

Tom Wright for Missionaries

How the Kingdom of God shapes and motivates our mission

(Jacob Haasnoot, Kajo-Keji, South Sudan)

1. Introduction & overview of workshop

2. What motivates your work/ministry?

3. N.T. (Tom) Wright about the Kingdom of God

(I) “‘God’s kingdom’ and ‘kingdom of heaven’ mean the same thing: the sovereign rule of God [-], which according to Jesus was and is breaking in to the present world...”. (*Surprised by Hope*, p. 213)

(II) “... God’s rule, is thus to be put into practice in the world, resulting in salvation in both the present and the future, a salvation which is both *for* humans and, *through* saved humans, for the wider world. This is the solid basis for the mission of the church”. (*Surprised by Hope*, p. 217)

(III) “The resurrection completes the inauguration of God's kingdom. [-] It is the decisive event demonstrating that God's kingdom really has been launched on earth as it is in heaven.” (*Surprised by Hope*, p. 246)

(IV) **Jesus explains the Kingdom with his parables** (Goheen & Bartholomew, *Drama of Scripture*, p. 112-114)

- **The kingdom does not come all at once.** It is present, but also future. Seems contradiction. Parable of sower and of the weeds (Matthew 13). Kingdom has begun (sowing) but not yet here in fullness. The age to come overlaps with old age.
- **In the present, the Kingdom does not come with irresistible power.** Daniel 2:44 talks about irresistible power of God. Parable: ‘farmer sowed his seed’ (Mark 4:1-20 & Matt 13:1-23). Messiah does not come as a military conqueror but as a humble farmer. It is by the *message* of the kingdom, not by force.
- **The final judgment of the Kingdom is reserved for the future.** See: parable of weeds & Matt. 25:1-46. Judgement is postponed. Jesus stresses the readiness and faithfulness in the present.
- **The full revelation of the Kingdom is postponed to allow many to enter it during the present age.** Luke 14:15-24 – the lost must also be brought in to share at the banquet table. Three parables about the lost in Luke 15.

Question: How do these points (parables) help you with understanding the world around you and your ministry?

4. How are we involved?

“The old social gospel from 100 years ago [-] communicated to people a wrong message that went something like this: *Okay, we’ve got to build God’s kingdom.* [-] ... speaking of “building *for* the kingdom” is a way of saying what Jesus talks about when you give someone a cup of cold water. Good works will not go unnoticed, unrewarded. The deeds that one does in Christ and by the Spirit are not wasted.

The example I use in the book is about the stonemason who builds for the cathedral. The architect and the builder have the great design for the cathedral. The stonemason is just told, “You’ve got to carve this bit of stone in this way.” And the stonemason does that and then later looks up and sees his stone halfway up in the cathedral and thinks, “Wow! That’s my little bit up there! And

look, I now see how it fits into the greater pattern.” We are building, like the stonemason, *for* the kingdom rather than us actually doing the building itself.

[-] The kingdom is always a surprise to us, which keeps us humble. The danger with “building the kingdom” language can make us very proud. “Building *for* the kingdom” keeps you humble. It says, “These are your tasks; you’ve got to get on with them. How God puts them into the eventual construct is completely his business.”

Source: <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevinwax/2008/04/24/trevin-wax-interview-with-nt-wright-on-surprised-by-hope/>

5. How does the Kingdom of God shape your ministry?

(I) “What you and I believe to be the goal of history will give particular significance and form to our lives today. If we recognize that we have been called to provide our world with a preview of God's coming kingdom, the hope of that kingdom's coming will shape all that we say and do in the here and now”. (*Drama of Scripture*, p. 159-160),

(II) “This brings us back to 1 Corinthians 15:58 once more: what you do in the Lord is not in vain. You are not oiling the wheels of a machine that’s about to roll over a cliff. You are not restoring a great painting that’s shortly going to be thrown on the fire. You are not planting roses in a garden that’s about to be dug up for a building site. You are – strange though it may seem, almost as hard to believe the resurrection itself – accomplishing something that will become in due course part of God’s new world. Every act of love, gratitude, and kindness; every work of art or music inspired by the love of God and delight in the beauty of His creation; every minute spent teaching a severely handicapped child to read or to walk; every act of care and nurture, of comfort and support, for one’s fellow human beings and for that matter one’s fellow nonhuman creatures; and of course every prayer, all Spirit-led teaching, every deed that spreads the Gospel, builds up the church, embraces and embodies holiness rather than corruption, and makes the name of Jesus honored in the world – all of this will find its way, through the resurrecting power of God, into the new creation that God will one day make. That is the logic of the mission of God. God’s recreation of his wonderful world, which began with the resurrection of Jesus and continues mysteriously as God’s people live in the risen Christ and in the power of his Spirit, means that what we do in Christ and by the Spirit in the present is not wasted. It will last all the way into God’s new world”. (*Surprised by Hope*, p. 219)

(III) **The 5 marks of Mission**

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Source: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm>

Literature:

- Michael W. Goheen, Craig G. Bartholomew, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, 2006.
- Stephen Kuhrt, *Tom Wright for Everyone*, SPCK, 2011.
- Tom Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, SPCK, 2007.