

# LITURGICAL FORMATION & FOOTPRINTS OF GOD

## Worship As Mission

Is worship a 'passive, introvert activity' relevant to an active, extrovert mission purpose? How significant is 'liturgical' worship to the concern of church planting?

The English word worship is a contraction of worth-ship. Worship involves assigning worth to what we believe is valuable. In this sense, Christian worship is our response to a holy God. By the ministry of His words and administration of the sacrament, 'we commit ourselves ultimately to Christ, for in him we perceive the ultimate meaning of existence'. On mission, The Introduction to the Lausanne Covenant states, 'We believe the Gospel is God's good news for the whole world, and we are determined by his grace to obey Christ's commission to proclaim it to all mankind and to make disciples of every nation. Therefore, we desire to affirm our faith and resolve and make our covenant public. There are three aspects of the relevance of our worship to the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20.

Firstly, the Westminster Shorter Catechism asked, "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." We come together to offer praise to God's specific revelation in the person and work of Jesus Christ, a celebrant of God's purpose in reclaiming lost humanity and fulfilling our deepest human need for connection.

In worship, we are making the missionary statement that God's work of reconciliation is in progress in real times. Worship is also transformative through its visible unity of agape love and practical expression within the ecclesia. This unity and love expressed in worship make us feel connected and part of a larger community. Anglican Village Ministry, pioneered by Bishop Ng Moon Hing, says, 'The long-term goal is to plant churches and to allow God to transform the villages into communities of God's people with Kingdom value'. Rightly, it is a calling of the faithful to establish a Christian community in a

visible, identifiable and concrete form. Though imperfect this communal gathering may be and sometimes even ironical in its many divisions, it is the apparent physical representation of God's salvation presence. The gathering and the identity of the ecclesia in worship is the mission per se.

Secondly, the preaching of the word as a mission. Jesus' excellent missionary work began with his personal 'expository' fulfilment from the reading of Isaiah 61:1-2. The Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40 was converted through a simple, informal explanation of the scripture from Philip. The missiological feature of transformative preaching to be Christ-like cannot be overstated. The kerygmatic proclamation of the power of the Risen Christ reclaiming lost humanity to be his own. Orthodox teachings have a profound perspective that the church's vocation is ultimately to bring together all creations so that they become the Body of Christ. Their understanding of the Great Commission starts from the Doctrine of Creation. There is also the didactic role of preaching in maintaining the ecclesia.

Doctrine needs to be explained, and tradition needs to be expounded. Like the Ethiopian eunuch asked, 'How can we know unless someone teaches us?' An informed community united in form and spirit is the best mission statement and a remarkable testimony to the world. Jesus constantly reminded his disciples to be one, as his redemptive work can only be accomplished through their united discipleship. Quote again, 'The holistic foundation of AVM is anchored in the Word of God. The Old and New Testaments show God's concern for the whole person and community. A catalyst in fostering a permanent Christian lifestyle to serve the wider communities.'

Thirdly, the quintessential eucharistic celebration is mission. Liturgy consists of people (laos) and word for work (ergon). It has to do with people and work. Christian worship represents

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God's work for the world in Christ. The mystical presence of a transcendent God coming amid humanity offers the world the gift of redemption. In the holy sacraments, we become witnesses and partakers to this divine mystery in the heart of God's people. In doing so, we have a glimpse and a 'taste' of God's kingdom (I Peter 2:3). The Anglican communion service appropriately ends with 'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord', meaning to love God and serve Him by loving our neighbours. The more traditional word 'mass' is even more indicative of this, 'Ite, missa est. "Go, it is the dismissal". Mass is the English form of the Latin missa - dismissal, sending into the world, implying mission. Worship always ends with the marching order that grace received should also be grace shared.

Worship is a retelling and reliving again and again of salvation story and history, which is fundamentally the main objective of all missionary efforts. David Watson says, 'The church's primary task is to worship God. Even before the obvious evangelisation and missionary work, God's people were called to be a worshipping community. A mission existed only because worship was there in the first place. Proper 'liturgical' worship is an act of mission and will naturally lead to a mission beyond itself.

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