

66

Signs of the End of the Age

5 And Jesus began to say to them, “See that no one leads you astray. 6 Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. 7 And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. 8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.

Mark 13:3-8 ESV



Today's Question

What speaks
loudest to you
in this reflection? Why?.


Reflection

Scripture readings: Daniel 12:1-3, Psalm 16; Hebrews 10:11-14, (15-18), 19-25; Gospel: Mark 13:1-8

THE TEMPTATION TO BE POWERFUL

—Henri Nouwen,
In the Name of Jesus, 57-60
Crossroad; 32117th edition
(October 1, 1992)

PRAYER of the week



Lord, please grant
me the grace and
humility to be a
true follower of
yours, Jesus;
forsaking the
illusion of power,
and embracing true
power of love found
in carrying our
cross after You.
Amen

You all know what the third temptation of Jesus was. It was the temptation of power. “I will give you all the kingdoms of the world in their splendor,” the demon said to Jesus.

When I ask myself the main reason for so many people having let the Church during the past decades in France, Germany, Holland, and also in Canada and America, the word “power” easily comes to mind. One of the greatest ironies of the history of Christianity is that its leaders constantly gave in to the temptation of power—political power, military power, economic power, or moral and spiritual power—even though they continued to speak in the name of Jesus, who did not cling to his divine power but emptied himself and became as we are [Philippians 2:5-11]. The temptation to consider power an apt instrument for the proclamation of the Gospel is the greatest of all.

**“IT SEEMS
EASIER TO BE GOD
THAN TO LOVE GOD,
EASIER TO CONTROL
PEOPLE
THAN TO LOVE
PEOPLE,
EASIER TO OWN LIFE
THAN TO LOVE LIFE.”**

**THE
TEMPTATION
OF POWER IS
GREATEST
WHEN
INTIMACY IS A
THREAT.**

We keep hearing from others, as well as saying to ourselves, that having power—provided it is used in the service of God and your fellow human beings—is a good thing. With this rationalization, crusades took place; inquisitions were organized; Indians were enslaved; positions of great influence were desired; episcopal palaces, splendid cathedrals, and opulent seminaries were built; and much moral manipulation of conscience was engaged in. Every time we see a major crisis in the history of the Church such as the Great Schism of the eleventh century, the Reformation of the sixteenth century, or the immense secularization of the twentieth century, we always see that a major cause of rupture is the power exercised by those who claim to be followers of the poor and powerless Jesus.

What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Maybe it is that power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to won life than to love life. Jesus asks, “Do you love me?” We ask, “Can we sit at your right hand and your left hand in your Kingdom?” (Matthew 20:21). Ever since the snake said, “The day you eat of this tree your eyes will be open and you will be like gods, knowing good from evil” (Genesis 3:5), we have been tempted to replace love with power. Jesus lived that temptation in the most agonizing way from the desert to the cross. The long painful history of the Church is the history of people ever and again tempted to choose power over love, control over the cross, being a leader over being led. Those who resisted this temptation to the end and thereby give us hope are the true saints.

One thing is clear to me: the temptation of power is greatest when intimacy is a threat. Much Christian leadership is exercised by people who do not know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships and have opted for power and control instead. Many Christian empire-builders have been people unable to give and receive love.



**LOVING
THOSE
AROUND US**



WALKING WITH JOHN

by Dunstan Sim

<https://cti.org.my/2019/09/06/walking-with-john/>

Someone pointed John out to me as we drove past him. That's somebody's uncle. He has schizophrenia. From the car, he looked big and intimidating. Shirt partially unbuttoned at the top, in shorts and slippers. He did not look friendly. I don't want anything to do with him, I thought to myself, with some trepidation. I had no inkling that I would soon be meeting John every week.

Not long after that, my colleague, G and I began to accompany John to the government clinic and sometimes to the hospital. John had to go for his weekly blood test due to the medication he's taking. He was not able to go by himself.

John would later tell me that he once held a job at a multi-national company. He spoke of the time when he was living alone on the streets. He tells me these things in Bahasa Malaysia and English. He speaks softly and sometimes his speech is slurred.



**LOVING
THOSE
AROUND US**

**“... “I DON’T
KNOW HOW I
BECAME LIKE
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WITHIN THOSE
WORDS, OUR
SHARED
HUMANITY.”**

He rents a room from a friend. He has no wife or children. He has brothers and sisters but he doesn’t seem to see much of them. There are huge gaps in his story but I don’t probe. He shares what he wants with me during our walks to the clinic and in the waiting room.

G faithfully puts his medication inside a pill box for him to make sure he does not miss taking them. John’s housemate gives him the medication. I think sometimes she forgets. The kids make fun of him and throw things at him. John tells us this matter-of-factly. He learns to avoid them. He takes these things with a measure of repose and composure that is admirable.

John has an engaging smile. That surprises me. I suppose it’s partly because I don’t expect him to smile. Sometimes he wears that smile when he greets us in the morning. He thanks us for our help after we send him back from the clinic. At times he shakes my hands.

I have occasionally caught fleeting glimpses of the man John once was. In a rare moment of reflection and introspection as we were walking to the clinic, he confided that he didn’t know how he became like that. He alluded to a woman he once loved and almost married.

I believe that John is a good man who is tormented by a debilitating sickness. He is clearly aware of his condition. I am certain that he wants to get better but he seems helpless to fight off the delusions when they descend upon him. I sense the quiet sadness and despair in his words “I don’t know how I became like this”. I felt, within those words, our shared humanity.



**LOVING
THOSE
AROUND US**

**“... KNOWING
JOHN HAS
DONE THAT. HE
HAS SHOWN
ME WHAT
COURAGE AND
RESILIENCE
LOOKS LIKE IN
THE FACE OF
OVERWHELMING
PERSONAL
ADVERSITY.”**

John smokes and is known to indulge in drink once in a while. But he tells me he has not had alcohol whenever I ask him. He once showed me his open wallet and told me he had one dollar left. He is obsessed over money. Understandably so.

A man adrift. That's how I see John. I try to put myself in his shoes. But we live in two completely different worlds. I can't even begin to understand what life is like for John, how he thinks and how he sees the world. I don't pretend to. He cuts a sad and lonely figure. A man who has known deep sadness and brokenness but remains unbowed. He swims against the rising tide long after most would have surrendered to the oncoming waters.

I don't know how long I will continue my journeys with John. I know I am growing learning. Knowing John has done that. He has shown me what courage and resilience looks like in the face of overwhelming personal adversity. There is a ripple of empathy that stirs within me where once there was only my ignorance and indifference. I try to judge less. Sometimes I need to look deeper under the surface to find beauty in brokenness. We are all God's children, fearfully and wonderfully made. We are loved by Him unconditionally. It's something called grace. These are my growth lessons. John is my teacher.



**LOVING
THOSE
AROUND US**

John is someone from CTI Community, at PPR flats, Kota Damansara. More about CTI can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/CTImsia/>

THE CAREGIVERS' CLUB
PRESENTS

Annals of the Anus

Real-life experiences
of a caregiver

by Anon.

Annals of the Anus.

What's that? No, this is not about biology. Neither, is a historical anecdote of political shenanigans. No, it's not about the rush to buy toilet paper during the pandemic. But it is a normal experience, often faced by a caregiver. Constipation is stressful and too much of it and uncontrolled, is simply a mess. Enemas, laxatives and diapers are commonly used. Using a Malaysian phrase "what to do?"

Once at almost midnight, I heard my dad call for me. He was in the toilet. Like most misadventures at old age he had inadvertently soiled himself. At the same time, my mum was also calling for me, "its time to do my dialysis", she said. I could feel a pounding headache building up and my anger levels bubbling over. "The maid is asleep there is no one around to help", I fumed to myself. I was already so tired from a whole day of caring and was getting angrier and angrier.

"In our moments of our greatest need God is always there even when we don't even acknowledge His presence."

The rage was overwhelming like a tidal wave rushing over me that I couldn't even think straight, let alone think of God or even say a prayer.

I headed towards the toilet first and shouted at my mum to wait. And there he was, my dad in the loo. I started to clean him with soap and water. Then I told him to stand up so that I could check and dry him thoroughly because my dad suffered from piles.


As my dad stood up, suddenly, I felt an unusual peace come over me. The peace that settled was like a comforting blanket as if Someone came and gave me a tranquiliser. At that moment I knew what Jesus meant when He said "My peace I give to you" John 14:27. It was a peace that transcended all of my understanding.

Even as I am writing this article I cannot even begin to describe that feeling. In simple terms, I just felt happy and quiet. It was a supernatural experience to me because I didn't even pray because I couldn't. And it was impossible to calm down within a few seconds. This Peace was undeserved but it enabled me to complete my tasks with love, care, calm, gentleness and affection towards my beloved parents. As we received the Peace we emanated peace and everyone had a safe and good night's rest.

In our moments of our greatest need God is always there even when we don't even acknowledge His presence. He knows and He understands. He will not test us beyond what we can bear (1Corinthians 10:13). This is my experience of God's peace peering through the annals of the anus.



**LOVING
THOSE
AROUND US**

A photograph of an elderly person with grey hair, seen from behind, sitting in a red wheelchair. They are on a paved path that leads into a residential area with houses and trees in the background. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

ON PRACTICAL SPIRITUAL & NON-SPIRITUAL EXERCISES AS A CAREGIVER

by Tammy Lam

Photo by Steven Hwg of Unsplash

What is caregiving like to the aged and infirmed parent? In a nutshell – it's a thankless, invisible job without accolades and with no compensation. Its not like being a social worker, where the social worker gets paid, can go home, can take time off, and sometimes honoured by testimonials, gifts and recognition and awards.

As a caregiver there are none of these privileges. There is no pay, (sorry you can't do crowd funding), the caregiver may even have to finance the parent and pay all the medical bills and all physical needs. If the caregiver is living in the same house as the parent, there are practically no boundaries, the caregiver is basically at the beck and call of the parent. And there is no recognition or awards received. The worse part in this, is the parent will eventually pass on despite all your valiant efforts. So what are the benefits of caregiving and how does one survive and thrive under these "working conditions"?



**LOVING
THOSE
AROUND US**

“WHEN YOU GREET YOUR PARENT, IMAGINE THIS IS THE FIRST AND LAST DAY OF YOUR PARENT’S LIFE. IT IS THE FIRST, BECAUSE THIS DAY WILL NEVER COME AGAIN. ... WITH THIS FRAME OF MIND, I FEEL MORE HAPPY SEEING MY PARENT AND TREATING HER AS IF SHE WERE MY BEST CUSTOMER.”

It is really impossible to answer all these questions extensively and each person has their own special circumstances so one size cannot fit all. But I can share a little some practical aspects in my daily life.

1. Getting out of bed

This is the first thing that happens to the caregiver – getting out of bed. In a normal day when there are no emergencies and the parent is stable, do not jump out of bed immediately. Jumping out of bed will cause your heartbeat to accelerate unnecessarily. (You will face many days of early morning and midnight emergencies).

Open your eyes and look at your surroundings. Feel your hands, fingers, toes. Listen to the noises externally and listen to your interior self. During these moments savour being alive with all your bodily functions working. Be like a child getting up, no baby/child opening their eyes ever dreaded the day ahead. Say aloud 3 things that you are thankful for. It can be as simple as – “I am thankful I can breathe, I am thankful I have a bed, I am thankful I have a family.” Think of something. Then get ready to face the day.

2. Attention to the parent

When you greet your parent, imagine this is the first and last day of your parent’s life. It is the first, because this day will never come again. And it is the last day of your parent’s life because their condition changes so fast and indeed it may be the last that you can see your parent in this state. In the same way, it is also the first and last day of your own life. The earth spins, times passes. Nothing remains the same. With this frame of mind, I feel more happy seeing my parent and treating her as if she were my best customer.

If for whatever reason the parent is winding you up, just try your best to get on with it but you don’t have to kill yourself in the process. If you need to, walk away for a bit and give yourself space. If you can, get help. Get another pair of hands.



**LOVING
THOSE
AROUND US**

"I HAVE HAD SITUATIONS WHEN FRIENDS, FAMILY AND EVEN STRANGERS HAVE CAME ALONG TO HELP AND YOU KNOW IT IS GOD THAT SENT THEM. JUST LET HIM DO IT FOR YOU. GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS."

If no help comes your way, just embrace that situation and carry on. It may be the Lord's way of telling you something. Accept and embrace that challenge when it comes. It's during these periods when you are at wits end, something happens and you watch a miracle unfold before you. If you cannot do anything just let it be. Be watchful.

I have had situations when friends, family and even strangers have come along to help and you know it is God that sent them. Just let Him do it for you. God works in mysterious ways.

3. Do one thing that gives you pleasure

Be kind to yourself. In a day, at least try to do one thing nice for yourself. If it is food, eat one thing that you really enjoy. If its music, listen to it. It may be just taking a walk. Talk to a friend.

4. Exercise

When the parent is resting, try to exercise. Go for a walk, look at the sky and trees. The sky is made of miles of air, the air that you need to breath and its free. Savour it.

5. Talk to a friend

– you need to let off steam. Connect with a few true friends and family. Be part of a support group. However always bear in mind that family, friends and support group have their own limitations and you will still have to be the caregiver at the end of the day. Be kind to them too and don't expect too much from them.

6. Eat

Eating and drinking is a very important element in caregiving. For the patient, it's the source of nutrition. However most of the time they have poor appetites or their tastes change so please try to be more flexible and creative in the meals.

Try to break it up into small but more frequent meals perhaps 5 meals a day?



**LOVING
THOSE
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**“CAREGIVING
IS A HUMBLING
EXPERIENCE
AND BE READY
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IT IS OK TO
SAY YOU CAN’T
DO IT.”**

There will be some restrictions on foods for instance my mother is diabetic but if she craves durian I just give her a little bit. Life is too short to deny her the pleasure of eating when she can. But please don’t poison them by giving them starfruit/ grapefruit when they are on statins.

As for the caregiver, please try not to overeat, stress eat and gain unnecessary weight. It impedes your movements. But please eat during set times and enjoy your food.

7. Be open to learn and receive help (it's ok to make mistakes, fail, loose your temper)

Caregiving is a humbling experience and be ready to learn and receive help. It's ok to say you can’t do it. It's OK to make mistakes and fail. That’s normal don’t blame yourself. But please give it a good go. Everyone can do it if they want to. Having said that I think I am not able to invest so much of myself to another human being except for my parents.

8. Prayer

I think this is by far the most important source for interior strength. What does it mean to pray? Each individual has their own way to connect with God, the Divine. I don’t know all the answers and I can only share my own personal experience.

In my moments of great distress, when I do not know what to do, I just fall on my knees and cry out to God to help. “Please heal! Please help!”.

Somehow God steps in and things do get sorted out one way or the other. I am sure everyone has a testimony of how God answers prayers.

However between these moments of emergency and urgency, one has to find a rhythm and a time to rest in God.

**“... BETWEEN
THESE
MOMENTS OF
EMERGENCY
AND URGENCY,
ONE HAS TO
FIND A RHYTHM
AND A TIME TO
REST IN GOD..”**



**LOVING
THOSE
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“... During these times I just go to my room and go into child’s pose (i.e. resting like a roasted chicken position).

And I just rest in God..”

Caregiving is a 7 days a week affair and the hours are long. For me my day ends after midnight, after the last round of dialysis and giving my mother a snack before bedtime. Despite these hours there will be pockets of free time when my mother is resting, watching TV.

During these times I just go to my room and go into child’s pose (i.e. resting like a roasted chicken position). And I just rest in God. I don’t say anything to Him and neither does He speak. I just rest like a baby at the mother’s breast. I hear my own breath and just breathe naturally. As I rest my head on the bed my mind just starts to slow down. That is my time alone with God.

As I am writing this it sounds like the most boring thing that is happening. It is and it isn’t. Prayer is so effortless and yet one must be mindful not to fidget or say anything or think of anything except breathing. Many a time even in our thoughts we have a false image of God and that would be counter productive. I just learn to be still, Be still and know that He is God.... Just be. Psalm 46:10 Prayer becomes as easy as breathing.

With each breath I pray and with each prayer I breathe. Is this what Paul means when he says to pray without ceasing? 1 Thess 5:17. Each breath is a gift, just as in the beginning God made Adam out of dust and breathed His breath into him. I breath His breath and breath out His breath. I would like to believe that even as I pray, God prays through me and I pray through God. Sometimes I just drift off to sleep.

After this rest, sometimes clarity comes to mind for example the things I have to do. Or I can pray for my family and friends’ needs with more sincerity rather than to merely go through the motions of prayer.



**LOVING
THOSE
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OR THINK OF
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EXCEPT
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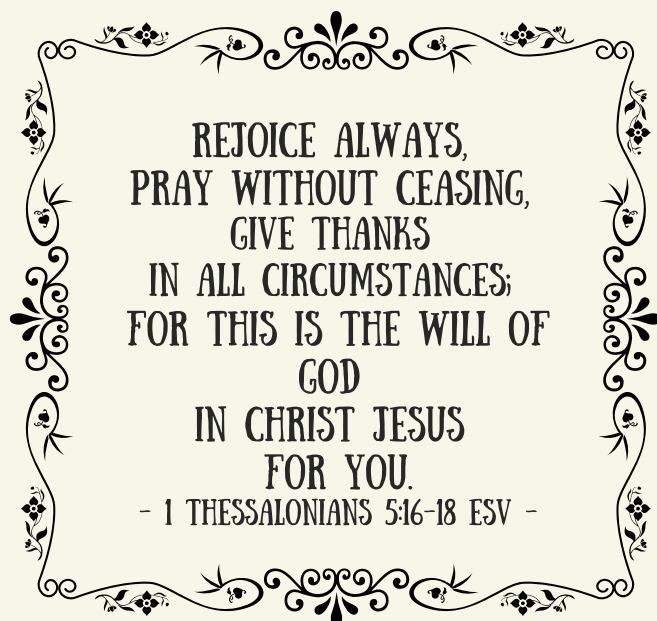
Do I grow a second brain after this prayer? Unfortunately, no. Is there any miracle that I have experienced? Yes and no. I can't explain it but I just continue to pray.

9. Benefits of caregiving

From the worldly point of view there seems to be none. Whether we get any reward in the afterlife, I don't know (I have never died before).

But I have learnt something about human behaviour and learnt about myself too in the process I still don't understand death. What does Jesus mean when He says “Oh death where is your sting?”.

What I think: How we lived will determine how we die. Death is a reflection of how we lived. It's like two sides to the same coin (I think). I learn to love another human being more completely. My mum is no longer my biological mother, she has become my best friend and baby. I receive her love freely and she trusts me. She has given me the highest praises before family and friends and that is my reward.




**LOVING
THOSE
AROUND US**

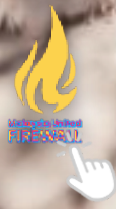


Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
- John 8:12 ESV

EXTERNAL
PRAYER LINK



Lectio 365



The Church (Body of Christ)

Pray that we will continually seek God's kingdom first and all His righteousness, caring for what's on the Father's heart. In our relationships with each other, that love will be our priority, and we will be our brother's or sister's keeper. In unity of faith and Your righteousness, that we will contend as one man and one Body in Your plans and purposes. Your voice we will hear and not the voice of another. At all times, we will walk in agreement with You, serving You will a clear conscience to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Your kingdom come, Your will be done. Amen

Nation

We pray for God to raise up wise, faithful and righteous leaders to steward the care for the nation and its people in these times. For Melaka's elections on 20th November. We pray for economic stability, improving financial situations and work opportunities.

Justice & Freedom

For the love of truth, justice, mercy, righteousness and humility to be the foundations of our nation and its inhabitants. For the protection of freedom of personal choices and rights of the people; minority or at large - to be respected and honored. For all children to have access to proper education channels and medical assistance.

The People

Lord, teach us to be intentional in making ourselves available to others, to help those who have emptiness in their hearts, or pains they cannot openly speak about. Teach us to be caring, compassionate, conscientious and emphatic.

BLC Community

Pray for the protection and safety of our Pastors and leaders, BLC community and loved ones; that we will grow continually in sensitivity to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, wisdom, discernment, resilience, quick to adjust themselves and respond well to changes beyond our control. May we be the salt and light of the Lord to those around us.

LCM

For the coming Biennial General Assembly on 3-4th Dec. For the logistics and tech team as they prep for a hybrid meeting. For the election of a new EXCO and God's plans for us to move forward post-pandemic.

Prayer Support

SUPPORTING YOU IN PRAYER.

Send in your requests via WhatsApp to Rev. Thomas, Adeline or our Council.

Announcements

Journey With the Displaced
Diaspora in Malaysia" with
Michael Moey

Time/Date: 23 November
(Tuesday) @ 8:30PM

Moderator: Rama Ramanathan
Upon registering, you will receive a
confirmation email on meeting details.

WEW (Saturday)
Nov 20, 3:00 pm

Book Club (Sundays)
Nov 21: Ch6&7, 2:00 pm

Tuesday Bible Study
8:30 pm

MEM (Wednesdays)
Nov 17th, 8:30 pm

Giving Tree (Fridays)
Nov 26, 8:15 pm

Friday Bible Study
Nov 19 & 26, 8:30 pm

Tithes & Offerings

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*The BLC Missions Collections supports
the following:

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- United Voice – Moh Foong
- Bible Translation Researchers
- Alongsiders (<http://alongsiders.org>)

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BLC
TABLETALKS

01

Journey with the Displaced Diaspora in Malaysia

Speaker : Michael Moey
Moderator : Rama Ramanathan
Date : 23 November (Tuesday)
Time : 8:30PM

(Register by Friday, November 19th)

Zoom Link:

<https://tinyurl.com/BLCTableTalkRegister01>



Michael Moey, who has been working with Myanmar Refugees in KL for the last 10 years, and is the founder of Ruth Education Centre and Judson Bible College.



Rama Ramanathan retired in 2014 as a Senior Quality Executive. He is now focused on researching, writing, and catalysing social reforms. He's passionate about representative democracy, enforced disappearances and deaths in custody. He's the spokesperson for CAGED, Citizens Against Enforced Disappearances.

THE FATHER'S HOUSE WELCOMES YOU

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**Weekly
Manna**

14 Nov 2021 Issue