

March 6

Memory verse

My times are in thy hand. Psalm 31:15

More information about this verse in the lesson for 8th March.

Something to think about

Irish born missionary Amy Carmichael (1867-1951) and her helpers dedicated the 6th day of every month to prayer and thanksgiving. This was because of something that happened on 6th March 1901.

Amy Carmichael served God as a missionary in India. She learnt the Tamil language of south India and made a study of the Hindu caste system. The caste system classifies people according to their birth rank with some castes being more important than others. Mixing (and marrying) between castes is not allowed by the system and certain castes perform certain jobs. The caste system is part of the Hindu belief in re-incarnation. Re-incarnation means that the soul survives death and comes back to the world in another body – human or animal. If the person has done good things in their life they will be rewarded by progress “up” the system when they return reincarnated. If they have done evil they will be punished. Thus anyone suffering poverty, sickness or affliction can be seen as deserving it – they must have done evil in a previous life and are being punished. Amy Carmichael knew how wrong this was. She knew that people are equal in God’s eyes. She travelled many miles over India with the message of God's forgiveness and salvation.

To gain acceptance in India, Amy Carmichael adopted Indian dress. Sometimes she would even dye her skin using tea or coffee. In this way she did not look strange to Indian people. Amy had brown eyes just like Indian people and that helped her too. As a little girl she had been rather vain and envied those with blue eyes. She even prayed to God that he would change her brown eyes to blue! How glad she was when she became a missionary in India that God had not answered her prayer in the way she had hoped he would as a child. Instead of giving her the eyes she wanted, he gave her a job in his kingdom that meant she wanted the eyes he had given her!



Amy discovered that little girls were being sold to the temples as slaves and she dedicated herself to rescuing these children. It was on 6th March that Preena, the first India girl to be rescued, joined Amy Carmichael and her team of helpers. You can see her photo, taken when she was older, on the left. Preena managed to escape from the temple, slipping past the guards at night. She made her way home to her mother. However, her mother, fearing the punishment of the gods, returned Preena to the temple. Here she was punished by having her hands branded with hot irons.

When she went each day to collect water, Preena had been listening to Amy telling Indian ladies about God's love for all, regardless of caste. She managed to escape a second time. This time she ran to the church in the village and here she was found by a Christian lady who took her to Amy. Preena climbed at once into Amy's lap begging to be allowed to stay and calling her “Amma” which means “mummy”.

Amy ran considerable risks by keeping Preena. The practice of selling children as slaves to the temple was not illegal in India at the time and Preena was temple property. Amy could be accused of stealing her. There was another problem too. If she was to care for Preena, Amy would be restricted in how much travelling evangelism she could do. She prayed for guidance. But then more needy children found their way to Amy's bungalow. God had answered her prayer!

As time went on Amy gathered a large number of children, some bought from their parents to prevent them being sold to the temple, some “stolen” directly from temples and cared for. They all called Amy “Ammma.”



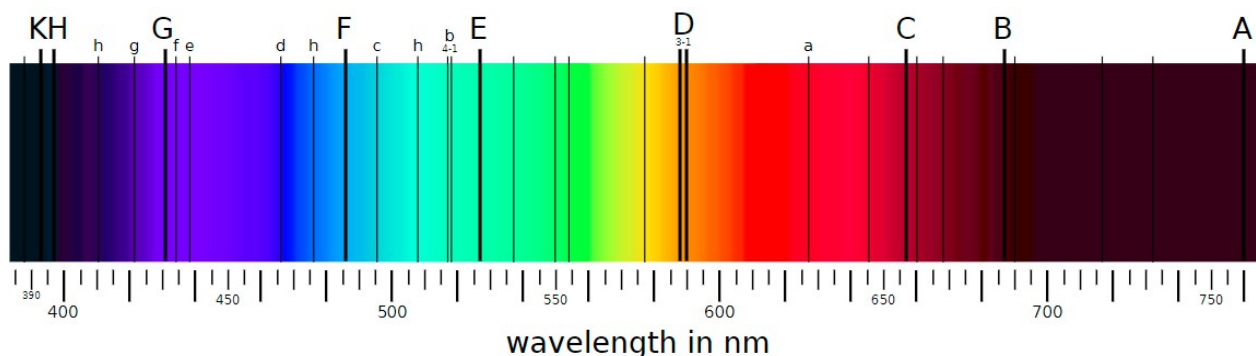
Amy worked in India for fifty-five years without ever going back to Britain. In 1931 she suffered a fall which left her bedridden for much of the time but she continued to serve in India until she died.

A story from science history

Maximilian Joseph, the Prince Elector of Bavaria (1756-1825) was regarded as a little eccentric. He liked to walk unaccompanied along the streets of Munich conversing with the citizens freely. He was very close to his people as a result. In 1801 he personally led the rescue operation when a glassmaker's workshop collapsed. Buried in the rubble was a young apprentice, Joseph von Fraunhofer.

Joseph von Fraunhofer (1787-1826) was born on 6th March. He had had a very difficult start in life. Orphaned at the age of eleven he had been apprenticed to the glassmaker who was a harsh man. Joseph had to work very hard and he was forbidden to read. The workshop disaster changed all that. The Prince gave him some money, provided him with books and insisted that the glassmaker give him time off for study.

The Prince's investment in Joseph was very worthwhile. He went on to make some important discoveries. This began with his development of a process to make very fine optical glass. From this he went on to discover the dark absorption lines in the sun's light spectrum. Joseph measured 576 lines in the solar spectrum and over 25,00 of them have been found now. These lines are called Fraunhofer lines after him.



Each element,¹ because of the characteristic pattern of energy levels in its electron cloud, absorbs a different pattern of wavelengths. It therefore produces its own signature spectrum. Scientists now use this information to work out which elements are present in a particular star by examining the spectrum of light it produces.

After examining the sun Joseph turned his attention to other stars detecting other dark lines in their spectra. He also ruled out the notion that the lines were produced by Earth's atmosphere, as they varied from star to star. This correctly led him to believe that they carried information about the source of the light. However, he did not know what the information was. Joseph was humble about his discoveries, believing that his focus should be on making telescopes, however he did hope that – “skilful investigators of nature would condescend to give them some attention”. His discoveries would lead the way to the development of many fields not limited to astronomy. In fact his discoveries are central to quantum mechanics, and many other fields of physics and even chemistry and bio-chemistry.

¹ See the lesson for November 1st to learn about elements.