

# ONE VOICE

TOGETHER IN PRAYER FOR AN **END TO POVERTY**

## **WOULD YOU CARRY HIS BODY?**

*An Easter reflection by James Aladiran, friend of Tearfund and Director of Prayer Storm.*

**‘So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock.’ (Mark 15:46a)**

Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy, influential man who took responsibility for the burial of Jesus after his crucifixion. However, we don't often think about the fact that Joseph physically took Jesus' dead body down from the cross.

I remember meeting a pastor in Lebanon, who spoke about how the Syrian refugee crisis was massively impacting his church, and how they were struggling to cope with the pressure. In a season of deep prayer and crying out to God for help, the pastor saw a vision of Joseph of Arimathea taking the dead body of Jesus down from the cross. He heard the Lord say to him, 'Are you willing to bear the weight of my dead body?'

The church in the West is like Joseph of Arimathea. We are influential, and wealthy in comparison to much of the world. And God is calling us to begin to bear the weight of the body of Christ – a body of people that is suffering in many places and in many ways. We're called to carry them not just in provision, but in prayer.

Thank you for answering this call by pouring out your prayers. Please continue to pray, and ask others to join you however, whenever and wherever you can. Together, we can bear the weight of our sisters and brothers even through the darkest times.

PLEASE PRAY:

- Ask God to work in our hearts, making us more aware of and actively engaged with the need, pain and suffering in the world around us.
- Pray that the church in the West will continue to rise up in both giving and prayer, to be a voice of hope where it's needed most.

- Pray for churches around the world, including Tearfund's partner churches, where congregations and pastors are giving all they have to carry those broken by conflict and poverty.

### **A NOTE FROM...**

'On this Good Friday, let's be mindful of just how much it cost Jesus to carry within himself on the cross the full weight of the pain, injustice and wrongdoing that still causes such grief in the world. What inspiration and hope that gives us as we seek to make Jesus' good news more of a reality for those who need it most.'

**Rev Marian Curtis, Tearfund Chaplain**

## **FIFTY YEARS, FIFTY COUNTRIES: COLOMBIA**

*To mark 50 years of Tearfund, we're sharing about 50 countries where we've worked, celebrating God's provision and power to transform, and praying for each of these nations. This week we're in Colombia.*

**Home to Latin America's longest-running civil conflict, Colombia is a nation where children face huge challenges. As a result of disrupted education and poverty, a large number of children live on the streets and child labour is common.**

Tearfund has been working in Colombia since 1980, with a strong focus on helping vulnerable children.

### **Out of options**

At the age of ten, Jhonatan\* faced a bleak future. Following his friends into a life of gangs, drugs and alcohol seemed his only option.

Thousands of children and young people live in slums on the edge of towns and cities, prone to landslides or flooding, with few amenities. Unemployment is high and young people are at risk of drug and alcohol addiction, teenage pregnancy, family breakdown and domestic violence.

Drug-dealing armed gangs rule in these areas, and children as young as seven are encouraged to join these gangs as a way of keeping themselves safe in their neighbourhoods.

What choice did Jhonatan really have?

Fortunately, before it was too late, Jhonatan heard about a sports programme he could join.

The Sport for Life project was started by Tearfund partner Red Viva, and later transferred to another partner, CORSOC. By providing a safe environment to play sport, learn about Jesus and develop essential life-skills, these sports programmes help vulnerable children and young people to make wise choices.

### **A different path**

Jhonatan (now 13) says, 'I feel lucky to be in this team, which is also my family. The football club has given me the opportunity to practise the sport I like the best, to make friends and to learn about God and his plan for my life.'

In partnership with local churches, the sports clubs offer weekly football coaching sessions, as well as ongoing mentoring and support. The children and young people learn teamwork, leadership, discipline, and much more, giving them a valuable foundation.

'In these years I have seen a change in myself,' says Jhonatan. 'I am no longer as rude to my parents – I have learned to respect them, and also the teachers. I have received training in principles and values that will make me a champion, not only in football, but in life.'

He is so grateful for being offered a different path and looks forward to being able to help other children like himself.

### **Broader challenges**

Although Colombia is developing rapidly, almost 30 per cent of the population still live below the poverty line. During the conflict, thousands of women have suffered from sexual violence, leaving a generation of women scarred emotionally and physically.

All this is worsened by Colombia's vulnerability to natural disasters; more than 11 million people are affected each year by droughts, earthquakes and flooding.

As well as improving the lives of children, Tearfund is assisting many women who have experienced sexual abuse and also provides emergency support in the aftermath of severe flooding.

### **Join us in praying for this nation.**

PLEASE PRAY:

- Pray for peace in Colombia, for an end to the conflict and violence that have characterised so much of its recent history. Pray for those who have been affected by the violence, that they might find support and restoration.
- Praise God for the many children and young people who have been given new opportunities through the sports clubs. Pray that they continue making good decisions and can be a positive influence in their families, schools and neighbourhoods.
- Lift up the local church and our partners as they support local communities in finding solutions to the challenges they face. Pray for physical and spiritual protection for those working in these areas.

*\* Name changed to protect identity*

## **LOVE IS STRONGER**

What is the most powerful force in the universe?

Is it military strength? A political ideology? Anger? Hatred? Perhaps it's a physical force – gravity or electromagnetism?

The story of Easter gives us an answer that is both shocking, wondrous and deeply necessary. The life, death and resurrection of Christ tells us that love is stronger than anything and everything. It is the law above all laws.

This is the message of Christianity, and this is what compels us to go where the need is greatest.

### **Stronger – An Easter poem by Gideon Heugh**

We're all searching for something true,  
surrounded by fake news, extreme views, everyone's confused  
but I've seen that love is stronger than fear, haven't you?

Sometimes it feels like there's nothing we can do,  
injustice is everywhere, systems are being abused –  
so we keep on searching for something true.

We're longing for hope, we're longing for something new,  
we're longing for that bitter mountain to be moved –  
but I've seen that love is stronger than despair, haven't you?

The world seems to be in crisis, and perhaps our hearts are too,  
but there's a different perspective that you can choose  
if you're searching for something true:

when you peer behind a veil that's been torn in two  
you'll see the promise of a world being renewed –  
I've seen that love is stronger than hate, haven't you?

Maybe that's not enough, maybe we need another clue,  
maybe there are some things that will never be proved;  
yet we're all searching for something true,  
and I've seen that love is stronger than death, haven't you?

## Let's pray

*Dear God,*

*Thank you for your unfailing love:*

*the love that destroys the darkness,*

*the love that wipes out sin and shame,*




*the love that reaches out its hand to the lost and the least.*

*Help us to wholly embrace this love*

*in our thoughts, our words and our actions.*

*In Jesus' name, amen.*

## PRAYER POINTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

-  A landmark trade deal was signed last week by 44 African states. Please pray that this will stimulate economic growth, and that the deal will truly remove barriers. Pray that those living in poverty will benefit most, and across the whole of Africa, not just in the countries included in this new deal.
-  Tensions are high in Sierra Leone, where presidential elections are being re-run this Saturday following an inconclusive result. Pray that the election process will be peaceful, and that the successful candidate will be someone with a heart for God, justice and peace.
-  Praise God that seven out of 10 supermarkets contacted by our Renew Our Food campaign have committed to halve their food waste by 2030. Please pray that the remaining supermarkets will also make this commitment, and that companies and governments will continue to tackle the issue of food waste.