



Thinking Outside the Box (While Loving the Box)

August 22, 2022

Last week I began a three-part series about the relationship between worship and mission. The first viewpoint, “inside and out “ (traditional), sees worship as preparation for mission. Worship is seen as an insider activity, for believers and prepares them for their mission in the world.

A second approach actually reacts against that one. Thomas Schattaer in the book *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission* (Fortress, 1999) calls the second approach “outside in” (contemporary). In this understanding the “outside” work of mission is brought within the church’s assembly. One subset can be found in the megachurches and in contemporary worship settings where liturgy becomes the scene of proclamation and evangelization, especially in seeker-focused churches. Often, in that form of worship, the format relies on an entertainment model, orchestras, dramas, and teaching sermons with video—the aim is to evangelize and convert seekers in the worship. Those churches often have an off Sunday service to nurture believers, since the main Sunday service is seeker focused.

A second subset makes of liturgy “a platform from which to issue the call to serve the neighbor and rally commitment for social and political action.” (Schattaer, p. 3) One example from our recent southern history would be the role the African American churches played in the civil rights movement, with worship often focused on the struggle for voting rights and equal treatment for African Americans.

In both approaches— last week’s “inside out: traditional” and in “outside in,”—the relationship between worship and mission is viewed “instrumentally, worship serves another purpose. But in this second approach that happens more directly than in the conventional approach. “The church’s worship is reshaped to take up the tasks of the church’s mission, construed as evangelical outreach, social transformation, or both. The tasks of mission become the principal purpose of the church’s worship—outside in.” (Schattaer, p. 4).

Next week, the third viewpoint, “inside out” (radically traditional.)
Peace,

David+

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