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FOR INFORMATION **

Mission as Movement "Together toward Life"

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This paper is an extract from my article I wrote in the *International Review of Mission (IRM)* on “Holistic Healing: A Transformative Church for All people” to which I will interpret in this theme that I was given to share with you, "Mission as Movement, “Together toward Life”.

The CWME statement has largely defined the key words of our presentation such as "mission", “mission as movement”, “mission from the margins", "together towards life". The work on Mission in the churches has been re-defined through the new WCC mission statement “Together toward life” (TTL). Churches and mission actors have been invited to “re-think mission and its implications in evangelism as the action of the Spirit of God in the life of our World”. In others words, the issue of the margins has to be the centre of the Mission. Thus, after Busan WCC structures that have been taking part in the Mission Programme, are, EDAN (Ecumenical Disabilities Advocacy Network), Indigenous Peoples, Migration, Multicultural activities and others.

The CWME states, « Mission has been understood as movement taking place from the centre to the periphery, and from the privileged to the marginalized of society »

This CWME statement, leads me to frame this paper in disability perspective in the African Context.

I will use the passage of Acts, Biblical reference (Acts 3, 1-10), The research on which this paper is based sought to explore this text that I named Holistic Healing for transformative church

Curing or Healing?

It is important to understand the difference between two words in the church mission, because as Theo Schmidts says, many churches have been using the “hurting ministry” instead of “healing ministry”. In today's context, people with disabilities have felt hurt by events in the church or in crusades during the healing prayers. I argue that the use of a wheelchair, white cane or walker for campaigning and attracting people to attend the “healing services” or “healing crusades”, is a sign of humiliation and disrespect for people with disabilities. Thus, the simple difference is

Curing

Is the restoration of health, an absence of symptoms and a remedy of disease.

Healing

Is the restoration of wholeness

Becoming whole

Healing in this exposé

Healing in this text concerns the inclusion and the respect of a human being, treating them with equality. Reinders says, “Every human being has an interest in being treated with equal respect, including the

mentally disabled, inasmuch as everyone has an interest in being included as a respected member of society”

My overall objective

- Raise awareness of disability issue

(Disability is considered as a global problem. It is a normal phenomenon to the extent that it exists in all societies and affects each population in a predictable and identifiable way). Ignoring this issue brings a crisis, and this crisis manifests itself in the inequality of gender, the exclusion of people with different capacities and the disregard for human rights.

- To engage in critical thinking and practice about what is meant by being in Mission of Movement.

(As I said at the beginning, the churches through the CWME statement in Busan have redefined the mission from the margins; together towards life is a challenge for a transformative church).

My specific objective in this paper is to

- To offer a new biblical understanding on the text of Healing.

(The healing here is what I called “holistic healing”, the different ways of “moving together”. It changes the way we consider and see people differently in order to live in an inclusive society).

Mission as Movement

Mission has been understood as movement, because it gives place to the marginalized people. The CWME says, « Now people at the margins are claiming their key role as agents of mission and affirming mission as transformation »

This had been started in the genesis of the Ministry of Jesus.

Healing in the Gospel

The link between Acts 2, 43, and Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2, 28-32) demonstrated “the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Jesus’ disciples and announces the Good News with healing and miracles”. In other words, the healing and miracles in the Gospels and in the book of Acts show how the excluded have been integrated into society by Jesus’ ministry, emulated by the apostles.

Healing in the context of Mission

The expression “stand up and walk” (Acts 3, 6b) contrasts with the man who spent a lifetime sitting and being carried, signs of his uselessness and hopelessness. But, when Peter (and John) told him to stand and walk, this gave him a sense of hope, and the strength to restart his life, to be independent and to be free. Hence for this man, before he could receive physical healing, his soul and mind had to be healed.

I like this biblical passage because it reveals three types of healing, thus I call that “Holistic healing”. These are Social Healing, Physical Healing, and Spiritual Healing.

Social Healing

- The social healing which v.8 refers to saying that once the man is cured he enters the temple. This means that he joins other people; he joins his community in the temple.
- The text informs us that the man was carried all the time, but that during the prayers he was left outside alone. He was a beggar, a poor man, and an “impure” man, excluded from activities such as prayer in the temple. He may have been a beggar for a long time because those who went into the temple for worship knew and recognized him (v. 10). This means that the way they used to see him sitting was different from when they saw him standing and walking. Therefore this changed the mind of people who portrayed and discriminated him.

Physical Healing

The physical healing, is referred to in the phrase (v. 6-7): “in the name of Jesus-Christ of Nazareth, ‘walk’”; and also referred to in v.8, “he jumped on his feet”. This shows that through this name the power did flow, the “cripple’s” feet and ankles were strengthened and the man walked and leaped, living proof of the power of Jesus. The healing was instantaneous (a miracle), without further treatment needed. In this part I highlight the paradigm shift, the change of position of the man: he used to sit, being unable to stand and walk; but with words and action he was able to stand up and walk even to jump. This is a visible change that this man experienced. The fact that this man moves forward to a new life makes his life’ story different

Spiritual Healing

The spiritual healing described in v. 8, highlights that the first thing that this healed man did was to enter into the temple, approach the throne of God and give thanks. The text seems to imply that this man might have been taught that he must sit outside the temple, not to pray, but to approach people to beg for money. He might also have been taught that he is “impure”, separated from God, and that only once healed could he enter into the temple. Thus, when he felt strengthened in his feet and ankles, he entered into the temple, “walking and jumping, and praising God” (v. 8b).

Summary of my interpretation

I speak as a person with a disability who has experienced failed physical healing.

I demonstrated in my reflection that physical healing is not the only form of healing in this text though initially, this story, in the book of Apostles, aimed to supply many signs and miracles performed by the apostles.

There are other forms of healing (emotional, social and psycho-spiritual) that I stated above which challenge people with disabilities as well as leaders of the Christian church, who think that when a person with a disability is not healed, he is being denied fellowship with God and fellowship with other people.

“Together toward life” in this context is the shifting to another life

In this text I argue that before this man was physically healed, Peter and John took time to talk with him to show him that silver or gold could not limit his life. Therefore, he has to move on and see further in his life.

I noted that it is not the fact that this man could stand and walk which amazed people. Instead it is the way he scaled up to another new life. I do not deny supernatural healing because I do know that God is All-powerful in everything.

My understanding of physical healing here is the fact of seeing the person shifted to another level that was not expected, because many persons with disabilities (PWDs) have been so alienated by the culture and tradition of their context that they cannot do anything in their lives because they are disabled. Therefore, my statement to church leaders is that through liberative education it is possible to empower PWDs to revive hope and a new life.

Conclusion

My reading of this text is as a church leader for effective awareness of the integration of PWDs in church. I should recognize that PWDs need assistance to discover their real identities so that they can take leadership in their respective communities for a transformative church.