

Sermon Series:

GREEN LEAF IN DROUGHT-TIME

God's sustaining grace in times of trouble



Sunday morning service – 18/07/2021

WORSHIP

This morning, we're going to do something a bit different. We will be reading parts of a psalm, interspersed with songs which will help us to think about what is said in the psalm. We have put it all into one video which will take you through the psalm and songs. If you don't want to use that, I have written the reading below with links to the individual songs or you can substitute your own songs. However you choose to do this, take time to come before God and share honestly with Him both your struggles and your faith in Him and be renewed. These are not easy times, but He is with us – always.

Video: <https://youtu.be/ynW6c5tFHbQ>

Reading: Psalm 34:1-3

- ¹ *I will praise the Lord at all times.
I will constantly speak his praises.*
- ² *I will boast only in the Lord;
let all who are helpless take heart.*
- ³ *Come, let us tell of the Lord's greatness;
let us exalt his name together.*

Song: As We Gather/The Steadfast Love of the Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96wFybfqspM&t=113s>

Reading: Psalm 34:4-10

- ⁴ *I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me.
He freed me from all my fears.*
- ⁵ *Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy;
no shadow of shame will darken their faces.*
- ⁶ *In my desperation I prayed, and the Lord listened;
he saved me from all my troubles.*
- ⁷ *For the angel of the Lord is a guard;
he surrounds and defends all who fear him.*
- ⁸ *Taste and see that the Lord is good.
Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!*
- ⁹ *Fear the Lord, you his godly people,*

for those who fear him will have all they need.
¹⁰ *Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry,
but those who trust in the Lord will lack no good thing.*

Song: The Lord's My Shepherd

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eIQQayhpak>

Reading: Psalm 34:17-19

¹⁷ *The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help.
He rescues them from all their troubles.*
¹⁸ *The Lord is close to the broken-hearted;
he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.*
¹⁹ *The righteous person faces many troubles,
but the Lord comes to the rescue each time.*

Song: I Will Trust You in the Darkness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5FxET7XBEo>

Personal Prayer

Take a few moments to take your own concerns and fears to the Lord.
Pray for those you know who are facing difficult times.

PASTORAL PRAYER (Bob and Marj Nance)

On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

Almighty Everlasting God, we praise Your Holy name, for You are the One who was and is and is to come. We come to worship You this morning in Spirit and in truth, as is Your desire. We love You, Lord, because You first loved us, and we remember how You showed just how far You would go to redeem us, and restore us to fellowship with yourself. You did this when You sent Your Son, Jesus, to live as a man here on earth, to know and experience all that we experience throughout our lives, and ultimately, take upon Yourself our sins and the punishment we deserved so that, as we put our faith and trust in You, we can know the joy of a life set free from the bondage of sin and the sure knowledge of eternal salvation. Nothing we could do could achieve this result, it is only that our hope is built on nothing less than Jesu's blood and righteousness, and through Him, and Him alone, we are saved.

As we grasp the fact that You are our Rock and our refuge, and rest in Your loving arms, and believe that You are in all things and over all things, that nothing happens in this world that You do not know about, then we can be assured, even in this time of lockdown because of the COVID-19 virus, that You are working to bring about Your purposes for each and every one of us and also for our church.

As we think of our church, and look back at the way You have provided many strong Spiritual leaders to guide and nurture us in our walk with You, we give thanks for Your amazing provision in leading us to the one You knew would fulfill Your plans for us. So, we pray that once again, You will guide and lead our JNC committee, to the one You know will continue to minister to us to bring forth Your will in our church, now and into the future. We ask for a special infilling of Your Holy Spirit in each member of the committee, so they may be able to discern Your will as they continue along the path toward achieving Your objective for us.

We rejoice in the news from Caleb Kajuna in Uganda, of the success of the new method of sharing the message of salvation via loud speakers on the church, and the response from people who heard his message. We pray that You will continue to bless his ministry and bring many people into Your kingdom. We ask that You will continue to be with Grace as she starts work in her new location. May her witness be such that people will be drawn to You and commit their lives to You.

We pray for Gabbi and Kit as they adjust their ministries to work in with the COVID restrictions. Strengthen them and keep them in good health, and may they know Your presence with them at all times, as they strive to be obedient to Your direction for them. Be with Kim Clarke and Paul Baxter as they too, have to modify their teaching methods to meet the needs of their students. We also think of Lihn in her nursing work, Lord, keep her safe and well.

We give You thanks that only one of our fellowship have contracted this virus and ask that You will continue to watch over and strengthen our people, so they may be able to continue to reach out, and share the message of salvation to those around them.

We also remember those of our fellowship who are not having the best of times with their own health, particularly Scott and Becky who have been in isolation. Thank You that their first two tests have come back negative and give them Your peace as they await their final test on Sunday and the result of that test.

Be with Lorraine Martin and her family, as Liz goes through her Chemo and radiation treatment. This can be a very stressful time, so help them to remain positive as the treatment takes its toll on her stamina, and may they all be very aware of Your presence with them, and give them Your peace.

Others we remember, are Margaret Carey and Jeanette Harrington in regards to their cancer treatment, Bill and Brenda, Cathy and Joan with their isolation, Jeanette Odgers and Ross Pogson with their rehab, Ron, Ian, Betty and Harry, and Ken and Greta as they deal with age related problems, and Dev and Chanda as they mourn the loss of a loved one in India.

We pray for our governments as they work to introduce measures to protect us from the virus. Grant them wisdom in their decision making and may they seek Your guidance in all they do; and as they obey Your direction, may they give You the glory.

We pray all these things in the Name of Jesus who taught His disciples saying:

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us in the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.
Amen.*

BIBLE READINGS

Lamentations 3:17-26 (ESV)

¹⁷ *My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is;*

¹⁸ *so I say, "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD."*

¹⁹ *Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall!*

²⁰ *My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me.*

²¹ *But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:*

²² *The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;*

²³ *they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

²⁴ *“The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”*

²⁵ *The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.*

²⁶ *It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.*

Philippians 3:7-14 (ESV)

⁷ *But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

¹² *Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

REFLECTION: Where is God in suffering? (Interview with Dr. Helen Roseveare)

I first heard Dr. Helen Roseveare speak when I was in Bible College in the early 1980s. Over the following years, I have found that her perspective on trusting God in suffering has challenged and comforted me. Difficult times can become unbearable if we don't have some sort of answer as to why God is allowing things to happen. This video does not answer every aspect of that question, and the kind of suffering we face many be different, but the concepts are important to consider as we walk with God in our broken and sinful world.

Video: <https://youtu.be/ePVZGKe1dHM>

Interviewer: In 1978, I came to know Jesus Christ personally with God as my heavenly Father. My life was in his all-powerful, loving hands and I now expected to be protected from all harm. Within months I attended a Women's Conference when I heard that the speaker was a single missionary doctor who had been captured, beaten and brutally raped while serving God in the Congo. My faith, my worldview was shattered. How could God permit such a thing? When Dr Helen Roseveare spoke and told the story of what happened in 1964 during the Simba uprising, it forever changed my understanding of God and his ways. Countless individuals the world over will say the same thing. It is a privilege to welcome from Northern Ireland, Dr Helen Roseveare.

Dr Helen Roseveare: Thank you.

Interviewer: I can't believe that we have this privilege. I heard you say this would be your last trip to Canada. I hope that's not true. Is it all right at this stage to say how old you are?

Dr Helen Roseveare: Yes, you're allowed to, I'm 85 - just about 86.

Interviewer: That's right. This is a story the first time I heard you tell it - I think in 1980 - you did not realize that you were getting up in front of thousands of women to share the darkest experience of your life. You thought it would be a little workshop!

Dr Helen Roseveare: Yes

Interviewer: And yet that was such a launch pad which has continued to ripple into millions of lives around the world ever since. Take us back who were you in the 1950s career-wise and spiritually - what were your hopes and dreams as you headed to the Congo - the Belgian Congo then.

Dr Helen Roseveare: Well, you know I'd been brought up in an ordinary middle-class family, as we would say in England. I'd finish secondary school and it was during the world war - two not one! - and I began to feel I wasn't even sure there was a God. I didn't see much point. I mean, He couldn't control the world. Like so many other families we had family members who had been in the war service and who never came back. And all the carnage and the brutality and the cruelty of the war. I found it blew my mind. I couldn't see this in relationship to God - not the God I wanted to believe in. So, when I went up to university to study medicine, I decided in a way to drop God out of the story. I didn't quite do that as I hadn't the courage. I felt that, in case I'm wrong, I'd better keep a foot in each world. So, I went to a service once every Sunday morning early, but apart from that I didn't reckon on God in the story.

But I was very lonely at university and without God in one's life I found it quite frightening. There were no limits set any longer and one had been brought up with clear limits which made sense. And then some Christian Union girls befriended me and I watched them. Their lives were just so different from other people. They were always, consistently kind, thoughtful, loving. They gave up time to help us to find our way around at university and I began to show up at some of their meetings.

I was amazed. They talked about God as though they knew him. I went to their prayer meetings and that blew my mind. They prayed to a God whom they knew. Little by little, this hunger grew in my heart. Come the first Christmas holiday from university, they organized to get me to a Christian conference, and we heard clear Bible teaching from a great Bible teacher of the last century, Dr Graham Scrogie. He took us through Genesis, and he took us through Romans and through this I was forced to make a decision. We were all around the supper table and I rushed upstairs. I was ashamed and I threw myself on my bed in tears and I said, "God, if there is a God, please make yourself known to me now". I looked up through my tears and written on the wall of the dormitory where I was staying there was a text. It was wartime and the roof had leaked and the last word of the text had been wiped out and it just said, "Be still and know that I am". The word, God, had been wiped out. I had just prayed, "God, if there is a God, make yourself known to me now". And He did and I was overwhelmed. God had actually spoken to me! And then all the teaching we'd had that week of a lovely Lord Jesus and who had died on the cross for my sin. It all made sense. I think all I can say is that I was overwhelmed by the thought of the love of God. That God who made me, so loved me that he died for me that I might be forgiven. This might be misunderstood, but I would say that I fell in love with Jesus that night.

Interviewer: Oh, I think he's delighted that you fell in love with Him!

Dr Helen Roseveare: Well, he was just so wonderful to me and that was my missionary call. I never had another missionary call. I just knew from that minute I wanted to give my life to sharing Jesus with other people. I felt that there was nothing worth doing in life except serving and loving the Lord Jesus.

Interviewer: In 1953 you went to what was a rain forest. You helped build the hospital. I mean, I've seen what they do when they bake bricks and make them, one by one, in Africa. You rolled up your sleeves and did it.

Dr Helen Roseveare: I worked in with the workman's team. I soon discovered that they work much better if you work with them. If you only tell them what to do, while you stand there, they'll do it but once you go, they won't. It is the same in Ireland - it's no different, we're all the same! So, I worked alongside them, and yes, we built a hospital and I had to learn that cement and concrete are not the same - I didn't know that before!

Interviewer: And you delivered babies and you helped lepers and you just served the people. But you were there in what would become a very tumultuous chapter of history and continues to be tumultuous in that country but tell us what happened.

Dr Helen Roseveare: Well, we like a lot of African countries in the early 60s, Congo got its Independence. It was a colony from Belgium and many countries that time became independent. But their colonial bosses had not prepared them for independence and really there were no graduates, there was there was one Congolese university graduate at the time of independence, and he was a Roman Catholic who'd been through their seminary and gone into the priesthood. But there were none others. In the Congolese army there were no black-skinned or dark-skinned bosses. Chaos broke out. The Europeans, the "pale-skins" as we were called, left. Sadly, a lot of the missionaries as well because we heard over the radio that the African army had gone on the rampage, and they'd gone into a mission station and raped one of the missionaries. Fear took hold of community and most of the pale-skin people fled - got out of the country.

We had four years of really frightening anarchy. The shops were empty. There was no food, there was nothing. There were no medicines, and it was very difficult. You worked with what you had left to work with until that ran out too. But then in September 1964 - as far as I'm concerned, with no warning - we suddenly found ourselves at war. One afternoon in early August a truckload of these wicked soldiers drove into my village with a wounded man and they said it was a wounded civilian. The word they used in Swahili was a word you would only use if you were at war, which we didn't know we were at war because we were so cut off from everything.

That was the beginning of five months of really horrific times. Initially they didn't touch us. They told us to keep out of things. But what we watched happening between dark-skin and dark-skin was terrible. Then ultimately 27 of our brother missionaries were murdered and over 200 pale-skinned nuns were murdered and countless priests. But, at the same time a quarter of a million Africans lost their lives. We tend to focus on what we pale-skins got but many of our Africans, who had loved and cared for us and looked after us, when we were eventually rescued, they turned on them and it was it was very horrific.

Halfway through - after about 10 weeks - they actually came to my house one night. I don't know what time. By then they'd taken our watches and clocks and everything else that was takeable. It was a horrific night. They came into the house and said they were looking for whatever and they smashed everything. They ransacked the house and they didn't find what they were looking for I didn't happen to possess a radio or anything like this. But then, they turned on me. There was a moment out of the veranda of the house when this sergeant major of the rebel soldiers stood there with a gun pressed against my forehead. I don't know it was loaded or not, but I presumed it was. And he said, "Say that Lumumba (their patron saint - the killed leader of the rebellion) is the saviour of the world". You know, I wasn't praying, I wasn't thinking, but I just knew that wasn't true. I knew the only one Saviour of the world that was Jesus so I just said, "No, never, Jesus is the only Saviour of the world".

I think in my heart - I think I was actually praying he would shoot. It'd be quick, clean, finished. But out on the courtyard was one of my junior students from the college and he was being held by these men and he broke loose. He threw himself between me and this little soldier and said, "You don't touch her but over my dead body". And they turned on him and they beat him up so savagely. I didn't know till two years later that he was not killed. Actually, he survived, but it was terrible. Then they drove me down the corridor of my home and somehow in that moment I think I was thinking, "God where are you? Whatever's going on?" And there was suddenly a tremendous consciousness that God was there.

Interviewer: There was a moment where you thought you'd been abandoned?

Dr Helen Roseveare: Well, I don't think I ever lost my faith in God, but I just felt He wasn't looking after me exactly. But suddenly I knew He was, and He was in charge and that these rebel soldiers were very small compared to the almightiness of God. And as they drove me down the corridor, I think He spoke to me. I didn't hear words. Looking back, I had to ask the Lord, "What did you actually say? Put it into words for me." I think what He said was, "Can you thank me?" And my heart was saying, "No! This has gone too far". I knew what lay ahead, I could see the whole thing was horrible. He said, "Can you thank me for trusting you?" I thought, "This is unbelievable!" I know I trust Him, but I never thought of Him trusting me. It was revolutionary to think that He trusted me! But in this second, I could see what he was saying. I thought I could trust You. I thought You wouldn't hurt me. And God was saying, "Can you thank me for trusting you with this experience - even if I never tell you why?". And even in the midst of the darkness – it was in only a split minute all this happened – I said, "Dear Lord, I don't know what You're saying. I don't know why You're saying it. I don't know who'll ever be blessed by this. But if this is part of Your plan, then yes, thank You for trusting me."

And immediately I was flooded with a sense of the enormous peace of God. It was wonderful. It was as though He said, "All I want of you is the loan of your body." It was Jesus in me. They weren't fighting me, they were fighting Jesus and all I had to do say, "Yes, Jesus I'm Yours. You're in me. You do just as you want". And it didn't stop the pain, the humiliation, the cruelty. It didn't take that away. It was all there. But suddenly it was with Him and for Him and it just revolutionized everything – it was wonderful.

Years later when we came home on furlough - we were rescued and we were sent home and I talked about this all over the United Kingdom, and every now and again a woman would come up to me at the end of women's meetings and say, "But why did God allow" –and then they'd just pause – "Why did the God of love allow suffering?" Really, they were saying to me, "Why did the God of love allow you to suffer? You were a missionary out there, serving Him?" And I thought, you know, we never asked that question. So, I didn't have an answer because we never asked the question. I just thought, "Lord, You're just so wonderful and You're so marvelous." And it's such a privilege that He is our master, our friend, our Saviour, our Lord, our king. He has the right to anything. And I'd given my life to Him, so why not?

Interviewer: Well, that's one of your teachings – Living Sacrifice – Romans 12:1 says, "Submit your body as a living sacrifice." God was calling this in in a way you never would have anticipated in that night, prior to your teeth being kicked out by a rebel boot, prior to being brutally raped twice. Were you aware that He wasn't abandoning you? That He was there, and He was going to do something in this, through this darkest, most evil experience, that you couldn't at that moment see?

Dr Helen Roseveare: It's really as though he wrote one word - I could I could almost read it in the sky – PRIVILEGE – right from the night I was converted. The leader of the conference where I was, gave me a Bible. I'd never owned a Bible before. He wrote in my Bible Philippians 3:10, "*That I may know Christ, the power of His resurrection and the privilege of the fellowship of his sufferings*". I'd been a Christian about half an hour and he was saying to me it would be a privilege to suffer for Jesus. And right from that day the word privilege has really underlined everything in my Christian life. It was a privilege that He asked me for something. He said, "I want the loan of your body" – it was amazing that almighty God, the great Creator, heavenly father needed me. It was something I had to respond to, and it was a privilege. And I think it's this word "privilege" which has made such a difference. It's just because it's a privilege to be given the opportunity to serve him or to suffer. Suffering is so tiny. To get it in perspective for me – it lasted five months and I've lived 85 years. What's five months? It's terribly small. Now I've read books of other people – Pastor Wurmbran where it was nine years, I think, of imprisonment by himself

and terrible tortures and I've heard of a pastor, I can't remember his name now, in China – terrible imprisonment and the wicked, wicked things they did to him. Mine was very, very small.

Interviewer: How long was the healing – emotionally, spiritually - out of this terrible abuse?

Dr Helen Roseveare: When I got home it was as though one woke up from a nightmare and I didn't want to. I didn't want to – I wanted to die. I wanted to go to be with Jesus. And it really took three months. I got home on New Year's day and in late March or early April I went with my mother for Easter to our cottage home in the UK and it was there at a Palm Sunday service that the Lord eventually got through to me to stop being a fool. You see, I wasn't wanting to go on living. You see, quite a lot of our people were murdered. And there was a lovely American boy (Dr Paul Carlson) and he was murdered. And people said, "His mother prayed for Him. Your mother prayed for you. Why did God answer her prayers and not the other prayers?" I thought, "That's ridiculous! We thought he got the best part. He got to be with Jesus!" I was still down here suffering.

Interviewer: When I first heard this story over 30 years ago, you peppered this testimony with the warmest phrase – "wonderful Jesus" I'll never forget it.

The tragic irony at least at the outset is that you were heading out there as an enthusiastic Christian and doctor. "Give me this Mountain" – that was your prayer. You wanted to live on the mountaintops with God. If you could have gone from one mountain of transfiguration to another your prayer would have been answered. Did you not feel betrayed in your trust and in your hopes and dreams as these events unfolded?

Dr Helen Roseveare: No, I don't think we ever thought like that. I suppose there was a moment of questioning. I was very conscious of being alone as far as being a pale-skin was concerned that night. And yes, I suppose there was a momentary thought of saying, "Why God?" but immediately He spoke into the situation, and he said, "Don't ask why."

I think I grew up with the phrase, "Is it worth it?" Everything, everything in life had to be worth it. If Dad said to me as a child, "You don't touch the kitchen knife!", I'd look at the kitchen knife and I'd think "Why not?" Then I think, "Dad said, 'Don't'." and I knew my father, so it wasn't worth trying it out! So, everything was, "Is it worth it? Is it worth it?" and I think when the awful moments came in the rebellion and the sense, "Is it really worth this?" and you almost felt, "No, this has gone too far. I can't accept it." When it seemed that the price was too high to pay, then God seemed to say, "Change the question."

He has to keep on saying this to me - quite recently He said it again. It's not, "Is it worth it?", it's "Am I worthy?" "Is He worthy?" - it almost sounds like saying "Is it worth it?" But it just turns the whole thing round. Instead of looking the price I think I have to pay, it is thinking of the privilege He wants to give. And always the answer is, "Yes, He is worthy.". The fact is that almighty God is willing to apparently use us in small ways. And He's been so good to me. Since 1964, which is 45 years ago, He's shown so often in little ways, and in bigger ways. people I've been able to encourage and help.

There was a lovely lady in Australia. Her two-year-old son had been drowned in a family swimming pool. She said that Christian so-called friends had said her, "Praise the Lord". And I was angry. How could you say that to a little lady who's lost her son? She said that they had said, "If you can't praise the Lord, you must have sinned in my heart". By then I was so angry, I thought that this was not the way God would speak to a dear mother and I said, "God, tell me right now what should I say to this woman?". And all that came into my mind was the memory of this dreadful night in Congo. I thought, "What's that got to do with it, Lord? It has nothing to do with it at all." And then He gave me these words, "Can you thank me for trusting you with this experience even if I never tell you why?" Although the whole thing was totally a different situation,

I shared this with this lady. Her name was Valerie. And little by little she came through and we knelt together in a big marquee tent, and she thanked God for trusting her even if He never told her why.

I met her three or four years later. I was back in Australia taking meetings and she came up to me on a Sunday night in a Baptist church. She says, "You don't remember me, do you?" I said, "I do, Val, I've prayed for you every day since I last met you." Well, she said that she had shared with her husband what I'd said to her, and he couldn't take it. And yet a few months later, a child in the house down the same road they lived in ran out of the house and was killed by a passing car. The parents were not Christians, in fact they were of another faith. She said, "We went and comforted the parents and because they saw how we had taken the death of our son, they allowed us to come be with them. And over these four years we've had the joy of leading first one and then the other to put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we know, at least in part, why God took our son home."

And in these sorts of ways, I can look back and say, "Now I know." He doesn't have to tell us why things happen, and sometimes probably doesn't tell us why they happen.

Interviewer: And yet, Dr Helen, God so powerfully allowed you to see in the horror in 1964 not just why, but to reveal to you that what was happening was an answer to your own prayers for these people that you had served and longed to reach with the gospel for 12 years but encountered a barrier. How did God use your suffering to turn that around? Tell us about standing in front of 800 men who'd already been primed to call out, "She's a liar!".

Dr Helen Roseveare: They took me away and I'd been very badly beaten up and my glasses were broken, and I couldn't see without them. My face had been all beaten up and I was in a bad state, and they drove me away. I could just about see light coming but in I couldn't see anything else, and it was just as daylight was breaking. We came into a clearing of a forest village. They beat the talking drums and these men came out from all around. Nobody dared not to in those days. The rebel soldiers were the only people with guns, and you did as you were told. And about 800 of them were filling this courtyard and I was to be tried by the lieutenant of the group. He asked me about something that had happened the week before with this other rebel soldier who had raped me. I wasn't going to speak up loudly in front of all these men so I sort of dropped my voice so he slugged me with a gun across my face and I couldn't stand the pain, so I spoke up. And we had this mock trial and they'd all been told that at a certain given sign they would say, "She's a liar! She's a liar!" and "What do we do with her?" They had a word we never did understand what it really meant – "*mateco*" - but it meant "*crucify her*". You knew you would die but you didn't know how.

There came the moment in the trial scene when they were given the sign and suddenly these 800 men, instead of seeing me as the hated white foreigner, they saw me as their doctor and they rushed forward, they pushed the rebel soldiers out of the way, and they took me in their arms. In that wonderful moment, the black/white barrier had gone and they said, "She's ours." They used a word in their language, Kibbutu, which really meant "*she's blood of our blood and bone of our bone*". The the rift between dark-skin and pale-skin was driven away and we were reunited as one. God was so good, He used so many things to show that He was working out his own wonderful purposes. Many, many came to the Lord through those days of suffering.

Interviewer: Because you said yes to God when He asked, "Can I use your body?", the walls of division were broken down and the kingdom was expanded. This is before you ever got to reach people who are struggling and stumbling and broken all over the globe.

Another one of my favourite parts of this story is when your director field director regularly sent you books. And one of the books you were encouraged to read you sent back. You did not want to read *Fox's Book of Martyrs* and what did you say to that field director?

Dr Helen Roseveare: Well, I sent the book back very politely. You didn't do anything else with our field director! I said, "I can't read this. if God ever asks me to be burned at the stake, I'll say yes, but I won't be singing!" I just couldn't take it all. And then, very shortly after that, three months later, we were taken away and we were stood before a firing squad. And we were singing every song, chorus, hymn we could think of with the name of Jesus. We were singing in English, French, Swahili – anything so the last word that these rebel soldiers would hear before they shot us was the name of Jesus.

Interviewer: Now, you weren't singing to impress your captors. Something else was very real in that moment when you thought you were about to die.

Dr Helen Roseveare: Yes, and that was the presence of Jesus. Jesus was there. He was so wonderfully there, and it was it was privilege. It was just this wonderful, certain knowledge I was going to go to be with Jesus and really, at that minute, nothing else counted. He is wonderful.

PRAYER

Father God, we come to you as people who love You and are seeking to follow You in the various circumstances we are facing. We don't always understand why You allow things to happen as they do. We pray that you will teach us to trust you fully and be willing to "*count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord*" and be willing to "*share in your sufferings*". We may not understand everything which happens, but may we know without a doubt that You love us and will always be with us. Amen.

SONG: Oh Jesus, I Have Promised

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svgHDdzP5xY>

BENEDICTION: 1 Peter 5:10,11

*And the God of all grace,
who called you to his eternal glory in Christ,
after you have suffered a little while,
will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.
To him be the power for ever and ever.
Amen.*