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Editorial

Nineteenth-century American poet Emily Dickinson writes “Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without the words and never stops at all.”



The word “hope” is a word that is common to us. We use the word “hope” on a regular basis. Unfortunately, when we use the word “hope” we are usually expressing the opposite of what it means biblically. We use the word “hope” as if we are crossing our fingers about something that isn’t likely to be done. We might say, “I hope that my team wins the game.” Or we might say, “I hope they don’t play that song on the radio again.” But inevitably there’s a good chance that our team will lose, that they will most certainly play that song again. For those who believe in Christ the meaning of hope is different, One of God's promises that brings us hope is that death is not the end of life, but is just the beginning of something far better for the believer in Jesus. Jesus' resurrection is that proof that life does not end with death.

To find comfort in life, we must know how we can face death. Hope comes only in trusting the one who died to take the curse of death and who crushed the power of death by His resurrection. “Christ has been raised from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:20). That is the only statement that can transform how we live each day and how we

prepare for our earthly life to end. You don’t have to live your life overwhelmed with defeat, discouragement and depression. You can live your life with great hope. We see this in Mary. The child was not yet born, but she had hope – a confident, joyful expectation that God would accomplish in her life what He set out to do. She was willing to trust Him and follow Him knowing that His will and His ways are always best. What about you? Do you need hope? It comes first by believing God and taking Him at His Word. Covid sometimes tell from our inner heart, there is no hope, but the evidences are there. Jesus died and rose again. He is our Saviour and He is with us today. He is our ONLY HOPE.

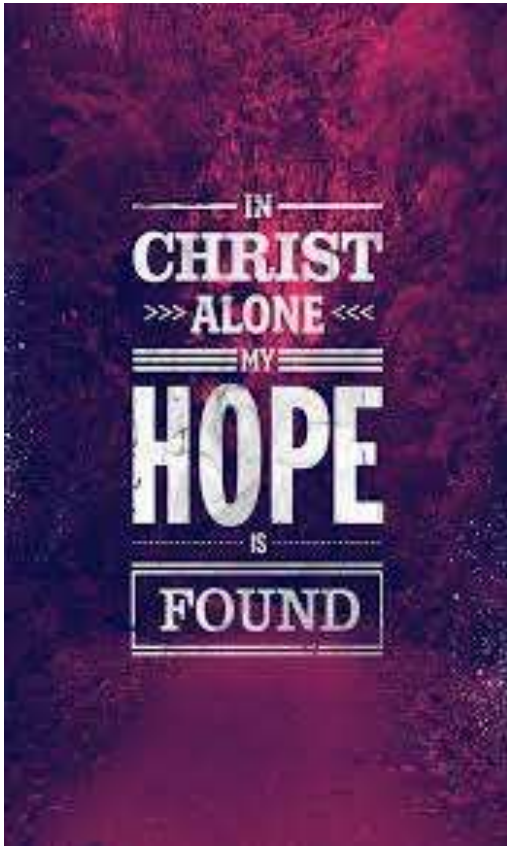
Let’s put our faith in Jesus, and walk by faith as we live in God’s bubble of hope and grace, so that when we die, we will experience the resurrection of life, and be with the Lord forever.



Christ our Hope

Dr John Thomas MBE,

St Johns Mar Thoma Church, UK



Hope is not a wishful thinking. Although we express our wishful thinking as hope, such as, winning a lottery, or hope for a nice weather when going on an exotic holiday or hope to get the job for which you were last interviewed. If someone says to you “Have a good journey”, there is no guarantee that the journey would be a pleasant one. These are only wishful thinking which has only very little chance of getting the desired result. There is no power or certainty of fulfilling the desired wish. It may often end in disappointment, leading to depression which in turn may lead to seeking temporary relief through alcohol or drugs. One then feels unable to cope with life. In the worst case, one would lose the wish to live and give up all hope in life and seek a permanent escape through suicide. There are several cases of young men and women

taking their own lives, for what we may consider as trivial disappointments, such as, failing an examination, or not getting the coveted job, or not getting the promotion wished for. They have chosen that route to escape from this hopelessness. They felt that there is no hope for them in this life. It is the human hope that failed them. This hope is based on the short-term view of life, just this earthly life. Christians take a long-term view of life, the earthly life and the life after death. Even at the time of Jesus there were a sect of the Jews called Sadducees who argued that there is no life after death and there are no penalties and rewards after death. But this is complete opposite to what Jesus taught about hope of eternal life in the kingdom of God.

What does hope mean to a Christian?

A Christian’s definition of hope is far superior to that of the world. Instead of wishing or hopping for something to happen, a believer knows that his/her hope is solid, concrete, because it is grounded in the word of God and we know that He cannot lie. The Christian has a hope that is “the assurance of the outcome, the conviction of things not seen.” To have faith is to be sure of the things we hoped for, to be certain of the things we cannot see.”(Heb 11:1). “but if we see what we hope for, then it not really hopes. For who hope for something he sees. But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience”. (Rom 8:24-25) Christian hope is a state of mind that is based on an expectation with confidence of positive outcome with respect to events. And as a verb it is to expect with confidence and to cherish with anticipation. It is a confident expectation of what God has promised and its strength is in his faithfulness. “God is not like men, who lie; He is not a human who changes his mind.

Whenever he promises, he does. He speaks and it is done.” (Num 23:19 “Let us hold on firmly to the hope we profess, because we can trust God to keep his promise. (Heb:20:23) “We have this hope as an anchor for our lives. It is safe and sure and goes through the curtain of the heavenly temple into the inner sanctuary”. (Heb 6:19) So our hope is firmly based on the promise of God which assures the outcome and fulfilment of our expectations. When we receive a currency note issued by, say, Bank of England we accept it without question, as to the value of it, purely based on the promise issued by the bank. The bank could go bankrupt. Inflation may make the currency note worthless. There are no hundred percent certainties. Now consider the promise of God. Hasn't it got the hundred percent assurance that the promise would be kept.

What is this hope? Hope of eternal life. That is to be saved from eternal death, the death following the Last Judgement. Every human being (except for Jesus) has sinned. Everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. (Rom 3:23). The penalty for sin is death (Rom 6:23). Once we have sinned, we earn the death penalty and there is nothing we can do to remove that penalty by ourselves. We have to be delivered from it. So, humans need to be saved -delivered – from eternal death and to be given the Gift of God, which is eternal life. That is why Jesus came to the earth as a human being. “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke: 19:10) We are all lost to the penalty of sin, eternal death, and the only way to be delivered from that penalty is through the sacrifice, the death on the cross, of Jesus Christ. Jesus came down to earth and lived a perfect life without sin and then gave his life for us. Because he was,

God in the flesh, His sacrifice can pay the penalty for all human sins. Jesus gave his life, a life of perfection, without sin, so that we can be saved. It is by his shed blood that salvation is now made possible for all humans. That does not mean that human beings only have to accept that sacrifice and we are saved. We need to accept his sacrifice and also repent and turn away from sin. Jesus came to die for our sins, which are actions that break God's law.” Sin is the transgression of the law”. (1 John 3:4) He paid the penalty of death for us so that we can have eternal life. He reconciled us to God the Father, justified us of our past sins through his blood. Hence after we repent of our sins and accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our salvation – deliverance from eternal death – is possible. But we cannot continue to sin, that is to continue to break God's laws. Once we have turned away from sin as Saint Paul calls it “dead to sin” how can we go back to it. “We have died to sin-how then can we go on living in it? (Rom 6:2)

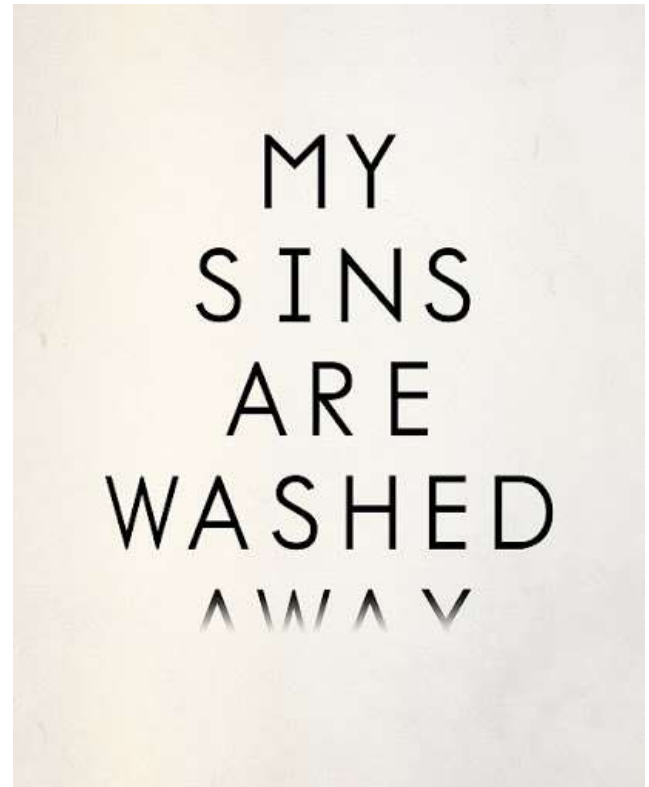


Salvation is a process that begins when we accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice for our sins. The term salvation describes two essential components of a Christian's life: being delivered from the penalty of sin, which is eternal death (Rom 6:23), being delivered from mortality and given the gift of eternal life. (John 3:15) We are saved, or delivered, from our past sins and their penalty (death).

We must then begin a life of change and grow to becoming more like our Saviour, Jesus Christ. If we continue to repent and change and remain faithful for our whole life, we will then receive salvation in its fullest sense, be given eternal life, at the return of Jesus Christ. We will be saved from ever having to face death again.

As we reflect on the pain and suffering Jesus experienced when he was humiliated, scourged, stripped of his clothes and crucified we may wonder whether God could not have provided for our salvation in some other way. Of course, He could have designed His plan however He wished. But according to Scriptures God's plan of salvation, including the death of Jesus was established "before time began." (2Tim 1:9, Titus 1:2) The Lamb of God was "slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev 13:8) God the Father and the one who came down as the Son of God designed their plan of salvation from the very beginning. The death of Jesus Christ was not an afterthought. So instead of devising a plan where Jesus didn't have to die we should ask the question why Jesus had to die. One truth we learn from the crucifixion is the enormous consequence of sin. The horrendous price, the death of the Son of God, had to be paid for our sins. There was no lesser price that would have taken away sins of the human beings. The crucifixion of the Son of God, with all its awfulness, helps us to understand the horrible consequence of sin and appreciate the redemption, the forgiveness of sins, we have through his death, "For the sacrificial death of Christ, we are set free, that is our sins are forgiven. How great is the grace of God, which he gave to us in such large measure?" (Eph 1:7) We marvel at God's love that he would give his only begotten son to be crucified for us. "For

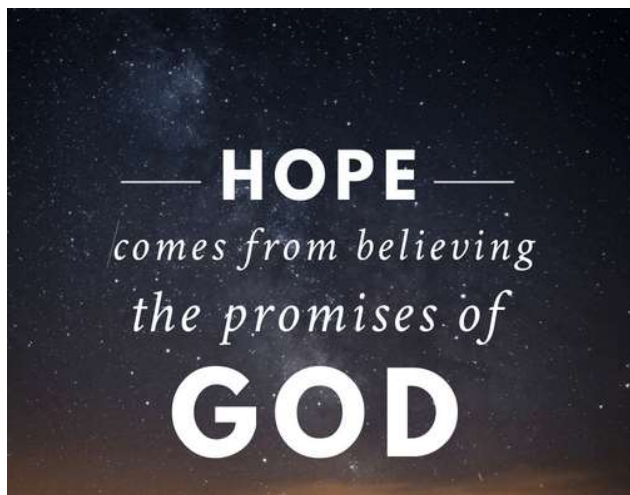
God loved the world so much that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life." (John 3:16) We stand in awe of Christ's love, that he would willingly sacrifice himself for us, even while we were sinners.



Most people know that Christ died for our sins. He died to take away our sins. Christ was sinless but God put our sins on him and he took it to the cross. Through his death we are cleansed of our sins. The narrative often stops there. The emphasis is on the cross. But, then why was he raised from the dead? What is the relevance of his resurrection? He was raised for our salvation. The work of salvation did not end with the cross. The resurrection is part of Christ's work for our salvation.

Let us look at the familiar story of the prodigal son. The son having squandered his inheritance realises that he would be better off if he return to his father and ask for his forgiveness and to be reconciled to him, not

necessarily in his old status as his son. Consider for a moment that the son has gone and asked for forgiveness and the father had just let the son join the household without much fuss. Would the reconciliation have been complete? Isn't the action of the father who rushed out and met his son while he was approaching but still far away that completed the reconciliation? The father's action confirms that the long-lost son has been fully restored to his earlier status as his son and all his previous actions have been forgotten.



If the story of Jesus ended with the crucifixion and his death there would not have been a confirmation that the humans were cleansed of their sins and were reconciled with God. However, God, the Father, raised Christ, his Son, from the dead as a confirmation of His acceptance of the death on the cross as a sufficient ransom for the redemption of humans. The resurrection was a necessary and an essential part of the process of salvation. God had taken the initiative to raise His Son and to welcome Him back to His lawful place with God. What other proof do we need for the successful completion of the process of salvation?

So, what does it mean to have hope in Christ? Part of it means to have faith in His promises. He promised to His disciples that He would return. He says “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself.” (John 14:3) Do we believe in this promise? Does this give us the Hope? To be a candidate for redemption we must repent our sins and recognise and accept Christ's sacrifice and lead a life in obedience of God's laws, that is, to lead a life of righteousness, a commitment to live in a manner pleasing to God.

So, the question remains for us—are we on the road to salvation? If not, we need to start our journey.



Part of an Unexpected Journey

Ligy Mary Thomas, Belfast Mar Thoma congregation

Ruth said:

*Entreat me not to leave you,
Or to turn back from following after you,
For wherever you go, I will go;
And wherever you lodge, I will lodge
Your people shall be my people,
And your God, my God.
Where you die, I will die,
And there will I be buried.
The Lord do so to me, and more also,
If anything but death parts you and me.*

Ruth 1:16,17

The above verses are of a woman who lost everything at a very young age, but her answer above paves a way to her making an important role in God's plan for her future. God chooses someone we would not expect, a Moabitess, part of a nation born out of an illegitimate relation, from Lot and have always been in quarrel with the Israelites.

Few reflections from this small book of only 4 chapters that I understood, but has some wonderful thoughts that encourages us to strengthen our relationship with our Heavenly Father are:

C- Commitment

Kathrine Switzer- named as 'the marathon woman' who ran the Boston marathon in 1967 and became the pioneer for introducing the women entry into marathon which was solely a male sport.

Her commitment to finish the race beating all odds and oppression she had to face even in the midst of the race is commendable and made her a part of history.

Ruth was a native of Moab, a nation who were the worshippers of pagan gods and mainly 'Chemosh', whose one main ritual had been human sacrifices, also whom God had strictly told the Israelites not to marry. Ruth after marrying into the family of Elimelech probably would have seen their faith and worship to the one true God which might have influenced her to accompany Naomi, leaving her past behind.

Ruth 1:14 "..... and Orpah kissed her mother-in law, but Ruth clung to her."

Ruth undeterred from her decision to go to Bethlehem, she was not concerned of any rejection or circumstances she might have to face or how the people would react to her being a Moabitess; as Israel had always been in war with Moab.



Thus, we see the one choice of Ruth, by which she got to be a part of God's plan and also of the genealogy of Jesus.

Similarly, we need constant guidance from our Father and include him first when we have to make a choice, it may be the subjects we have to choose for our high school year, the university to opt for further studies, a life partner choice and many other life situations.

P-Preparation

One of the stories I heard in our vbs few years back was of Ricardo Icezson dos

Santos Leite, who as a young boy had a bright future of getting into the football but had his dreams shattered completely at the age of 18 with a paralysis leading spinal fracture following accident but God cured him.

He recovered back to be a famous athlete of his time 10 years later following his accident and came to be known as 'Kaka'.

He had his jersey and shoes printed with words of glory to god and always pointing towards the sky for his wins in the midst of thousands of spectators.

In our bible story also, Ruth had been at a stage of being completely broken but instead of being buried in her own sorrow, she asked Naomi to go out to glean so that she could feed her and Naomi. She continued to work hard working tirelessly in the fields till evening.

Ruth 2:2

“So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, “Please let me go to the field , and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favour.”And she said to her , “Go, my daughter.”

Furthermore, we see God also guiding her in her ways, Naomi and Ruth arriving Bethlehem at the time of barley harvest ,directing Ruth to Boaz field who was a kinsmen to Elimelech, Boaz showing favour to Ruth asking her to continue to work in his field and leaving extra sheaves for her to pick , we see God writing a beautiful story for them both.

Today, also in this pandemic time, many of our plans have been brought to a standstill and we don't know where we are going to go from here, everything has changed in these

few months for everyone, including myself. But one thing that has kept me going is this Word of God and his promises.

R-Redemption



Ecclesiastes 3:1 *To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven*

Ruth 4:11

And all the people who were at the gate , and the elders, said, “We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah , the two who built the house of Israel, and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem...”

Through the chapters of 2 and 3 of Ruth, we see Naomi guiding Ruth for gaining a redeemer for her family from within the kinsmen of her late husband also Ruth obeying her completely without questioning and further on, Boaz gaining the blessing of

the society and elders to redeem Ruth in the right way.

Two short aspects that can be understood that led to a new life for Ruth and Boaz -

- Ruth being obedient to Naomi:

One of the common thought I used to have as a teenager was my parents don't understand as they don't know how things are done , they don't know the latest trends, but Ruth' s obedience led her to a greater blessing in life.

- Boaz consulting his elders before marrying Ruth:

Today we live in a world around where we are see our own social circle influencing us to make life choices especially in the matter of marriage with more open mindedness and compromises, with our elders choice or opinions taking a backseat, but Boaz here shows us that although he was one of the wealthiest and influential man in Bethlehem he didn't use any of those as an extra credit for marrying Ruth.

Thus, the commitment, preparation and redemption of Ruth and the choices she made can also guide us to renew ourselves to a new beginning, because it's never too late for God to use us for his plan.

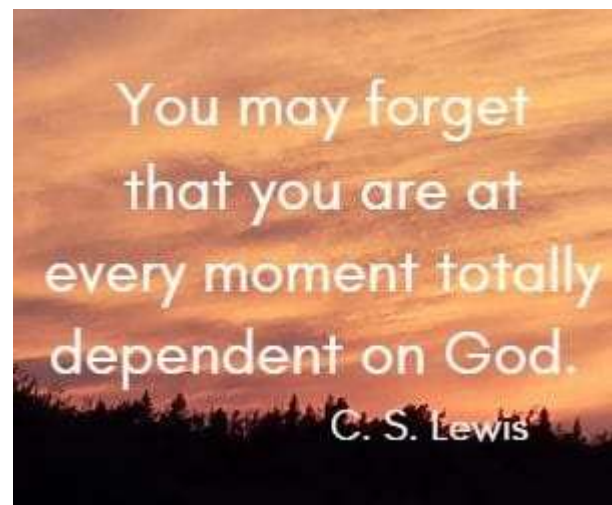
Additionally, I would like to conclude by giving a small testimony of my life here in Belfast, completing my 3 year sponsorship with the NHS for which I came here in 2017 from Delhi, the only two addresses that I came here with was - one of my hospital and another was the Belfast bible college where we gather together as a congregation.

These 3 years that I have lived here have been nothing short of but raising my arms and praising my Awesome God, there have been moments of pain but nothing that I

was not able to bear. Instead he has given me multiple folds of blessings.

Also would like to include few lines from the poem based on the book of Ruth by Flossie Powell Everett:

“Here we are doing are best
Loving and laughing like all the rest.
Putting our shoulders to the wheel
Gleaning like Ruth in the Master's field.
Praying each day for those who are lost
Not minding the labour not counting the cost.
Knowing that finally, when this life is past
We'll reap our reward with Jesus at last.”



Jesus – Our Shepherd

Roshan Thomas

Preston

Tabore MarThoma Church, Manchester



The lowly figure of a sheep is used many times within the Bible, from the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, to the parable of the Lost Sheep and even the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross, as the Lamb of God. Sheep are often seen as meek and simple-minded animals, that require direction and at times may even act stupid. Therefore, the Pharisees of Jesus' time were surprised to hear Jesus refer to us, human beings, as sheep.

In John 10, Jesus used the figure of a sheep, to prove to the Pharisees that He indeed is the Messiah and long-awaited Son of God. However, the Pharisees fail to understand and misinterpret Jesus' Word.

Jesus uses the earthly example of a sheep, to express a deep and heavenly meaning. If you have ever noticed a sheep, it will most likely follow its peers, without any reason. Sheep have a gregarious instinct to stick with their flock for protection and will copy what the other sheep do. We are just like sheep. Many times, we copy our peers, follow the crowd and lack individuality. Like sheep, we can be stupid at times and require guidance from others to show us the right way, guidance which may or may not be good. For sheep, the gatekeeper is their guidance.

Jesus says in verse 3, "The gatekeeper opens the gate for Him and the sheep listen to His voice." As our gatekeeper, Jesus guards the gate and opens it to allow us to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. As the sheep we must listen to His voice and obey Him. Sheep follow their master's voice, but a stranger's voice, which they do not recognise, they will ignore. Just like the strangers, thieves and robbers in the story, we are also often led astray by earthly pleasures, such as our money and belongings. Jesus tells us that His sheep must not listen to the voice of evil, but should ignore the stranger's voice and earthly concerns. For the sheep follow their master's voice and as Jesus portrays in Matthew 6:24,

"No one can serve two masters." We must not be tempted to follow other evil ways, but we must stick to Christ and obey His Word.

In John 10:9, Jesus compares himself to the gate. Now keep in mind, a gate can open but also close. It can restrict our path or open a new path in our lives. Jesus says "Whoever enters through me, will be saved. They will come in and find pasture." The only way for us sheep to enter God's pasture and Kingdom is through the gate of Jesus. This has been mentioned many times in the Bible. In John 14:6, Jesus similarly says "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me." To get to God, and to get to His Kingdom, we must know Jesus, trust Jesus and obey Jesus.

In order to know Jesus we must follow His every rule and command. Jesus knows us fully inside and out (Verse 14). But if we want to know Jesus, we must surrender ourselves and put in extra effort to know more about Him and follow His example as His disciples. Jesus once again reminds us of the Day of Judgement and that

ultimately, Jesus has the power to open or close our gate to eternal paradise.



Jesus carries on to say, “I am the good shepherd” and that as the

shepherd He would even lay down His life for us. This foreshadows Jesus’ sacrificial death through which He died, so that we may have life. As the shepherd, Jesus once again implies that He will guide us and show us the right way. David conveys that Jesus is our shepherding guidance in the popular Psalm 23: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” With God we have everything we ever need, but without Him we are useless. “For better is one day in Your House, than a thousand elsewhere.” (Psalm 84:10).

Jesus concludes to illustrate that other sheep, that are not of this pen, will also hear His voice. He conveys that although people may be sinful, we will all receive another chance to repent, turn our ways and join Him as One flock, under the guidance of One shepherd.

I pray that in today’s modern society, especially at this time of trouble and uncertainty, we are able to hear God’s calm and soothing voice and that as sheep, we follow our shepherd, who will open our gate to the beautiful pastures of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Christ Our Hope in Life and Death

Dr VS Varughese, Carmel MTC, Liverpool

The Apostle Paul who was bound in chains and incarcerated in prison, endured all his suffering in order to spread the gospel to all around him and to others outside, through his letter to the Philippians.

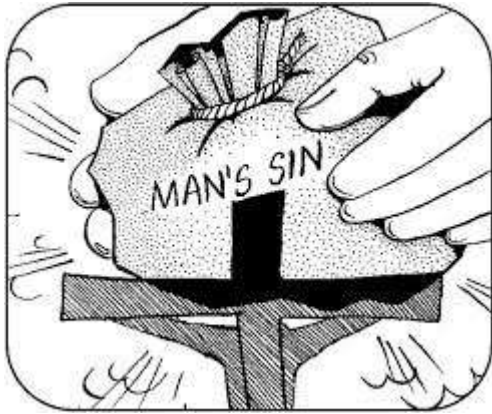
He said “**for him to live is Christ and to die is a gain**, as in death or in life, Christ will be exalted in his body.” (Phil 1:20-21). He further emphasised in Philippians 1 that through the abounding love of Christ, if we abound our love to others, like a spring that continually flows into the river, then the more we give, the more our love is replenished. This can solve most of the problems in the world around us. In this context, in Philippians 2 he is urging all of us to humble ourselves and consider that the needs of others are greater than our own. We should also in turn restore dignity, to those who are humiliated, as Jesus did to the woman who was a prostitute. (John 8:11).

We can understand these principles if at least we know the answer to two questions.

1. Who we are **TO** Christ?
2. Who we are **IN** Christ?

Who we are TO Christ?

Our God loves every one of us whether we are a sinner or a Saint. The Father loved us, even before the foundation of the Earth (Eph 1:4). God so loved the world that he gave us his one and only begotten Son, that who so ever believes in him, should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16). God so loved us, that Christ died for us even when we were still sinners. (Rom 5:8)



Christ took our sin and our death into his body on the cross, where he shed his blood and gave his life, in order for us to have eternal life. God raised him from dead on the third day, as the first fruit of all those who died, so that we in turn will be raised at the Rapture, (1 Thes 4:17) as the risen after fruits to share in his Glory. (1Corinth 15).

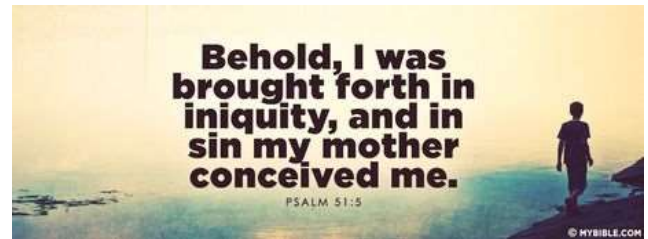
CHRIST REMAINS OUR HOPE IN LIFE AND DEATH. CHRIST HAS TRANSFERRED HIS RESIDENCE FROM THE TEMPLE, INTO OUR HEARTS SO THAT WE CAN BECOME THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD (1 Cor 3:16)

We have now the assurance that our God is nearer to all those who call upon him and call upon in truth (Psalm 145:18). He will keep us in the perfect peace whose mind is rest upon him (Isaiah 26:3).

Who we are IN Christ?

If we are in Christ, we are a new creation, all that is past has gone and all that is new is created. (2 Corint 5:17). To understand this, we must be born of water and spirit. (John 3:5) We should realise that we are made of three in one with the Spirit, Soul and a Body. The Body is a robot under the control of our Soul (Soul consists of our heart, mind, five senses and our conscious). The

Spirit can influence the Body only through the Soul.



Psalm 51:5 says behold I was born in iniquity and in sin when my mother conceived me. Hence from the start, we are all living with the disobedient spirit that is the ruler of the kingdom of the air, through our transgression and sin (Eph 2:1-2). We have to deny this spirit, this old man and crucify it on our cross. (Mat 16:24) Then the Holy Spirit will come into our hearts and prepare them for Christ to come in and create his new spirit in us, to embed in us true righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:24). Then our spirit will now have the mind of Christ. (1Corinth 2:16). We can now worship our Lord God in Spirit and Truth (John 4:24). **SINCE CHRIST HAS BECOME THE SIN FOR US**, we ourselves will become the Righteousness of our God in Christ Jesus (2 Cori 5 :21).

In John 10, Jesus as our good shepherd gives life, in fact life to its fulness to his sheep. He brands the sheep's ears to know them, the sheep in turn incline their ears to the shepherd, to hear his voice and follow him. (Prov 4:20) He makes them lie in green pastures and leads them to the still living waters and carries them when they go through life's dark valleys. He leads them to his Father's kingdom.

However, there is a gap like Moses and David. Jesus stood in the gap on the cross and gave his life for his sheep. He then stood there as the door, sprinkled with his blood

on it. As the sheep follow him through the door they are cleansed of their sin and he grants them eternal life. This new life is imperishable sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. (Eph 1:13) It is held in a triple lock of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the palm of his righteous right hand, so that no power in the world can undo them. We have now the power to become the children of God by receiving and believing in him (John 1:12) and becoming the heirs and joint heirs of his kingdom.



This Spirit will leave us only if we outright reject God. (Heb 10:29) We have a responsibility towards this spirit that it shouldn't grieve or thirst. (Eph 4:30) We should nourish this spirit regularly with the imperishable, enduring living word of God (1 Pet 1:23) This word of God should come into our hearts as treasure. (Prov 4:22) Thereby we become a good person with good treasures of the heart, giving out good gifts (Mat 12:35).

Now that we are born of God, we shouldn't live in sin as God's seed remains in us. (1John 3:9) To prevent sin pray that God's word should abide in us. (Psalm 119:11). Romans 3:23 tells us that we have all sinned and fallen from the glory of God. While our

spirit's rebirth is a once in a lifetime event, our human mind is old and needs constant reprogramming. We should not conform to this world; however, we must be transformed by the daily renewal of our mind, (Rom 12:2) in order to know the good, acceptable and the perfect will of our Father.

Fulfilling the will of the Father like Jesus did, is our task. We need to undertake the work given to us in full faith, so that his name is glorified. Furthermore, we need to understand and do as Mathew 5:1-16 tells us. As in John 8:31 we need to become a disciple of Christ, to learn his teaching and imitate him with our life and to unveil our faces to contemplate the Lord's glory. (2 Cori 3:18) We need to know Jesus as the truth, so that his truth shall set us free to enjoy eternal life (John 8:32). We should know Jesus as the word of God, just as God's word is the truth (Psalm 119:160). As Jesus prayed to the Father to sanctify us by the truth, for your Word is the Truth (John 17:17) We should remain in Jesus and his word should abide in us, (John15:7) in order to have eternal life. Now there is no condemnation for us as we are in Christ. (Rom 8:1) We can have the privilege to enjoy the joy of eternal salvation. (Psalm 51:12) We should now realise that we have been saved by his grace through our faith, not on our own merit but that it is a free gift. (Eph 2:8-9)

NOW DEAR FRIENDS AS WE FACE THIS DEVIL'S FIREY ARROWS OF COVID 19 the only way to resist that is with the shield of faith. We should face it knowing like the Apostle Paul, that for me to live is Christ and to Die is a gain so that Christ remains our hope in life and death.

We can now boldly approach Jesus's throne of grace (Heb 4 :16) while we give praises to

God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of all compassion and God of all comfort. (2 Cor 1:3) Jesus is asking us to humbly take up our yoke and approach him. For those of us who are weary and burdened he will give us rest, as Jesus has a gentle and humble heart, as his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. (Mat 11:28-30)

As we follow Jesus, God will give us the spirit of unity with endurance. He will give encouragement of scripture, so that we can glorify our Father in heaven. (Rom 5:5-6) For as in Adam we all have died, that in Christ we are all alive. (1 Cori 15:22) He **IS** going to come again and at the name of Jesus, every knee in heaven and on Earth and under the Earth will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:10-11)

AMEN

So let us sing **OH SING ALLELUIA OUR HOPES SPRINGS ETERNAL NOW AND AGAIN WE CONFESS CHRIST ALONE OUR HOPE IN LIFE AND DEATH AMEN**

DOWN IS UP



The lower I bow, the higher I rise
To the heights of heaven above.
As I bow at his feet, I am moving on up.
Transported by mercy and love.
Come! Humble your spirit.
And bow down to the King!
And soar to the summit of grace.
Bow low to the foot of the cross
...and ascend!
Come down to the highest place.
Bow low! Rise High! Rise Up!
Exalt your King!
And soar to the summit of grace!
Bow low to the foot of the cross!
...and ascend!
Come down to the highest place.

By Jaden

Sometimes you have to let
life turn you upside down,
so you can learn how to live,
right side up.

Sevika Sangham Quarterly Report



“So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:13 The Zonal Suvisesha Sevika Sangham are blessed to be able to do the ministry in the UK & Europe zone. Thanking our Lord for the opportunity given to Sevika Sangham in UK-Europe zone to stand together in faith and dwell on His mercy. Even though there is vast distance between each parish geographically, Sevika Sangham is united as a zone and participates on one platform in prayers and various activities including charities. A Special word of thanks to Diocesan Bishop Rt Rev Dr Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa and all vicars of Mar Thoma churches in UK-Europe zone for the wholehearted support and care given to Sevika Sangham in UK-Europe zone. Along with regular prayer meetings in every parish, we also have chain prayers and voluntary fasting every alternate Fridays, which is organised by the Zonal Sevika Sangham. UK-Europe zone was blessed to bear testimonies from many members and non-members of Mar Thoma churches as the prayers were blessed. In this quarter, we were able to participate in the world chain prayer organised by Sevika Sangham centre in Thiruvalla, India for a period of 3 days during the pandemic. Our second Zonal Sevika Sangam conference was held on July 11th, using a digital media, based on the theme “In Christ Alone My Faith and Hope”.

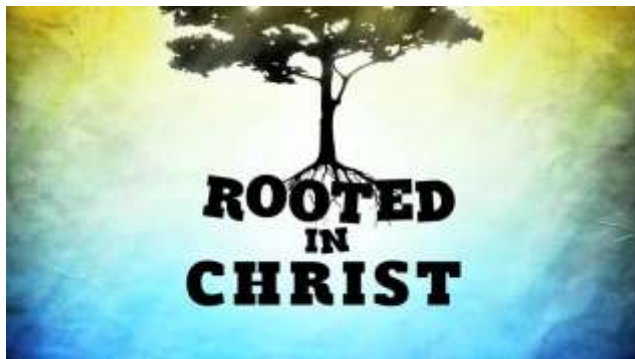
Our Diocesan Bishop Rt Rev Dr Isaac Mar Philoxenos Episcopa graced the occasion by appreciating the contribution of Sevika Sangham members, who were active and maintained a meaningful part not only by their valuable prayers for the sick but also were in the frontline serving the people during this Covid-19 pandemic. Rev Mathew John (General secretary of Mar Thoma Voluntary Evangelist Association) was the main speaker, he spoke the about life of Noah from Genesis 6: 8-9. I thank Very Rev P T Thomas and all the Achens of the Zone who participated and took initiative to make this digital platform a success. I also thank Rev. Jacob K A and Rev. K K Kuruvilla for their leadership and guidance in all Sevika Sangham activities. We are looking forward to holding more conferences and retreats in this zone for nourishing our souls spiritually and living our life in hope without fear.

Rev Jacob K A
(President)

Mrs Shiby Varughese
(Secretary)

Youth Conference: Summary

Anna Mary Ajay, Belfast Mar Thoma Congregation



Youth conference 2020 took place over three consecutive days starting on the 16th August 2020 all the way to 18th August 2020. The theme for this year was '**Be rooted in Christ**'. And the reason why this year was special was because it was virtual. Because of the current situation we were in, the Covid 19 restrictions would not let us meet up in a big gathering. However, the crew behind this big event made it possible to teach us youths more about God virtually. Everyone was able to join from their homes and learn about God in a comfortable atmosphere.

On the first day we got a speech from **Rt. Rev. Dr. Joe Joseph Kuruvila** which was really inspiring. Joe Joseph Achen talked about the audition of Susan Boyle and how everyone thought she was going to be another fail on Britain's got talent. But when she opened her mouth to sing it was something none of us expected. She sang so wonderfully she put the Judges in tears. This audition was like a wakeup call for everyone that we should never judge a book by its cover. Another thing it taught us was the way Susan Boyle did not care about what others thought about her. She gave her performance with such good confidence and passion. We are all created uniquely from head to toe and a unique individual path

that God has created for us. We all have a special talent but we all might have not found it yet. If we need to be rooted in Christ, we must focus on the internal traits than the external traits. We should keep the internal traits clean and continue to keep them clean. We should be more God pleasing than people pleasing and continue to create a destiny with God.

On the second day of the convention the sermon was taken by **Mr. Robin Thomas**. The sermon told us that being rooted in Christ is very important. Not being with Christ is like a tree with no roots. The roots are very important as it spreads the nutrients around for the tree. In the same way we will get nutrients through the word of God. He nourishes us with things we should know in life. We should seek these nutrients. In this pandemic we are facing now many things have changed; the rhythm of life, uncertainty of the future and many others. But seeking these nutrients will overcome any situation. Sometimes in life the desire of the flesh will take over the

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desire of our mind. But stopping that is just as easy as saying one word 'No'.

Actually, we all know that is not as easy as we think but a way to overcome that is by reading God's word as it will change us from a weak mouse to a mighty lion. We should discern our space and let no one take us captive. In the Garden of Eden, Eve let Satan take captive over her mind and misled her thoughts. This is a mistake we should never make in our lives. We should walk alongside God as Christ is always in our hearts. We should not let the desires of others consume our daily lives.

On the third and last day of the conference the sermon was taken by **Rev. Merin Mathew**. talked about how in these hard times with the Covid 19 pandemic we were able to try new things. But we should always put aside time to God where we confess our sins whether it is in church or by ourselves. No matter how sinful we are we should confess and remember that God will always forgive us if we realize what our mistake was. We should live everyday like we are getting baptised; confessing our sins and building a stronger relationship with God. Remember that God loves us no matter what and so we have to be able to turn towards God for help. He wants us to be who we are and we should not hide from God as he can help fix our mistakes. Instead of climbing the ladder we should grow down and be firmly rooted in Christ as we are Gods dream which is to spread his word and live in harmony. We are the 5th Gospel in life which should inspire others around us.

Altogether, I loved the experience altogether as this was my first ever youth conference as I only recently turned 13. Especially through these rough times I was able to enjoy the event even though it was online and probably very different to previous years. Thank you for all those who worked hard for me and other youths to take part in an amazing youth conference this year.



Zonal Intercessory Prayer

Mar Thoma Church Uk-Europe Zone has started an Intercessory prayer on every Sunday evening at 8.00 pm. The focus of the Intercessory prayer is mainly for the Corona affected people and especially for all the Key workers who are working in hospitals, care homes and other areas of our society. Every Sunday around 100 families are participating in this prayer and the achens in our region is giving leadership to this prayer.

Kindly participate the Zonal Intercessory Prayer - Time: 8.00 pm on every Sunday

Meeting link:

<https://meetingsemea10.webex.com/meetingsemea10/j.php?MTID=mf93fd450a1f88c5b7c6ea9c4eb626d4d>

Meeting Number: 143 157 471

Meeting Password: marthoma

Phone number: 020-76608149

let your
faith
BE BIGGER
than your fear.