



# Conference on World Mission and Evangelism

*Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship*

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## I Have a Dream

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This session deals with the last part of the plenary on “Equipped Disciples: Embracing the Cross”: “I have a dream.”

What are the fundamental characteristics of ‘equipped disciples’? I propose two critical aspects of ‘equipped discipleship’ as the theme suggests: embracing the cross, and having a dream.

Let’s explore this idea from the Gospel story of Jesus and his disciples in Mark 8:27-34 and Matthew 16:13-28. This story is about the event that took place as Jesus and his disciples were on the way to villages of Caesarea Philippi. Jesus first asked his disciples, “Who do people say I am?” Then he asked, “Who do you say I am?” This is the most fundamental question in the New Testament. This was not a question only for his disciples there, but for all of us here. Peter answered, “You are the Christ.” For this answer, Peter was commended by Jesus. Indeed, Peter’s answer, in its very essence, marks the beginning of discipleship. Then Jesus continued to speak about his way of the cross. At this moment, Peter rebuked Jesus severely to not do such a thing. In return, Jesus rebuked Peter, even calling him Satan. “Get behind me, Satan, for you are not on the side of God but of men.” Clearly, the way of the cross means to be on the side of God. Those who deny or avoid the cross are not disciples of Jesus but of Satan. Being on the side of God means to carry the cross of dedication, sacrifice, persecution, poverty, and commitment to transforming the world that is full of injustice, conflict, and suffering. Equipped disciples should keep asking themselves whether they are on the side of God whenever they are confronted with problems, questions, and moments of decision-making. Christian discipleship is always costly.

The next question to ask is, what kind of dream should equipped disciples have in such a secularized, materialized world of today, which threatens even the credibility of the gospel? Disciple’s dream is not possible apart from Jesus’s teaching and vision. Christians are those who participate in Jesus’s vision — that is, God’s vision. Then, what aspect of life indicates that we participate in God’s vision and dream?

It is prayer. Prayer is an act of ‘amen’ to God’s vision and will. When we pray, our vision, dream, and commitment become renewed and strengthened. In the Gospel, we find Jesus teaching his disciples how to pray, and what to pray for. The Lord’s Prayer is not only reflective of Jesus’s teaching, but it further contains his radical vision of fulfillment of the kingdom of God on earth. The petition in the Lord’s Prayer, “thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” demonstrates the vision, aspiration, and dream, with which disciples must be equipped. In other words, “as thy will is realized in heaven, it will likewise be realized on earth.” This is our dream and aspiration.

We find the concrete vision for realization of God’s will on earth as already realized on heaven in the following petitions: “give us our daily bread, “and “forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors.”

One of God’s concerns is centered on bread, or food. We human beings are inevitably dependent on food. Life is more than food, of course. Yet, one cannot survive without nourishment of food. Life depends on it. When we pray to God, we do not say “my father,” but “our father.” God belongs to all of us. Likewise, bread belongs not only to me, but to all my brothers and sisters. Only when the bread is

“our bread,” it is God-given. Otherwise, it becomes something selfish, and greedy. Therefore, we have to be aware that, when there are people who do not have bread and go hungry in our world today, it raises the critical question of the quality of bread, which we are having for ourselves only, for it does not deserve to be called “our bread given by God.”

As we see in the words “give us” and “our daily bread,” we should not pray for accumulation or monopolistic possession of bread, but for sharing of bread. That is God’s justice. Remember in the Gospel, the kingdom of God is always depicted as the Great Feast.

The injustice of this world — that is, the lack of compassion and sharing, and the greed for possession — is shockingly evident in disparity of wealth and overconsumption in some parts of the world, in heavy contrast to the poverty and starvation in the rest of the world. The rich are getting richer at the expense of the poor, and the poor continues to be poorer. Today, equipped disciples are commissioned to stand on the side of God, and to resist and transform all life-destroying forces of injustice in the social systems and structure. God’s vision — our dream — now tells us that justice be realized on earth so that bread is for everybody, every day, and not for some greedy individuals or for some parts. It is God’s justice.

Jesus also taught his disciples to seek God’s forgiveness in the Lord’s Prayer: “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Our God is forgiving God. Forgiveness is the core of Jesus’s whole ministry. It should be noted that, in the Lord’s Prayer, the petition for forgiveness of our sins is conditioned on our granting of forgiveness to others. We cannot ask God for forgiveness if we ourselves are not prepared to forgive. It assumes repentance on the part of the recipient. Therefore we are led to ask ourselves, are we ready to forgive others? Are we working on mutual forgiveness? It is truly God’s vision and equipped disciples’ dream that the reconciliation and peace be realized on earth when forgiveness is not only from God, but also from ourselves to others. Our God is God of forgiveness and peace.

The ultimate equipment of disciples depends on their willingness to embrace the cross, and also on their dream toward the God-given vision. Equipped discipleship is commissioned to work together, embrace the cross, and have God’s vision as their dream and commitment for a transformed world of justice and peace. When equipped disciples give up or ignore standing on the side of God, they are not disciples anymore, and their dream is no longer God-given vision and aspiration.

I have a dream. More precisely, we have a dream of sharing our bread, and of mutual forgiveness. That is the dream of justice and peace, which is our God-given vision and aspiration. This dream directs us, motivates us, challenges us, and strengthens us to move along our pilgrimage of justice and peace to transform the world until “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”