THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Posted on August 13, 2019 by Eddie

â€œWhen Christian communities speak about God, by definition they have to speak about Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is simply no other God.â€
Category: Observations

I am slowly working my way through The Mission of the Triune God: Trinitarian Missiology in the Tradition of Lesslie NewbiginÂ which is very, very good but it isn't an easy read.

This morning, I thought I would highlight a few quotes about the church's mission in the world.

> *â€œWhen Christian communities speak about God, by definition they have to speak about Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is simply no other God.â€*

I love this one. All too often the Trinity is presented as a confusing doctrine; a mathematical conundrum that we don't need to worry about. This couldn't be further from the truth; God is triune and the gospel message only makes sense if that is true. Arguments about whether or not the Christian God is the same as those worshipped by other religions all have to deal with this reality at some point.

> *Godâ€™s being consists of the Triune Persons in communion, and one comes to know God through redemptive and revelatory participation by the Spirit in the Sonâ€™s loving relationship with the Father.*

> *From the churchâ€™s understanding of God as three Persons in mutual perichoretic relations, there issues an invitation for others to come to understand this Triune God by themselves personally participating in these relations.*

OK, these two quotes are rather geeky, but they illustrate the fact that our salvation and our subsequent mission find their origin in the Trinitarian nature of God as it is expressed in human history.

> *the Sonâ€™s ongoing mission is accomplished through the mission of the church, which cannot be considered apart from the mission of the Spirit.*

This is a neat summary of John 20:21,22.

> *Jesusâ€™ training of the disciples was preparation for entrusting and committing his ongoing mission to them, for they were his primary legacy. As Newbigin famously said, â€œwhat our Lord left behind Him was not a book, nor a creed, nor a system of thought, nor a rule of life, but a visible community.*

This is excellent and something which some evangelicals (including Bible translators) who have a high view of Scripture but a lower view of the church need to consider.

> *Consequently, elsewhere Newbigin says â€œthe Churchâ€™s mission to the nations is the clue to the real meaning of world historyâ€ because the church-in-mission bears witness to people of â€œwhat God is doing and will do, of his kingly power which is hidden now but will in the end be revealed to all in its majesty, glory, and terror.â€*

As I implied above, we need to have a high view of the church - it is important!

> *For Newbigin, the churchâ€™s missional thinking and praxis must be determined by and modelled on Christâ€™s mission; â€œWe are not authorized to do it in any other way.â€*

Something for mission strategists to muse on!

> *Central to mission is the communication of the good news of Jesus, and this communication incorporates the manner of speaking, the content that is spoken, and the lifestyle and credibility of the speaker.*

You cannot separate word and deed or social action and evangelism. The one gives life and credibility to the other.