



REGAINING THE AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL VOICE

LESSONS FROM THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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Introduction

- ▶ The African voice is a vital contribution to the global theological conversation.
- ▶ The Church as it currently stands is like a half-finished song.



Significant Contributions From Africa In Church History

- Christianity was nurtured in Africa almost from the moment of its inception.
- Significant figures from early Church history
 - Biblical period
 - Patristic period
- Early African believers not only shared the gospel, but also shaped Christian theology and succeeded in countering numerous heresies. They were at the forefront of the theological conversation.

Present Situation

- An unprecedented numerical growth but the contribution of the African church now cannot measure up to what it was.
- Issues of intervening period
 - Doctrinal controversies.
 - Importation of Greek philosophy into Christian thinking,
 - Erosion of biblical theology in the perspectives of many church fathers.
 - The arrival of Islam in the 7th century.
 - The church was a Latin church and hence not indigenized.

Middle Ages and Reformation

- No significant activity
- Survival of three Nubian Kingdoms of Nobatia, Makuria and Alodia (died 14th to 16th Centuries)
- Roman Catholic priests in West Africa in 15th century



18th and 19th Centuries



Missionary era.






Present situation: Unprecedented growth

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- National awakening
 - Cultural renewal
 - African leadership
 - Theological impetus of the name of God



Challenges

- Neopentecostalism and its attendant doctrines
 - Syncretism
 - Rejection of Christianity
 - Corruption and unethical practices
 - Schisms
 - Growth of ethnic hostility
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Neopentecostalism and its attendant doctrines



False Preachers

Deceived Members

Tithes



Syncretism



Witchcraft



Rampant ...



only in governments
but in churches as well!

**Declining
moral
standards**



Poverty,
disease,
suffering ...

Schisms



Growth of ethnic hostility



Stemming from?

- Dichotomized lives
 - Many people came to believe the “progress” consists not in being themselves, but in imitating foreign ways.
 - Social and political convenience of Christianity.
- The dichotomy the African church is experiencing today is as a result of the resocialization that took place with regards to social, economic, political, religious, ethical and artistic systems after the onset of the missionary and colonial eras.

The solution: A redefinition of identity.

- If we know who we are, then our “voice” will be what God intended it to be.
- Revelation 7:9.

We need to have
a truly biblical
worldview while at
the same time
retaining what is
uniquely African.





Why focus on identity?

- Identity is core to our human existence.
- In Africa, culture (including religious culture) and tribal identity may even overshadow Christian identity.

The Identity of Jesus in Mark's Gospel

➤ Why Mark?

- Compelling story that artfully unveils who Jesus is, as well as the basis and right understanding of his identity.
- The most relatable gospel for Africans. It is not only about identity, it is also about power, authority, and suffering.
- Significant parallels with our own African context ("oral" gospel, similarities between the worldview and the socio-cultural context of the world Mark describes and that of Africa, story with features that resemble those of African stories).



Lessons for Africa from the Gospel of Mark

Lesson 1

- Integration of culture: Conflict over fasting (2:18-22)
- Jesus uses material resources of his Jewish culture.
 - A proverbial saying about a wedding.
 - Two parables about wine and wineskins.
- Shared cultural resources are a bridge.
- Examples:
 - Chris Manus Ukachukwu (Intercultural folklorist)
 - Jean Claude Loba-Mkole (Intercultural)
 - Ezekiel Ajibade (Contextualized preaching)

Lesson 2

- Interrogation of Worldview: Jesus' Teaching with Authority (1:21-28)
- Jesus understood and interrogated the worldview of his audience and then acted accordingly.
- While he did not doubt that the man was demon possessed and needed deliverance, his approach to the situation was radically different from that of his contemporaries.
 - Example: Mburu (Four legged stool)

Lesson 3

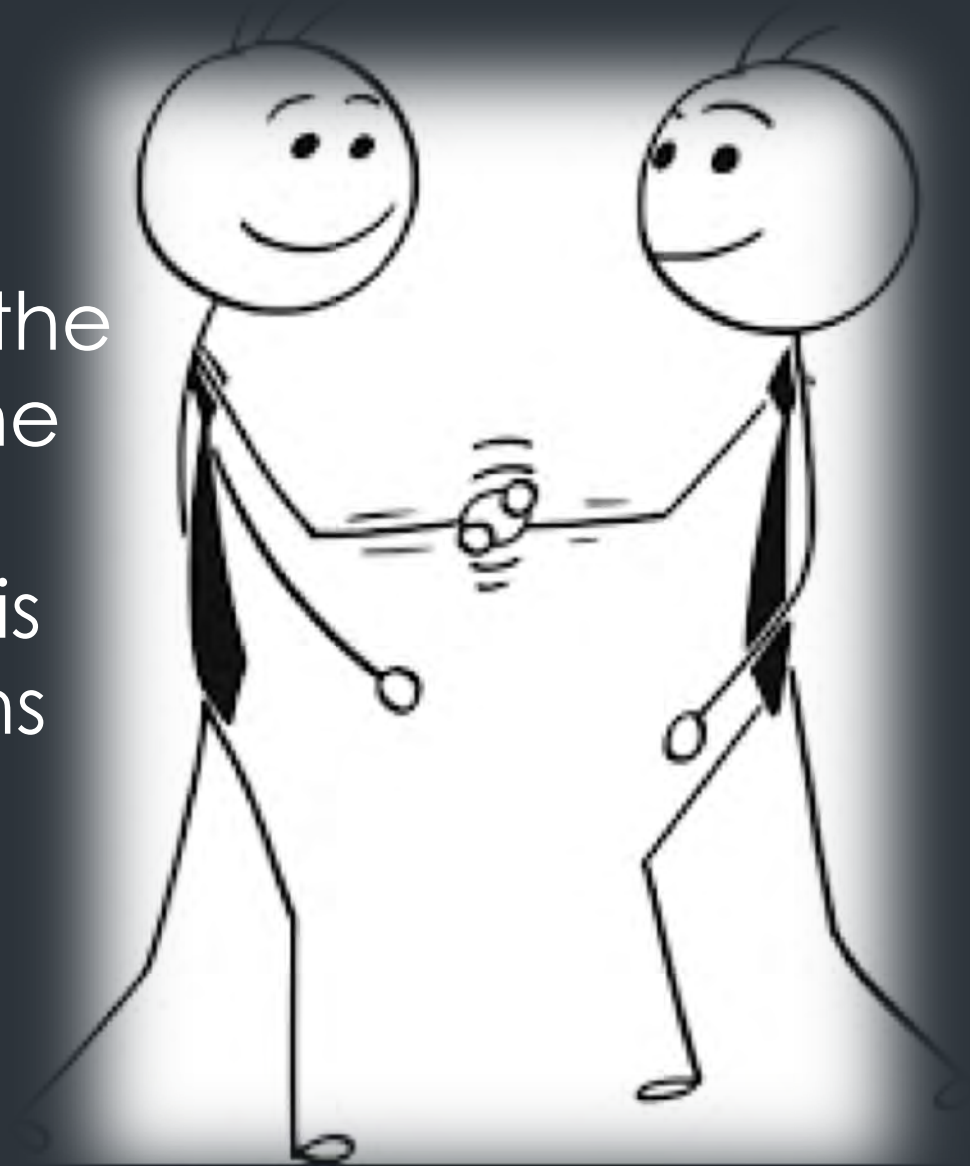
- Exploitation of our Practical Orientation: Question about the Greatest Commandment (12:28-34)
- one's faith manifests itself in concrete acts as a direct outcome of a right relationship with God and others.
- We need to exploit our already existing practical orientation, as this is the evidence of a genuine relationship with God and others.
 - Example: Samuel Waje Kunhiyop (African Christian Ethics).


Lesson 4

- Engagement of the Community in our Theological Work: Whoever is not against us is for us (9:38-40)
- Jesus was urging his disciples to make a shift from an exclusive to an inclusive mindset that leaves no room for jealousy or unwarranted ideas of privilege and status.
- The need to engage the community in the theological task.
- Examples:
 - Justin Ukpong (Community readings)
 - Teresa Okure (African Feminist)
 - Joseph Galgalo (Conversational model).

Conclusion

- ▶ A two-way dialogue between the world of the biblical text and the world of traditional and contemporary African realities is what will allow African Christians to forge an identity that mirrors that of Jesus Christ himself.



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- Positive output as we
 - develop contextualized theological education
 - promote contextualized models of biblical preaching
 - develop relevant ecclesiology
 - provide a glocal impact through scholarship and missions.