

Insights from Kuzmic Seminar for Speaking notes:

Our God is not a tribal deity, there is diversity of religion, culture, socio economic in all places and no one group can claim exclusivity to knowing God totally. Only Jesus can make the claim of “I am”.

- Without geography you cannot understand Christianity, history or political issues. Are the dynamics of history regressive, i.e. could Turkey go more fundamentalist in the next few years?

Revitalization of Religions - is this failure of modernity? Renaissance of nationalism and of religion is part of global movement in the attempt to bring ethnic and religious identity to peoples resisting the tidal wave of change brought by globalization. Technology and modernity are twin motors of globalization and there is a reaction to this globalization process that is happening all over the world.

Nationalists and religious fundamentalists are finding a fertile ground with the discontent and frustrations of many marginalized people that are being left behind in the global experiment of Mc World...

Peter showed a major study on “Who Hates Whom” in Europe – note that it is usually the ones who are closest that are the most disliked. Hungarians dislike Romanians and vice versa. Islam has a very strong political element and can usher in more fundamentalist people in political parties.

Theological Framework

What does it mean that the Kingdom of God is at hand? This is mentioned 121 times in the synoptic gospels.

In the Sermon on the Mount there are the ethics for the Kingdom; in the parables are the illustrations of the Kingdom. Healings and miracles are the demonstration of the Kingdom.

Not an alien concept nor is it a future thing. “Already here and the not yet” of the Kingdom. Not here fully. Started but not yet completed. We live between the ages and we are called to be the ambassadors of the Kingdom here on earth in the Kingdoms of this earth. We are the witnesses to the future hope. We know that when the Kingdom comes in fullness we will see the end of war, pain and sin.

- We are the transformative agents. Jesus did not announce the Kingdom from a distance, the importance of the incarnation of God. He entered human history and became one of us – he became a full member of the human race. After the resurrection – “As you go”. All power (dominion) in heaven and on earth is given to me; therefore **as** you go make disciples of all nations teaching them to obey all things.

Remember the great foundation is first – then the great commission -- then the great promise. The Christ event is central but cannot be understood theologically without the understanding of the Kingdom of God. He is the only one who has all power – understand the context – all power, all dominion; all authority is given to me. His power is moderated by his love.

(Note that Stalin, Pol Pot, Hitler and the other dictators of the 20th century claimed all power). In Christ you have all power and all love completely manifest in the person of Jesus.

What is the role of the church? We represent God's Kingdom, we have the message, and we live by and demonstrate the values of the Kingdom. The church represents the Kingdom. He is the Lord of History, we do not serve a private God – we are his servants as he provides the rule and reign of the realm where we are servants.

Historically the “Lordship of Christ” comes into being as the early church emerges – out of the concept of the gentile world living under the Caesars. Kingdom language is translated into Lordship language in Paul's writing because he is the apostle to the Gentile nations.

- Acts 12:8 The good news was the Kingdom of God and the face is Jesus Christ. Kingdom of God and Jesus are used as synonyms.
- Acts 28:23 Testifying to the Kingdom of God and convincing them about Jesus. V.31 Proclaiming the Kingdom of God (for 2 years) and teaching about the Lord Jesus.

The church today needs to understand the perspective of the Kingdom (a theological perspective) it is foundational and operational for discussing how the Kingdom of God interacts with the kingdoms of the world.

2Corin. 5: 17-20 The famous passage on Reconciliation. Work of, message of, work of.... So from now on we regard no one any longer from a worldly point of view. We have a new point of view (Christ's Kingdom). Worldview is the philosophical framework for all ethical discussions.

- Beijing University wanted to develop a course on Christian ethics without Christian doctrines. What is your epistemology – there must be interpretation of how we perceive facts. We have a new worldview – which is informed by the Kingdom of God.
- Use the thumb in from your eye to illustrate Parallax – the point of view changes. When you become a citizen of God's Kingdom you experience Metanoia – a change of view point. The world does not change but your view point does in relation to it.

Back to the World in Conflict.

It is important to point out that Huntington's thesis in Clash of Civilizations is not as simple as just a religious world in conflict. In some cases you see the American (Christian west) coming alongside the Muslims to prevent aggression of Christian east. In Albania and Kosovo the Americans were welcome as they were seen as stopping an aggressive and dangerous encroachment from the "Christian Serbs".

Today, Mosques are being built all over Western Europe as Muslim Cultural Centers – an active attempt to Islamicize Europe.

Nationalism has a tendency to hijack God and use God as their tribal God. There is tremendous potential for the church to be active in reconciliation. The church is an international body, it is inter-ethnic and it is a visible demonstration of how we can deal with ethnic conflict? . Example: of a woman in Bosnia that forgave the Serbs that killed 4 of her sons.

- The poor and illiterate are easily manipulated by the extremists of any culture. They can be driven to Radical behavior. What does this say to us about Islamic extremism? Peter K says that he thinks a great deal of the world needs to be secularized in order for real religious change to take place.

Look at European Christendom which is a temple built on the foundations of a pagan culture because Europe was never very deeply converted. We also need to note that Germany was a very highly literate and well industrialized – yet became a breeding ground for hate. Yes there are economic and social causes, but there is the doctrine of Sin which means we must take seriously a doctrine of Salvation.

The Role of the Church

A question of Lordship in the history of the church – secular rule and church sphere of influence – discuss the failure of Luther. When you look at the history of Nazi Germany it is clear that the church did not speak up for the oppressed minorities. We have to ask how is it that the two most totalitarian systems came from Europe – Nazism and Bolshevism. Why has the history of Christianity been so rampant with a history of War.?

- Always remember to reflect the issues of this world (the Kingdoms of this world) in light of the Kingdom of God. God is neither a republican nor a democrat – the Kingdom calls all to understand the ethics of the Kingdom.

When people have suffered there will be expressions of pain in ethnic and religious groups which are a receipt for revenge. Example: what about laws that deals with the language of hatred. In Serbia they sing songs of killing the pagan Turks. Unforgiveness and hatred spills over into riots and war breaks out. So much of this language has been adapted as the language of identity. We glorify our way and demonize the other.

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Christians should use foresight and not always rely on hindsight. **We tend not to take the future seriously (Sine)** but we do have insight of the situation today and this can help us with foresight for what is coming.

In addition to this we need thorough analysis; we need the knowledge to make informed decisions. Why do we bother sharpening our minds and our ability to understand what is happening in our world. Remember how much of the NT is written by Paul and Luke?

Remember the Church of Jesus is not at home in any society. It is prophetic body that is called to be salt and light in the greater society. The American church is a reflection of our cultural values; we have acquiesced to being like the culture, we in danger of losing our ability to be salt and light in the culture

Where is our Prophetic Vision?

The absence of Preventative Strategies is what leads to so many disasters. Sight has to do with Vision and understanding – where there is no foresight the people perish.

Helen Keller said what is worse than being blind? She said yes, having sight but having no vision. Seeing physically but no spiritual vision. Jesus saw the crowd and was moved with compassion. (he loved them so much it caused him pain).

At a time when there were 6,000 Sadducees and 20,000 priests Jesus said that the people were like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus saw the food, the harvest, and the sheep. The metaphors of Jesus – he saw and he had compassion (what is this word in the Greek). We need the eyes of Jesus and the love of Jesus. Have the vision and have the love.

Apathy= no sympathy, no feeling with, no ability to care. George Barnard Shaw – our worse sin is not to care at all, to be indifferent – to care is the essence of humanity.

God was not apathetic – God gets involved with both power and love. Divinity = love empowered and power moderated.

Time magazine: “Death in Rwanda in horrendous proportions came not only as a result of hatred and disease but also because of apathy”. If we could wake up the church to not be apathetic – injustice should cry out to God. A lament before God – if we would take Jesus seriously what could we do to change the world – taking injustice in the world seriously should motivate us to lament before God.

Example: In Rwanda the Hutu priests began to teach the people in their churches that the Tutsis were like snakes and need to be driven out of the house.

Sudan over 2 million have died, there are many reasons but the saddest part is that the west has not taken the crisis seriously enough to intervene. Our national security interests are not at stake.

Where does this leave us as Christians and citizens of God's Kingdom?

Four Quests in the world today:

1. The Quest for Moral Authenticity
2. The Quest for Meaningful Community
3. The Quest for Transcendence and Mystery
4. The Quest for Meaning and Coherence

In each of these areas the experiment of modernity is yielding many empty promises. There is a moral vacuum in a permissive age. Where there are no valid truth concepts people are longing for meaning, into the void comes the fundamentalist or radical faiths which give the assurance of promise. Or in the west we have the New Religions and New age offering promises of transcendence.

Do you take seriously the contemporary culture, how are we to exegete the culture?

What is written on Gandhi's tomb?

- Seven Sins in the World
 1. Wealth without work
 2. Pleasure without conscience (the moral code has broken down)
 3. Knowledge without Character (Brilliant intellectuals who do not have any character in their lives.)
 4. Commerce without morality
 5. Science without humanity
 6. Worship without sacrifice (when worship becomes entertainment)
 7. Politics without principles (politics without ethics) Western Christianity has been captivated by a secular, materialistic and consumerist culture.

St. Augustine said, "Hope has 2 daughters – these are anger and courage. Anger with the ways things are and courage to change them." Biblical anger is righteous and holy indignation at the injustice that oppresses the poor.

When we see the injustice of war, social inequality, prejudice against the minorities then we should be moved by hope which releases us into acts of courage.

"Hope is the ability to listen to the music of the future and Faith is the courage to dance to it in the present". (Episcopalian Bishop)

There were those that said the 20th Century would be the Century of Human reason and there would be no more war. Modernism had come to release humankind from evil. A

vision of the Kingdom of God on earth without God – the result of enlightenment. Karl Marx and Ingles were part of the 20th Century Project of Peace.

In the 1500's (16th Century) ---- 1,600,000 were killed in War (largely Europe where we have stats)

In the 1600's (17th Century) ---- 6,100,000 were killed in War

In the 1700's (18th Century) --- 7,000,000 were killed

In the 1800's (19th Century) --- 19,400,000 were killed

In the 20th Century ---- 112,800,000 million were killed and this in the century that was to be the century to end all war and usher in world peace. Something is wrong with Humanity and these Utopian projects.

The Christian Doctrine of Sin (Reinhold Niebur) the one doctrine for which we have the most evidence. Something is fundamentally wrong with human nature.

Theology of the Cross – are we willing to be vulnerable to the extremists from both sides? Those involved with reconciliation are going to be vulnerable and attacked by those on both sides that seek to keep hatred going. Humility and servant hood are the moral basis for authority.

- 1) Human alienation – Humanity is flawed. (something is wrong with Humanity).
 - Ignorance
 - Greed
 - Pride
 - Alienation (we know that we are alienated from God and from other people – Remember Niebur said the Doctrine of Sin is the least popular of all doctrines but is the one doctrine for which we have the most evidence.) Without a doctrine of Sin no doctrine of redemption.
 - Good to note that we need a theologically informed view of anthropology. There is a conflict between optimistic and pessimistic anthropology, which why we must bring in a Biblical perspective in any analysis of the human condition.
 - Christian ethics requires all three elements
 - a) Man as in image of God
 - b) Man is fallen
 - c) Man can be redeemed – why evangelism – the knowledge of the saving nature of Christ must be taught to the nations or we have no answer for the fallen state of man.

Mathew 28: The great commission and Matthew 25: The great compassion.

Peter told about the story in the town in N. Bosnia. In some places overt proclamation is counterproductive. Both hands of Agape to care and give the love of Jesus in tangible

ways. He told the story of a Muslim mayor saying why not distribute the literature and why not start a church.

“We trust you and I am increasingly interested in your Jesus”. Proclamation alone will not do it. We need to show the love of God in the context of need. Serbs came in medieval fashion with a cross and sword. Peter asked why do you trust us? You are trustworthy because you became vulnerable with us.

“Our credibility is directly proportional to our vulnerability.”
A great missiological principle in this simple statement.

As an illustration of what is wrong with our world in many places you can get a Coke and cannot get a cup of clean water. Why are there no international bodies that speak to this? What will it take to awaken the church as a truly moral community?