

I placed the last of the ingredients in the agrilla pot and nestled it safely in the middle of the oven. I estimated 2hrs for the entire meal to be cooked, just in time for me to leave for work. The frenzy of cooking came as a result of a meal promised to a friend after the sudden loss of her 43yr old husband.

Heading towards work, thoughts of the utter insignificance of a home cooked meal as comfort to a grieving wife and mother spoke louder than the traffic noise. I said the smallest of prayers, asking God to strengthen my efforts.

With a prayer half-forgotten, I stepped into work and started the prep for the day, which saw staff donning their PPE while sharing a casual morning greeting. A colleague and mutual friend of the widow called me aside and said she dreamt I cooked a meal for Lisle and her daughters. She wanted me to know that more was being accomplished than I was aware of. As we walked out together to face the days challenges, I told her of my little SOS prayer, and she smiled.

Why am I sharing my story? After dropping off the meal, my friend texted and asked me if I would share at the memorial service of her late husband. Panic gripped my heart as I wrestled with God over the weakness of my words. I was painfully aware that, in each of our workspaces, families and friendships, we're facing an unmerited onslaught of negativity, loss and pain. An onslaught we feel impotent to address as the call to mourn and console has become inappropriately demanding.

On the day of the memorial, I fought to speak through cascading tears as I watched my mask get soaked with pain. Not even a mask could mask my obvious despair and deficiency.

The unmasking of Peter and John, as narrated in Acts 3:1-16, sees Peter and John approaching the Temple for their daily hour of prayer. Before entering, they were faced with the demands of a lame beggar at the Temple gate. A beggar who, we are told, was brought daily to the Temple gate to beg for provision.

It's Peter's response to the lame beggar – "Look at us!" – that unmasks my understanding (verse 4). Peter needed to be seen for who he truly was, a deficient man. He rightly discerned that they did not have what the beggar was asking for. If their religious masks were left on, they could have only focused on his request and kept face by not disclosing their lack.

For many of us, it has been a season where the cries of the widow, orphaned and friend has demanded our unmasking in order to answer the question, is the answer of Jesus enough, for every trial of life?

We learn that the unmasking of Peter and John had eternal consequences for the lame beggar. It helped point the beggar to Christ's sufficiency and empowered him to worship God for himself. If Peter and John stayed "masked", by trying to meet the need of the beggar in their own strength, it would have kept the beggar outside of intimacy and relationship with Jesus.

Peter's final question to the crowd, "Why do you keep staring at us, as though by our power we had made this man to walk? (Verse 12), once again emphasised their deficiency and Christ sufficiency.

May we, as the church, grow in a renewed appreciation for our all-sufficient relationship with an all-sufficient Christ. Blessings.