros building in Yerevan for this project. We have worked very closely with them in the past on a number of occasions and we praise the Lord for this aspect of their ministry.

Even as the apostles of old pointed out to the believers on the importance of the word of God and doctrine- ‘sincere milk of the word’ by Peter, the Corinthians were reminded by Paul.

‘And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.’ 1 Corinthians 3:1

The encouragement of the word is essential and we praise the Lord that ACM can work closely with the local church and other like-minded organisations to share the word of God. Much prayer is needed for the youth in Armenia as they face the onslaught of a carnal world and we offer praise to our Lord who has made it possible for these activities to continue.

ACM Director
Dr. Daniel James

