Prayer Focus: April 2014

The Commission on the Status of Women held its 58th session in New York in March this year for 10 days, with the theme ‘Challenges and Achievements in the Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.’ Ecumenical Women, a group that included some Salvationists, met every morning for devotions, which explored the main theme. What follows is some of the devotional material shared during those days.

1. Theme for the Day: Together in Response

Bible Reading: Luke 18:1-8 (NIV)

‘Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: ‘In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

Values in the reading to reflect upon: justice and perseverance

Prayer:
Almighty and eternal God, may your grace kindle in all of us a love for the many unfortunate people whom poverty and misery reduce to living in wretched conditions. Arouse in the hearts of those who call you Father, a hunger and thirst for social justice and for love expressed in deed and in truth. Grant O Lord, peace in our days, peace to our souls, peace in our families, peace in our country and peace among nations. Amen.

2. Theme for the Day: Millennium Development Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

Bible Reading: 2 Kings 6: 24-30a

(Warning – What follows is a shocking story of desperation and deceit!)

‘Some time later, Ben-Hadad king of Aram mobilised his entire army and marched up and laid siege to Samaria. There was a great famine in the city; the siege lasted so long that a donkey’s head sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a quarter of a cab of seed pods for five shekels. As the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried to him, “Help me, my lord the king!” The king replied, “If the LORD does not help you, where can I get help for you? From the threshing floor? From the winepress?” Then he asked her, “What’s the matter?”
She answered, “This woman said to me, ‘Give up your son so we may eat him today, and tomorrow we’ll eat my son’. So we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, ‘Give up your son so we may eat him,’ but she had hidden him.” When the king heard the woman’s words, he tore his robes.

Values in the reading to reflect upon: the realities of desperation

**Prayer: A prayer when overwhelmed or desperate.**

‘I cry aloud to the LORD;
    I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy.
I pour out before him my complaint;
    before him I tell my trouble.

When my spirit grows faint within me,
    it is you who watch over my way.
In the path where I walk
    people have hidden a snare for me.
Look and see, there is no one at my right hand;
    no one is concerned for me.
I have no refuge;
    no one cares for my life.

I cry to you, LORD;
    I say, “You are my refuge,
        my portion in the land of the living.”

Listen to my cry,
    for I am in desperate need;
rescue me from those who pursue me,
    for they are too strong for me.
Set me free from my prison,
    that I may praise your name.
Then the righteous will gather about me
    because of your goodness to me’.

Psalm 142

3. **Theme for the Day: Millennium Development Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability**

Bible Reading: Job 12:7-10

‘But ask the animals, and they will teach you,
    or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you;
or speak to the earth, and it will teach you,
    or let the fish in the sea inform you.
Which of all these does not know
    that the hand of the LORD has done this?”
In his hand is the life of every creature
and the breath of all mankind’.

Theme in the reading to reflect upon: learn from creation

Prayer:
God our Father, you have entrusted the earth to our care, and bid us share its riches. Give us the
courage to work hard and make the necessary sacrifices to accomplish your will. We ask this
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

4. **Theme for the Day: Millennium Development Goal 8: Global Partnership for Development**

Bible Reading: Revelation 22:1-5

‘Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the
throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of
the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And
the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The
throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see
his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not
need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they
will reign for ever and ever’.

Themes in the reading to reflect upon: fulfilment of prophecy, working together now for peace,
justice and equity.

Prayer:
Holy Spirit, you can change our hearts and enable us to love. Please change the hearts of all
those who want war, who want to take away from others their freedom or their bread.
Strengthen those who suffer in their fight against oppression. Rekindle in the hearts of all
people the longing for peace and justice, and the courage to implement them. Amen.