

## *Fowey Fables – No.25*

*November 2010*

Some of you may have wondered why there has been such a long gap since the last Fowey Fables. Some of you probably have not noticed! I am writing this from India on the last day of a three week trip Nick and I have made to India and Pakistan. The last few months at Fowey Lodge before leaving have been even busier than usual so composing a letter somehow did not fit in.

Jesus responded to the criticism by His disciples of the reckless extravagance of the woman who poured expensive perfume over His head in anticipation of His coming death and burial.(Matt.26:7-13) They complained that it was a waste of money and that good stewardship would save the money to give it to the poor. Unwittingly they had been influenced by Judas Iscariot who had used exactly the same words four days earlier when another woman, Mary, had done a similar thing. Judas' motive was his own greed and dishonesty.(Jn.12:5) Probably both these women had been inspired by a prostitute who had cried tears of repentance and then poured perfume on Jesus' feet several years before.(Lk.7:36-50) Jesus' response to the disciples' criticism, 'For you always have the poor with you...' (Matt.26:11) was quoted from Deut.15:11, 'For the poor will never cease to be in the land.' The Lord's instruction through Moses had continued, '...you shall freely open your hand to your brother, to the needy and poor in your land.'

The real point of Jesus' message to His disciples then and now is that it is only when our hearts are poured out in ridiculous generosity to Him because we love Him so much that anything life changing will happen for the poor around us. Paul provided a lovely example of this when he described the open hearts and pockets of the otherwise poverty-stricken Macedonians.(II Cor.8:1-5)

Luke, the doctor, of all the gospel writers emphasizes most strongly the poverty of Jesus' birth and upbringing, and His compassion for the most needy in His society. He expresses this pointedly in his account of the 'Sermon on the Plain',(Lk.6:17-49). Whereas in the 'Sermon on the Mount', Matthew talked of the 'poor in spirit',(Matt.5:3). Luke brings the message right down to earth, 'Blessed are you who are poor...Blessed are you who hunger now...Blessed are you who weep now...Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil.'(Lk.6:20-22)

Jesus did not just feed the spiritually hungry with truth but He fed the physically hungry with bread and fish.(Lk.9:12-17) He used His disciples to hand out the food and He still does. The two activities are meant to go together. Preaching the gospel tells people God loves them. Feeding the hungry illustrates His love.

Being in India and Pakistan has made us deeply aware of this again. Over 400 million people, one third of India's population, live on less than \$2 per day. There are more desperately poor in India than anywhere else in the world. The economy is fast growing with enormous wealth at the top, but at the bottom nothing changes.

The first stop on our trip was in Chennai where the Apostle Thomas preached and was murdered nearly 2000 years ago. We stayed with Peter and Tammy Williams who are working with the International Justice Mission, a group of Christian lawyers, to free and rehabilitate people from slavery. We were so impressed by the wisdom, energy and compassion that have made this group so effective.

Next we traveled by train to Vijayawada where we spoke to students and churches in the evenings and the weekend. During each weekday we traveled with Jampani, a student at the Lodge in '98, for 2 hair-raising hours to Nagaram, a village in a vast rice-growing area where people earn about \$1 per day for hours of back-breaking work in their rice paddies. Both of us taught a group of 12 pastors from surrounding villages to launch them on our Certificate of Christian Ministry course. They were hungry for the word of God. While we were there we visited a school where this group provides free education for about 90 local children. They study in a simple shelter with a thatched roof but no walls. The dream is to provide them with a more adequate building, books, a good meal each day and school uniforms. The teachers are paid \$140 per month. We would love to organize sponsorship for these beautiful children who are hungry in every sense.

One evening after the pastors' course we traveled an extra hour to visit Samuel Dasi, another past student, near Machilipatnam who, with his father, pastors several churches and seeks to provide for a group of orphans.

From Vijayawada we took the night train to Hyderabad, and then flew to New Delhi where we were stuck for the next night because our connecting flight was cancelled. The following day we were taken by car nearly 500Km north to Amritsar. At least 300Km of this road was in the process of being upgraded so the trip was slow but not boring! On the motorway we passed an elephant, a string of camels, numerous ox-carts and donkeys pulling heavy loads, and even a few monkeys. Amritsar is the centre of the Sikh religion and the site of the fabled golden temple. Most men wear turbans and magnificent beards. Just north of Amritsar is the India-Pakistan border where the two countries' armies compete each afternoon in a display to intimidate each other and entertain tourists. Crossing the border is a challenge because neither country can imagine why anyone would want to visit their neighbour, and so the few who do are treated with suspicion.

Pakistan is a fascinatingly different world because of the dominance of Islam. We stayed in Lahore with Habib Sadiq and his family. Again we were preaching and teaching several times each day to a variety of church groups, and taking a seminar for pastors. We visited three little schools, each with 30-50 children, most of whom were the children of the very poor. The majority of Pakistan's three million Christians struggle to survive. The first school was in a brick works where the workers were bonded labourers, therefore effectively enslaved for less than \$1 a day. The children sat on the dirt floor in a walled courtyard, performing items to welcome us and proudly showing their school work. As in India the dream is to have a simple building, feed and clothe the kids, equip them with some books and pay the teachers a very modest amount.

In Lahore we visited the clinic of a local doctor working among a poor Christian neighbourhood. He gives free medical care to over 100 patients a day with minimal equipment, tests and medicines. He has asked me to help him to work out how to give the best possible care with such meagre resources.

We are heading home with a longing to make a real difference to poor people, their children and their leaders. On our minds is a similar child sponsorship plan to the programme which is working so well in Uganda with the support of so many of you through John Wandera's group.

Arriving back in New Zealand will bring culture shock but we realise that although poverty is far less extreme there are also countless needy people. Chris with the loving support of the community at the Lodge sounds to have coped well both with the needs of our student family and some demanding problems at Taihoa, Nick's place at Opotiki.

Nick is preparing for summer camps in January at Taihoa. He would love to know if you can help in leadership with either your people skills or your practical abilities. He expects to start with a leaders' camp from 8<sup>th</sup> January, followed by two five day camps for 8-12 and 13-17 year olds. Contact him on 07-315-5885 or [nickjhanne1982@hotmail.com](mailto:nickjhanne1982@hotmail.com) if you can join us or if you know kids who would enjoy the camps.

In March Nick is hoping to hold his first live-in Bible School at Taihoa in conjunction with the Lodge. It will combine serious study with a practical programme with a difference. Please pass the word around.

Pete has successfully completed his first year of Outdoor Education Instructor training at OPC at Ruapehu and plans to return for a second year. He also enjoys being a volunteer fire-fighter. He is huge fun as always.

Another year of Bible School finishes in 2 weeks time. Every year is different but this year has been great with a fairly small group of really keen students and our usual team of wonderfully faithful lecturers. Next year, Bible School will start on 7<sup>th</sup> February. Please encourage anyone you know who is hungry to learn to join us. We will hold our 3<sup>rd</sup> Bible Conference on Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> February and would love to see you and your friends.

We always enjoy news of you

Our love in Christ

Tony, Chris, Nick and Pete