

to me—I'd much rather speak on something else. The modern world has reduced fasting to a technique—a form of political or weight control. But we need to see what *Jesus* means by prayer and fasting. When the physical and spiritual are brought together with the purpose of being in touch with spiritual warfare, we see a repudiation of modernity at the heart of its grand lie. Modernity is the greatest example history has ever seen of “by bread alone”—by sex alone, by work alone, by money alone. “By bread alone” is written across modernity. We can see where Adam failed. He did not obey, he broke his fast and he ate. Our Lord sustained both his fast and his obedience, refused to accept the Devil's temptation, and overcame.

The second point of reliance in overcoming modernity is by the Word and the Spirit. Modernity is a world without windows. We live in a world where there's no way to break out because there's nothing left in modern philosophy to break in. The answer is the Word. While traveling around evangelicalism, I hear the cry of the poor, the cry of the dying, the cry of the imprisoned. And I hear the cry of a gasping Word because of evangelicals who say they believe it doesn't belong in preaching. In America, for instance: I know of no country in the world where the churches are so full and the sermons, by and large, are so empty. The loss of transcendence in preaching is horrifying. You can see this shift from Lausanne '74 to Manila '89 in the difference in styles of utterance. That's why Marxism declined. Why is the gospel different from Marxism? Marxism had no transcendental point of critique and could never be renewed. We have, however, the Word which breaks in.

It is my prayer that we will put modernity on our agenda for mission. And that we will analyze its impact at our local levels in our countries, our cities, our audiences, our ministries. And I pray that we will seek to reform the church where the impact of modernity has already been damaging. For example, the loss of truth; sweatless, long-distance evangelism without incarnation; technique without spiritual warfare; a reliance on images until they are coming out of our ears without a trust in the power of words in general, and the Word in particular. I pray we will also abandon our easy excuses.

We need to recover the only reality which will overcome modernity. What's the answer to Nietzsche's philosophy that when God dies for a culture they become weightless? The answer is the glory of God. The answer to Nietzsche is in Moses, in Exodus 33 when he faced the great crisis of his life, with problems all around him. He turned to the Lord and his deepest prayer was, “Lord show me your glory.” He wanted all of God that a human being could behold because only that could see him through the problems that he faced.

Do we think we can win the world by A.D. 2000? Or are we overwhelmed by the thought of the task of winning the world at all? We need to face the world and then deliberately turn away and look to the Lord, the source of the only reality stronger than modernity—the only one with power able to overcome the colossus we face. Lord, show us your glory!

## SOCIAL CONCERN AND EVANGELISM I

# Social Concern and Evangelization

Vinay Samuel

Several participants have asked me to explain the difference between the two plenary themes of “Good News to the Poor” and “Social Concern and Evangelization.” A clue is found in the table of contents of the electives offered at the Congress. “Good News to the Poor” is placed in the section on “The Whole World,” which focuses on the poor as a group to be reached with the gospel. “Social Concern and Evangelization” is included in the section on “The Whole Gospel” and invites us to explore the meaning of the whole gospel.

Their selection reflects the assumptions of the Lausanne Covenant that: (a) faithfulness to the gospel includes a call to respond to the needs of the whole person and to all human needs; and (b) it is in this context of responding to the whole person that the whole gospel is uncovered and articulated.

Lausanne I affirmed the commitment of evangelicals to the whole gospel. It facilitated a worldwide movement of evangelicals willing to be shaped by the whole gospel, and willing to pay the price of living it out and being eager to share it. Despite some failure, they discovered its effectiveness. Their witness has been shared at this Congress.

We saw the moving and powerful video *The Challenge Before Us*. Luis Bush told the inspiring story of a servant of God who works in the dump city on the edge of Manila. Afterwards, the person sitting next to me remarked, “The problems are so overwhelming. Can we do anything?” Someone else asked, “Does such response to human need really work?”

I would like to present a humble response to such feelings and fears—the response of people who refuse to give up in spite of being overwhelmed by the greatness of the need. They persevered and found Christ empowering them. They looked at the people around them through the eyes of Jesus and sought to respond to their needs in his way. We will hear first from Joni Eareckson Tada, who works with disabled people in the United States:

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Lord's concern is *people*. All of our systems and structures should serve God's concern for humankind, not suppress it. It is the job of the evangelist and the missionary to address all forms of oppression—spiritual and structural—which hinder the wholeness which the Lord offers. We cannot be silent about evil structures if our message is Good News to the poor.

A thoroughly contextual gospel will give people a sense of dignity and a hope that their humanity will be redeemed. When context plays a key role in determining the things from which individuals must repent, then the evil in that society—including the oppressive structures or persons—will be identified. Faith in the Lord Jesus then leads to a realization of the ability of the Cross of Christ to bring change and redemption.

This is where hope lies. The Good News touches people in their individual situations of pain, suffering, and oppression. Redemption is transforming, because no area of a person's life is left untouched. When people have this hope, the gospel affirms them and gives them the ability and power to move forward, and the Holy Spirit gives the courage needed to do so.

If the gospel is contextual, it will be transforming; and, if it is transforming, then it will be empowering. It is not possible to impart an empowering gospel which is not contextual. We make transformation a mockery if we think it can occur apart from the context. When people recognize God's concern is holistic and that we are yoke-fellows with Jesus (Matthew 11:29), they are given a reason to believe in the things of the kingdom of God.

### The Challenge to the Bearers of Good News

The kingdom of God is *his* kingdom, *his* rule, *his* authority. The kingdom deals with the future in that we will only experience the fullness of the kingdom when the King returns. But the kingdom also has a present dimension which we experience and participate in now. The kingdom's values are consistent with the character of the King, who cries, "For I, the Lord, love justice" (Isaiah 61:8).

"Of prime importance is Jesus' conviction that the kingdom is for the poor, and that the arrival of the kingdom is the beginning of a radical reversal in the world order, a restoration of justice." This does not mean those who are not poor are excluded from the kingdom. Rather, it tells us something of the *nature* of the kingdom. In the same way, the concept of the "preferential option for the poor," which came out of the Catholic Puebla Conference, does not mean there is no hope for the wealthy. On the contrary, it shows that our message in the mission and evangelism of the powerful is *determined* by what the Good News is for the poor.

There are six guiding principles for evangelicals as they take up the challenge of reaching the oppressed:

1. Our message must come out of a heart committed to the one thing most oppressed people desire: Justice.
2. We must never allow strategy to triumph over theology. The concern for growth, numbers, and results often leads to a lack of integrity to the gospel and unfaithfulness to the true biblical mandate.
3. We must never change our message during a crisis because when the crisis is over, we will have no message. One of the Chinese words for *crisis* is a combination of two words meaning "danger" and "opportunity."
4. Our evangelism and mission need to be incarnational if they are to be authentic. If God is on the side of justice, then our message and our lives need to reflect this.

5. We need to do a social analysis. This is essential if we are contextual (transforming and empowering) and it enables us to take a clear biblical stand when challenges arise.
6. It must be clear that we serve only one Master—the Lord. We have primary allegiance to only one King. In mission and evangelism, we proclaim freedom from tyranny and oppression on earth. Our cry is a political cry: the proclamation of a new King!

It is easy to bypass evangelizing the oppressed because of their resistance to the gospel. We need to remember that they are part of the whole world to which the whole gospel must be preached.

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Join me as we further explore the theme of seeing people through the eyes of Jesus. Our video presentation will share three stories of people who responded to human need around them, and describe what it means in practice to see people through the eyes of Jesus:

### VIDEO PRESENTATION

## Seeing People Through the Eyes of Jesus

Producers: Mary Fairbrother, Andrew Raynor,  
Steve Bynon, Mark Townsend and  
Duncan Murdoch

*Vinay Samuel:* To see people through the eyes of Jesus is to visualize how Jesus viewed people he ministered to, responding to their physical, social needs, and enabling them to enter into a personal relationship with God.

Jesus went up into the hills and sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing him the blind, the lame, the crippled, and the dumb. They were laid at his feet and he healed them. The people were amazed, and praised the God of Israel. Seeing the crowd was hungry, Jesus was filled with compassion; and calling his disciples to him, he told them to feed the people.

*Bishop Michael Lazario:* Jesus' answer to the multitude was quite clear. He told his disciples to feed them. The preaching of the gospel goes hand in hand with the service of our fellow human beings.

*Narrator:* India! A rich country with many poor people. It has a deep religious awareness, and a great respect for family and community life. It has "Silicon valleys"; a larger film industry than Hollywood; and yet millions live in poverty, bonded labor, and illiteracy.

Colline Samuel is a director at the Divya Shanti Christian Association, based in the

heart of the slums of Bangalor. The Association began as a Sunday school, under a tree. Now it is based in a building used as a school and a community center for homeless children, families, drug addicts, alcoholics, battered wives, and the physically disabled. Colline explains that it is only by this privileged involvement with people in the slums that she has gained the right to speak to them about Jesus.

*Colline Samuel:* The homeless people form a large part of our work. One family we visited had a ten-day-old baby sleeping on the streets, covered in newspaper, so we are struggling now with the government to see that homes are built for people; because we have discovered that, if the government give homes to a woman, they know that the woman is not going to move on. And the woman in our situation, in the lower income group, takes the full burden of the family. We formed this multipurpose women's cooperative, and we find that we are registering two hundred to five hundred of our lower income group so that they will then have a voice. One can thank God for being able to be involved in the life of people. When you pray with someone, you just can't go on praying for them. They have to be also made into the dignified human being that God wanted them to be. Hope gives people something beyond the situation in which they are.

*Lazario:* Jesus spent most of his ministry among the poor. By effective sign, he showed them where and how the kingdom was coming. And so he healed their diseases, he fed them, he gave them a sense of dignity and worth as children of God.

True religion is this, to look after orphans and widows in distress, and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

*Vinay Samuel:* To understand an individual is to understand her community: the historical context, the social and economic structures which are a part in which this group exists, and so that the whole of life, not just its behavior, but its political life in relation to other groups, nationally and internationally; all that is taken into consideration, and especially its historical role.

*Narrator:* Peru! The jewel of the Andes. But beyond its breathtaking landscape is a country gripped by fear, mistrust, and disunity, which began in 1980 with the first public terrorist activities. This violence is met with the government's own violence of repression; armed forces flagrantly transgressing the laws they should defend. Pedro Arana, a pastor working in Peru, finds that a wholistic witness is both effective and essential. Fighting for justice and liberty, Christians like Pedro are admired, and Christ is thus shared with others.

*Lazario:* There is a kind of preaching that challenges the exploitation of the poor, and the gospel is not wholly preached if these things are not challenged. The most effective preaching is done by those who are serving their fellow human beings.

The spirit of God is upon me, because he has chosen me to preach good news to the poor; to proclaim freedom to the prisoners, and recovery of sight to the blind. To release the oppressed and to proclaim the coming of the kingdom.

*Vinay Samuel:* And the whole of the thrust of the Bible in this area is that the kingdom of God is to be proclaimed to the poor, but it is to be proclaimed not only by word of mouth, but by what we do.

*Narrator:* Kenya is a beautiful country. Home to a mix of city-dwelling sophisticates, urban slum-dwellers, nomads and hard-working farmers, it has one of the largest growing churches in the world. Its enviable political stability is marred by tribal rivalry and economic problems, the cause of much corruption and human rights abuse. Despite victimization, Bishop David Gitari speaks out against this abuse, actively involved in feeding the poor, providing health care, and agricultural development. Hand in hand with this evangelism finds a responsive crowd, as people see Christ's work in action.

*Bishop David Gitari:* Here in Kenya, we have been able to receive many Ugandan refugees. We try to help and encourage them, and make them feel at home until such time as the situation in their country improves. We have also been very much involved in food distribution during times of famine. We have not wanted to make a commitment to Christianity a condition of receiving food, asserting that anyone, irrespective of their religion, should be fed. As a result, many people came to admire the spirit in which this work was done, and they wanted to know how and why we were spending so much time trying to help them. As a result, we had a great number of people committing their lives to Christ. In Luke 2:52 it says that Christ grew in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and humankind. And so he grew in four dimensions: mental, physical, spiritual, and social. And so accordingly, we aim here to look to the whole person. The needs of the whole, both the body and soul, should be met.

*Colline Samuel:* You just can't go on praying with someone. They have to be also made into the kind of dignified human being that God wanted them to be.

*Gitari:* Many people came to admire the spirit in which the work was done. They wanted to know how and why we were spending so much time trying to help them. As a result, we had a great number of them committing their lives to Jesus Christ.

*Pedro:* To see through the eyes of Jesus is to see in every human being a possibility.

*Narrator:* Seeing people through Jesus' eyes shows us a ministry that is mobile and effective, sensitive to each individual, every situation. A shifting interdependence needs to be respected between evangelism and an immediate, compassionate, sacrificial response to human need.

(VINAY SAMUEL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 297)

Christian social concern is motivated by seeing people as Jesus saw them. It requires us to experience the life of Jesus in our own lives and to be shaped by his Word, the Bible, until we begin to see people through his eyes. This is also the starting point of Christian social concern—our unconditional commitment to experience the fullness of the life, attitudes, and teachings of the Lord.

It then follows that we will obey the call to share the gospel in Christ's own way.

Like Jesus, we should go to those in need and not expect them to come to us. We can identify with them by sharing our lives with them. This is not just a proposal for a few brave spirits: It is a necessary part of following Christ's own way.

The way of Jesus is the way of the Cross—the way of a suffering servant; of denying our rights (even luxuries); and accepting rebuke, pain, and suffering on behalf of others. How else can the whole gospel be shared with integrity?

Jesus' strategy was not of conquest but of love. He chose to draw people to himself, rather than drag or entice them. To draw them, he had to stand with them; he had to bear the cross and wear the crown of thorns; he had to become poor so that they might become rich. Any authentic strategy to share the whole gospel must reflect love rather than conquest.

The way of Jesus was also to empower the needy. Made whole in body, mind, and spirit, they were enabled and released into the world. This empowerment was first the offer of a new identity as daughters and sons of God. It was given freely by sheer grace. Imagine its powerful impact. They were people who long considered themselves cursed by God. Many poor, oppressed, and disabled people today still feel that way. Some were people who saw themselves as subhuman (the lepers, the outcasts) and were treated as such. It still happens today. All such people heard the offer of a new identity, experienced it, and were released into the world.

This new identity was not merely a label without content. The content was Jesus' power in the Spirit—the power of a new community where people shared what they had; the power of a hope that God is acting to transform the world and will fully restore it when Jesus returns in glory.

The gospel enables God's children not to remain as victims of their circumstances or disabilities, but work in partnership with God, in the power of his Spirit, to address their circumstances and overcome their disabilities. The gospel empowers people to find God's grace not just sufficient to take them to heaven but more than sufficient to address poverty, injustice, oppression, ill health, illiteracy, and physical disability. That is the gospel—the whole gospel which empowers people.

The way of Christ is also the way of the small flock. Jesus called and empowered the little flock—not the wise and powerful. The small flock were to be his ambassadors. It will not be the powerful, the wealthy of the world, however Christian or committed they be, who will be the main players in sharing the whole gospel with the majority of the unreached. They will likely be support staff.

It is the little flock whom Jesus chooses still. It is the foolish and weak, the despised and lowly of the world, whom Jesus calls to be his ambassadors. Jesus' power to transform is revealed and released through them. The roots of the Pentecostal movement at the turn of the century were among such people.

I am of the non-poor. I have a room in the Philippine Plaza Hotel and use a credit card. I try to minister to the poor and live among them. But it is the poor who often teach me what the whole gospel is all about—something which even Cambridge University never taught me.

We have choices before us: Will we commit ourselves to seeing people as Jesus sees them? Will we dare to share the gospel in Christ's way? Practically, it will mean that we need to identify with the needy groups God is calling us to; to begin the process of ministering to them; to learn how to empower them; to release them to change their situations; and by this we will be empowered ourselves. Anything less will not be a witness to the whole gospel.

## VIDEO PRESENTATION

# The Uniqueness of Christ

Producer: Peter Darg

*Narrator:* Who was this man who walked among the nation of Israel two thousand years ago? His birth was unique. He was different from every other prophet or teacher. His father was God and his blood was pure enough to atone for the sins of all mankind. Abraham was known as the friend of God; Moses as the servant of God; but at his baptism, this man was declared to be the Son of God.

He is unique in his power to heal. His death was unique. No other man even claimed to lay down his life for all mankind. His resurrection was unique. While the graves of other prophets and religious leaders can still be venerated, his tomb in Jerusalem stands empty as a unique witness to his victory over death and his promise to come again.

But who is Jesus to the billions of frightened, lonely, hungry, indifferent, and confused people living today?

*Woman:* I don't know.

*Punk youth:* I don't think he exists.

*Man:* He was a historical character who lived in Jerusalem.

*Hippie:* Who is he? He's supposed to be the Son of God.

*Young Woman:* I'm not very religious.

*Man:* A lot of people seem to think he's real.

*Woman:* He was a very good man.

*Man:* I'm a Christian. He's the Son of God. It's as simple as that.

*Narrator:* But *is* it as simple as that? The world has many other gods to divert attention from the truth of our Christian witness. Television and sports heroes, gurus and cults, humanism and materialism all compete to lure untold millions away from the one true God we proclaim. In today's world, Christians aren't the only ones offering answers to life's problems. Other voices are making spiritual promises, too.

[Setting: Muslim children studying the Koran.]