TOWERS OF HOPE COVID-19 UPDATE, TUESDAY 5 MAY 2020

Last Tuesday afternoon the police again came to monitor our daily soup kitchen. They have been there a couple of times since the lockdown, so I wasn’t overly concerned. However, as our numbers at the soup kitchen had begun to run away with us (on the Monday we had 104 people, on the Tuesday it jumped to 148!), it was becoming more and more difficult to practice social distancing and safeguard those who came, from possible Covid-19 infection (although we had good systems of social distancing as we handed out the food, and 98% of those who came co-operated, the challenge was very much the 'before' and 'after' we handed out food). We thus, in cooperation with the police, had to take the difficult decision to stop our daily soup kitchen for now... This was very very difficult, as there are still so many people on the streets who are desperately hungry... At the moment we are looking at other ways to keep on supporting those on the street with food.

At the same time the restrictions regarding the handing out of food parcels have also hit us squarely in the face. But then, as I turned to the Lord, I heard James 1:2-4, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything".

It is very interesting how God works and actually, without one always being aware of it, at times prepare you for the next challenge. Last Tuesday morning, a few hours before we had to close our soup kitchen, I was sharing with the men in the government emergency shelter in Rocklands on another Scripture on perseverance, when one of the guys made a reference to Acts 16 where Paul & Silas were in prison in the most difficult circumstances. But instead of sulking, they were praising God with prayers and songs. And then - without expecting anything, God provided a way out! When I visited the shelter again this past Sunday and shared with the guys the sad news that we had to close the soup kitchen, the same guy who first mentioned Acts 16, reminded me of it! Thank you Lord! Forgive me my sulking. I just praise your name!

I know, God is in THIS! As the author Dan Stone says in 'The Rest of the Gospel' (p.138), "...that whether it (that which has happened) comes from seeming good or seeming bad, we choose to take it from God. All is of God. Am I saying that God is the author of evil? By no means. But God in his sovereignty uses evil to accomplish His purposes in us and in the world. He's in it, and He means it, but it's not His righteousness." This applies to the whole madness of the Covid-19 global crisis.

There is a song that we often sing in worship at Towers, 'Open the eyes of my heart Lord. I want to see You... To see You high and lifted up, shining in the light of your glory... Pour out your power and love... As we sing holy, holy, holy...'

And yes! I do see that! In spite of all the negatives, I do see the presence of our Lord! Take for example *Peter (not his real name), one of the guys in the Rocklands shelter. He's from a Muslim background and from the Cape. But he met the Lord through a Bible someone gave him. ostracised from his Muslim family he came to Bfn and ended up in the shelter. But he not only knows the Lord intimately, but loves His Word and can recite Bible verses with the best of them! As it is, he sorts of 'run the shelter' under the authority of the Soc Dev officials (yes Lord, I see You!).

I see the Lord in the way He works with the ladies in the government emergency shelter for ladies in Heidedal. For the past weeks, during my regular visits we’ve been discussing 'the armour of God' in Eph 6. And what a joy to experience how the Lord is ministering not only to these precious ladies but also
the officials of Soc Dev who sit in on the sessions. Real and precious relationships are formed all around! (yes Lord, I see You!).

On Saturday I was able to visit with my colleague Rev Vueylwa (Trinity Methodist) the shelter outside Bfn in the vicinity of Tierpoort, and what a tonic to my system! These men and ladies who have been taken out of a difficult life on the streets where every day is fraught with all kinds of dangers and where they have to struggle to survive, now are not only physically healthy (some are even getting a bit fat! 😁), but are growing spiritually through the various programs committed partners are running (yes Lord, I do see You!)

Lord, I see You also in the new connections and relationship Towers can form with key people in the police and Soc Dev in Bfn. Lord, You are definitely in control!

Regarding the distributing of our food parcels, we surely have hit a snag. After the events of Tuesday, I had to spend lots of time and energy to try to work out how do we proceed - especially in the light of the seemingly rules of government. However, we were still able to distribute 123 parcels the past week. This week we trust that we will be able to get out more - at least up to 200. While we still want to co-operate with Soc Dev and will do whatever we can to be in relationship with them, we will keep on handing out food parcels while all the while keeping to the regulations regarding social distancing etc. But we will not hand over our food parcels, neither the resources entrusted to us, to them. We will fill in the forms required by Soc Dev and continue to engage with them to support and help vulnerable and hungry people.

Lastly we have started to make face masks to those who need it, and have the support of quite a couple of supporters and volunteers in the wider Bfn. For every facemask we sell (@ R30 each), we will be able to make another one and hand out for free to vulnerable people who are not able to buy one. If you, or someone you know, wants to partner with us in this, please send me a mail at dlh@towersofhope.org

Blessings and may the Lord enable everyone of us to see Him in whatever crisis or challenge we have to handle in these times. Remember, "The Lord is in everything which happens. He means everything, but everything is not Him, not His righteousness".

Untill we chat again.
In Him
De la Harpe