

A Vision of the Chinese church

ANIC Synod 2008

Rev. Stephen Leung

Objective: to share what God has said to me.

Text: Acts 10: 34-35, 44-48.

Preaching to Cornelius' Household

Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that *God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. ...*

...

While Peter was still speaking these words, *the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.*

Then Peter answered, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

Message:

1) Acts chapter 10 is the turning point in early church evangelism, extending the missionary work from mainly among the Jews to the Gentiles. Cornelius illustrates the dividing line in Acts. After chapter 10, the entire outreach focus in Acts has been switched mainly to Gentile mission, becoming a cross-cultural mission.

2) But who made the change? Who was the architect? And who made the outreach plan work? God himself. It is God who gave Peter the heavenly vision in the beginning of Acts 10; and it is God who sent the Holy Spirit to guide Peter to Cornelius and his household. However, it is in fact Peter who was not ready for gentile evangelism. The Jerusalem church was not ready for cross-cultural mission. They were too busy and being absorbed entirely in Jewish mission.

Yet God moved forward according to his time and plan. God took the initiative to invite Peter to take part and then asked him to witness what the Holy Spirit had done in Cornelius. God spoke to Cornelius and the Holy Spirit poured out onto Cornelius before his baptism. Fair to say, God moved ahead of the steering committee of the Jerusalem Missions Department. In Acts chapter 9, God prepared Paul for Gentile mission leadership. God also prepared Peter to support Paul later in the Jerusalem Council and missionary journeys, letting Peter witness first-hand God's grace upon Cornelius.

It is God's work; God prepares his servants. It is God's plan; God makes it work.

3) However, we need to discern *when* we are Peter and *when* we are Paul. Peter is the pastor among his own people, and Paul is the cross-cultural missionary. In Church history, when Western missionaries came to the East, those missionaries served like Paul. Later, local leaders were raised up and took up their responsibilities, so that they became Peter. When I came to Canada, I was called to minister to first generation immigrants, thus I am Peter; but when I minister to local-born second generation, I become Paul. Therefore, vice versa, when the Canadian-born or Canadian-raised Chinese (whom we call CBC or CRC) rise up to local leadership, they become Peter. When they take up the role to minister to the first generation immigrant, they become Paul. To me, Bishop Don is my Peter and I will be Paul.

The reason I bring forward Peter and Paul is that we need both Peter and Paul in team work in order to face the challenge from cross-cultural missions. God puts both together who are complementary in outreach ministry.

4) Now in Canada, a post-modern world, we are living in times of high mobility and globalization. Canada is experiencing a drastic change in population composition, becoming a pluralistic society. There are huge numbers of Asian Canadian immigrants and local-born Asians. For example, by statistics, Chinese is the largest ethnic minority, nearing a million people across Canada. In Vancouver, there are hundreds of Chinese and Korean churches, and many are Baptist, Alliance, Mennonite, for example. This means that God has done great work in reaching Asian Canadians.

5) But what about Anglican churches in Canada or the United States? Do we see the changing local mission field and allocate resources to the unreached ethnic groups? I have been in the Anglican Church of Canada for 18 years and I don't see much action being taken. Do we have a new page and a new paradigm for ANiC? Are we going to draw a new picture for our future?

6) My vision for ANiC is that one day, in our future Synod meetings, we will have delegates representing different ethnic roots according to the composition of the Canadian population. They then are truly one in Christ and one in community. Thus, our gathering has a living gospel to proclaim.

7) In order to reach our goal, as Canadian Anglicans, we have advantages to make it work through the Anglican Communion. As we probably agree that today the Global South has taken the leadership in saving the crisis in the Global North. God has made use of the fast growth in Global South to reform and redirect the Global North back to biblical faith and Christian commitment. Therefore, ANiC should take serious consideration towards mission partnership with the Global South, so that we are able to link up and work among immigrants from the Global South with Global South Anglican provinces. I myself would like to see closer and more active missionary relationship with Asia so that we can venture together in outreach missions.

8) In order to develop the outreach mission to Asian people in Canada, we need to nurture and build up pastoral leaders who know how to minister to different Asian generations in N America, which is in fact very complicated and much different from ministering to European or Australian immigrants. There is a bigger difference of languages and cultural gap between the East and the West than between Europe and N America. We need to develop new modes of pastoral theology and pastoral care to Asian Canadians.