HOLISTIC MISSION AND LEATHER TROUSERS

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Whatever their strengths as a style statement, fig leaves are not suitable as working clothes; they don't offer much protection from thorn bushes (I'm not speaking from personal experience, I hasten to add).
Category: Observations

Without being overly theological, I believe that we should shape our mission work around the way we see God acting in Scripture. Obviously, there are some things that are God's prerogative things that only he can do, butÂ this doesn't negate my point - we should seek to imitate the way that God acts towards humanity.

After all, this is the whole point of being made in God's image. All too often we talk about being made in God's image as a privilege (which it is) and go no further. However, the whole point of an image is to show what the original looks like. As people made in God's image, we are to demonstrate the character and acts of the creator God to heaven and earth. We'll mess it up and get things wrong, but that doesn't do away with our responsibility to be God's image - his portrait - on earth.

With those thoughts in place, I'd like to briefly look at a well known passage in Genesis 3:

> *14Â So the Lord God said to the serpent, â€œBecause you have done this,*
>
> *â€œCursed are you above all livestock*
> *Â Â Â Â and all wild animals!*
> *You will crawl on your belly*
> *Â Â Â Â and you will eat dust*
> *Â Â Â Â all the days of your life.*
>
> *15Â And I will put enmity*
> *Â Â Â Â between you and the woman,*
> *Â Â Â Â and between your offspringÂ and hers;*
> *he will crushÂ your head,*
> *Â Â Â Â and you will strike his heel.â€*
>
> *16Â To the woman he said,*
>
> *â€œI will make your pains in childbearing very severe;*
> *Â Â Â Â with painful labor you will give birth to children.*
> *Your desire will be for your husband,*
> *Â Â Â Â and he will rule over you.â€*
>
> *17Â To Adam he said, â€œBecause you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, â€˜You must not eat from it,â€™*
>
> *â€œCursed is the ground because of you;*
> *Â Â Â Â through painful toil you will eat food from it*
> *Â Â Â Â all the days of your life.*
>
> *18Â It will produce thorns and thistles for you,*

> *Â Â Â Â and you will eat the plants of the field.*
>
> *[19Â] By the sweat of your brow*
> *Â Â Â Â you will eat your food*
> *until you return to the ground,*
> *Â Â Â Â since from it you were taken;*
> *for dust you are*
> *Â Â Â Â and to dust you will return.â€*
>
> *[20Â] AdamÂ named his wife Eve,Â because she would become the mother of all the living.*
>
> *[21Â] The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.*

I guess most Kouyanet readers are familiar with this rather remarkable passage. Faced with Adam and Eve's disobedience, God judges them by expelling them from the garden into a world of hard work and pain. However, most people concentrate on verse 15; the promise that the woman (not the man) would have an offspring who would crush the serpent, while being wounded in the process. Though it was written over a thousand years before the events of Bethlehem and Calvary, the meaning of this passage comes to light when it is read in the light of what Jesus accomplished.

Here, at the point where humanity has rejected the rule of God, the merciful Father points to his solution and announces, albeit it veiled form, the coming Messiah who would set the world to rights and restore God's reign.

However, when people look at this passage, they tend to gloss over verse 21, which doesn't seem as important as what precedes it.

Just picture the scene. Adam and Eve are standing there dressed in fig leaves and God is about to send them out into a world where there will be hard labour, thistles and thorns. Whatever their strengths as a style statement, fig leaves are not suitable as working clothes; they don't offer much protection from thorn bushes (I'm not speaking from personal experience, I hasten to add).

So God made them clothes from animal skin; tough, hard wearing leather clothes. Just what you need for a life of hard work in the fields.

Some see the fact that animals had to die in order to provide the clothes as being a symbolic of the need for death to reconcile God and man. This may be so, but I don't think it is the central point in this passage. The main thing that is going on here is that God made some clothes for Adam and Eve; it's that simple. God saw that they had a very practical need and in his love for his fallen creation, he met that need.

Within a few verses, God both pointed to the coming Messiah and provided Adam with some hard wearing clothes.

Is mission about proclamation or works of service? How does God act?