

The Forcey Focus

Forcey Bible Church Newsletter

September 2014

Joy in the Face of Suffering

Article by Mark Zimmerman



"I am happy every hour of the day."

This amazing quote is not from a famous movie star or a wealthy heir, but from Joseph Merrick, aka "the Elephant Man."

In 1884, Sir Frederick Treves, the most eminent surgeon in England, had his first meeting with Merrick, who was then twenty years old and part of a traveling freak show. Treves said of that encounter, "There stood revealed the most disgusting specimen of humanity that I have ever seen. ... At no time had I met with such a degraded or perverted version of a human being as this lone figure displayed." Merrick was covered in tumors from head to toe. His skin hung down in large, spongy folds. He smelled terribly, and he could barely speak due to the tumors on his jaw. His mother had died when he was ten, and his father and stepmother had abandoned him. He ended up in a workhouse, which he was only able to escape by joining a traveling freak show. The show happened to end up in London, directly across the street from London Hospital, where Treves worked.

After seeing the show, Treves gave Merrick his calling card, and eventually examined Merrick several times at London Hospital. Soon, though, the show was closed by the police, and Merrick and his manager disappeared. Treves didn't hear from Merrick again until two years later, when Merrick showed up in London, having been robbed by his manager and carrying only Treves' calling card.

With the help of donations solicited through newspaper ads, Treves fixed up a private suite for Merrick at London Hospital, which became his permanent home for the final three and a half years of his life. Treves visited Merrick every day, and soon became impressed by Merrick's intelligence. But the most impressive thing about Merrick, according to Treves, was his optimistic attitude in the face of tremendous suffering. Treves said of Merrick, "He had passed through the fire and come out unscathed. His troubles had ennobled him. He showed himself to be a gentle, affectionate, and lovable creature ... free from any trace of cynicism or resentment, without a grievance and without an unkind word for anyone. I have never heard him complain. I have never heard him deplore his ruined life or resent the treatment he had received at the hands of callous keepers." In fact, Treves reported that Merrick told him several times that he was "happy every hour of the day."

How is it possible that Merrick, whom Treves referred to as "remarkably intelligent," and therefore capable of realizing his deplorable state, could have been so happy? No one can be sure of the answer, but it is very possible that it was his faith in Christ that was his source of joy. Treves said that Merrick knew the Bible and Prayer Book "intimately." His mother, Jane, who died when Merrick was ten, was a Baptist schoolteacher; Merrick recalled her very fondly, and his most prized possession was a small portrait of her. The chairman of London Hospital, Carr Gomm, said that Merrick was regularly visited by the hospital chaplain, and that he was confirmed in the Church of England. The chaplain also reported that in their last conversation Merrick had expressed his feeling of deep gratitude for all that had been done for him at the hospital and acknowledged the mercy of God to him in bringing him there.

Merrick's joy in the face of suffering became an inspiration to many people. In fact, he was personally visited by King Edward VIII, Queen Alexandra, and other powerful members of British society. As Treves said of Merrick, "As a specimen of humanity, Merrick was ignoble and repulsive; but the spirit of Merrick, if it could be seen in the form of the living, would assume the figure of an up-standing and heroic man, smooth browed and clean of limb, and with eyes that flashed undaunted courage."

'Tis true my form is something odd,
But blaming me is blaming God;
Could I create myself anew
I would not fail in pleasing you.

If I could reach from pole to pole
Or grasp the ocean with a span,
I would be measured by the soul;
The mind's the standard of the man.

~ poem used by Joseph Merrick to end his letters, adapted from "False Greatness" by Isaac Watts

Soul Winning at Forcey

"For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. "(2 Cor 6:2).

This verse underscores the need for the soul winner to press for a decision to receive Christ when the Holy Spirit has provided an open door to present the gospel. Delay may result in a missed opportunity. A recent experience by a Forcey member illustrates this point.

Over the past several months, a Forcey member has cultivated a friendship with Robert, an elderly gentleman living in a long-term care facility. Robert is confined to a wheel-chair, having suffered a stroke, but still possesses a clear mind and the ability to speak. Numerous conversations convinced the Forcey member that his friend was religious, but lost, with his hope of salvation stemming from his church and his good works. Despite Robert's evident need of Christ, the Forcey member found no real opportunity to present the gospel to him, but trusted that the Lord would present the right opening in due time.

Recently, during his weekly visit to this facility, the Forcey member found Robert in the hallway distraught over the serious illness of a close friend. Sensing that this was the opening he had been seeking, the Forcey member felt emboldened to present the gospel to him. Robert listened carefully to the message of salvation by grace and, when urged to receive the Savior "now," humbly called upon the Lord Jesus to save him (Rom 10:13). Subsequent visits by the Forcey member to see Robert have given evidence of the reality of his salvation. Praise the Lord!

~ Ralph Zimmerman, Evangelism Team

Health Ministry Note

Check out informational pamphlets placed in Senior Information Resource Section of the tracks rack near room 150.

Also, health information for all ages can be found on the Health Ministry bulletin board.

Check it out!!!

~Carmella (Joy) Wright, Health Ministry

NOTE FROM A FORCEY MISSIONARY

Dear Ones at Forcey,

It is always with thanksgiving and prayers that we remember you for your faithful prayer and financial support. Without your partnership, we would not be able to continue in God's ministry in Togo. We are so blessed to be able to meet people's physical and spiritual needs as God brings patients to the hospital. And we are blessed to be able to work in local church plants and to disciple others.

God has truly blessed us with your partnership! Thanks from the bottom of our hearts!

For His Glory, always.
Phil 1:3-5



Michael and Cheryl Gayle

Togo

SAVE THE DATE!

Christmas in October will be a pot-luck luncheon
on Sunday, October 12, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

This is a great opportunity for the whole family to enjoy
fellowship over a meal with Forcey missionaries and
the Forcey family.

WATCH FOR DETAILS AND SIGN-UP!

KIDS CLUBS are starting SOON!

For information on registration dates, parent meetings, and more, click on the club name below which will take you to their individual web page.

GIRLS CLUBS

[PIONEER GIRLS](#)

[CHALLENGERS](#)



BOYS CLUBS

[TREE CLIMBERS](#)

[STOCKADE](#)

[BATTALION](#)



Calendar of Ministry Activities

September 2014

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	LABOR DAY	SAM's Bible Study (10-11:30 a.m.)	Jubilee Choir Rehearsal (7-9 p.m.) Wednesday Prayer Group (7:30-9 p.m.)	FCS Middle School Back-To-School Night (7-9 p.m.) Praise Band Rehearsal (7-9 p.m.)	Worship Night (7-9 p.m.) Karate (7-9:30 p.m.)	Ladies Prayer Group (7-8 a.m.) Body & Soul Aerobics (8:30 - 9:45 a.m.)
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Middle School Teens Pool Party (5-8 p.m.)	Sanctuary Orchestra Rehearsal (7-8:30 p.m.)	ESL Classes (7-9 p.m.) Handbells Rehearsal (7-8:30 p.m.) Choir Rehearsal (7-8:30 p.m.)	Wednesday Prayer Group (7:30-9 p.m.) Pioneer Girls, Stockade & Tree Climber Clubs Registration (7-8:30 p.m.)	SAM's Blue Angel/Annapolis Trip (9-4:30 p.m.) Battalion (7-9 p.m.) Praise Band Rehearsal (7-9 p.m.)	Karate (7-9:30 p.m.)	Ladies Prayer Group (7-8 a.m.) Body & Soul Aerobics (8:30 - 9:45 a.m.)
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
		SAM's Bible Study (10-11:30 a.m.) ESL Classes (7-9 p.m.) Handbells Rehearsal (7-8:30 p.m.) Choir Rehearsal (7-8:30 p.m.)	High School Teens Small Groups (7-9 p.m.) Jubilee Choir Rehearsal (7-9 p.m.) Wednesday Prayer Group (7:30-9 p.m.)	Battalion (7-9 p.m.) Praise Band Rehearsal (7-9 p.m.)	Karate (7-9:30 p.m.)	Ladies Prayer Group (7-8 a.m.) Body & Soul Aerobics (8:30 - 9:45 a.m.)
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
		ESL Classes (7-9 p.m.) Handbells Rehearsal (7-8:30 p.m.) Choir Rehearsal (7-8:30 p.m.)	High School Teens Small Groups (7-9 p.m.) Jubilee Choir Rehearsal (7-9 p.m.) Stockade (7-8:30 p.m.) Tree Climbers (7-8:30 p.m.) Wednesday Prayer Group (7:30-9 p.m.)	Battalion (7-9 p.m.) Praise Band Rehearsal (7-9 p.m.)	Karate (7-9:30 p.m.)	Ladies Prayer Group (7-8 a.m.) MOPS Yard Sale Fundraiser (8-3 p.m.) Body & Soul Aerobics (8:30 - 9:45 a.m.)
28	29	30				
		ESL Classes (7-9 p.m.) Handbells Rehearsal (7-8:30 p.m.) Choir Rehearsal (7-8:30 p.m.)				