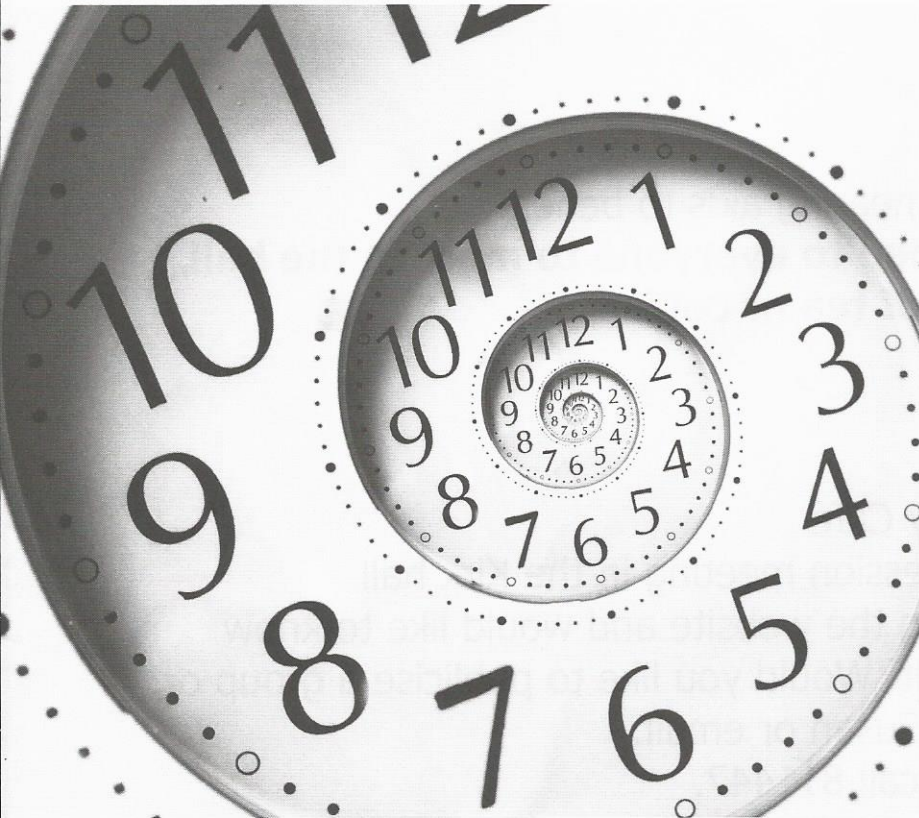


No time like the present



Gillian Cooper *reflects on* Acts 8:26-end

Philip should probably have consulted the church leaders before baptising a foreigner. He should have suggested to Queen Candace's servant that he might like to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem for a few months, and attend a course of preparation classes. But these were the heady days, when the implications of the death and resurrection of Jesus were beginning to be understood. "What is to prevent me from being baptised?" asks the eunuch, and Philip has no answer. His unintended venture into evangelism has proved surprisingly successful, and now he has to deal with the consequences.

Peter has not yet had the vision that for him opens up the Gospel to the Gentiles. Paul, that great apostle to the Gentiles, does not appear until the following chapter of Acts. Yet in this astonishing story, against all expectations, outside the rules, an Ethiopian comes to faith in Jesus and is baptised into eternal life.

In the centuries that have passed the Christian faith has inevitably become institutionalised. Our role in the world has changed beyond recognition. But still we read these stories, and know that, miraculously, life is stronger than death, and that with the Spirit of God let loose in the world, anything can happen. Each year the Easter season helps us to recapture a little bit of the excitement of the Gospel, and gives us a small encouragement to expect astonishing things of God. ☺

We give thanks, O God, for the baptism that draws us into your family in union with believers past, present and future. Help us to know the power of your Spirit, that we may draw others to your love. Amen.

Lesser-known Bible characters

Titus

by Caroline Fletcher

Titus worked with the Apostle Paul in challenging situations. For instance, Paul attended a meeting in Jerusalem to oppose demands from some Jewish Christians for Gentile converts to be circumcised. Controversially, he took along Titus, himself an uncircumcised Greek Christian, thus making his companion the focus of heated debate.

Later Paul sent Titus to deliver a letter to the Corinthian Church severely criticising them. Paul feared an angry reaction and trusted Titus to deal with any fallout. Fortunately, he was able to report back a positive response. His reward was another challenge – to persuade the Corinthians to fulfil their promise to contribute to a fund for poor Christians.

The letter to Titus tells us that Paul subsequently entrusted him with another unenviable task – to tackle false teachers in the Cretan Church and appoint leaders there. Titus showed ability under pressure and tradition holds that he eventually became Bishop of Crete. ☺

“ Let God's promises shine on your problems.. Corrie ten Boom

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency
a sense of community

by Heather Smith

Mma Ramotswa receives many callers at the offices of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency. Undoubtedly her clients are looking for happiness. Many have a firm idea of what that means. But Mma Ramotswa sometimes finds, not what they think they want, but what they need to know, which is

different. And sometimes that unexpected knowledge brings unexpected happiness. Mma Ramotswa knows its value. Her work makes her happy and counts, in her view, for more than a healthy balance sheet. In fact, she says: "Annual accounts should include an item specifically headed Happiness, alongside expenses and receipts and the like."

How often we believe we know what will make us happy. "If only..." we think. But like Mma Ramotswa we have to know how to see our situations in terms of the happiness they bring. If we do, we will find that God is only too willing to rejoice with us. ☺