



More than Survivors **(Ps145:13-10)**

Psalm 145:13 The LORD is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds. 14 The LORD upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down. 15 The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. 16 You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.

PART 1

What's your home like? Let's hear about Naara's home in NE Brazil

- It is a home with a six to ten month long rainless, severe dry season.
- It is a home with a chronic water scarcity.
- It is a home of hunger.
- It is a home shared with disease and malnutrition.
- It is a home of less than subsistence farming.
- It is a home shared with scorpions, snakes and tarantulas.
- It is a home of extreme poverty.
- It is a home in need.

BMS is doing something about it

BMS development workers Mike and Daveen Wilson are helping to change Naara's life.

Daveen says, "Naara's story is just one example that, again, brings home to me the effects of poverty. Last week I took Naara to Natal to a hearing with a judge to see if she could get some money for treatment for her child with the heart defect. When we got ready to go to the court, I realised that the scruffy shorts she was wearing were the only clothes she had, so I lent her my skirt. Then I realised she hadn't brushed her teeth since we'd arrived in Natal and I thought – you don't spend money on a toothbrush if you haven't got food for your children."

Mike and Daveen have been working with BMS in Trapiá for 14 years, and as a result of their personal commitment to show God's love in practical ways and by implementing a range of development projects, they are improving the quality of life in their surrounding community. Their projects range from encouraging mothers to breast-feed

their children and initiating new building and agricultural techniques to starting a church.

Help God's work continue

As we celebrate harvest we are reminded that there is no need for anyone in the world to be without food, shelter, clothing or love.

Many years ago people said how much they were concerned at the shortages of food and water, health and shelter there was for so many people in the world. And efforts were made to alleviate these problems.

But here in the 21st century we see these problems still exist. The irony is that there is sufficient food and water available in the world to feed and water people to the correct standard.

BUT IT IS IN THE WRONG PLACE

There is also enough wealth to provide people with a good basic level of healthcare and proper shelter.

BUT THE WEALTH IS IN THE WRONG PLACE TOO.

Why are resources so unevenly distributed?

- ➔ Through inept government in the lands involved**
- ➔ Through the greed of the few who are content to leave many suffer**
- ➔ Through the actions of rich governments like ours who do not allow poorer countries to compete fairly in our markets**
- ➔ Through richer countries who will not write off debts that they could afford to write off**
- ➔ Because of political differences between richer and poorer countries.**

Whatever the rights and wrongs of these circumstances, mission organisations like BMS have traditionally been at the heart of dealing with the whole man or whole woman. As we perceive people's felt needs, we are able to go further and deal with their deeper need for Christ that will make sense of their lives.

Let's here more about Mike and Daveen Wilson:

Trapiá is located in one of the poorest regions of Brazil where around 17 million people are living below the poverty line. Trapiá itself is home to approximately 2,000 people who are continually faced with social, economic and environmental difficulties. They are poorly educated and heavily in debt. The area is just below the equator and so, as well as being arid, it is also very hot and plagued by drought.

Mike and Daveen, whose home church is Trinity Hill Baptist Church in Sutton Coldfield, have been working with BMS in Trapiá for 14 years. They originally began as rural development workers, introducing projects ranging from encouraging mothers to breast-feed their children to initiating new building and agricultural techniques, before planting Trapiá church.

As well as continuing with community development projects, Mike and Daveen are helping to train emerging church leaders. By continuing to extend the church building they are using the process to train local people in brick laying and plastering. Daveen says, "Building up a strong church is probably doing more for the community than anything we did before. In the church, people are learning to work together and reach out to help others instead of always expecting help from the outside.

"Achieving the status as a Baptist church means that we are now free to make our own decisions on things like who can take communion and so on. We see it as enabling the church to become a central point for other churches in the rural areas, as well as a sort of model for how to develop."

What is mission all about. As we have seen, it involves meeting people's felt needs and expressing the love God shows us in the way we help other people. But as we help people in their felt needs, we shown them their deeper need for Christ. That's what mission is all about , coming into contact with people and as we minister to them, they find that God does not just want to provide them with food or healthcare or better farms or whatever, but He wants them to find the answer to their deepest need in life - to know God, to find forgiveness of their sins in life, to find eternal life, hope and a future. Put the two things together and you have an amazing transformation, whether that is in Brazil or in Norfolk or anywhere else!

PART 2

Last night and today we have heard a little more of the plight of people who live in dry desert or semi-desert areas like North East Brazil. For poor people who live in these places, life is very hard, particularly when the rains don't fall, and when water is difficult to obtain. In Britain - and in fact most of Brazil - people have come a long way from this. We get food from all around the world delivered to our local shops and some of the tropical stuff is literally less than a few days since being removed from their stalks.

It's when we look at situations like these people were facing that we realise how privileged we are here in Britain. We complain bitterly when there is a shortage of something in shops that are otherwise heaving with plenty of alternatives. Why's that? Because we live in a land of plenty, where because of our ingenuity and our wealth, we have created an environment over which we exercise a degree of control so that we

have become dependent on ourselves. That's not true of the poorer people who live in the NE of Brazil, they are dependent upon the resources they have and the weather that comes along - and that is very acute in a harsh environment.

I'm not surprised that we see a huge explosion of the Christian faith in Brazil and countries like it. When people have nothing they start to seek God and find that He is a God who meets their needs in profound ways as they seek Him. Very often, as we have seen in Trapia, as Christians share their love with people in helping them hugely by giving them very simple new skills, the sharing of faith results in a new attitude to life that comes through faith in Christ. Christ is the answer to our every need as the old chorus says.

Christ is the answer to our need. Perhaps that is one reason why we feel and see so little of God's power in our lives and in our society. We are dependent on ourselves, *our* wealth, *our* ingenuity, *our* standard of living, *our* ability to provide healthcare, *our* security. Who needs God? That's our society - and that's often a characteristic of the church in Britain too. How much is that a characteristic of you and me? How little most of us ever have to prove the love, faithfulness and goodness of God.

The verses I read from Psalm 145 this morning reflect what sort of God we have. And He comes across as a God who meets our needs. His generosity is so great, that we don't just survive, but that we are more than survivors. Sometimes we only find these characteristics of God when we are faced with a situation like the people we heard about are in. And so often in *our* security we see so little of the presence and power of God.

So what do we learn from these verses? That we need to reflect afresh on what God has done for us and what He wants to offer with other men and women.

🕒 He keeps His promises

The LORD is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds.

God is a God of promises. Yet this Psalm affirms a truth - God is faithful in all His words. He's the God of creation. The people of Trapia understand that. They know that there is a direct connection between the weather and what they eat.. We have a faithful God, we stand on God's promises!

We also share God's promises with others. Listen to this one: *John 5:24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."*

That's an amazing message and a promise. But for people to receive it they first must hear it. God keeps His promises, but people must hear and believe them first. the object of all mission whether in Brazil or hear is to let people know the promises!

🕒 He loves every person

The LORD is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds.

Have you ever noticed how much somebody will pay to have a makeover - new hairstyle, new clothes all the best gear. Why? Just so that it will give us cred. For most people who use their wealth to make themselves better than the Joneses or just to affirm the status they should have.

But we have a God who is gracious in all His deeds. He doesn't look on people's outward appearance - and we are going to learn about that this evening. God's

blessings and mercies are on offer to people equally. Yet it is again those in areas like Trapia that this understanding sinks in so readily.

The clerk in a posh hotel greeted a small man who asked for a room. The fellow was so unimpressive that the clerk told him immediately no rooms were available. About that time the hotel manager came out of his office to the desk, recognised the man and called the clerk aside. He whispered to her that the man asking for the room was Pierre Monteaux, who for many years was the distinguished conductor of the San Francisco Symphony. The clerk came back to the desk, apologised and said, "Why of course we can take care of you, Mr. Monteaux! Why didn't you tell me you were somebody?" Whereupon Maestro Monteaux turned to leave, "Madam, everybody is somebody!"

To God, everybody is somebody. We understand that truth even more when we have no means of our own to improve our situation. Then we see God's love in action. Our message is a message of love. God cares for everyone and wants them to become not just somebody but His children. And we have that message and promise to share.

He rescues the troubled

14 The LORD upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down

Look after number one. Don't get involved. We see someone in trouble and look the other way. We know from scripture that God never walks on. When God saw us without help and hope, He loved us so much that He sent His only Son to die for us. Because of Jesus, he is willing to forgive and restore us and make us His children. Because of His love we are more than survivors. If we know Christ, He has already rescued us in one sense, but He is also willing and ready to rescue us in other situations in life we get ourselves into. But we must be ready and prepared to accept His offer of help and be prepared to accept His solution rather than our solution.

He gives the food we need

15 The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season

As I said earlier that we become dependent on ourselves and we forget about God. We get all het up when things go wrong on us. We are sold something dud, we get poor service, we are overlooked for promotion or whatever. Yet God is one who supplies all our needs. The sun comes, the rain comes and we have our food. We congratulate ourselves on our ingenuity and our technology. But there wouldn't be food unless there was sun, rain and good soils, In Trapia, people understand this only too well as they are so much more directly reliant on the environment to produce their food; but we are so detached as to not appreciate it. If we have a drought in Britain and the crops die - we go somewhere else and buy them - not so the poor people of Trapia.

But it's also our testimony as Christians - or should be - that we have a God who supplies our every need but so often we fail to recognise that and forget His goodness. But as people who are privileged with so much we should recognise that the plenty that God has provided us with does so much to change the lives of others. You've seen what the money you gave previously has done in Trapia. The work has not just had simple practical consequences but eternal consequences too as a vibrant new church has been planted. God has supplied their need through His people who love enough to *give* and who love enough to *go*.

He satisfies our desires

17 The LORD is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings.

What satisfies you? A new car maybe? Perhaps a huge house? No weeds in the garden? They are all dreams. We like the thought but that's what they are and won't necessarily make us happy. They are not real desires but dreams.

But what about deeper needs - to have peace, to feel secure, to find forgiveness, to find hope. If we are to be fulfilled and happy people, then these are desires that need to be satisfied.

And God satisfies that sort of desire. Jesus said "*I have come that they may have life; and have it to the full*" (John 10:10). We aren't made just to hang on and just be survivors through life but to be more than that. I just love looking at what God makes His people. We are His children, His chosen people, His holy nation. In Christ, we have not just found eternal life as we have repented, but we are God's special people.. This isn't survival in a worldly sense, but in an eternal sense. Our desire for security, peace, forgiveness and the rest is an eternal one.

And His love should be compelling us to take that message to those who don't know. It may be the world, or it may be to Swaffham. In Swaffham, we haven't been to Brazil - but the Brazilians have come to us!

As we have looked through these verses this morning, we find that God is one who wants to pour out His blessings on every person. As believers we have come into those blessings but what is our reaction?

He wants each person to receive and understand His promises, but too often we ignore them

He loves every person, but that love is so often ignored or spurned. Let's treat everybody as somebody that God wants to know.

He rescues us - but we need to take the lifebelt if we want to accept rescue

He feeds us and provides for us, but so often we take Him for granted.

He satisfies our deepest spiritual desires but so often we are dissatisfied with much of life.

Let's remind ourselves afresh about the God who doesn't just provide for us to survive, but makes us more than survivors. As the people of Trapia have seen God provide for them in their felt needs and as they have seen where their real need is - Jesus, the quality of their life and hope for the future has changed.

And what are we called to be - like Jesus. And if we are to be like Him then we should also like Him as we deal with the world that He has placed us in

He wants each person to receive and understand His promises: let's take His promises to other people, be it in Norfolk or anywhere else in the world

He loves every person, let's love other people He created and bring that love in meeting their felt needs and bringing them the good news.

He rescues us - let's offer everybody the lifebelt!

He feeds us and provides for us, let's show people our love and generosity.

He satisfies our deepest spiritual desires. Let's reach out, welcome people and show them the love of Christ and a Saviour who satisfies our deepest spiritual desires.

**Forgive us, Lord,
for not caring enough -
we think we're OK,
so what does it matter about everyone
else in the world?**

**Forgive us, Lord,
for passing by on the other side
of the road,
not wanting to know what's wrong,
not wanting to get involved,
in case it places demands upon us.**

**Forgive us, Lord,
for carrying on our daily lives
with a me first mentality,
with a skewed sense of priorities,
and hearts hardened to a needy world.**

**But you have poured your love
into our hearts
by your Holy Spirit.**

**Soften our hard hearts, Lord.
Make it possible for us to care,
to look people in the eyes
and smile at them,
to walk the extra mile,
and offer the hand of friendship.**

**Enable us to serve,
not counting our acts of mercy
as gold stars on a heavenly chart,
but helping others because,
with your love compelling us,**

**May we welcome all people,
whatever their age, race, gender,
beliefs or looks,
seeing the image of God within them,
however faintly,
and longing for their full potential -
in you.**

**Empower us to love,
to give of ourselves without wanting
anything in return,
and to go on giving,
knowing in so doing,
we are but a pale reflection of you. Amen.**