

# Go with the flow

## Ezekiel 36:26 NKJ

***"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."***

For nearly two decades a civil war raged in Mozambique between the opposition forces of anti-Communist rebel militias and the Marxist regime. Three quarters of a million people fled into Malawi. They were welcomed by the Malawians and supported by the aid agencies. For several years we passed one of the camps when we drove up from Blantyre in the south to the capital Lilongwe, along a stretch of road that followed the boundary between Malawi and Mozambique. We had heard that some of the refugees had started demanding more and more from the donors, and now we saw tinned produce labelled 'donated by the EU' being offered for sale as we drove by. Then we were told that the market traders in Blantyre were in uproar: the refugees were selling the cooking equipment they had been given and consequently prices in the local markets had tumbled.

The refugees had lost what little they had owned and you might have thought that of all people their response to the gracious welcome from their equally poor neighbours would only be motivated by appreciation. But Jesus knew well what sometimes surprises us: that **"from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts," Mark 7:21**. It seems that in the stony places of our hearts gratefulness is easily overwhelmed and for some of the refugees it was replaced by desires of exploitation.

So what about us? We have so much more than physical life to be grateful for. In the past we may have heard sermons telling us to be thankful, spent the next few days making sure our prayers are thanks-loaded, and then forgotten about them by the next week. Even when we leave behind any perceived pressure to be thankful we will be faced with the fact that that our own gratefulness is shallow and inadequate as a response to the immeasurable grace of God and the limitless love of Christ, and can so easily be swamped by trials, tribulations or even just mundane life-stuff.

Jesus knew all about the problem. It is Jesus who gave us the solution. Speaking of the Holy Spirit he said: **"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water," John 7:37-38**. The Spirit brings into our hearts the heart of Christ. Jesus' perfect human response to his Father can be ours. It can flow out from our inner beings in joyful appreciation, generating a grateful and love-filled response to God. It is there for all who flee as refugees from the country of the stony heart.