



Harvey Kwiyani – Liverpool Hope University
Intercultural Mutuality as Innovation in Missions

Hello, my name is Harvey Kwiyani. I come from Malawi, somewhere southeastern Africa. I currently live in the UK, in the city of Liverpool, where I teach at Liverpool Hope University. I teach courses that has to do with African Christianity. African theology. But my training is in missions, so I spend quite a chunk of my time exploring non-western missionary movement, with a special focus on African Missionary Movement, as we're seeing it emerge in the world today. And it is with a missiologist's heart on that, that I share with you on this conference about what I find to be fascinating innovations in mission in the world today.

For me, in my work, what I really find fascinating as I envision in mission going on in the world today is the intentional spaces where Christians from around the world come together to reflect on God's mission together. I find this to be very refreshing. It has not been done quite that much before, but I do think that it's the future of the missionary movement. It's the future of mission is the future of the Church, that the members of the Body of Christ - followers of Christ from around the world- engage one another and figure out how to serve God and work together in God's mission around the world.

And so, these few spaces that I see emerge here in the UK, in Europe, in North America where people have intentionally made a commitment to include voices that would otherwise not be at the table. That we cannot really begin to move in what God's doing unless voices from other parts of the world, voices different from the voices where we have always heard are present at the table, I find that to be very refreshing. I do think that to some extent that will be the genius of our generation of mission scholars or mission theologians. That we choose to work together over against the past models that had the older churches in Europe and the younger churches around the world and couldn't really give up leadership and to trust that Africans and Asians can lead themselves. That we are moving on from that. That we are living in a world today where we trust one another. Different cultures, different theological inclinations, different upbringings, different skin colors. But that we trust that the Spirit of God is bringing us together so that we can serve God together as God's servants in the world. And that is what I redefined to be innovative in mission that we can spend our energy trying to figure out how do we work together as Christians from different parts of the world, as Christians from different denominations, as Christians from different cultures. How do we serve God together as members of one body. That is quite significant.

So as a background to that argument, I want to take you to 1991, of course, 1991 in mission circles. Our people would think about David Bush and Transforming Mission, that's really when the book was published, and of course, 30 years later, it's been quite -the book, it's been one of the most important

books in mission studies around the world that we still depend on it for quite a chunk of what we teach in mission schools around the world. So, that book has to be celebrated. But there's a little-known article that was published in the International Bulletin of Missionary Research that was written by a senior colleague of mine at Liverpool Hope University, Professor Andrew Walls. And the title was Structural Problems in Mission Studies, in which he sort of lamented the strange nature of Western dominance in mission studies in a world where Christianity was increasingly becoming a non-Western religion. And more so today than it was in 1991. Christianity has taken on a new appearance in the non-Western world much more than the Western world. But that as I speak today we are confident that Western Christians, White European, White American Christians, maybe some from Australia and New Zealand, but white Christians form a third of world Christians.

If we go back 70 years, in 1950, over 80% of Christians in the world were white and we're living in the West. So in the past 70 years there's been a big shift and that has changed the appearance, the color of Christianity around the world. And Andrew Walls was saying in 1991, I think you can say that again today that our missiological discourses, our theological discourses have to look like Global Christianity. They have to include voices and phrases from around the world. We need Black Christians; we need Christians from around the world. The Brazilians, Mozambicans and Fijians and everybody. We need voices. We need this discourse to look like world Christianity. This is exactly what Jesus wanted us to do. He wanted us to make possible the presence of followers of His disciples, of His around the world in every tribe, every nation and every tongue. And the only way that can be possible is if people from every tribe, every nation and every tongue are empowered and released and equipped to serve God in God's mission in the world. So, I find this to be fascinating, that we, in our generation can at least begin to make that happen in one way or another that we can create spaces that are intentionally multicultural. When we create those spaces, we realize that many of the things that we have taken for granted in our understanding of mission.

What is mission? Who is a missionary? What is the mission field? All those things would have to be rethought again. I remember having a chat with a Ugandan Christian leader by the name of Bishop David Zac Niringiye who, and this is before Michael Stroope's book Transcending Mission came out was arguing that the word "mission" does not really do justice to what God has done in Africa in the past seventy years. That mission ties Christianity too much to colonialism. That it doesn't even look like what Jesus is doing in the continent. That if we're going to talk about bearing witness for Christ and following Christ in the world, we have to find new ways of describing mission. And I do think he has a point. As we are now aware of Michael Stroope's book that makes the same argument. The definition of a missionary becomes something that we also need to reflect on again. When we talk about -when we got statistics about missionaries in the world, great mission-sending countries around the world, we include United States, Brazil, South Korea.

But, I do think that if we rethink what it means to be a missionary, I really -we will make space to include the many Nigerian pastors leading the churches in the UK or in Europe and the United States. They are not registered with the mission agencies so they were not featured in the general statistics that comes say, out of out of Todd Johnson's work at Boston University. But they are engaged in God's mission. They are God's missionaries in Europe in North America, in Asia, in Australia. And they are missionaries! They are. They are serving in God's mission. And so we will begin to rethink what it means to be a missionary. That actually is possible. The Nigerian's leading churches in London are missionaries just as much as the British missionaries sent to Nigeria by missionary agencies from the UK, so that, that would be helpful

for the conversation. But also, another thing that would be very helpful is is that when we begin to engage one another from around the world, we will begin to think again about what the mission field looks like.

For the past 200 years, the mission field has been in Africa, in Latin America, in Asia. As we speak today, the heathen is in Europe. It's no longer in Africa alright? I saw Europe has become a mission field. Many European Christians will not recognize this. They will not understand this. They still think that mission is something that you do out there somewhere in in their language, in the jungles of Africa. But as we speak today, Europe is the mission field, plus of course, we can take that argument and begin to understand that the mission field is everywhere. That God's people have to be empowered and equipped to serve God everywhere where God has placed them. And these are part of the things that when we begin to engage or not only create intentional spaces where we can come together to engage one another in missional reflection from different parts of the world. Different cultures, different theologies, different everything. When we begin to engage on another, we will have a rich composition. It will help us understand God's mission better. It will help us understand God better. It will help us understand what it is that God is doing in the world better. And so I'm really grateful for the people who are taking lead in creating multicultural spaces where Christians, missions, mission thinkers, missions scholars from around the world can engage one another as equals to discuss matters to do with God's mission in the world.

That's my contribution for today, that's why I find innovative ways of doing mission image in these intercultural spaces where we can have multi-cultural conversations about God's mission and the creating of that space, I think is a brilliant innovation. Thank you so much. I'll stop here.