



***Dr. Bijoy Koshy – Interserve
Innovative Missiological Reflection***

Dear friends, greetings in Jesus' name. I'm Dr. Bijoy Koshy and I'm presently the International Director of a mission organization called Interserve. I'm here to share with you our journey on Discerning Innovative Missiological Reflection. A broader missiological framework that will lay the basis for future functions, structures, and collaboration in missions.

At present, our mission movement is built on a particular worldview with functions and structures that serve a reality that existed a few hundred years ago, when mission was from a Christianized West to a heathen rest.

The truth is that neither is the West Christian now, and neither is the rest of the world either. The very theological and missiological basis on which missions is founded, was based on a worldview that comes from that part of the world, from where the Gospel was brought to the rest of the world. But the Church is becoming far more global than it has ever been. And missions truly becoming from everywhere to everywhere. It is time to widen a theological and missiological framework before we can innovate effectively for the future. To understand better the wider framework I'm talking about, let us look at three additional lenses that we need to put on as we consider these issues.

Firstly, **The Lens of Community.** The Bible is written in a culture that is largely communal. And was more or less, almost completely written to communities of people. We need the lens of community to better understand the truths of the word. Let's take an example, the way we understand missions, for example, is largely to an individualistic lens. Shawna Follett's Paraphernalia Decorations, "Missions is understood as being about an individual's call to go to a particular place and do a particular piece of work." However, this is just a miniscule part of the biblical framework of the mission of God in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The picture of missions that we are confronted with is that of God who is raising for Himself a community of people through whom He reveals Himself to the nations of the world. Their communal relationships, ethics, unity and love would demonstrate, so says Jesus, in no uncertain terms, that He had been sent from God.

Our own personal, individual call finds meaning only when it is rooted in this reality. Gideon's call was real. But really held no meaning unless it was seen in the wider and larger perspective of Israel being called to be a nation through whom God was going to reveal Himself. Looking at the world through the lens of community changes the focus of our activity, putting a narrow, goal-driven actions within a wider framework that will truly reveal to the world who Jesus is.

Secondly, **The Lens of The Kingdom.** It is surprising that though the bulk of Jesus' teaching was about the Kingdom, the bulk of our teaching is directed towards individual salvation. There's nothing wrong with individual salvation except that it almost completely ignores the broader and perhaps more direct effects of the work of Jesus on the cross. On the cross Jesus actually defeated the forces of darkness, defeated the Kingdom of Darkness, and established the Kingdom of Light. The invitation of salvation is not so much to get eternal life for oneself as it is an invitation into this Kingdom. The key therefore is not a generalized repentance for us, but a specific repentance of having placed self on the throne. The act of putting Jesus on the throne of our lives and confessing Him as the Lord of our lives, and indeed of the Kingdom is what gives us eternal life. Our forgiveness, the saving function of Jesus Christ flows from that particular victory won on the cross, establishing the Kingdom of God. Our self is called to identify with, and indeed, as Paul says, actually, do we put on the cross with Jesus' death and resurrection. "I have been crucified with Christ." says Paul. "It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me and the life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

In honor and dishonor cultures or in power and fear cultures, the call to Jesus as Lord is far more meaningful than Jesus as Savior. This means that only Jesus can be served in my life and brings with it the moral imperative of a life that honors their King through obedience and love. The lens of the Kingdom then challenges our present articulation of the Gospel, removes agendas that are self-serving from amongst us, and truly makes the Gospel message and the work of mission centered around the person and work of Jesus.

And Thirdly, **The Lens of Powerlessness.** Powerlessness. Mission has always piggy-backed on power. Some form of power or the other, whether it's colonial power, or military power, of financial power, or academic power, or in today's world, maybe, digital power. When I read the old manuscripts of my mission organization, I cringe at words like heathen. We do not use that word anymore, but we still use words of power. In fact, our whole mobilization program rests on power words, words that give us a feeling that we are superior over others. We have something that others do not have. We can go and give something to other people. What that does subconsciously to us, that it gives us an inherent sense of superiority over the church we go to minister to. All over the world, the missions program has looked down on nationals they ministered to. The world we live in encourages us to find our worth and our gifts, our strengths, our talents, our achievements, our experiences, academic qualifications. In fact, we operate according to these strengths of our life. But the biblical version is a different version.

Moses had to be 40 years in the wilderness and in a place where he had no power to deliver the people of Israel. Jacob had to have his hip dislocated and forever was left leaning on a staff before he could become Israel. Jesus himself as he prepares to come to Earth, empties Himself of divine power, does not cling onto His divine nature, and He is born as a helpless babe in a manger. He lived his whole life in complete and full dependence on His Father. Paul, there in the Corinthian Church that he refused to come to them in the power of his eloquence or his theological training. That he determined that he would only know Jesus and Him crucified, so that the Gospel would not come to them in terms of human wisdom but in the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit. Everything else, his academic achievements, his lineage, his theology, his qualifications he counted as rubbish, as dung. He tells the church that we have the treasure of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, but he wants them that we have this in broken, vulnerable, weak jars of clay, or proclaims when I am weak, then I am strong for his strength is perfected in my weakness.

Each of us, I believe, has to proceed on this journey to weakness, to powerlessness. Only this can remove the discrimination that exists in the Church, remove the sense of superiority that some hold onto. Only then can we be united so that the world will know that Jesus is God. The future of missions, I believe, rests with our ability to allow the National Church to take center stage in our mission endeavors. However, we can never really embark on what this will look like if we do not get off our high horses. Understand that the Kingdom work will only proceed through the power of the Holy Spirit and is not dependent on our academic and training excellence, our skills-set, or our experience.

As we embark on these new innovations journey, as we look more at the next stage, and next phase of Missio Dei, I'm convinced that unless we are able to allow and reach a major revamp to our theological and missiological understandings and have the courage to embrace the changes that this revamp will bring, we will not be able to follow God in His continuing work of Missio Dei in the coming years. The lens of community. The lens of the Kingdom. The lens of powerlessness. I believe these are the hallmarks of future innovative missiological reflections. Thank you.