



# The Vine

## *Editor's Ramblings*

Someone actually said that I grumble in my editorials, so maybe the title should be **Editor's Grumblings**. However,

grumbling does work. In the last issue, I had so many articles, some from first time writers that I had a problem with space and was “kicked” out.

We are planning to do some kitchen renovation in mid-August during the Chinese 7 moon because most contractors are free due to lack of business at this time of the year. When I consider the dust and the noise, the inconvenience of not having a kitchen, not being able to wash clothes or drink filtered water for about 10 days, I would easily have given up the idea of doing the renovation. However, my wife looks to the end result, a brand new kitchen, with nice tiles, a new cooker and oven, new cabinets and nice table top. This vision gives her the drive to want to proceed with the renovation work.

This thought crossed my mind about our Christian living. There are two types of Christians, those who see the cross of Christ, the suffering, the sacrifices, the persecution and maybe even martyrdom and they are turned back. However the other type of Christian see a more heavenly vision, glory, the joy of the Father and freedom from tears and pain and they are driven to be willing to bear with the cross for the glory set before them.

The first type of person doesn't have a far sighted vision, they cannot see far ahead into heaven. They are easily turned away as those in Matthew 24:10 when persecution begins. The second type of person is like *“Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”* (Hebrews 12:2-3)

How many of us are like the first type of person? Do we fear the trouble and effort needed to build up Cambodia missions? Are we afraid to commit to rebuilding JCC, the church building? Are we discouraged by the numbers who

turn up at the Dialect service? Thank God that even though many of us are Type 1 people, we are willing to be led by a Type 2 person, with a great vision for the future. If everyone was a Type 1 person, JCC would not be here because there were only a handful of members at the birth of JCC, some 41 years ago.

So even as we look back over the last half year and see the many changes that have taken place, and worry about the future and how we can afford all these changes, let us remind ourselves that God has a better plan for JCC. He is making the surrounding area into a Lake District. Even if we think our property is of no value, God is increasing its value by placing us right in the midst of this Lake District plan. The Lord said to Abraham, *“Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west.”* (Genesis 13:14)

Do not be troubled, O Type 1 people. The psalmist says, *“I lift up my eyes to the hills--where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”* (Psalm 121:1-2) Indeed, let us be like the Type 2 people who can see the final result and therefore are willing to go through the trouble to achieve it. Like in John 16:21, *“A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.”*

And when my beautiful kitchen is ready, I will not remember that I had to go through 10 days of deprivation, I will just enjoy all the new facilities that the new kitchen has to offer.

Happy 41<sup>st</sup> Anniversary JCC. Good thing I was not a member 41 years ago. I might have voted against building a church when we were comfortable in a shop house across the road.

*Martin Cheah*

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Jurong West CG took a walk along part of the Southern Ridges on 9 Aug 2008. Many CGs have taken this walk but we are glad that we managed to finish the walk because most of us are above 50 years old.



## A Non-Lucid Dream

I dream that one day, Jurong Christian Church will grow BIG. The problem is that, as in many dreams, it is not lucid. What does BIG actually refer to? Is it about the size of the body of Christ or a good-functioning large building that can pull in more sheep? Besides, I do not really understand when this “one day” will actually be – tomorrow, 4 years’ time, 4 more decades ...? With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day; so when my dreamed day will arrive is at best a mystery. (Rf 2 Pet 3:8)

It is easy to dream. It may even be easier not to dream, but just leave everything “up to God’s will” and “up to God’s time to reveal His will.” Why so? When you dream, your mind actually ends up being encumbered by an expectation; but when you do not dream about anything, you can just live day by day free and easy. Why think about tomorrow? – Just leave it in the good hands of God! Who doesn’t enjoy a free-and-easy life?

Should we dream, or not dream, then? It is harder to dream than not. Those who are not with you in the dream can call it daydream, pipe dream, castle in the sky or delusion. Of course, if you happen to have many sharers for your dream, the shared dream may earn a better name – “vision”. Whether it is of the welcome or unwelcome variety, my dream called by any name is still a dream – a non-lucid dream – that no one would dare risk his neck to proclaim:

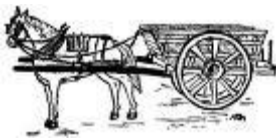
*“Yeah, this is what God has spoken. We shall build our Church BIG for our fourth generation. What God has willed, let no man dispute. Now is the time for us to join together in unity as one body. If you are blessed financially, hold none back but pour forth your hundreds, thousands, or millions, as God enables you to give. Why dither? Hold back for what? He will bless you with more.*

*“Of course, if you are not blessed to a high degree financially, if you are like a student or a poor widow, with only a few dollars in your purse, your giving of the little that*

*you have will not be paltry in God's sight. Certainly, if you do stretch to give a few cents more, the little extra will also be much in the Lord's hand. This applies too to gifts of skills that you may contribute.*

***Nobody asks everyone to give in the same quantity and manner, but we are asking you to give in one form and/or another as much as you have the ability and would give cheerfully to God who has blessed you, for Him to multiply both the giving and the blessing.***

Ironically, while no one wishes to make the wrong rallying call and risk unhelpful effects, there is none either who would proclaim the opposite loudly and unequivocally – i.e., let the church stay SMALL! It is understandable that there are people inclined to be on the fence – eyeing a hope; but finally giving in to the reality that we are not living in the time of Jesus, and they dare not imagine that the same little loaf of bread we have now as a little boy had 2000 years ago is able to miraculously multiply. I can't blame myself for having this thought flitting across my mind from time to time when the practicalities are being mulled over in the familiar human-natured way concurrently with prayers for God to grant a miracle in His Way. We do not deny the possibility of a miracle taking place. However, being “practical about it” or “cognizant of reality”, we are inclined to think of miracles according to our human terms – i.e., with some preconceived notions of what is plausible and what not. Then, we discuss what we need to do to facilitate hope fulfillment, to put the horse



right before the cart and not the wrong way. Finally, we leave things on the back burner. In other words, the cart's wheels are stuck in the

ground, stationary – never start rolling – without a forward destination to reach for.



A cart and a horse seem distinctive enough, but what they stand for as metaphors may at times be clouded that we are unclear what is what. For example, when we talk of actions we need to put into our Christian service to bring about a desired outcome, we simultaneously talk about our need to

pray for God to bless. Between our effort and God's intercession – which is the cart; and which, the horse? We can neither deny our need to participate to see the fulfillment of a longing nor deny that we ought not hold back our faith or trust in Him to show us how a little of our effort or resources that seem highly inadequate will become aplenty when submitted into His hands without procrastination before the latent resources evaporate or depreciate in worth and the yearning loses its buoyancy. Having an adequate church facility to encourage and anticipate church growth or having a sizeable spiritual body-of-Christ before physical expansion also throws up the same horse-and-cart conundrum. Can we solve the conundrum by working to put our cart and horse together at the same spot, each neither before nor behind the other?



About this dream I have, will it be a mistake for us to ratchet up efforts now, beginning with a call to arms, and later find all hope ends up in a puff? Will God allow the efforts to go to waste? Or will it be a mistake for us to wait for clearer signs and, after a long long wait, find that we will need to wait forever more? Will God allow this against Kingdom's interest?

In my dream, a number of huge churches pop up in my semi-consciousness.



No, they are not BIG churches; they are MEGA churches! How grand are the churches – both in the physical buildings and the membership sizes! Why can't we have JCC like any of these? I laugh at my own dream.



One should not be envious when looking at the giant churches (for envy is surely a deadly sin), but a little musing may not be totally misplaced as a starter for us to ponder why God provides differently to the point of extremes. Is it because God is biased, or is it simply because one congregation of faithfuls is more faithful and deserving than another? **Maybe we are in fact better off in some ways by virtue of our modest, manageable size.** Maybe we just do not have the collective will to spur us to begin doing something for ourselves first instead of turning to heaven for a handout of blessings gratis for a larger size. Maybe our faith is not big enough, just as small as a mustard seed; so we feel that whatever little we can hand out as a demonstration of our trust in God to use it is of no significance in divine terms as in human terms.

We can quote history as well as Bible stories about how great faiths of people rose out of seeds, and how attainments were had out of hopeless situations. These are lessons from the past, events happening in very different milieus – Good to retell for encouragement? Do we today rest any hope literally on the same past miraculous dispensations from God? Even if the answer to the last question is nay, a gravely ill person can still rest hope on a miraculous medical breakthrough (such as advancement in stem-cell technology) in place of a direct face-to-face ministering by our Lord, a poor man longing for a roof over his head can still believe that he can attain his hope by being gainfully employed and assiduously saving whatever little he can day by day; finally, he gets his desired HDB flat to the great surprise of many who are wealthier yet unable to afford a roof. God's blessings may be delivered to us in ways that we least imagine. Whether a blessing just pops out in mid-air or comes slow and steady in ordinarily conceivable human terms that surprise us as a miracle only on our hindsight does not detract from the fact that we can achieve a worthy desire only when our faith is allowed to make its move rather than complacently put its feet up to rest.

In any aspiration, there must be a vision (a definition of goal unambiguously stated *sans* details), a leader who is the prime mover in steering support towards the vision and a team to develop the project minutiae. Underpinning all these is faith. It seems a tall order to have all

the factors in place; yet, if only any single factor is missing or self-centred considerations (fear or worry) become a spanner in the works, then good grief to the aspiration is a most likely outcome. As I contemplate my dream, a non-lucid dream, I dare not assume that there are enough sharers to raise the dream to the status of a “vision”. A different question comes into me: **Does size really matter?**

A big church has the advantages of economies of scale and the visibility to draw more into the sheep pen. A fresh new building with more functional spaces will hold up the church ministries better than an old building with crumbling bricks and greater maintenance needs. A small church is spared the disadvantages of the economics law of diminishing returns and a complex administration to handle a large sheep population. Big churches started off as small churches. Having gone through their developing years of struggles, they hold many positive and negative lessons for the small churches to draw on if the latter seek to grow. Isn't it the natural desire of every Christian to grow the church? Small churches that are inexcusably stagnant in growth have much to learn about eradicating weeds in order for nourishing grass to sprout to propagate a healthy sheep population.

Size does matter – BIG or SMALL – with its attendant advantages and shortcomings. Successful as the government is in its plans to help the poor, there are always those in need who fall through the cracks. Hence, there are the small charities (like Bread for Life, niche community groups, etc.) that step in to fill the gap. Similarly, successful as the big churches are in drawing crowds (thanks be to God), there are also those in need to be reached who slip through their efforts. Is it not in God's plan for a church like JCC of small and humble size to keep status quo to stand in the gap?

Imagine we have a big box to be filled with balls. If we only have large and gigantic balls, less of the space is filled than if we have more small and tiny balls. A combination of sizes may just be the right thing in God's

plan. **It may just be the will of God for JCC to remain SMALL and quite manageable.** A portion in a certain Christian hymn goes like this:

*Little is much when God is in it!  
Labor not for wealth or fame.  
There's a crown—and you can win it,  
If you go in Jesus' Name.*

*Does the place you're called to labor  
Seem too small and little known?  
It is great if God is in it,  
And He'll not forget His own.*

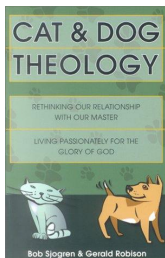
Now, I am getting confused by my non-lucid dream. It is not unusual for me to be befuddled by dreams. Dream big, dream small, dream nothing – I am in need of direction from my good Shepherd to know what is good, bad, right, wrong, helpful, waste of time ... and what is considered the optimum size – BIG or SMALL by whatever appropriate measure. My dream that one day JCC will grow BIG (just BIG, not MEGA, whatever it refers to) may turn out to be a vision that turns into reality. No denial too that it may just be a daydream, pipe dream, castle in the sky or delusion – whichever expression best describes!



Have I been watching too much of the Singapore Navy's recruitment advertisement on TV – the one with speeding buildings and water-cooler rockets in a naval battle? A command keeps ringing in my ears, "STOP DREAMING!" Should we?



*John Lee*



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*The God-given traits of cats ('you exist to serve me') and dogs ('I exist to serve you') can be similar to certain theological attitudes held by many Christians.*

A dog says, 'You pet me, you feed me, you shelter me, you love me, you must be God.' A cat says, 'You pet me, you feed me, you shelter me, you love me, I must be God.'



# Girls' Brigade Cambodia Trip

12-17<sup>th</sup> June 2008

By Saw Pei'en



We really thank God for the opportunity to bring the girls, a total of 17 of them from 9<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> Girls' Brigade to Cambodia to experience the life there and minister to the children in Cambodia. We are also thankful for the members of the church who have rendered their support through donations and their presence during the trip. Those who went were Michelle Ong, Wong Mui, Sook Hwee, Pei Woon and the teacher in charge, Angeline, Lijie and Joy. God also provided a Paramedic, Yong Heng, who was a friend of the teacher-in-charge of 17<sup>th</sup> Girls' Brigade, Joy, to join us in the trip.

Our first day there we check-into a clean and comfortable place called the Korean Guest House located near the Girls Brigade Village Works Song Khem shop, which sells products made by the women in the villages. We visited the Tuol Sleng Museum and the tour guide at the Museum



*Tuol Sleng Museum Tour*

shared her own experience of the Pol Pot regime when she was a young girl and how she lost her family members during that time and had to pick herself up after the war ended. Her sharing really brought us closer to the sufferings of the people in Cambodia.

Throughout the trip we share God’s hand and blessing upon us. Michelle who suffered a migraine and dizzy spell was healed after one day. Though she rested and did not manage to follow us to Baray district villages, she had the opportunity to rest and catch up with “long lost” friends when she attended the international Christian fellowship in Cambodia. She was also well taken care of by Sook Hwee, Col Tan and Mabel, who were the co-ordinators for the Girls’ Brigade ministry in Cambodia. The 2 girls who had sprained their ankles, Huiimin and Huishi also recovered at the end of the trip. We saw how the girls supported them through the muddy terrain in Cambodia.



Homestay at Baray District

The girls also had the opportunity to hear the testimony of Esther, who is a missionary in Cambodia for 13 years. She continues to meet up with about 20 local pastors in Baray to support and encourage them in their ministry. Esther runs the homestay accommodation that we stayed at for 2 nights in Baray village. Through this homestay, she provides employment for the villagers through cooking meals for the visitors, cultural dance performances, horse cart and cow cart rides. Her homestay also runs a kindergarten for the village children and provide opportunities for the Cambodian youths to interact and learn conversational English with the visitors at the homestay. She is indeed a woman of



Horsecart Ride in the Baray Village

great faith in God to have ministered in Cambodia for 13 years and experienced God healing her miraculously from dengue fever.

One of the most meaningful experience for the girls was when they were ministering to the children through games, songs, bible story telling and the sharing of the gospel with finger puppets. When we were there the weather was surprisingly cool in comparison to my previous trips. One of the days when we were taken to the villages to learn about their livelihood, it started to rain very heavily and we had to stay in their workhouse as shelter from the rain. While waiting for the rain to stop we starting to sing songs of praise and the Cambodians in the workhouse also joined in the singing as some of the songs was familiar to them and we really enjoyed the time of worship together with them. God's presence was felt during our time of spontaneous worship, which gave me a glimpse of what it would be like in heaven with different nations worshipping together.



Cambodians Worshipping together in the midst of rain

The time spent with the Cambodians especially with the children brought joy and laughter to all. The girls also learnt to adjust to having less comforts when staying at the homestay at Baray. We are also indeed thankful for the hospitality shown by Jayanthee and Thida, the Girls' Brigade staff at Cambodia, who taught us what it means to

serve others through their example. I was pleasantly surprised that most of the girls would like to come back to Cambodia again, which means giving up their comforts back home especially their bed, aircon rooms and their choice of food back home, in order to serve with the children in Cambodia. All glory be to God for showing us his love for all nations through his chosen people.



Ministry with the children staying in the surrounding slum area in Phnom Penh



Children Ministry at Village Works in Baray



Children Ministry in Chantolok Village



Children in the surrounding villages in Baray District



## Lissa 's Germany Memories

The whole trip was very enriching and I was especially impressed by Lutheran Church in Bavaria's extensive and wide range of involvement in the community. They covered the old folks, families, handicap and children. Some of the programs were very enriching and an eye opener for me.

I was very impressed by the founder Pastor Wilhelm Lohe who started the deacon and deaconesses work to care for the sick, handicapped and the community in 1854. This work still continues until today with the help of government support.

The open dialogue program between the Muslims and Christians enlightened me. Is it possible here in Singapore to have open dialogue with our Muslim friends without hidden agendas? This will open avenues of friendship and understanding instead of no talking about religion to my Muslim colleagues or friends.

It was an eye opener for me to see how 4 sisters started a café for the community so that they can come for counseling or if they just need to someone to talk too. It is a means to reach out to the community.

# THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Lutherans, together with most evangelicals observe two sacraments, baptism and communion. What are sacraments?

Sacraments are material things that point beyond themselves to their creator. They are like windows to divine reality – they light up for us the mystery of God. All created things are sacramental in the sense that as God's creation they point to or signify their creator, just like a great work of art point to the artist.

*Lissa's Germany Memories continued...*

The only setback I see is the younger generation in Germany. They are not involved and in the near future, who will continue the good work done by the older generations? I am so glad that JCC encourages the younger generation's involvement and have taken steps to cater to their needs. This I hope will continue the work to fulfill God's great commission.

I want to thank LCS and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria for the support and opportunity to be able to see the sights and birth place of our founder Martin Luther.



Baptism and the Lord supper are sacraments because they are instituted by Christ himself and are bound to the promise of his word. Christ himself was baptized and instructed his disciple in the great commission to baptize believers, as with it he gives the promise of his presence to be with them forever. Christ instituted the Lord's Supper and called his disciple to come to the richness of the Passover and to identify by participation with our present involvement in the events that happened – remembering with gratitude what the Lord did for us, receiving his body and his blood in the present, and looking forward to the day of his coming.



Why do we need the sacraments? We need it because we need the physical and material confirmation of our relationship with God, because we are human. We need assurances because of our human weakness. In the sacraments, God communicates to us in a way particularly suited to our creatureliness – we need more than the spoken word, we need the touch, the smell, the taste. The sacraments are a medium of action, God's action

## **Baptism**

Baptism unites us to Christ's death and resurrection. Paul identifies baptism as our participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. *"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."* (Roms 6:3-4)

The context of the teaching was Paul dealing with a moral question raised:

*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?* (Roms 6:1)

Some believers had believed that "grace abounded" – *"But where sin increased, grace increased all the more"* (Roms 5:20b), by faith in Christ, they could go on sinning with impunity.

Paul emphatic answer was

*By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?* ( Roms 6:2)

Paul teaches, you were baptized in to Christ, baptism means a baptised way of living. Paul was talking about how baptism fundamentally changes how we act and how we think about ourselves. We identify with Christ in his death and resurrection.

What does it mean to be baptized into Christ?

Paul explains this in the 2 Adams:

The 1<sup>st</sup> Adam represent all humanity fallen in sin that leads to death. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam – Through Christ, God offer his gift of righteousness, out of grace so that man is restored

*For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. (Roms 5:17)*

So when Paul talks about baptism into Christ, he is speaking of our new identity in Christ, who is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam.

What does baptism into Christ's death means to us?

It means death - our death – *"You were baptized into his death"* (Roms 6:2) When Paul says we were baptized into his death – he means we are baptized into a new reality – where once death reign through sin, now life reigns in Jesus Christ. Where once humans exist under the domination of evil, we now live under the reign of Christ.

*<sup>4</sup>We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death" (Roms 6:4).* Our burial marks the absolute death of the old life of sin and death, Death marks the end of life, in this case, life under the dominion of sin. Christ's death on the cross marks the end of sin's grip on humans. Because we are baptized into Christ's death, we must now consider ourselves, "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." (Roms 6:11) , we must henceforth *"walk in newness of life"* (Roms 6:4)

*<sup>4</sup>We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

The Biblical teaching is clear baptism marks our new life in Christ; it is a life transforming experience. Baptism is not a rite which ensures our salvation and eternal life, it calls for us to "walk in newness of life". It is so sad to see newly baptized members think that they have arrived, and instead of walking in newness of life, backslide in their faith and instead of walking in newness, walk in nominalism. What a travesty of God's word and promise.

### **Baptism into Christ involves a new community, the Church**

*For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body (1 Cor 12:13)*

Baptism also defines our new identity; we become members of a new community called the body of Christ. This community sets aside all human

division and hierarchies and places everyone on equal footing under the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. (Col 3:11)*

Paul further instructs us, how we should live as members of the new community:

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.<sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.<sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:12-14)*

Some Christians think that they can be “lone ranger” believers, the Biblical instruction does not allow it, all believers belong to corporate body, the Church. *The Church is the bride of Christ, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Eph 5:25).*

The Church indeed is very precious. Christ paid for her with his life, He is now at work by His Spirit and by His word purifying and beautifying her for Himself and for her joy.

Rev 19 describes the *“marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb’” (Revelation 19:6-9).*

Our focus is not simply on the fact that Jesus came 2,000 years ago as king and is coming again as King, but on the fact that He came into the world to betroth to Himself a bride (the Church, we believer) at the price of his own blood, and that he will come a second time to marry his bride and take us into the infinitely beautiful heavenly realms to enjoy his love and joy forever.

What a great promise. As baptized believers let us remember our identity in him, live a baptized life even as we look forward to the glorious day of his appearing.

**Tan Swee Leong**



# **Your Answer is at the Door**

Rev. James C. Matthews

"So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him' ... 'Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists'. ... 'When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!" "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel." But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. (Acts 12:5,7,12-16, NIV)

One morning during my prayer and devotion time, I ran across a scripture that stopped me in my tracks. There was something in the text that God wanted me to see. So I backed up and reread the text again. Then it hit me! These believers, who were praying earnestly, weren't expecting their prayers to be answered. I said to myself: "How can this be? How can we prayer "earnestly" for something and not believe our answer when it arrives?" God revealed to me that this happens all the time. He sends answers to our prayers and they are returned to Him stamped "Unclaimed."

Why is this? How can we take the time to pray and not expect our answer or recognize it when it comes knocking? I believe there are three main reasons why this happens.

First, is a "lack of expectation" due to "past experiences". In looking at the context of this scripture, these individuals had experienced fellow believers being killed, even after they prayed for their release. They had endured the stoning of Stephen, the slaying of James and now their leader Peter was schedule to be next. Those who were in the house praying, told the young girl who reported that their prayers had been answered, that she was "out of her mind". However, we must remember that our past experiences or failures do not determine or dictate God's present or future course of action. Many of the most difficult things that hinder our forward movement in life, are not the things that lay ahead of us, but those things that are behind us that distract us from what is happening in our lives now. We must expect God to answer our prayers and be on the look out for its

manifestation in our lives, regardless of what happened yesterday. The Bible says that he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Secondly, prayer in the lives of many believers, has been minimized to being nothing more than a "religious activity or responsibility", instead of it being the heaven moving gift of God. When we lose sight of the fact that we are calling upon an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Creator God of the universe, who also happens to be "our Father", we can become overwhelmed by the severity of our situation. We must understand that we are not calling upon another human being or some distant disinterested deity - but our Father who has no limitations. If I can find it in His Word, and agree with what He has said, the facts of my situation will have to line up with the truth of His word. Facts change everyday, but the truth never changes. Because I've decided to believe the truth above the fluctuating facts, I have a legitimate expectation of manifestation (answered pray) in my life. Prayer is more than religion or a believer's responsibility, but a relationship with our Father!

Thirdly, "God's ways are not our ways". I truly believe, that part of the difficulty those gathered in prayer had in receiving their answer, was that it seemed "too easy". They prayed and God answered their prayer. It was that simple! Believe it or not, this happens more often than you think. I've discovered that many of us overlook our answers because we "feel" that we haven't toiled, labored or suffered enough to have earned an answer from God. Remember, you are a "son", not a slave! You don't earn blessings - you receive them! Jesus said, in Matthew 7:11, "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

Therefore, what have you been praying to God about? Did you know that God is your Father and He wants to bless you? Do you expect your prayer to be answered? If not, you need to take a good look around, because the answer to your prayer may have already arrived, and waiting on you to receive it!

# DIACLECT MINISTRY

I have been attending the dialect service for the past few weeks and have been blessed by it. The adults have been faithfully serving and befriending the visitors, who felt so welcome to the house of the Lord!

I am touched by their faithfulness in serving week after week with one purpose; i.e., to bring people into the house of the Lord! I want to thank them for their faithfulness in calling my mum week after week.

Yesterday (27<sup>th</sup> July), Pastor spoke on the heavenly home and this is indeed the topic I have always wanted to talk to my mum but have difficulty broaching the subject. My mum came to the service and she started a conversation with Auntie Susan and asked, "Why are Christian children not willing to hold the joss-stick if their parents are dead?" Then she added, "Doesn't this mean that the children are not faithful sons or daughters? I believe that the conversation was an opportunity. My mum is thinking much more than ever.

Indeed, the sermon spoke to me and it also spoke to my mum. I saw tears from her eyes when she heard the sermon. It was great! The speaker spoke substantially on the religious beliefs of the Chinese and explained why they are wrong. It was both humorous and instructive to hear him talk about the fact that Christians who depart from this world have no worry about no money in heaven, no place to stay, nothing to eat – unlike the followers of the Chinese religious traditions who pray in the temples and burn hell money, paper houses, etc. because they are concerned that their departed loved ones are being deprived in the nether world. Contrast this with the heavenly house that Christians know that their Lord and Saviour has prepared for them. Those attending the service left with a better understanding of how we could get to the heavenly home.

你住在哪里？(Where do you live?) – A catchy question that resounded loud and clear throughout the sermon. As much as people give a lot of attention to their present abode, likewise they ought to contemplate the question about their future dwelling place. Do we look forward to settling in paper houses (or cardboard-container dwellings) like many indigent people presently do in this world?

你住在哪里？ It was a question thrust into our heart and mind, a question we should never fail to contemplate regarding our future. I was really

touched by the message and by the faithfulness of all who helped out in the dialect ministry.

I hope that more people will come to be blessed by this ministry and more brothers and sisters in Christ will step forward to help out. (I have volunteered to serve, too.)

God bless!

*Roger*



**“Farewell” for our dear Benedict**

On Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> July, some of our Youths were at Changi Airport Terminal 3 bidding farewell to our Pulse coordinator, Benedict. He’ll be going to Shanghai

for an exchange programme for about 6 months and will only return at the end of the year.

However, his scheduled flight was delayed by about 1 ½ hours as there were some delays in Shanghai. Perhaps this is God’s plan as we could use this 1 ½ hours to interact more with him and he even treated us to coffee at TCC. The most amazing thing is that because of the delays, Peh Ern and a few of us could make it in time to bid farewell to him. They wouldn’t have done so if the plane had departed at the original time. Praise the Lord! We’ll definitely miss his presence and laughter for the next 5 months, but we know that he’s in Shanghai doing what God has wanted him to do. And we would also want to thank Jason, who will be standing in for Benedict as Pulse coordinator during his absence. 加油Jason!

*Zheng Lin*