

Brooklands Church of the Nazarene

Sunday 20 June 2021
Issue 65

Pandemic Times

Friends

"Then Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell on the ground and worshipped. He said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'" – Job 1: 20-21

I've been reflecting on this verse of late. What causes a man who has lost literally everything he had – family, home, and livestock – in a single day to respond like this? One commentator suggests that Job's life must have been steeped in prayer and worship so much that he was conditioned to respond like this. I find that remarkable. May we be so steeped in prayer and worship that when difficulties come our way we respond the only way we know how.

We look forward to hearing from Lucy this morning as she preaches as part of our series, 'Encounters with the Holy Spirit.' It has been a joy to watch Lucy develop in her ministry even during my short time here. I'm sure it's ever more evident for you all! She is a real encouragement to me and to so many in the church and community.

Speaking of the community, I'm pleased to announce that we will be launching 'pop-up' community café serving tea, coffee and tray bakes in church on Thursdays throughout the summer. It will be donation only, run from 11am-2pm and commence on Thursday 1st July. This is set up with the help of local counsellor Susan Cooley who is grateful to partner with the church for this.

If you would like to help serve or contribute tray bakes then please let me know and I can let you know exactly what is needed. You'll see below a poster that has been designed to advertise this which will also be shared on our Facebook page. If you can, take a moment to share with others. Feel free to join us as we take another small step towards opening the church building in service to the local community.

For those who remain somewhat anxious of physical gatherings, let me remind you that some continue to meet on the church's Zoom link following the service each Sunday for a short time of fellowship. If you can, pop on from time to time to help keep us connected in these days. Also, a group of us gather on the same link for prayer on a Wednesday morning, 10.30am-11.00am, which is always a very encouraging time.

Mick

***...Be strong
and
courageous.
Do not be
terrified; do
not be
discouraged
for the
Lord your
God
will be with
you
wherever
you go.***

***Joshua
1:9***

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Prayer Page

Global Church

The Church of the Nazarene is active throughout the world. At the end of this newsletter, there is some information about the work of the Church of the Nazarene in India. Please read about our work in the region, and remember to pray for this work as well as our own church needs.

Church Family

- * For the pop-up community café launching in the church in July
- * For John Beattie who hasn't been well enough these past two weeks to receive his chemotherapy. Pray specifically for his blood pressure to rise to normal levels.
- * For Jean Hall who has been sick these past two weeks
- * For others we know who continue to need prayer for healing: Jon F, Isobel, Claire, Bill and Sue.
- * We remember again Alan Roberts, son-in-law of Val Batty, who has recently been diagnosed with bowel cancer.
- * And for those that attended the Community Car Wash in Wythenshawe recently

Daily Reading and Prayer Guide for This Week

Date	Reading	Pray for
Monday 21st June	John 20	Ruth Hogan
Tuesday 22nd June	John 21	Claire, Terry, Liam and Chloe Humphreys
Wednesday 23rd June	Acts 1	Sebastian, Claudia and Nathan Ianos
Thursday 24th June	Acts 2:1–13	Tim and Alison Ingram
Friday 25th June	Acts 2:14–47	Annette and Mike Jones and family
Saturday 26th June	Catch up	Huw Jones
Sunday 27th June	Acts 3	Vivienne Kenyon



Holy Spirit Encounters (5)

Acts 13 : 4-12

Lucy Frost

The Rocky Road

20 June 2021

This week we are continuing our series of sermons about Holy Spirit encounters. It was back in November we studied the diverse little church in Antioch in Syria, described in Acts 13:4-13. This church did not make decisions in their own strength but was fully Holy Spirit focused. Through prayer, fasting and prophecy they realised that Paul and Barnabas would have to leave them because God had important work for them to do. They must go out on mission to spread the Gospel.



Our passage this morning described the journey between two locations with the same name. Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark travelled from Antioch in Syria to Antioch in Turkey known then as Pisidian Antioch. I have never heard a sermon preached on this passage, but some important stuff happens here, and I hope you enjoy this exploration.

Sermon notes continued...

Opposition and Opportunity

They set off looking for opportunities which they duly found but not without some serious opposition. Travelling via Cyprus they reached the city of Paphos in the south of the Island. They came across a man named Bar-Jesus, also known as Elymas. Luke is scathing in his description of this man. He was Jewish by birth but a false prophet and magician. This passage is a reminder that evil likes to latch on to people in power and is desperate to thwart the work of the Holy Spirit. Sergius Paulus was the Proconsul of Cyprus. Proconsuls were leaders employed by the Romans to look after their territories. Sergius Paulus was a good and intelligent man but like many political leaders was insecure and looking for divine guidance. The Islanders were heavily involved with Pagan and occult practises. It is no surprise that Sergius fell under the influence of someone like Bar-Jesus who claimed to be Jewish but was operating as a false prophet. You might be wondering about Bar Jesus's name. Bar was used to denote that someone was a son or follower of someone. It may have been that as Jesus' fame grew Bar-Jesus's named himself after Jesus to increase his own fame and as a form of mockery.

Bar-Jesus must have enjoyed the influence and financial rewards his evil practises bought him and was desperate not to lose his position. The enemy had this man in his clutches. When Paul, led and equipped by the Holy Spirit came along a mighty spiritual battle broke.

A question for you all. What was Paul's first miracle? Well, the first recorded one is right here in this passage. It's not a pleasant miracle. This was a destructive miracle. Paul was furious with Bar Jesus, accusing him of trying to corrupt and twist the ways of the Lord. The first Christians referred themselves as followers of "The Way." John the Baptist had ushered in Jesus' ministry by quoting Isaiah 40:3. This says: "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him." Just as he himself had experienced Bar-Jesus fell to the ground blinded. He had tried to block the Holy Spirit and his spiritual blindness now manifested as physical blindness. Unlike Paul he was not ready to accept Christ, so he stayed afflicted with blindness.

Nowadays politicians surround themselves with spin doctors and unelected special advisors and some are not immune to dabbling in the occult or listening to false prophets. President Reagan and his wife Nancy were Christians and attended a Presbyterian church but throughout their married life consulted astrologers. This intensified when within just a few months of starting his presidency Ronald Reagan survived an assassination attempt. After this an astrologer was employed by the White House to try and keep him safe. For nearly eight years Joan Quigley planned Reagan's itinerary and elements of policy based on an elaborate system of astrological charts. To avoid embarrassment payments were made through a third party. It was not until near the end of the presidency that the public became aware when exasperated former White house staff spilled the beans. You might think this was harmless, but it shows a lack of focus on God and obedience to Him, and it is a slippery slope. In Nigeria corrupt politicians make large financial payments to fake prophets in return for prophecies of safety and protection. We must guard ourselves against the temptation to stray from complete obedience and trust in God, that allows evil to gain a foothold.

Sermon notes continued...

Another question for you: who was the first person Paul led to the Lord? We believe he must have saved many people, even before his first missionary journey. However, the first one recorded in Scripture, is again in this passage- the head official of Cyprus named Sergius Paulus. Archaeologists have found several inscriptions that prove Sergius existed and was the Proconsul. The dates match up perfectly with Luke's accounts here in the book of Acts. The enemy had tried to use Bar-Jesus to block Sergius becoming a Christian, but the Holy Spirit overcame the opposition. Indeed, Sergius helped establish the faith in Cyprus.

In 1912 archaeologists found evidence of a large family estate in Pisidian Antioch belonging to Sergius's family. This suggests Sergius sent Paul and his team there for hospitality and to lead them also to Christ. To get there they needed to sail to Perga on the southern coast of Turkey before making their way north to Pisidian Antioch. From that one man, a family got saved and many more people in that region.

There have been other examples in history of God enabling powerful inbreaking of the Holy Spirit to spread the Gospel. In 1952 the evangelist Tommy Hicks had a vision of a map of South America with vast fields of wheat ripe for harvest. He also received a prophecy: For two snows will not pass over the earth until thou shalt go to this land, for thou shalt not go by boat nor by land, but as a bird, flying through the air shalt thou go. He wrote the prophecy in his Bible. Nothing happened for three months. Then at a convention in California, a pastor's wife led prayers and proceeded to speak the exact words of the prophecy. When Tommy showed her the prophecy, he had written in his Bible she broke down in tears. It came to pass that Tommy was invited on mission to Argentina when another evangelist pulled out of the trip.

Argentina at the time was riddled with occult practises as Cyprus was during Paul's day. Despite many missionary efforts the Christian population was tiny and even they would consult spiritualists and witch doctors. Roman Catholicism was nominally the state religion, and they blocked any Protestant efforts to appear on television and radio or hold rallies.

None of this discouraged Tommy. He knew he had the Holy Spirit behind him. At the airport he prayed for a harvest of 50,000 souls! Once on the plane Tommy got a name placed on his heart: Peron. He asked an air stewardess if she knew of anyone with that name. Well, she replied "the president is called Juan Peron." It was then that Tommy realised he had to gain access to the president.

He headed to the Casa Rosada, the Argentinian equivalent of the White House with an interpreter. He managed to secure a meeting with the Minister of Religion but with little success. That was until the minister's secretary entered the room limping. Tommy asked to pray for him, and the leg was healed! This gained him access to the President where he then healed Peron of a skin condition! Juan Peron was so amazed that he granted Tommy use of a 45,000-seater stadium and unrestricted media access. This is how a great revival started in Argentina with millions of people becoming Christians.

Sermon notes continued...

Onwards through obstacles



When I was starting to research and wrestle with this passage earlier in the week, I was not getting very far. The only thing that piqued my interest was that Paul chose to go an unexpected route on his mission and the roads were rocky. It made me think of the cake rocky road (more on that later). My eyes kept being drawn to a book low down on Mum's bookcase. It was as if this book was beckoning me! The book is called *Prayer That Moves Mountains* by Gordon Lindsay. Lindsay was a great missionary and founder of the missionary organisation Christ for the Nations which worked to spread the Gospel in 120 different countries. I opened the book to see if it said anything about the Holy Spirit and indeed it did. Lindsay writes about the importance of praying in the Spirit. So, I prayed in the Spirit for revelations about this passage. I drifted off into a strange half sleep and I got a picture of Paul, Barnabas, and Mark on this mission. The route was rocky, but it was also uphill. I saw the three missionaries tired and struggling on this long arduous journey. I felt the Holy Spirit really wanted to know this. So, I researched further, and my vision was correct. This was an extremely difficult journey.

The Roman Empire is famed to this day for its advanced network of roads. They were paved and pleasant to use as well as being policed to ensure safety. In reality however these roads only connected military and commercial centres. Other roads were dirt and gravel tracks. They traversed rough terrain and criminals operated freely, placing travellers in grave danger. The trek from Perga to Antioch was a treacherous feat. The journey was 100 miles long and at a height of 3600 feet through the Taurus mountains. Why did Paul did choose to make life so difficult? I have been asking about this in prayer this week. They Holy Spirit put on my heart how desperate Paul and others were to spread the Gospel. They went where the Holy Spirit sent them, however difficult.

Sermon notes continued...

When they arrived at their destination there was more heartbreak. Mark decided to leave them and return to Jerusalem. We are never told why Mark left, but Paul was angry and upset. Mark was young and energetic, qualities that were useful for mission. Later, they would be reconciled, continuing their missionary work. But at this time Paul had to overcome his anger and disappointment and continue this trip without his young friend.

More frustration would follow. After preaching at the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch Paul led many Jews, and then Gentiles to Christ in that area. But he incurred the wrath of the religious leaders and fled North to the area of Galatia. After many months of tortuous travel and setbacks it was here that the Holy Spirit really broke through with many churches springing up.

Opposition and obstacles- these are very real issues that we as Christians will inevitably face. We can face ridicule and mockery for our faith and our evangelistic efforts are sometimes in vain. We should also be aware that spiritual forces of darkness are very real and that we are in a spiritual battle. In Ephesians 6:11 Paul urges us to “put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”

We will also face obstacles. Perhaps not a hundred miles of rough, treacherous road but other obstacles. Obstacles of lockdown, loneliness, isolation, and separation. The frustration of limitations as well try to be salt and light to our community around us and spread the Good News of Jesus. I leave you with two more words beginning with o: omnipotent and omnipresent. God is all powerful and ever-present everywhere. We can be assured of victory. In the last chapter of Revelation, Jesus promises he will return and invites us to “take the free gift of the water of life” (Rev. 22:17). If you are attending church in person this Sunday, please enjoy a slice of rocky road cake as a reminder of the good news of this sermon. I will also make sure to have this cake available at our upcoming pop-up cafes!

Grace and peace,

Lucy



BROOKLANDS COMMUNITY

Pop-up Cafe

Thursdays, 11am-2pm
Brooklands Church of the Nazarene

Donations only!

From 1st July

BrooklandsChurch
of the Nazarene



Brooklands Church of the Nazarene

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At Brooklands, we are big enough to be part of a world-wide denomination, yet small enough to invite you to make our church your home. Please visit our website and contact us if you would like to get in touch or need more information on any of our events.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, we are holding weekly services on our YouTube channel, starting at 10:30 am each Sunday.

We look forward to welcoming you to our fellowship!

BrooklandsChurch
of the Nazarene





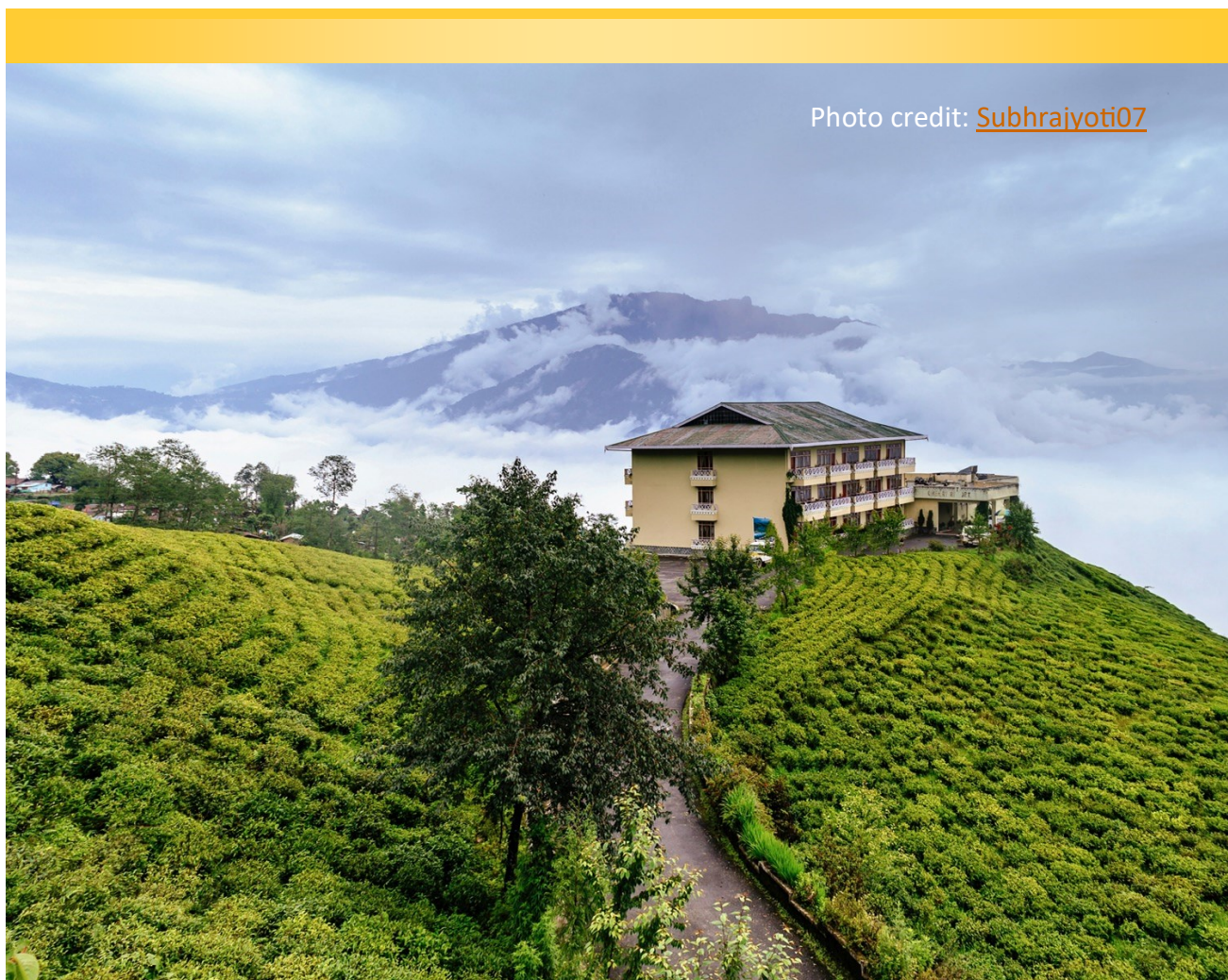
The Church of the Nazarene in India

- * 15 districts
- * 6 pioneering areas
- * 2300+ organized churches
- * 1,800+ churches plants
- * 126,000+ members
- * 18,000 fellowship members
- * 270+ ordained ministers
- * 350+ licensed ministers
- * 54 media ministry teams
- * South Asia Nazarene Bible College provides theological education



The Church of the Nazarene in India—Compassionate Ministries

- * NCM child development centers (CDCs)
- * Anti-human trafficking project to help sex workers and their children
- * Water and Sanitation Hygiene project (WASH)
- * Child sponsorship for pastors' kids
- * Women's empowerment projects
- * Nazarene Nursing Training College
- * Reynolds Memorial Hospital



The Church of the Nazarene in India—Challenges

- * Sharing food and the compassion of Christ with people in crisis due to the 2020 pandemic's crippling of economies.
- * Many who attend churches are elderly, or are children, and have been unable to participate freely since the beginning of the pandemic.
- * Poor people, and those in remote locations, cannot participate in video worship or church meetings due to lack of Internet, electricity or other necessary infrastructure.
- * People who are emotionally and psychologically affected by the pandemic need counseling and support, but churches face many obstacles and lack of resources to provide this help.



The Church of the Nazarene in India—Opportunities

- * Churches reach out to neighbours in the midst of their own hard times.
- * Many young people are involved in Nazarene ministry.
- * God has provided opportunities for churches to address people's emotional, psychological, spiritual, and relational needs through webinars.
- * Compassionate ministries, such as the Reynolds Memorial Hospital, women's empowerment groups, and other works are helping people experience Jesus' love and the support of local faith communities.



The Church of the Nazarene in India—Prayer requests

- * Pray for pastors and lay leaders as they work hard to minister to church families, as well as many new connections made through compassionate ministry to church neighbours.
- * Pray for God's sustaining grace and provision for the desperate people who have lost all ways of supporting their families due to the coronavirus pandemic and its economic consequences.
- * Pray for God's provision to pastors who depend on support from their congregations.
- * Pray to the Lord of the harvest for more workers in this time where people are seeking and searching God.



Learn more about what God is doing in the
Eurasia Church of the Nazarene
and how you can pray:

www.eurasiaregion.org/news

www.nazarene.org/news