

Devotion by Annie Ching given in a prayer meeting on Wednesday, Sep. 13, 2017

**Winkie the pigeon** - The pigeon that saved a World War II bomber crew.

This is a true and inspiring story of a rescue mission happened on 23 February 1942 during WWII. A RAF bomber and its crew was returning from a mission over Norway, but their Beaufort Bomber had been hit by enemy fire and crashed into the sea more than 100 miles from home. Struggling in freezing waters - unable to radio an accurate position back to base - the four men faced a cold and lonely death. But as the aircraft went down, the crew had managed to salvage their secret weapon - a carrier pigeon. The blue chequered hen bird, called Winkie, was set free in the hope it could fly home to its loft in Broughty Ferry, near Dundee, and so alert air base colleagues to their predicament. The carrier pigeon had been released as a "last ditch stand" when the crew realized they had no other options.



But Winkie did make it home, after flying 120 miles of very dreadful journey, and finally was discovered, exhausted and covered in oil by owner George Ross who immediately informed RAF Leuchars in Fife. Winkie became the toast of the air base, with a dinner held in her honor. A year later, she became the first animal to receive the Dickin Medal - named after PDSA's founder Maria Dickin - for "delivering a message under exceptional difficulties".

My devotion today is using Winkie, the honored war pigeon, as an analogy of rescue mission in our journey of evangelism. I found this true story of Winkie very moving and inspiring. Winkie is a vivid illustration of someone who is running a rescue mission for God with determination and purpose. Destination of this mission is heaven bound and his commended destiny is to carry a message of hope and salvation for those who have lost their way and desperate for deliverance. But Winkie must fly despite all difficulties and treacherous conditions with focus and perseverance. Isn't that what mission for God is all about?

Though Winkie carried no written message on his feathery body, he himself was the message. His owner at his destination knew him and his message well: that someone was in danger and needed rescue. Don't we Christians also carry the good news in our lives? When someone is lost and cries out for help, should we show the person the way to the Father God? For Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me." John 14:6.

In fact, unlike Winkie, we have a 2-way message to carry. First, there is the imploring message from the Lord our God to those who are lost and in need:

*"Even now, declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart...Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love" Joel 2:12-13*

Second, there is this glorious message which Christ has graced us to carry deep within ourselves:

*“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” 2 Cor 4:7*

To all Christians, it is both a command and a glorious honor to serve Christ with the sustaining power from God. And the amazing discovery is that with this “all-surpassing power” from within, the rescue mission is accomplished by God himself, not on our own! I believe, even with Winkie, his success of rescue mission was not by chance either. Winkie was a planned and indispensable instrument for the rescue mission. We too are precious clay jar in God’s eyes redeemed by the precious life of His Son! We too are called to be an indispensable co-worker of God in His mission field!(1 Cor 3:8)

We must live out this convincing message of one who is by running humbly with Him. May we be sent to the battle field, the harvest field, the market place, homes of the sick and weary, hug with the broken-hearted, prayer closet to intercede or simply extending our serving hands in our community where lost souls are in need of God’s grace and salvation.

The messenger should be consistent with the message in order to be truthful and believable! Winkie itself was both the messenger and message of a crew needing rescue. Are we a true messenger of Christ and our life the message of God’s grace and salvation? Let’s pray, by His grace and power, our lives are always mission bound, bringing hope of Christ to those He has commended us to serve and touch. Amen!