

*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!*

I know some people have a real fetish for feet; they find feet a real turn-on; they think feet are the most beautiful and fascinating part of the human anatomy. Not me! I have never thought of feet as particularly beautiful. I see feet as something functional—something God has given us to get us where we need to go. Because of that, these words of St. Paul, which are taken from the prophet Isaiah, have always struck me as kind of *odd*.

But then some years ago, I had an experience in India that gave me a new appreciation for these words—even if it didn't change my perception and perspective of feet themselves. The next to last day I was in India, our group accompanied Pr. Vijaya Kumar, a pastor of the Church of South India, on one of his missionary journeys to several remote villages outside Kakinada. In addition to his pastoral duties at his church in Kakinada, Pr. Kumar would get on his motor scooter about twice a month and go into the jungle to preach to the people in the villages.

Even though we were in a van—about 15 of us packed into a vehicle about the size of a mini-van, it was a harrowing experience. When we got out of the van at one point to stretch our legs, Pr. Kumar told us to stay together and watch out for the *cruel bears*. Apparently, people had been attacked and mauled by bears in that area.

All along the way, it was hot; we were isolated out in the middle of nowhere; and we were exposed to danger from the wild animals. It boggled my mind that Pr. Kumar faced that danger alone twice a month—he made that journey in the face of danger to share the good news of God's love in Christ with the people who lived in these villages.

Just before we arrived at the last village we were to visit, we had to get out of the van and walk the last mile so that it wouldn't get stuck in the sand. When we got to the village, I looked down and saw Pr. Kumar's sandal shod feet—and that's when it hit me. *How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!* So I asked him to take off his shoes, and I took a picture of his feet. How beautiful, indeed, are Pr. Kumar's feet to those people who otherwise would not know the joy of God's love in Christ.

Our arena for ministry is quite different than the jungles of India where Pr. Kumar goes to proclaim the good news. We have different jungles to overcome: jungles of meaninglessness—where we get caught up in the grind of life that seemingly has no purpose and our employer sees us more as a part of the machinery that produces the company's bottom line than as a person; jungles of physical and emotional abuse—where we are treated like a punching bag or a scapegoat by others who refuse to accept responsibility for their own failures; jungles of brokenness—where relationships are no longer lifelong commitments but rather are temporary alliances that can be scrapped or abandoned on a whim; and jungles of despair—where we are shattered by loneliness, lost-ness, hopelessness or grief.

The lay of the land may be different, but our jungles are just as treacherous as Pr. Kumar's. But as we go into our jungles, we carry with us the treasure of the risen Christ—we carry the hope of Easter, even as we bear the theology of the cross. As we go into our jungles, we go with a peculiar message of grace—we carry with us the assurance that even when life crucifies us, God raises us up—God raises us up to new life, transforming us into new creations as his presence and love sees us through our struggles, strengthening us like a refiners fire, tempering us, purifying us and shaping us into something that is even more beautiful than it was before.

As we go forth in this love and bear witness to Christ, our feet are made beautiful to those to whom we bear the good news. The least attractive, most mundane part of the human anatomy becomes beautiful because it bears the awesome beauty of God's love itself.

Today, we are assured that *Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved*. As we step out onto the stormy sea, like Peter, and as we go out into our jungles, like Pr. Vijaya Kumar, Christ goes with us every step of the way and sees us through—to redeem us with his love and to make us vessels bearing his love so that others may come into the experience of his love like us. In sharing his love, our feet are, indeed, made beautiful beyond all imagination.

