

GOSSIP FEET OR GOSPEL FEET?

Today's Text: Nahum Chap. 1:15; Isaiah 52: 7

Extracts:

Behold, on the mountains, *the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace!* O Judah, keep your appointed feasts, perform your vows. For the wicked one shall no more pass through you; he is utterly cut off [Nah. 1: 15].

How beautiful upon the mountains are *the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"* [Is. 52: 7]

*In the children's favourite movie, **Happy Feet** (2006),¹ a folkloric little penguin named Mumble is born into a colony of Emperor penguins in the Antarctic Ocean. Lacking the ability to sing a heartsong (a mating song which all penguins can perform from an early age), he finds himself unaccepted. However, he has a talent for tap dancing which is derided by his peers and scorned by the penguin elders as blasphemous. In fact, Mumble's gift of dance is blamed for the possible cause of their food shortage, which has in reality been caused by nearby trawlers depleting local fish stocks. After being virtually cast out by his colony, Mumble goes in search of a solution for the famine. He leads other penguins on an incredible adventure as he tries to discover the threat to their food source and survival. Using courage and bravery built around his tap dancing talent, Mumble wins favour with the humans responsible for his colony's food shortage. In the end, his tapping feet bring joy and restoration to his colony and humans.*

That story illustrates what all of us can do with our feet. We can use them to spread joy and salvation to others (Gospel feet), as penguin Mumble did, or we can use them to spread bad news, especially against those we hate or envy (Gossip feet). So, what type of feet do you have: gossip feet or gospel feet? What does God expect you to do with your feet?

Today's study suggests how you can use your feet to glorify God.

¹ Based on plot summary by several writers,

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0366548/plotsummary>

1. Your foot and its extensions!

In my ancestral home in Nigeria, there was an old man who was physically challenged (lame) on both his feet. As a result of that, he could not attend the weekly meetings of the Elders' Council as often as he was required to do. At one of the meetings where he was absent, there was reportedly a discussion which was quite uncomplimentary of the administrative style of the king, locally called the ONOJIE [pronounced OR-NO-JAY]. Soon, the Onojie heard about it and took offence. The leakage was traced to the lame elder. When his colleagues challenged him why he had betrayed them to the king, he replied, "But I was not at the meeting where you discussed the matter!"

We may not be able to vouch that it was that elder that had spread the rumour. However, if he was not personally present at the said meeting where the matter had been discussed, and he did not send somebody to represent him, how did he know about it? Somebody who had been at the said meeting brought it to his attention! One of the other elders was the rumour-monger. The lame elder was also a rumour monger if he told the king what he was not expected to know about.

From that simple story, we learn a few things about our pair of feet, the lower part of the body that move us from one place to another. Here are some features of the feet that we need to note:

a) *The feet represent the person*

The feet do not control themselves. They move as they are directed by their owner. Therefore, when the two feet move, the whole person that owns them is the one who is moving. It is just like when someone calls out and asks, "Who is home?" and your voice replies, "I am here." It is the whole of you replying, not just your mouth. Confirming the interrelatedness of body parts, Paul writes, "The body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body?...But now in deed there are many members, *yet one body*" [1 Cor. 12: 14-20]. So, the feet represent the person and whatever they do has been done by the person who owns them.

A good illustration can be found in Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush. As he drew near to find out why the bush was not burning in spite of the fire, he heard the voice of the Lord, saying to him, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground" [Ex. 3: 1-5]. It was Moses that stood on holy ground, not just his feet that brought him there. So, by removing the sandals, from his feet, Moses (not just his legs alone) acknowledged God's holy presence in that place. Joshua had a similar experience before the battle of Jericho [Jos. 5: 15].

b) *The feet do not need to move to be said to be walking!*

Having accepted that the feet represent the person, it follows that feet can also walk from place to place without actually moving a limb! Ordinarily, we move from one place to another by different means of transport, such as by foot, road or rail, by sea or air. We can travel by telephone calls, letters or on the Internet by e-mail. *As long as we are communicating with others, no matter the means or mode, our feet are on the move.* Therefore, we do not have to move our feet to acknowledge that we are walking all over the place!

c) *The feet do not move if they have no message to carry!*

An African proverb says that when you see an old man running early in the morning, he is either pursuing something/somebody or somebody/something is pursuing him! In like manner, the feet do not wander aimlessly. They only move when they have a purpose.

Take the story of the four lepers that walked from Samaria towards the camp of the enemy, the Syrians. There was severe famine in Samaria, capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, following the siege of the Syrians. The lepers said to one another, “Why are we sitting here [at the entrance of the city gate] till we die? If we say, ‘We will enter the city,’ the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now, therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die.” So, they arose and walked towards the Syrian camp [2 Kgs 7: 1-4].

The lepers moved with a sense of purpose. They wanted to survive and moved in the direction where there was likely to be food. In like manner, when we move our feet (as defined in (b) above), we have a purpose and a message.

d) *The message may be good or bad*

When you knock on your neighbour’s door at home or at work, when you send an e-mail or make a telephone call, you are conveying a message for bad or for good. What message do you spread with your feet?

It is possible that you are out to backbite or spread false rumours against those you hate or envy. It is possible that you are out to gain unfair advantages against competition or to close a corrupt deal. Among the seven abominations that God hates are “a heart that devises wicked plans,” “feet that are swift in running to evil” and “one who sows discord among brethren” [Prov. 6: 16-19]. In such cases, your feet can be said to be

“gossip feet.” You are walking in the counsel of the ungodly or standing in the path of sinners or sitting in the seat of the scornful. Those who walk on gossip feet are regarded as “ungodly” and are “like the chaff which the wind drives away,” and their way shall perish [Ps. 1: 1, 4,6].

Compare that with the example of the four lepers cited earlier. They came to the Syrian camp only to find the place providentially abandoned. They ate and drank and carried away gold, silver and clothing to hide them. Then, they said to one another, “We are not doing what is right. This day is a day of *good news*, and we remain silent. .. Come, *let us go and tell* the king’s household” [2 Kgs 7: 5-9]. The lepers had good news to spread, the news of salvation from starvation. They went to give it to those in need, That way, they brought God’s salvation to His people in need. The lepers had “gospel feet.” Today’s lesson helps us to know those who have gospel feet.

2. Features of Gospel Feet

Nahum’s prophecy was addressed to the people of Nineveh [Nah. 1: 1]. You will recall that some years earlier, God had sent Jonah to the same city to warn its inhabitants to repent or face destruction in forty days. They repented and God spared them [Jon. 3: 1-10]. However, Nineveh backslid and Nahum was given a vision that the city faced destruction. We shall address that part of the message in the next lesson. For today, we shall focus on the work of those with “Gospel Feet.” Nahum wrote, “Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace!” [Nah. 1: 15]. Isaiah said a similar thing in a more amplified way as follows: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad things of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” [Is. 52: 7]. Taking the two together, we can identify the following qualities of people with gospel feet:

a) *They are always climbing mountains!*

We all know that it is more difficult to climb uphill than to descend downhill. As you go up, you need more oxygen for your lungs and yet you get less of it as you climb higher! That is why the bulk of the winners of the marathon race at the Olympic Games come from mountainous regions, such as Ethiopia and Kenya. When they run at lower altitudes, they burn less energy than the rest of us!

Nahum and Isaiah paint the picture of people with gospel feet in admirable terms. For example, Isaiah says, “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him...” That suggests that no matter how hard is the climb up the mountains, gospel feet enjoy going up and making us like what they are doing. They give us the impression that the work is easy, even deceptively

easy. They absorb pains and deprivations. They suffer persecution, pains and hunger. Yet, they do the work of God willingly and cheerfully until they die. They are always climbing up higher and higher mountains for as long as they are alive.

Paul bears eloquent testimony of this. As the apostle that received more than a fair share of suffering for the gospel of Christ [**2 Cor. 11: 16-33**], he said, “If I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.” On his tenacity, he writes, “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” [**1 Cor. 9: 16, 27**]. Therefore, those with gospel feet are in the Lord’s vineyard for life. What a load!

b) *They preach good news*

Nahum calls it “good tidings” and Isaiah, “glad tidings” and “good news.” What is this good news? We are told that when Jesus began His earthly ministry (after fasting for forty days in the wilderness and had been tempted by the devil), He came to Galilee “preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” [**Mk 1: 14-15**]. His work was accompanied with signs and wonders [**Matt. 4: 23-25**]. When He was about to ascend to heaven, He commissioned His followers to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” and to teach them “to observe all things” that He had commanded His disciples, assuring them that He was with them always, “even to the end of the age” [**Matt. 28: 19-20**].

Clearly, *good news means leading sinners to salvation through Christ*. It does not mean telling people what they want or love to hear. That is lying. Truth is bitter, not sweet! Salvation truth is good news. That is why God attaches to it a number of earthly and eternal blessings, as put by both prophets, as follows:

- Peace
- Glad tidings of good things
- Salvation

Jesus demonstrated those signs and promised believers the power to cast out demons and speak with new tongues in His name. They will take up serpents or drink poison but they will not be hurt; they will lay hands on the sick and they will get well [**Mk 16: 17-18**]. Paul manifested that power on the island of Malta after the shipwreck on his way to Rome. As he was putting some wood into the fire to warm himself, a venomous snake bit his arm. He simply shook it off into the fire and he was not hurt at all,

whereas people bitten by such snakes usually died instantly! The local onlookers treated him like a god. They led him into the island where he met and healed Publius, the leading citizen, of fever and dysentery. The rest of the people in the island who had diseases came to Paul and were all healed in the name of Jesus. That was how the gospel of Christ came to Malta [Acts 28: 1- 10]. Paul certainly had gospel feet!

3. Conclusion: The Great Commission needs Gospel Feet!

Writing to the church at Corinth, Paul said, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation [2 Cor. 6: 2]. The end times are here and Christ will soon return to judge the world. The harvest is ripe but the labourers are few [Matt. 9: 37-38]. Having enlisted to work with Christ for the salvation of as many people as possible around you, what does your report card look like?

Scripture says that the people who know their God shall be strong and do exploits [Dan. 11: 32]. Gossip feet cannot know God because they cannot lead you or others to Christ or salvation [Rev. 22: 15]. Gospel feet are beautiful upon the mountains of life through which pass God’s highway of holiness [Is. 35: 8]. They proclaim peace, glad tidings of good things and salvation.

Do you know what feet you have and where they are heading?