

Lo I Am With You

by Mert Wolcott

The speaker shares his experience in Africa and emphasizes the importance of being members of the body of Christ, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep, and sharing material resources with those in need.

Duration: 42:33

Scripture: Romans 12:4-5, Romans 12:15, Ephesians 5:23, Ephesians 5:30

Topics: "Great Commission"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses their recent trip to Africa and the challenges they faced due to the shutdown of airlines. Despite the difficulties, they were able to continue with their plans and visit Africa. The speaker emphasizes the importance of unity within the body of Christ, highlighting that although there are many members, each has a unique function. They also mention the needs of the people in Africa, particularly those affected by tribal wars, and commend the Christians who have shown forgiveness and generosity towards others. The speaker concludes by discussing the poor infrastructure in the country, specifically the terrible road conditions, which have made travel difficult and time-consuming.

Transcript

It's a real honor and privilege to be able to speak to you this morning. And I want, first of all, to thank you, so many of you who prayed for me and for Jane during this past six weeks. I left these shores on September the 22nd, along with Brother Roger Raybuck from California, and flew to Entebbe, Uganda, where we met up with my son Steve, and from there made our trip into the Congo.

Thank you very much for praying for us. Jane probably wouldn't appreciate my mentioning what I'm about to say, but I think it's quite significant. And Jane came to me the day I was leaving, just as we were getting ready to leave for the airport, in tears, and asked me a question.

She said, What do you think I should do if you don't come back? How do you answer a question like that? September 22nd, of course, was just 11 days after the problems in New York City, and we had really wondered if we were going to be able to leave. The airports were all shut down. And when flights finally did resume, a lot of them, a lot of flights had been canceled as well.

But fortunately, ours was not canceled. And in consulting with Roger Raybuck during those days, we felt that if it was at all possible, that we should continue with our plans to make our visits to it. I want just briefly

to read a few verses without too much comment on them.

You can turn to them if you like. I'm just going to read them from a sheet of paper that I have. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we being many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another.

Randy pointed out to us that all of us who know the Lord Jesus as our Savior are members of that body of Christ. Each one of us, whether we be black or white, whether we be Greek or Roman or U.S. citizens or Canadian, because we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are members of the body of Christ. Of course, the body of Christ comprises all believers around the world today, doesn't it? We have especially felt that during these days when our African brethren have suffered so much in recent years.

Slipping on down in Romans 12-15, there are some very practical verses in Romans 12 which speak to us how we are to live our Christian lives. There's a little phrase there that says, Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Our interest in going to Africa at this time was to meet with our brothers and sisters who have been through so much in the past few years, to sit down and to listen to their story.

We did not go to preach. I made that very clear when we arrived in the Congo that we had not come to preach to them. We had come to sit down and listen to them, to listen to their stories and to bow and pray with them and to pray with them about some of the trials that they had been through.

They rejoiced that we were able to do that at that time. We also had the opportunity to rejoice with many believers who were rejoicing because their lives had been spared or lives of loved ones had been spared. There were others who had lost their lives, some very dear friends of ours who had lost their lives in some of the difficulties that they had been through.

Looking at 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 26 as well, speaking again about members of the body of Christ, it says that if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. Is that true? I trust it's true that when we are aware that another member of the body of Christ suffers, that we suffer along with that one, that we sympathize with that one who is suffering, and we do what we can to alleviate the suffering that they're going through. Or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

And we rejoice, once again, with those that rejoice, don't we? Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 23, the second part of that verse, do you remember that that's speaking of husbands and wives, how the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church? Ephesians chapter 5 verse 23 and the second part of that verse reads, Christ is head of the church, and he is the Savior of the body. And then skipping on down to verse 30, we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Let's never forget that marvelous truth that we are members of the body of Christ.

And then one verse that I was reading this morning in my devotions in 1 John chapter 3, and a verse jumped out at me in verse 17, Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? I'm very grateful that a number of believers shared their material resources as we made this trip, and we were able to distribute to many needy saints as we had opportunity in this way, because there were those that had shared with us that which we could share with them. We had some of this world's goods which we were able to share with some of our brothers and sisters in Christ. I've made a couple of visits to the Congo in recent years.

In 1997, Jane and I had actually gone out to have a little family reunion with our daughter, Chris and Dale Hamilton and their family, and also our son Steve and his wife Debbie and their children. We had a little time of vacation. And then at the end of that time, I was able to go along with my son Steve and some other missionaries making a trip by road into the Congo to see believers after the war of revolution where Laurent Kabila had overthrown the Mobutu government.

And then in 1998, very shortly thereafter, after Kabila had taken control of the country, a rebellion was sparked by the little countries of Rwanda and Uganda, which both had very well-trained and very strong military forces. There was a rebellion which was backed by these two countries against Kabila, and the eastern part of the Congo fell through those forces and still is controlled by those forces. There's still a very strong presence of both Rwandan and Ugandan soldiers in the eastern part of the Congo.

It's been estimated that between two and three million people have lost their lives in the Congo as a result of the wars of the last three or four years. Most of these have not been victims of gunshot wounds. Most of these people have died of disease or starvation, really being forced back into areas of the forest where they could no longer support themselves.

Many, many people have died. The war in the Congo, which has continued, has been called Africa World War I. I've mentioned Uganda and Rwanda, which have backed the rebellion in the eastern part of the country. Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia have come in on the government side and helped them to retain possession of the western half of the country.

The area which we visited is a relatively small area of the country of Congo. Congo is a country about the size of the United States east of the Mississippi River. We confined our visit to an area roughly approximately the size of the state of New Jersey, from north to south, and probably a little bit narrower strip than even the New Jersey is in the area in which we travel.

I mentioned my son, Steve. Steve was born at Yonkundi in 1958. As you heard, we went out in 1956.

We already had two children by that time. Our daughter, Chris, was two years old when we first went to the field. You're going to wonder how old I was when I got married.

So I'll tell you, I was 19 and Jane was 18, and Chris was born in the year following. So we had our family early, and then we have our son, Alan, and Steve. Steve is a fellow who has a great understanding of the African people, of African culture, and of the countries in East Africa.

He knows eastern Congo well, the countries of Uganda and Kenya and Rwanda. He's traveled quite extensively in those countries, particularly in the times of war, helping to organize medical relief into the Congo, into eastern Congo. He's met a lot of people during that time and had the opportunity of praying with some of the leaders, Laurent Kabila, as he took power back in 1997.

Steve had the opportunity of meeting him in the city of Goma and asking if he could pray with him, and had the opportunity of praying with him at that time. Just as we were finishing up our trip this time, Steve learned that a new man had taken power in our part of the Congo, a man by the name of Mbusa Nyamwisi, and this man was over in Kampala for a conference to meet with President Museveni of the Congo. Steve found out where he was and asked for an audience with him.

It was granted that audience, and along with a Congolese pastor, he was able to go in and pray with this man as well. So Steve is very well acquainted with African politics, with government people, with business

leaders. He speaks French and Swahili and Lingala, the language of the Congo army, very fluently.

He is currently working on the Luganda language, which is the language which is spoken by the Baganda people in the southern part of the country of Uganda, and is doing quite well. Both he and his wife Debbie are doing very well with that language at the present time. Steve and his family are now working in fishing camps in the Sese Islands, which are a group of islands in Lake Victoria where there are a lot of fishing camps, and they have started doing some evangelistic work in some of the islands, particularly one island about two hours away by boat from the shore where they live at Entebbe in Uganda.

Lake Victoria, some people have wondered how large Lake Victoria is. Lake Victoria is 420 times the size of the Sea of Galilee. That's a little over three times the size of the state of New Jersey.

It's a very large lake. It's the second largest freshwater lake in the world after Lake Superior. And there are literally hundreds of islands dotted with fishing camps.

There is a tremendous amount of fish that comes out of that lake. A lot of it is frozen and shipped to markets in Europe. I don't know how much makes it here.

Nile, perch, and tilapia are the main fish. Roger Raybuck, who went along with me, is a very good friend. I've enjoyed very much the fellowship of Roger over the years.

Roger was a machinist by trade. He was saved through the ministry of Fairhaven Bible Chapel in San Leandro, California, and then attended the discipleship intern training program, which was run by that assembly for many years. Discipled by Gene Gibson and Bill McDowell and others.

In 1984, he went to the Congo, and when we went back to the Congo in 1985, we found Roger and Janita and their children living at Yonkundi. They shortly left for Loiwa and worked at the station of Loiwa until 1996, when the events of the rebellion of Kabila forced many of our missionaries to leave. Since that time, Roger's been full-time with the Fairhaven Assembly at San Leandro.

It's a large assembly, about 450 people in fellowship there, and Roger is one of the five elders. And recently, because of Gene Gibson's failing health, has assumed much of Gene's responsibilities there. In our visits in Africa, we had a good time going out with Steve and Debbie to the island of Chitobo out there in Lake Victoria to see what was happening on that island.

It was interesting to see that there are some believers among those people, people who have recently come to the Lord Jesus. A couple of them, or one of them at least, is fairly advanced with AIDS, and we noticed there are a number of HIV-infected people there on the island, which is the case in many of the islands. They're usually immoral places.

Young men go out to these fishing camps to make money, and the prostitutes soon follow the men, and so sexually transmitted diseases are quite rampant there in the islands of Lake Victoria. We had an unexpected bonus to our trip. On the first weekend that we were there, we were able to go to Kenya, where Steve and Debbie's children are enrolled at Rift Valley Academy.

We had a Sunday in Nairobi with our sister, Peb Green, and she was doing very well. She's a very busy lady managing the Mayfield Missionary Guesthouse there, but doing very well and has a real ministry to many people at that place. As we went into the Congo, we went by road using Steve's four-wheel drive Toyota Land Cruiser.

The only way that you can get around in the Congo anymore, the roads are absolutely horrendous. I wish that I could describe them to you. They're just unbelievable.

What used to be roads, when we left there in 1992, we thought that the roads were bad in 1992 and couldn't get any worse. Well, they got worse, and they are just terrible. We were able to visit Revi Station, which was an African mission station, where our children had gone to school in previous years, the school for missionary children.

Revi Academy was located at a place called Revi. From there, we went down to Bunia, which is the main city in northeastern Congo. It's the administrative capital for the Ituri region.

It's also the place where missionaries have done all of their shopping over the years. The city, because of refugees, has grown tremendously. I was told that the population of Bunia is today 250,000.

I could hardly believe that, because it was a city of about 25 or 30,000 the last that I knew. But a lot of refugees from the tribal wars particularly have come to that place. We were able to visit, or I should say Roger was able to spend a week out at Loewa, where he had worked before, and found that Loewa is not in very good condition.

In fact, to get there, he had to ride a bicycle for six hours. What used to be the Trans-Africa Highway, East-West Highway, no longer exists. It ends where the forest begins, where the tropical rainforest begins.

Only bicycle traffic and small motorcycles, light motorcycles, are getting through on that road at all. Roger said that he had to actually, on a bicycle, brush the elephant grass out of his face as he was riding along on the bicycle. It used to take us, it's a distance of about 40 miles from Yankundi to Loewa, which we could do in a little over an hour at one point.

Today, the first half of that journey was made in about an hour and a half in the car, and then six hours by bicycle. The station of Loewa was badly looted in both 1997, when Mobutu's forces retreated through there and stripped everything of any value. Then elements of the local population came in and stripped the houses even further, to the point where Roger found that his house was not even livable by African people anymore.

They actually punched holes in the walls of the house to find where Roger had hidden his money. There are holes in the walls, and the windows are all gone, the doors are broken, and so forth. The Africans there had actually fixed up one room in one of the houses where Roger could stay, and he had gone through two or three nights and noticed that he was getting little bites all over his body.

It took him about three nights to discover that it was bedbugs that were bothering him there. While Roger was out at Loewa, I was able to do some visits around Yankundi, visiting a place called Soka, visiting one of the old chiefs that I had known. I'll tell you about that a little more in a little bit later on.

And then from there we went to Ngulang Zaba, where the Bible school that Arne and Sarah Glenhartson and then Stan and Rhonda Sharpe had been involved with in years gone by, and found that that place had been quite badly damaged as well. And then when Roger got back to Ngulang Zaba, we made the trip up the mountain to a place called Aveba. I don't know if I mentioned before already that our average speed, we calculated, the average speed of traveling around in a convoy, we estimated about eight miles per hour in the Toyota Land Cruiser, the roads are so bad.

And then from Aveba we went up to Chabu to visit our sister Pearl Winterburn. And speaking of missionaries, I want to talk a little bit about them. Marion Baisley is up in years.

She's a very remarkable woman. Marion arrived in the Congo in 1960, just at the time that the Congo got its independence from Belgium, and almost immediately had to evacuate in the first and second evacuations there, and then again in 1964 in the Simba Rebellion, had to evacuate again, going to East Africa and then back into the Congo. She's been on furlough one time in 41 years.

She came to the U.S. and Canada, I don't even remember what year it was, but she had such a difficult time getting back to the Congo that she vowed she would never leave again. And in fact, she mostly just stays at Yonkundi. She doesn't really go anywhere.

She doesn't have a vehicle, but she has a remarkable ministry to a lot of people. The Africans affectionately call her Tsongazi, which means auntie. That's her name, Tsongazi.

They all know her as that. And people are coming in and out of her house all day long, asking for advice, commenting on different things, asking for prayer. And she just has a tremendous ministry.

And a lot of young people, she has a fairly large enclosed front porch, which the young people from the assembly meet at on Sunday mornings during the preaching service at the chapel. And there's always a good group of young people who are there, and Marian is there to see that they're well cared for. I asked Marian if she, once she would consider coming back to North America, and her response to me was, well, would they really accept me barefoot back in North America? Marian doesn't wear shoes very often.

Consequently, her feet have very heavy calluses, just like the Africans, and she digs a garden very much just like the Africans do. There's another missionary at Yom Kippur, a young woman by the name of Brooke Ford, who has been out for about a year now. She went out to Itande and was with the Pecks there at Itande, Jonathan and June Peck.

But when the Pecks came on furlough, she felt it wise not to stay there at Itande. There are some real difficulties at Itande, and I'll talk about that if I can keep moving here. So Brooke has come to Yom Kippur there to be near Marian.

She has been studying Swahili, and I asked her to pray for Brooke. She's not getting the language very well. She's finding it difficult.

In a year's time, most missionaries have the language pretty well under their belts and are able to converse in it quite readily, but she is having a hard time. There's another young couple, Gilles and Miriam Bonvalatte, Swiss, from Swiss Assemblies, and they are there working at the Evangelical Medical Center. Gilles is a, what I call a, I was going to say, I was going to use a Swahili word, fundi, which means an expert.

He's an expert with computers, and he keeps the computers going at the Evangelical Medical Center. Gilles and Miriam are very interested in the young people's work and work closely with Marian Daisley in the young people's work, so that's been a real help and encouragement to Marian as well. Visiting Pearl Winterburn at Shabby, we found that Shabby has become a very remote place.

It's very difficult to get to these days. It used to be only a 15-minute flight by MAF plane from Yonkundi to Shabby, and it was an easy place to get to and from. But today, with no flights going, Pearl finds herself in

a very solitary position.

When we first arrived there at Shabby, I asked Pearl how she was doing. She said, Oh, I'm doing fine. I'm enjoying my solitude.

So, she has not had any fellowship with English-speaking people for some time, but she did enjoy the fact that we were able to come and spend a little bit of time with her. Also at Yonkundi are a couple of Americans, well, an American and a Canadian doctor, Dr. Ted Sugimoto, who's a Japanese-American surgeon, and his wife, Colleen, and Dr. Phil Wood from the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade, who are both there, hopefully, for a longer period of time. Dr. Wood, at one point, was the medical director of the Evangelical Medical Center, but in more recent years has been the Canadian director of Worldwide Evangelization Crusade.

He's since resigned from that and is spending time at Yonkundi, and both he and Ted Sugimoto are helping to train African nurses to do simple surgery, something which has been really blessed of the Lord. There are a few nurses now. I think of the one at Aveva, with whom I was very impressed, who had been trained in that way, doing caesarean sections, appendix operations, hernia repair, simple surgeries like that.

It's been a tremendous help in the work. Another couple that we had fellowship with, I think it was four nights on a couple of different occasions. We were in the town of Boonea, and we stayed overnight with Greg and Karen Lewis.

Greg Lewis is from Fairlawn, New Jersey. They're AIM missionaries, and Greg is acquainted with--he was a very good friend of Jimmy Miller, Bob Miller's son. The two of them, during high school, were very good friends.

Also, Greg had Les Campbell as a teacher in the Fairlawn school system at one time. Conway's infrastructure, we talked about that a little bit. The infrastructure of the country is really in a shambles.

The roads are terrible. What used to take us 40, 45 minutes to drive the 25 miles from Yonkundi to Boonea to do our shopping today takes at least two-and-a-half hours, three or three-and-a-half hours if it's been raining and there's a lot of mud. The trip from Yonkundi to Reddy used to take us about five hours to do the 125 miles when we were taking our children back to school.

From Boonea, which is a shorter distance, only about 100 miles, when we came into the country it took us eight-and-a-half hours to do that 100 miles. Going back out of the country because of very, very heavy mud, it took us 14 hours to drive from Boonea up to Reddy. The civil service is pretty much nonexistent except for policemen and soldiers and so forth who have road barriers every so often.

They want to examine all of your papers, make sure that everything is in order, and they can always find something wrong so that they can fine you for something. So we had a few experiences. I won't go into all of those experiences with some of these people.

All that to say that there really is no continuing stable government. Joseph Kabila, Juan Kabila's son, controls the western part of the country, and there's a struggle in the northeastern portion where we were between a couple of people from two different tribes. The real power brokers, of course, are President Museveni of Uganda and President Kagame of Rwanda, who have a real strong military presence in the country.

We passed by several times Ugandan encampments of soldiers. One thing I will say is that the Ugandan soldiers are much better behaved than the Congolese soldiers. The Ugandan soldiers do receive a salary month by month, whereas the Congolese soldiers don't get anything from their government and so have to resort to extortion and bribery in order to exist.

Tribalism has been a real destructive factor in the country, particularly in the last year. In January, there was some very strong fighting between the Lendu and the Hema peoples in the northeastern part of the country. In traveling from the Congo border to the city of Bunyan, we passed through long areas where, at one point, there were village after village.

Another friend of ours, a young man by the name of Phil Stan, was on his way with a group of other people to a prayer meeting one day. They were having a big prayer meeting at a place across from Yankundi, about three or four miles away. He was on the back of a pickup along with a number of his other people.

As they came down to the bottom of the hill, they met a force of Barbera tribesmen armed with spears and machetes and bows and arrows. They pulled the Walendu people off the truck, hacked a number of them to death. Along with them, Phil Stan, he was speared in the abdomen.

Dr. Ted Sugimoto, who sewed him up later, told me that the spear had just missed his heart. He was shot with an arrow in the side and hacked across the face and leg and arms with machetes and left for dead. When the Red Cross came down later to bury the victims of this fighting, they found some signs of life in Phil Stan and took him to the hospital where Ted Sugimoto and his team of nurses were able to save Phil Stan's life.

He was one of the first people that I met there at the beginning of October when I made a trip through the Evangelical Medical Center. There was Phil Stan in crutches, and I said, What in the world happened to you? And he explained what had happened. A couple of weeks later, when we were coming down from Chave to Yankundi, we found Phil Stan up in the hills.

He'd gone up there to visit relatives and wanted to come back to the medical center. It was time to have the cast off his arm and his leg where he had been hacked. As we were coming along the way, we picked him up and brought him along the way.

As we were coming along the way, he suddenly pointed to a man and said, There's the man that speared me. This man is just walking around the country, indicative of the lack of security and difficulties for people. It's interesting that we as white people, as missionaries, have no problems going around the country.

I felt no fear in going from one place to another, but Africans who were with me showed great fear when we went through territory belonging to another tribe. It's an interesting situation when we as strangers or foreigners can go into the country and move about freely, and yet the people whose country it is are unable to move around. Yankundi has been badly damaged by all of this fighting.

On October the 13th, Roger was still out at Lowa, and I was staying in a little guest house there at Yankundi. I had just taken my shower about 9.30 in the evening. I was getting ready to go to bed when the night watchman knocked on the door, and he said, There are houses burning down in the village.

So I slipped on some slippers and went outside, and I could see the flames from four houses that had been torched that evening. So it isn't over yet. This is a message from one tribe to people of another tribe

that they're not welcome at Yankundi, and that they should get moving and move out of there.

Consequently, the population of Yankundi has dropped from something like 25,000 people. I'm not sure where it would be between 10,000 and 15,000 today. The population has dropped drastically.

Schools are operating at 30 percent of what the students that they had last year. A lot of these people have fled to other places, to Abeba up in the hills where we had most recently worked. Others have gone to the town of Bunya and other areas where they feel safe.

The press at Yankundi is closed. School offices for the whole community of assemblies, which have primary and secondary schools, that office has had to move to Bunya because of the insecurity of the office personnel there at Yankundi. So Yankundi has really suffered a great deal.

There's grass growing, high elephant grass growing in the yards of a number of what were missionary houses. The Evangelical Medical Center is having difficulties because of low attendance at their clinics, and very few of the beds are occupied at the hospital because people are just afraid to come to Yankundi. So you can pray about that, this fear that they will get over it.

The assembly at Yankundi is functioning at probably about a third of their capacity as well. It's a very large assembly. The building will hold 1,000 to 1,200 people.

The highest attendance that we saw when we were there was 338. Normally that attendance would be around 1,000 people or more every Sunday morning. A lot of people ask, well, that big assembly, why don't they hive off? They have hived off.

There are five or six other assemblies within a radius of two miles from Yankundi. So there's a high population of Christians in the area, people who come to the meetings. Some of those smaller assemblies have been decimated as well.

I know of at least three of those assemblies within a couple of miles that are closed completely. The people have fled to other areas that are more secure. I had the opportunity of visiting with three different tribal chiefs.

Chief Bulamuzi, who was the chief of the Barbera people at Yankundi, a man that we've known for a number of years. He's been chief since about 1984, 83, 84, something like that. He's been a bit of a rascal over the years.

He's a professing Christian. Along with my son Steve, while Roger was out at Lolo, we were able to spend several hours with Bulamuzi. We went to see him at 1.30 in the afternoon, and he talked nonstop until 4.30, before we could even get a word in edgewise.

But we could see from what he was saying that he was regretting very much his part in stirring up his people to burn houses and to kill people. No real repentance that we could see. It seemed to be more the thought that he's lost a great portion of his tax base.

A lot of his people have left, and we trust that he has seen the error of his ways and will do something to try to reestablish relationships with people of other tribes in the area. Then I had a great opportunity of visiting a 96-year-old former chief, Chief Bagota of the Bahama people, a man that I've known ever since I first went to the Congo. He's bedridden and blind, but he's very coherent.

He hears very well. He knew me when I came from my voice, and he asked me many questions about all of the early missionaries. He asked me about people like Dr. Woodhams and Jordan Searle, Robert Deans, Bill Deans' father, and about Bill Deans, of course, and many others, Carl Johnson, and a number of the earlier missionaries.

Dr. Harlow, he asked me about Ed Harlow as well. He remembers these early missionaries very well. I had a good time with him.

His nephew, who is the current chief, was also there, so we had an opportunity to speak with him as well. And then when we went up into the Ngiti country, into the higher country near Aveba where we had worked, we took the occasion to go and visit the tribal chief from there, Chief Okobi, who has been a personal friend for many years and a great help to us in the work at Aveba. He is a genuine believer.

Really, he and his wife really love the Lord and seek to serve him. Chief Okobi really risked his own life after the killings had taken place at Yonkundi of his people. There were a group of young warriors who wanted to take revenge upon the Babira people.

Okobi went and personally intervened between the two groups of people and managed to restrain the young men from going to torch Babira houses and to wreak vengeance on their enemies. We have a great deal of respect for Chief Okobi. The Congolese people, after having said what I've said, the Congolese people generally are very friendly people.

When we went into the visa office in Bunia to get our visas for staying in the country for a month, we were very warmly welcomed by the officials there. Every office that we went into, the road tax office, the car insurance office in Bunia that we went into, warmly received by these people who urged us to stay in the country, to return to the country, to invite other missionaries to come to the country. So there really is no anti-white or anti-missionary feeling in the country.

There is an open door for a special kind of people. For a person to be a missionary in Africa today, in that part of Africa at least, needs to be a very special person, a patient person, someone who can endure a lot of misunderstanding and government pressures and all kinds of difficulties, someone who would not be easily frustrated, and someone who is able to live in an insecure environment, and someone who would be willing to live a restricted life. I think that people like Pearl Winterburn and Marion Baisley were pretty much restricted to staying in one locality at this time, not able to travel around much, and that would be the case for most missionaries who would go to the Congo in these days.

There are many needs in the country, of course. Many have lost everything in their tribal wars. Their houses have been burned and pillaged.

Their gardens have been pillaged as well, food stolen from their gardens and so forth. It's good to see some Christians demonstrating an attitude of forgiveness. For instance, the young man who had been left for dead alongside the road.

As he pointed out, the man who had tried to kill him to us, I said immediately to him, I said, You've forgiven him, haven't you? And he said, Yes, I have. And that attitude has been demonstrated on the part of many of our Christians as well, as they've had things taken from them. Food is plentiful.

There has not been a dry season for three years, which is very unusually. Usually the dry season begins about now and runs through the month of March. But for three years there's been constant rain, so they've

had plenty of food, which has been a good thing.

In closing, let me just ask you to pray for a certain thing. We need godly leadership in the assemblies, men and women that can see beyond their own clan and tribe and put the kingdom of God first. We need godly leaders, men who can see beyond their tribe.

Pray for that. Our missionaries need wisdom and understanding and patience. You can pray for Pearl and for Marian and for our other missionaries as well.

Pray, too, for the leaders of the Christian community. There's going to be a change come the first of the year in the community with a new group of men taking responsibility. Actually, we had a request from the fellow who is going to be the new legal representative for some of the older missionaries to come out in 2002 and to sit with those leaders and to review where they may have strayed from our assembly principles.

That would be a good opportunity if this request still holds true. So, once again, we thank you for your care for us and for your prayers for us as we have gone. Thank you very much.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/21/SID21983.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/mert-wolcott/lo-i-am-with-you/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net