

AINA OLAWALE MATTHEW

JESUS AND ME

...a series

'To death I will follow, no flinching'

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JESUS AND ME

INTRODUCTION

Do you care to know something new this moment? Do you care to understand a mystery? Do you wish to know what new things I just found out? If yes, come along with me as I show you a new message -- it is indeed new.

'I travelled alone upon this lonesome way,
my burdens were heavy, and dark way my day;
I looked for a friend,
Not knowing that He had all of the time been looking for me.
¹

'I have sung for kings and queens all around the world,
I have romanced millions with my guitar and a love song
Taj Mahal to Paris, Galveston to Hollywood
I thought I had done it all then I met you.²

'Now I'm singing a new song
making music for Jesus my King
He is my Hero
He has become my everything,
Now there is no other song,
No higher melody Under heaven;
The greatest Love Story, JESUS AND ME³

'When I've done all I can,
Just to help my fellow man,
And when my best is never good enough,
There have been times when I felt just like giving up
Trials come on every hand the more I try to do what He
wants me to do, Sometimes I just don't understand;
But Jesus reminds me everytime I pray; 'oh it won't be, it
won't be like this, it won't be like this always⁴

'The road may be long to heaven's pearly gate;
I know it's narrow;
I know it's straight;

But Jesus is there through eternity,
We'll travel along, just JESUS and ME.

Now its Jesus and Me
For each tomorrow, for every headache, and every sorrow;
I know that I can depend upon my new found friend
And so till the end, it's Jesus and Me¹⁵

'People call me a winner
But I know what it means to lose;
I've seen some high times
I've paid some dues
Paying dues isn't just enough
Nothing seemed to satisfy me
Until I met Jesus
I'll tell you He's alive
And I am free¹⁶

Just when I thought it was over He came to my aid,
Now I'm singing a new song,
making music for Jesus my King
He is my Hero
He has become my everything,
Now there is no other song,
No higher melody Under heaven;
The greatest Love Story, JESUS AND ME

I wish you go through the phrases again. It has a message for you.
You must have picked them up.

Many times I strive to understand certain things about God. I have always wondered why he said somethings, though I read the bible story but it would not just fit in the hollow part the questions have created, until I met with Him personally. So true is it when they say: 'questions not answers bring about knowledge', not little have acquired so far in this journey with Him- just Jesus and Me.

ONCE WITH HIM... till I got lost

Now it is dawn on me how much I've missed. Shameful and painful, though I accept the blame. What have I ever wanted that He never provided? Nothing actually, I was just not contented.

How do you feel when you lose something worth dying for or something that gives you unspeakable joy? You feel tattered and disastrous, isn't it? You feel so unhappy, sad, full of regret, and never wish talking about it. Same was how I felt when I was lost from Him.

Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter's shop until He was thirty. Three years He was an itinerant preacher.

He never owned a home. He never wrote about. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to the college other than being an apprentice at the carpenter's shop. He never put His foot inside a big city like New York or Washington. He never travelled 500 miles from the place He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials worth calling His, but Himself... so everytime He spoke I always thought He was inferior.

So true is the saying: 'you do not know what you've got until you've lost it'.

One faithful day, He approached me. He looked humble, gentle, meek, and seems humiliated. He looked to me as one whose right has been messed up with or abused by a bully. He actually looked stupid in appearance. It didn't took time before I concluded that He was a beggar, so I put my hand into my pocket and pointed a few cash at Him then He rejected it. 'What do you want Mr. man?' I

yelled at Him.

He seems too calm for my liking, so I got angry and walked out on Him, even before He said a word. After a little while, I looked behind me, behold He followed me. Then I approached Him, 'can I help you?' I asked. 'I only want to be a friend' He answered. A friend?' I laughed out. 'And what qualify you to make such a request? Who are you? What have you got? Where do you hail from? You don't seem to be in the right place. May be you should come back another time when I have the time for jokes' I continued. I was a bit embarrassed at such a request. I'm I the calibre He ought to ask such a question, I'm I that lenient to accommodate rags?

'He doesn't fit me. Why would He make such a request from me? Why not others?' I had a second thought. 'Let me find out' I concluded.

I returned to the same spot I left Him. He was sitted there helpless. 'Don't you have a friend?' I asked cautiously. 'It's a very long story' He replied, 'would you be my friend, please?' He asked pitifully. 'I will' I replied with pity. He was glad, He leaped for joy, like I just gave him a million bucks. He embraced me and said 'finally you have become my friend' He gave a deep breathe. I imagined how long He has been seeking a friend.

Now I got a new friend. So who is He and why did He insist on being my friend? I was so curious to know. Is it to help me solve an academic problem, lead me to a pasture of gold, or just become a burden? I wanted to get o the end of it.

Day after day, He amazes me with different manner of things. Every minute He makes a visit in and out of my heart's very beat. He kept me in wonder. How caring He is! I was expecting Him make request and burdensome attitudes, but reverse was the

case. I was looking for the destination, I wanted to know His mission, yet the daily experience were unspeakable and remarkable.

I first noticed his footsteps in a lush, green pasture and decided to see where they headed. He then began to make promises. He promised me a whole territory, a big beautiful mansion, life and all sought at the end. They were all abstract to me, I wanted them immediately.

I once asked Him where we were heading to, but He said I should just follow, that very soon we would get there. He asked me to always consider three things about Him as we journey together: 'HIS WORDS', 'HIS WORKS', and 'HIS WAYS'. He says that those three things were His virtues. He made me promise to Him that I wouldn't disappoint Him, which I did reluctantly. Things were changing suddenly, I couldn't say exactly, but I am no longer what I used to be.

One very day, He said words like this: 'Promise me that you would do all I do, no turning to the right or to the left from the way I go, and you would not depart from whatever things I ask of you. Even when I say enter that pit, leave the gold, pick the sword, drop the diamond, or when I say abandon me and run; promise me you would not argue nor doubt.' I was out of words not knowing what to say. The next thought that ran across my mind was 'who is this Man?'

Then I noticed that the very reason for insisting on friendship was how much He loved me. But His cost seems expensive. Why would I leave the gold that I have ever longed for or jump into the pit, or run and abandon me? Is He a robber? I became skeptical, but I continued still. 'Let me get to the root of this' I thought. He always told me stories, lots of interesting ones about some kind of beings I have never imagined ever exist, beings He said have

wings, clean and powerful. 'How would He ever imagine such? It's absurd and impossible' I thought, though the stories were touching. I never knew that His absurdity surpasses my sagacity, and His debility is more energetic than my solidity. My journey with Him became sceptic. He was caring, loving, generous, clever, wise, and had all the good qualities I never expected He could possess, but it was just not enough, where are the riches, the gold, the money and the greatness/pride?

He never told me what was ahead, be it gold or silver or otherwise. It wasn't long before the trail made a sharp turn and headed up a steep path. The journey has continued across beautiful terrain, and some rather difficult places. Thankfully there have always been places along the way to rest beside refreshing waters.

He said to me as I journey along, 'you see my dear friend, the terrain is not all beautiful just as the clouds aren't all white, only the challenges along the way makes us fit. If you keep grazing in green pastures too long, you will become a bored, fat spectator rather than a strong, fit follower'. I followed silently like a child whose tear gland had ceased work, I kept enduring.

It was one of those places beside the refreshing waters I rested one faithful day to take a nap.

'Wake up, Wake up!' The voice said. I opened my eyes wide only to see a stranger. 'Who are you?' I asked. 'I am sent' the reply came, 'sent from who to who?' 'To you Of course' the conversation continued. 'I never remember Him describing you in any of His stories. He never even mentioned that He would send anyone. Besides where is He?' I asked. 'He continued alone as He saw that you were too weak and tired to move on with Him' the stranger answered.

I was just beginning to get along and fall in love with Him. How

could He do this to me? Is this an illusion? Numerous thoughts ran across my heart as I felt disappointed with the one I thought had loved me. But why did He do this to me? I never could explain.

I felt like dying. Is that all He could He has to do and just abandon me? I thought He was nice and honest. He couldn't wait a little while and bade goodbye, not even a note...to bad of Him. I thought He was a friend. 'Tragedy!!!' I exclaimed. It took a long time before I could recover from the thoughts of depression that overwhelmed me.

I almost forgot that the stranger was still around. 'shall we continue?' the stranger motioned, 'NO!!' an immediate reply from my heart through my mouth, 'it's of no essence' I continued, 'why should I continue, when the one I thought I could trust have failed me, how come I would trust you either? I concluded.

It was a trick, I was fooled, I never knew...

I turned back like making a U-turn. My silent inward desires for riches and greatness sprung up. I began to feel hatred and discontentment. I never knew the way but I kept moving. I've never felt like that before.

I began to see many cherishable things. Silver and brass were uncountable on that way, Gold and diamond were there as well though not as numerous as I wanted. No rules, no principle, no consideration, nor control, not even a step to follow. I pictured how glorious and full of wealth the end would be.

But the way that seems right to man, and the end thereof is death.

If wishes were horses, even beggars would have a ride.

After a while, I saw a big city down my path. The outskirts of the city was a wilderness. I thought: 'the city must be full of gold than the path'. I entered into the city without hesitating.

To my surprise, the first person I met in the city was 'the stranger' that broke the bad news to me earlier. 'Here you are? How come you got here before me?' I asked. 'Well, I know the way you didn't and besides my master already provided a better a way for my journey when he sent me to you' the stranger replied.

'So where is he? Where is your master? I want to see him and at least thank him for all the treasures I picked up on the way and at least ask for a little more' I asked as I thought I was going to meet my old friend there.

'No problem about that' he replied. He took me to his master. What I saw there was not what I expected. I didn't see anyone like the old friend I knew. No kind welcome, instead horrible accusation.

'You stole my treasures!' the bold voice of the master yelled, 'Open your hands and bag' he ordered. I became speechless like a dumb fowl. The size of his guards is all enough to scare me off. I wished all I had taken would disappear all at once before the mighty guards come any closer, but that never happened. They saw I had taken on the way; the gold, the diamond, the silver, and all the treasure I had taken, even the little things I had received from my old friend were all taken from me. I had no word of defence. It was the beginning of anguish and suffering. As the African adage says 'Eni nwa ifa nwa ofo' which means 'He who seeks inordinate gain seeks loss'.

Wish I could just reverse time!!!

Suddenly he pronounced his judgement: 'Take this stranger to the wilderness of death and must be killed the next market day, which is seven days from now'. *'Let the ground swallow me up now'* I pleaded in my heart.

tears roll down my eyes profusely non-stopping till I was left in the wilderness. 'What next now?' I asked myself, and the reply was

'death!' ... 'where could my friend be?' I thought. I knew it was already late to plead innocent. I got dawn on me that I had been deceived by the stranger. Had I know, I would have waited a minute more before taking the U-turn. I lost it all. I lost Him. I lost the gold. I lost the silver. I lost the brass and diamond. And finally, I had lost the precious virtues.

LOST IN THE WILDERNESS

From the time we were Children, most of us have been preoccupied with the desire to feed, bath, cloth, pamper, prosper, and protect ourselves. We ran to the things that made us feel good and ran from those that makes us uncomfortable. We always wanted to be happy. Eventually when we outgrew our childish ways and realize that there is more to life, we pursued education, career, family and make name for ourselves. But we realized that there was still somethings more that we needed to satisfy us. We have always had an unquenchable desire to experience more. Even when we have enough, yet it was always never enough.

Alone here in the desert I began to remember my good old friend. I remember all of His very words right from the first time we met. Tears never stopped rolling down my eyes as I fell into deep thoughts of hoe we have been together. I remember when He first approached Him and how I embarrassed Him and yet calm and gently patiently seek my love. I kept remembering all day long till I fell asleep.

I woke up into the thought again. I was overwhelmed by how mush He cared for me. I wondered where He could be at that tie that I left His path. 'Where could He be now?' I thought. No other though came to my mind but the thought of Him. Accepting fate was next to my mind. Giving up, I thought was the next thing to do. It was clear to me that there is no going out of the wilderness of death.

No escape route!

They were so sure that there is no escape to the extent that they kept no guard to secure me.

I kept wandering in the wilderness. One thing kept telling me, He would come, but I doubt it, how would He come, from where? certainly impossible. Would He send those creatures in His stories? Certainly not! It's just like fleas in a closed jar and would not come out. I couldn't figure out what next. I was just waiting to give up for death to come.

I recalled all the good things I have experienced in life, and how many things He had taught me just to console myself, but it was making me more sad.

There was no one to feed me. I was like a sheep without shepherd, whose food is no more served, and needs to care for itself; become dirty, feel worthless, endures hatred, feel disappointed and just trying to shy away from death.

Two days past, no food, I'm starving, drying up and felt abandoned. Even the stranger did not say hello to me (of course what help will that offer). It was as if I had left the world. New friends started appearing - Ravens, black birds of the sky. I think they are here to sing a funeral song, preparing me for my demise.

'This was not the type of death I ever hoped for. I have always wished to die old, placed in an expensive coffin, and celebrated with a very befitting burial, but I don't just understand, what has suddenly gone wrong? I guess I just got to the wrong hands.' I thought all day.

I cleared a part of the forest where I wandered, to write a piece of treatise to console my dying soul and thank my old friend whom I was never able to appreciate all the time we spent together. My treatise went thus:

'If you would ever be able to see this, please read. I don't know you too well, but you do know me than I do myself. I was on a quest for riches when you met me. I

felt embarrassed at your quest to be a friend. I thought of it but never knew what good you would be to me, but now I know. You have taught me a lot. To endure, to love, to be generous, to be caring, and to be impartial. If there is one thing I love about our being together, it is **'following you'**. I noticed your footstep in a lush, green pasture and I decided to see where they headed. I thought I was just going to a destination to be reached soon, I never knew that it is a journey that will continue over an entire lifetime. You asked me to consider **your words** which where; 'leave gold, pick the sword, abandon me and run' though I pursued gold and landed in the wilderness. You also asked me to consider **your works and ways**- they are wondrous and unspeakable. But I have one request, Please; let those your stories come true. That is my last wish. One thing I was never able to tell you when we were together is what I will say now: I LOVE YOU. Thank you for your love, because you loved me first, even before I loved you. I love you for your love.'

Now six days past, I have lost all strength, I can't stand nor walk, I was just laying there half-dead. All life was almost gone out of me. Just as I was singing my goodbye song to a world of hate and backstabbers, then I experienced a wonder. I did not believe my eyes. Is it a consequence of my almost gone soul, that I am seeing sky visions?

He touched me, the one I have been thinking of all day long. The last strength came up in me, I gave a hug. He has been searching for me all day long. 'How did you get here...' I began to weep as I broke the silence. 'Where have you been? I've missed you' I did not stop talking till He spoke a word. 'You will leave soon' He said. 'To where and how? With you?' I asked. 'You will go Home now, leave

me here' He replied. 'Not without you! I've done nothing but to get into trouble without you. Please do not let me go without you' I wept. I took Him to the place I had cleared, where I wrote with my hands on the floor all I want to let Him know. He read it and wept. Then I repeated 'I LOVE YOU' and He embraced me and said 'I LOVE YOU TOO, and that is why you must leave and I must stay. I am come here to pay ransom for your lost soul'. You have to leave here tomorrow dear.

Over the night I placed my head on His shoulders as He told me some cogent things I would never forget. The night passed like a minute. It was best spent with Him. Not too long the executioner came. I was wet in tears. His kindness could not be compared to any kind. He loved me so dearly, that He gave His life for me. He said His last words;

'Through many dangers, toils and snares, you have come, though you have raced through the wrong paths, and now about to start afresh the right path, but be rest assured grace will lead you home. Now you are free from the law, tell all you shall find on the way, and when you get home tell the father how far you have come. Give account of all that have happened. Now abandon me and Run!!! Remember those words, and remember; I LOVE YOU!'

He was eventually executed. He died for my sake.

On my way back home as He has told me, I saw gold, saw silver, saw all riches all calling on to me 'pick me!', but I acted blind to them all. All that filled my heart was the death of my friend that gave me life. 'How will I pay Him back?' I had asked earlier, and all He replied was '**get home safely**'. I that all He wanted from me?

He is such a wonder. He is the wonder that I have seen, no such

has ever happened. He brought my life to its knees and lifted me up. He would forever remain in my heart.

How sweet He is. He was so dearing that He saved a wretch like me. He trained me. I was lost He found me. Held bound for my freedom. Who am I without me? He made me who I am. Seeing Him at home again is what I ever long for. He is an encourager, a lover, the joy of my very heart, the peace in the storm, the word, way and work that made me whole. I no longer need gold, all I want to be is to be like Him. So caring that He noted my faults and straitened me up. He noted every tear and fear I had felt. So I am resolved no longer to linger, charmed by the world's delight. Things that are higher, things that are nobler, these have allured my sight, I am resolved to go home, I will hasten to Him, I will hasten so Glad and free to that friend that gave His life for me. I LOVE HIM, HE LOVED ME FIRST. Now I'm singing a new song, making music for my FRIEND, He is my Hero, He has become my everything.

THE STORY

FANNY J. CROSBY was right when she composed 'Tell me the story of Jesus';

'Tell me the story of Jesus,
Write on my heart every word;
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard.'

The first question I asked; 'Please tell me the meaning of all that has happened. I don't understand '.

He replied, 'I am Jesus Christ. You are man, and your soul has been in the journey. The stranger is the agent of darkness'.

After the little introduction, He taught me a lot of lessons, of which I would discuss a bit.

Steve Adebowale was right on point when he said that 'the absurdity of the Omnipotent surpasses the sagacity of man, and the debility of the most High is more energetic than the solidity of man.

Behind the Genesis.

At the beginning of things, I mean creation, GOD - the mysterious trinity [so to say] - created man as sin in the Genesis.

The Scripture says:

'And GOD said let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' Gen. 1:26 [KJV]

From the scripture verse quoted above, you would notice a conversation between the trinity. 'Let us make man'. Who was man at that time? Was it man from the future that was being spoken of here or one man has been in existence then?

In the creation story, God created man as a spirit, just as He created angels up there in heaven. This means that man has been in existence as long as the angels are. All dwelled together in heaven praising God in His majesty. That man was a Spirit just like the cherubims and seraphims, until God's pronouncement in Genesis 1:26.

Man was then covered with flesh and a soul was administered into Him from the very nostrils of His maker. As you know, the potter has the decision of what he uses the pot to do, so was the case of man. The invisible man became visible, became different from the angels, uniquely made lower than the rest of his mates-not humiliation- but never lost his immortality as a spirit.

Man was created visible not because He should be a caricature, but because there is need for a difference.

Ever since the fall of Satan and its angel, the world became a home of demons/darkness which were all spirits. Remember that Genesis 1:2 says:

'And the earth was without form and void: and
darkness was upon the surface of the deep.'

They are bonafide members/citizens of the world on the Earth, yet God wanted to make a difference. Some theologians believe that the fall of Lucifer has been several centuries before the creation (*but that isn't the bone of contention here*), but the fact that the demons were qualified citizens of the earth, not aliens.

God made man for the purpose of making a difference. It's an

honour as God created man for a unique purpose different from the reason why we have angels. For this reason, Satan was jealous; because not only did He create the man, He also handed dominion of all things on earth to him-what a love and favor.

The aim and purpose is that after man has done the things sent him by his master, his visible flesh would be forgotten and discarded and the spirit of man would ascend back and join his fellow to continue service unto God.

After the creation of the visible man, He was still immortal just like the other angels, yet a little lower, since there is a limit to which the flesh could reach. God placed man in the garden of Eden.

But God did not only place man there alone, He also planted among others two unique trees that worth mentioning: the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

The tree of life was Christ - i.e. God Himself, and the other was the tree of knowledge of the things of this earth.

And out of the ground made the LORD GOD to grow tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.' Gen. 2:9 [KJV]

The functions of the tree of life was more emphasized in the book of Revelation.

'He that has ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches; To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.'REV. 2:7

'And in the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bore twelve manner of fruit, and yielded her fruit every

month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.' REV. 22:2

One of the major changes/differences between the Genesis and Revelation was the kind of tree remaining in the garden. In the Genesis, the garden was called 'Eden', but in the Revelation it was called 'Paradise'. The only tree in the paradise was the tree of life which was the Lamb Himself.

At the placement of man in the garden, he was to be an ambassador. For no reason have He made flesh than to make the created man an ambassador different from the demonic spirits. Still in the garden, man ought to have a closer look at the tree of life, but because the tree was not too good to behold, man overlooked it. No attention was given to the tree, not well cultured, not eaten, but left alone to grow. God would always pay visit to man, but one version of God-the tree of life- was and has always been with man all day and night.

In order to show full responsibility in the new ambassadorial position, He gave man the dominion over all that was on earth, but when man ate the forbidden fruit (so to say) the dominion was seized from man. The immortality of man was lost. The spirit that fellowship daily with God had entered coma, a poison has been taken in.

Man was sent out of this very garden, the tree of life became lonely. Only ambassadors have the dominion, that is the only way the flesh is useful (James 2:26). The devil understood that what made the real difference was the dominion accompanying the flesh, and now it is stolen away.

Man is of no use without dominion in that position. Until there is dominion, man would remain God's opposite. God is a God of dominion and authority.

Only a man whose dominion is not lost has a place in the spirit world of eternity. It is the Spirit that holds the dominion potential. Dominion isn't the the function of the flesh but of the spirit residing in the flesh. Dominion lost to the devil is spirit captured. That is why if one's dominion isn't recovered and restored unto God before death comes, the devil who has already captured the spirit has gained a member to hell. So it is a function of who owns the spirit at the point of death.

The flesh has no other function but a tool of ambassadorship for the spiritual realm in the reality. If the spirit therefore be evil, then the flesh operates as an ambassador to the devil operating on the inside, and if reverse is the case, and the spirit residing on the inside be Holy the flesh would succumb to the leadership from the inside.

So the flesh is just an ambassador to the spirit operating on the inside be it good or evil. The flesh here isn't the same as the 'self' or 'flesh' used in the epistles - the context is different.

Ever since that departure, Christ -the tree of life- have sought all ways of giving life back to His old lost friend.

At His arrival on earth, man did not recognize Him as one who have come to save rather we saw Him as a timid and stupid foreigner. We were looking for the Lion of Judah rather than the Lamb of God. We rejected Him because He behaved like a stupid lamb instead of a lion. We sought a conqueror, not a sacrificial lamb. We wanted a lion that was strong and courageous, not a lamb that would be timid or weak. We prayed daily for one who would have the strength and courage to take back our dominion for us.

What we did not realize is that lions have other traits that would not serve the right purpose, for that reason we almost lost Him. In

fact we lost it, if not for grace.

While He was still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial.

He didn't come to create a spectacle, He came to make disciples. On one occasion, He dismissed a large crowd that had come to see Him and moved on to the next village to preach the gospel. On another occasion, He walked past the crowd just to two blind men who were crying out for help. On another occasion He called out to Zacchaeus, a tax collector, sitting in a tree above the crowd. Jesus wasn't too impressed by the size of the crowd, He was so concerned of the life He had come to offer, the salvation He has kept for His old time friend-Man.

He came to set us free, to return us back to our immortality. I've heard that if you put fleas in a jar and close the lid, it takes the fleas about three days to get used to the top of the jar and hit the lid time after time. At first, they don't realize that they are held captive (so was man at the fall). But after only a few days, they become accustomed to living in the confines of the jar (such is man, overwhelmed with pleasures of his pitiful circumstance). After that you can remove the jar and the fleas won't fly out. Even after they are free, they continue to live as prisoners. Apparently the trauma of hitting the lid day after day convinces them that freedom is just too costly.

At one time you may have felt like one of those fleas. Hopefully, He cared enough to come to man and say 'I have come to set you free!' That's what it means to proclaim release to the captives (as in Isa. 61:1).

He was named Immanuel, meaning 'God with us'. That was the

interpretation of His act in the garden He was always there day and night as the tree of life, and He still promised to be there in Matthew 28:20 :- '... and remember *I am with you always (Immanuel)* to the end of the age.'

He came to set us free from everything that stops us from lying full, free and in dominion. He said 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is the slave of sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed' John 8:34-36. Servanthood would be forgotten and sonship comes in.

As He as said and would keep saying, to be a fit follower worthy of reward, challenge must come. Only the challenges we encounter will make us fit for the kingdom. It's not a destination, but an eternal journey. He made it clear that "the Kingdom of God doesn't come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is' or 'There it is', because the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21).

Our experience at the end of the journey will depend upon what we experienced along the way. That would be the essence of a good report. He urge us to remember His WORDS, HIS WORKS and HIS WAYS as they are the content of a good report. He said specifically: "*In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.*" (Jn. 16:33) because if you only graze on the pasture, you will become a fat spectator rather than a strong fit follower.

The seeker had come, the real shepherd has arrived and have brought light and salvation to the lost.

LEFT IN THE WILDERNESS

Luke's account of the gospel recorded three distinct parables in chapter 15; the lost sheep, lost coin, and the prodigal son. In the lost sheep, Christ said:

'What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he finds it?' Luke 15:4 [KJV]

The first question that came across my heart was 'did the shepherd think before doing that?' Of course he did. The shepherd is well aware of the hunger that would pay visit to his flock if he searched for the lost for too long. He was aware of the danger posed on his flock, aware of the wild beast that would come to feed on his flock if he leaves them without a shepherd. He know that thieves may pay visit to the flock, and that his enemies may come by and venture their anger on his shepherdless flock in his absence; but like as if he never thought, he left the flock ALONE in the wilderness.

Have you ever been in a situation when you feel like help is coming from no where? Have you ever felt like the world is about to come to an end? You must have been in a situation before where you ask-'where is God? Don't I have faith? Why are things just not working the way I wanted it?

Let me remind you, among the promises of the master is the tribulation and challenges. Even among the prayer He taught us, tribulation and the evil one appeared there, even the sermon on the mount which were to Be-attitudes in our daily endeavours says 'Blessed are those persecuted for righteousness sake'. Have you ever come across any of Christ statement which says 'you shall not behold tribulation or suffering'? Then of use would the

virtues of endurance and longsuffering be if He says so?

'No star without a scar', 'no glory without a bitter story'.

Our lives are designed with good and bad, that is what makes the journey interesting.

Ever since Adam and Eve disobeyed God, humanity has not had an easy life. Thorns grow beside the rose, weeds spring up in the garden, dark clouds hide the bright sunshine, and challenges became our daily bread. Remember that such is life. It makes us fit for the kingdom.

Gold must pass through fire, crude oil must pass through cracking in heat before it becomes useful as petroleum. All you just have to do is realise that every problem and challenge have an end.

You can't reap until you weep and sow (Psalm 126:5). You grow after some groanings. It is training under rigorous challenges that reshape you for the narrow path.

Remember that the mansion/home is all furnished in gold, that only means that only finished and refined materials goes into that place, and implies that you must be refined just as gold is refined.

A perfect relationship got diluted and became imperfect. A life of difference and discovery became drudgery; ashes replaced eternal ages; serenity was washed away by sweat; thorns and weeds displaced flowers as sin placed its mark upon man.

But let's not forget that God is there even in those trying times. Remember, the tree of life never left its position even when the test of choice on its friend Adam and Eve in the garden. We just have to be able to withstand the test of time.

Do we ever say the sun is no longer there when it becomes hidden by the clouds? Do we say the moon has gone into extinction when it disappears into the sky? No! They still remain there even if we

can't clearly see them. So is God

He is ever perfect [Immanuel] just that the situation, condition and all we are passing through tends to cloud our sight that we became confused and know not what is next. We at that time feel like a blind and at the same time deaf man (imagine how such would live fine). We aren't seeing Him neither can we hear Him those moments. Confusion rolls into our daily thoughts, but blessed is that person who knows how to make stepping stones out of stumbling blocks of stones.

Once you make the decision to follow like a sheep led to the slaughter, you must remember that wolves won't stop coming, thieves wouldn't rest, and hunger wouldn't stay afar off, but remember that they all have a short life span. It is like joining the army; once you join, you sign in for whatever the consequences may be. Remember, we are members of God's army of the end time. You can't be a winner until you have known what it means to lose. You just have to keep up the hope and love for he loved you first.

Until you have learned that in better situation and also in the worst to keep still and keep on the candle of hope, you will keep drifting and slipping of the slippery narrow path, and remember, the difficulty of the challenge is not so much in finding an answer but being willing to pay the price for solving them.

Remember, the solution is just getting the light and shine it into the darkness, in pouring the living water into the wilderness and replacing the leavened bread with the living bread; and remember that may take little time, you just have to endure.

To walk out of the wilderness, you must have a direction, and never give up on your mission, nor give in to temptation but rather key into salvation until you have completed the task and be able

to conveniently and confidently say 'Mission accomplished!' before GOD the father.

During the World War II, Jews were being persecuted by the Nazi Germany, Corrie and Betsie Boom were sent to prison for trying to help the Jewish Christian escape from Europe. Following their arrest, they were transferred to Ravensbruck, a terrible Germany prison camp where prisoners were subjected to hardship and cruelty.

When they entered the barracks, they found out that it was extremely overcrowded and flea-infested. On their first morning there, they read from 1Thess.5:16-18: "Be joyful always; Pray continually; Give thanks in all circumstance, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus". Betsie told Corrie to stop and thank God for every detail of there new living quarters. Corrie at first flatly refused to give thanks for the fleas but Betsie persisted. She finally succumbed. During the month spent at that camp, they were suprised to find how openly they could hold bible study and prayer meetings without guard interference. It was several months latter when they learned that the guards could not enter the barracks because of the fleas.

Tony Campolo, a popular preacher and college professor from the United states tell about the time his mother called and said, "Tony, Mrs. Kilpatrick died and you need to go to her funeral". Mrs. Kilpatrick lived just down the street from him when he was a little boy, growing up in the city of Philadelphia. He arrived a few minute late for the funeral, and so he rushed through the door and quickly sat down. But when he looked around the room, he noticed that he and one little woman in front of him were the only one there. Then he looked at the coffin and suddenly realized that the man laid to rest there was not Mrs. Kilpatrick! He had gone to the wrong funeral chapel. He thought it would be best to quietly get

up and leave, but just as he was about to stand, the woman turned around and asked, 'did you know him?' He knew it would not be right to leave the woman there to grieve alone and so he decided to stay for the funeral service. Then, when the service was over, he went to the grave-side service as well. After the service was over and they were riding back to the funeral chapel together, he turned to the woman and confessed, 'I did not really know your husband, Mrs. King, but I will like to be your friend'. She replied, 'that doesn't matter. You will never know what your being here as meant to me'.

The presence of a friend in a time of a need is a great source of comfort and strength. Jesus is such a friend. He is available in the time of plenty and time of want. He is able to encourage and refresh us when we are weary or troubled. He will remain with us when we walk through dark valleys, and encounter difficult problems. His goodness and mercy are always available just that our patience, obedience, and willing determination are not always readily available. Yet, He will never leave us or give up on us, except we come against Him. 'What a friend we have in Jesus!'

You can be certain of this that God works in a strange and mysterious way to bless those whom He loves, but only those who trust God and enjoy close relationship with Him will take a high level of confidence in His strange and mysterious ways. I'm sure that your last prayers has been answered, just look out for the testimony.

You would see the shepherd come back joyfully and reward you patient waiting. He loves you even before you know Him.

THE HATCHED EGG...the result

Twenty-one centuries have come and gone, and today He is a centre-piece of the human race, and the leader of the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built, all the parliament that ever served and all the kings that ever reigned put together have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as that one solitary life.

He was nailed upon the cross between two thieves. While He was dying, His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth-His cloak. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Crucified, laid behind a stone, lived just to die, rejected and alone, like a trampled rose; He took my punishment, my pain, my fears and the consequences of my sin. How much I want to live a life like His; despite the fact that many are educated, yet His wisdom surpasses them, born and bread in the manger, yet and fit than those who were bread and buttered with a silver-spoon. Though I am born and buttered not in a manger, educated, and never worked with a carpenter yet I want to be like Him. To be humble and influential as He is. To be blameless and spotless, I wanna be like Him.

Far away, He saw us and in compassion He acted ignoble, ran, left all His glory, dignity, and accepted the ridicule to embrace us in our guilt, dirt, and stiff-neckedness, and forgave us, and stretched reconciling hands toward us. But did we accept Him?

One of the result of His actions was the eruption/birth of Christianity. Actually, Christ begat salvation not Christianity. Christ brought light and salvation to us not Christianity, but salvation gave birth to Christianity. The traits and qualities emulated

brought about the Christ-like name--Christianity.

Ever since the death of the apostles, the baton experienced a change of hands; there was a turn around. Religious practices set into the stage.

A Christian is one who belongs to the way. The journey with Jesus is an attempt to challenge all who follow Him, to set aside all they have charted for themselves in order to follow the way of Jesus.

Then, it was powerflow, wisdom in act, joy and perseverance in terms of persecution, truth and spirit-controlled living, but is that equal with what we have now?

Paul said it's not a thing to pride on, it is believed that impartation is not more paramount than memorisation, but it is the opposite now in the Christendom, The church shouldn't exist to serve its members but to serve God ultimately first. Members should therefore not see themselves as consumers but servers of the same goal, which is to worship.

Dr. G. Cambell Morgan was right when he wrote:

Generation --> Degeneration --> Regeneration.

It all began remarkable, it was spirit-filled then, fire-full and God present, but now the flesh had overcome, the evil within has been unleashed, and the demon within is now in control. The Church is degenerating, there is need for regeneration.

Alexander Franser Tytler also wrote about the spiritual decline:

BONDAGE---}SPIRITUAL REBIRTH---}GREAT COURAGE---}
LIBERTY---}LIBERTY---}ABUNDANCE---}SELFISHNESS---}COMPLA
CENCY---}APATHY---}DEPENDENCY---}BONDAGE

From the beginning of the time, we humans have had an unquenchable desire to experience more. Adam and Eve lived in a

beautiful garden where they could each freely of everything but the fruit of one tree, but that wasn't enough, they wanted more. David had it all; wealth, power, fame, and harem full of beautiful women, but he wanted more; he wanted Batsheba, the wife of Uriah. Judas was well chosen by Jesus to handle the finance for an elite team that would change the world, but he wanted more! Thirty pieces of silver seems to be a good start for him. There is more to Christianity than participation in a religious organisation that observes ancient rituals. The way of Jesus is much more than a collection of beliefs and practice. Christianity is a lifestyle. A lifestyle that can only be experienced by following Jesus.

If Christianity is to receive rejuvenation, it must be by other means than any of the ones being used presently. If the church is to recover from the injuries suffered in the past since the beginning of the degeneration till this time, there must appear a new type of preacher. The proper ruler-of -the-synagogue would never do. Neither would the priestly type of man who carries out his duties, takes his pay and asks no questions, nor the smooth-talking pastoral type who knows how to make the Christian religion acceptable everyone. All these have been tried and found wanting, Another type of religious leader must arise among us. He must of the old prophet type, a man who has seen visions of God and have heard a voice from the throne. When He comes (and I pray God that there would not be one but many), He would stand in flat contradiction to everything our smirking smooth civilization holds dear. He would contradict, denounce, and protest in the name of God and will earn the hatred and opposition of a large segment of Christendom.

The core of the great commission is discipling, and discipling is basically empowering others as God has empowered us.

There is a reason why we are chosen, to disciple, to impart, to

minister, to teach, to encourage, to be humble, generous, loyal, loyal, merciful, kind, wise and continue the ambassadorial task. All He wanted from us He has said in the sermon on the mount and had summarised in the two greatest command of love. He started from what must Be-attitudes of all Christians (Beattitudes).

The church is now affected by numerousity of doctrines and believes. Yet that is not the call to salvation, rather we should extend the love of our saviour to others who have not received. All without love is useless (1 Cor. 13), and there is never love without unity.

The world's state now doesn't seek expert in bible trival but seek seek experienced teachers who have experienced biblical transformation. Biblical trival seek memorisation, but biblical transformation needs spiritual impartation.

The church needs revival. Christ hasn't given up yet. He is only looking forward to seeing us repent. He love us, He wants us love Him by loving one another.

'Let Brotherly Love continue'

Faith leads us to God; gives us life. Life inspires us to love the brethren, and the love of the brethren proves to us that we have passed out of death into life. Love is the evidence of faith. If faith is real there will be love. Discerning between true and false love is not by examining the faith but by examining if Love is attached to it. The church is likened to a bird, young or old, it has just one name- bird. The head (Christ) never changes His position, but the church has changed so much. As the adage goes, don't say a village is peaceful just until the hooligans are grown up. The church seems to have turned against itself. The hand no longer want to be partners with the mouth, nor the toes with the legs, but how would the body hold itself together if the skin is running away from the bones? All parts of the body must come together and unite, all must work together for the edification of the body. That was the thirst of Christ. He prayed thus:

'That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me,
and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that
the world may believe that thou has sent me.' John
17:21

The love was great then in the apostles but now has waxed cold as the scripture says it, now it is coming to pass (Matt.24:12) - the love of many shall wax cold. The Lord means what He says and says what He means. The church must be united, and then regeneration would step into the stage. 'God is Love' John noted;

*1 John 4:8 'He that loveth not knoweth not God; for
God is love.'*

*1 John 4:10 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but
that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation
for our sins.'*

*1 John 4:11 'Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also
to love one another.'*

In the cycle of spiritual decline, 'selfishness' was the turning point. Yes, a time when the church gave up her virtues to pursue selfish ambitions and dreams. A time when we left the track and began to chase wind. A time we lost focus and became blind to that which is right. We sold our principles to mere pleasure. John C. Maxwell said 'Success is knowing a truth and accepting it. Finding a need and fulfilling it'. Bob Krouse also said 'when you get to power, note that there is no real power in selfish ambition but only in selfless service'. Now in our era of Christianity, we know the truth but we run (not just shy) away from it.

It's high time we trace back our foot step. High time we run back to God. When we can't figure out whether to sit at His feet, walk in a manner worthy of His call, stand in battle, or run the race with diligence. It is time to get back to Jesus alone.

When we can't remember the core principles of a follower, the

characteristics of a good wife and husband, the steps of appeal to authority; the things to do when worried or the way of life; it is high time then, to get back to Jesus the source.

When life seems too soft, or too hard for us to live in, when it seems like no one is watching, none is interesting, none is loving or caring, then you got the right thing to do: get back to Jesus.

It us time to separate Christ principles and commands from Christianity rules and demands. It's time we remove the veil in our eyes or blocker in our ears and hear Him speak the Word. It is time to simplify and take it from the scratch - one step at a time. It is time to consider some lilies and birds, time for the secrete place with Him alone.

In the school of Jesus, the whole world is His classroom. He can pick up anyone, and any part as for practicals. It could be you, it could be me. But first, we have to take off all enchantment with trendy church programs, and power fall and 'what's the point' sermons. Time to take off our shoes and sit at the feet of Jesus like children humbly, patiently and gently listening to folktales. It is time to gear His voice and do His will. Time to return to Jesus... now.

THE LAST CALL

One day, Jesus was passing by and knocked on the door at the house of a typical family and asked to come in to greet them. Grand ma had just taken her bath and she didn't want Jesus to see her until she had put on a nice dress. Dad was watching an important match. His team was winning and he was annoyed that Jesus had chosen such an inconvenient time to come. The house needed to be cleaned and mom didn't want to let Jesus in until she had straightened up a bit. Their son was really upset. "Oh gosh," he said, "Jesus is here and I haven't even tasted beer yet, I haven't tasted sex... Ask him to come back when I'm a little but older and have had a chance to see what life is all about".

What excuse do you have of His coming now? Do you expect Him to come at a very much convenient time? Maybe not.

Many times, we try to separate our lives into different part: the everyday life and the spiritual. The everyday life takes most of our time and energy, then we remember that we need to pursue the spiritual as well, so we tend to carve out little space from the everyday life to pursue the spiritual. Unfortunately, we do not experience the in depth and fullness of His power. So far so poor (so to say), many have become contented with religion rather than digging deep to find the hidden gold and treasures in the soil of the word of God.

Don't be surprised if He comes tonight or if He does appear in the clouds even before you are married, or just when you ate in high school. Remember, He never specified what age, or level we would be at His coming, so watch out. This very minute you may be and the very next you are no more. It is unpredictable. It is sudden, breathtaking, and unforeseeable to all.

Remember the parable of the list coin, the woman lit a lamp, swept the floor, and found the coin. Same is the scenario in reality. The light had come, placed in a hill for all to see (Matt. 5:14-15) and everyone would see and behold Him. No searching or judging without the light. Every lost soul must see it - no room for excuses.

'Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.' Matt. 13:30 [KJV]

The time shall come that the cleansing would be done and all shall face judgement, and all who is unqualified shall be casted into the burning flame of fire and sulphur, so great would the pain be for such that would experience it. The qualified shall be allowed back home and awarded for good and successful ambassadorial mission and would be celebrated.

That time is unknown, so be ready for the son of man us coming when we expect not, let's be alert for we know not the day nor the very hour, not even the angels know that very hour of His return.

Nevertheless, I tell you, Christ is coming back to knock on your door again, as a matter of fact, He is knocking right away, if you open, He would come in and fellowship with you. He won't break the door in. One thing is sure, All nations will stand before Him, All in graves come forth, good go to the resurrection of life, evil to the resurrection of judgement, He shall gather all who believe till the end. With Him shall they reign forever.

Your repentance is solely welcome!!!

Have a deep thought now, go back to the beginning, have a rethink; are you in the way? It's high time you turn to Him, the only source we got. Never feel self pity, that won't do any good, rather employ godly sorrow which leads to repentance. You only need rethink and redressing. Even be that thinks he stand must watch out for his faults. You are never alone calling for repentance. Permit your heart to see your faults, permit yourself to yield to the master's call now. He loves you so dearly even before He formed you. Don't be a waste, rather acknowledge His love for you today, and He would gladly accept you home. He would as well put aside His glory and dignity and embrace you just like He did to the lost wandered away son. He love us even more!!!

I WILL FOREVER BE GRATEFUL

What does Christ mean to me? Wow. A lot of times, I've had tough time figuring out what to say to people, but when it comes to you, Christ, I don't, because with you everything that used to feel tough just doesn't anymore.

It's one of the things I love about you, you don't need me. You can handle anything without me, independent, fearless, loving, kind... You are without question the best decision any man would ever make. Everyday without you is a gift. You mean everything to me Christ.

What can I give to Jesus who gave Himself for me? How can I show my love for Him who died on Calvary?

'Are you able?' said my master, 'to be crucified with Me?' He asked. 'Yea' I sturdily said. 'Then pick up your cross and follow Me, I gave my life to ransom thee, just give your all to Me' I heard Him say. 'To death I will follow, no flinching' I said, 'wherever you go I will go, where you lead I will follow without swaying left or right...

You are my everlasting portion, more than a friend or life to me; all along my pilgrim journey, saviour I will work with thee. Very close to thee, all along my journey would I walk with you. Gladly will I toil and suffer with you till we get to the gate of life eternal, that I may enter Lord with you.

Living for Jesus a life that is true, striving to please Him in all I do, yielding allegiance, glad hearted and free, it's the best path for me to tread.

Saviour, like a shepherd lead us, much we need your tender care; in your pleasant pastures feed us, for our use, your folds prepare. We are yours dear friend. Be the guardian of our way, keep us from the treasures that makes us bound, seek us when we go astray, and in your loving kindness save and restore us. Our love and life we give unto you, lamb of God who died for us, may we be forever faithful.

I need to go home by the way He has set before me, no other way

but this; I would never be able to see the gates of light if I ever miss that way. It is sweet to know as I onward go. I am so happy in Christ today, that I go singing along my way; so happy that He included me. Sinners would hear my song if Him and would come to the light.

Would you join me in my new quest dear friend; to run through this path together. Have you been to Him? Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour? Lay your sins on Him. He bears them all, and frees us all from the accursed load. I brought my guilt to Him for help, to wash my crimson stains white in His most precious blood, till not a stain remained. I was sinking in sin, far from the peaceful shore, very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more but the master of the sea - a dearing friend- heard my despairing cry, from the depths He lifted me, now I am safe.

You can come on board to join the crew

When nothing else could help, He is the friend you need, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow. Though they be red as crimson, they shall be made white as snow.

A ruler once asked my friend the way of salvation, He made His words true and plain like this: 'you must be born again', simple and clear. Hasten to Him, make haste to the saviour. Be resolved to follow the saviour this very seconds. He is the living way.

Let your joy be in giving all. Let Him take your life for consecration, surrender your hands for His movement. He will give you grace and glory, go with Him all the way. Do as He says, say as He says, go the same way He is going. Just imitate Him, and you will find the joy you ever seek.

Remember O brother man, fold to your heart your brother with love! Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there; to worship rightly is to love each other, each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.

For they whom Jesus love have truly spoken: the holier worship

which He deigns to bless restores the lost with love and binds the spirit broken, and feeds the widow and fatherless [loving, generous, and caring].

Follow with reverent steps the great example of Him whose holy work was doing good; so shall the wide earth seem our Father's temple, each loving life a psalm of gratitude.

I am thinking today of that beautiful land I shall reach when the sun goes down, when through the wonderful grace by my saviour I stand, hope I will have a crown worth call my own? Will you also have one? When we gather at the river, that beautiful river; gather with the saints at the river that flows by the throne of the master. When the trumpet shall sound, and time shall be no more, and the morning breaks, eternal, bright, and fair; when the saved of the earth shall gather over on the other shore, and the roll is called up yonder, I hope I'll meet you there?

On that bright and cloudless morning when the dead in Christ shall rise, and the glory of His resurrection share; When His chosen ones shall gather to their home beyond the skies, and the roll is called up yonder, I hope to be there.

Let us labour for the master from the dawn till the setting of the sun, let us talk of all His wondrous love and care; then when all of life is over, and our work on earth is done, and the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there! A land of cloudless day, the land of an unclouded day, it's a home of saints, where no storm clouds rise, no pain, but joy eternal.

Forever with the Lord! Amen so let it be; life from the dead is in that word, this immortality restored. My father's house on high, Home of my soul; the golden gates appear! Ah, then my spirit faints to reach the land I love; the bright inheritance of saints above. How I love you to be there!

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