



Sunday, January 24, 2010

Gorongosa, Mozambique

Soon after the sun rises over the rolling hills of banana trees, Paulo Manuel Caetano leaves his grandfather's mud-walled house and walks straight toward the center of town.

He passes the vegetable sellers piling tomatoes and avocados on handmade reed mats, and the women carrying buckets of corn kernels on their heads toward the mill. He walks by other barefoot teenagers making their way to the dusty soccer field across the only paved road in town. And then, not far from the informal traders setting up their stalls of plastic sandals and tissue paper, he stops at a bamboo-and-mud walled hut and surveys his options for the day:

“Phantom Soldiers,” “Shadow Fury,” or, here in Portuguese-speaking Mozambique

Pauolo approves of today's media diet. “I like the ones with fighting,” he says. “I get here very early in the morning to find a movie.” And with that, he pays the equivalent of about 4 cents to Santos Fernando Casão, the gatekeeper, and ducks into the cinema – a sweaty-smelling room with six wooden benches, a dirt floor, an old Supra television set, and lots of teenage boys. Movies are popular here. This town, the center of a sweeping district of about 95,000 people, mostly subsistence farmers, boasts more than 20 small cinemas – a figure that might surprise an outsider looking at the mud huts and goats wandering around, but one that seems normal to locals, and unsurprising to film experts.

10-12When they were off by themselves, those who were close to him, along with the Twelve, asked about the stories. He told them, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom—you know how it works. But to those who can't see it yet, everything comes in stories, creating readiness, nudging them toward receptive insight. These are people—

**Whose eyes are open but don't see a thing,
Whose ears are open but don't understand a word,
Who avoid making an about-face and getting forgiven."**

13He continued, "Do you see how this story works? All my stories work this way.

33-34With many stories like these, he presented his message to them, fitting the stories to their experience and maturity. He was never without a story when he spoke. When he was alone with his disciples, he went over everything, sorting out the tangles, untying the knots.

Jesus, Mark Chapter 4 (The Message)

Sunday, January 24, 2010

Jesus includes both the senses of seeing and hearing as he references the Isaiah passage. Jesus' vivid use of parables and stories created His own genre of teaching and preaching that was ground breaking. He didn't just retell OT stories well he created new ones. Craig A. Evans, "Parables in Early Judaism" points out that both the Hebrew Bible and Hellenistic literature lack such a genre is a fact. What made his style unique:

Some of Jesus' parables seem to have a conclusion that is open-ended as in the case of the parable of the lost son. We are not told whether the older son stayed outside or entered the home to join the festive gathering. The immoral woman who anointed Jesus feet went home in peace because her sins were forgiven

Jesus' teaching method involves the hearers or readers in the context of the parables. It removes them from their comfort zones and places them in the story to become active participants. The hearers of the parable of the lost son are the Pharisees and teachers of the law who are portrayed by the older son. They are invited to come and participate in the joy of the forgiven son who personifies the tax collectors and moral outcasts. But if they refuse to come, they in effect are the ones who are lost and dead

Jesus uses allegory. The examples Jesus used in telling His parables are true to life and people

relate to them without any difficulty. He relates stories of events that could have

happened in the daily lives of the people of that day. Anyone could readily identify

with the roles people filled, work that they did, relations that were broken and

restored, losses they sustained and happiness they experienced.

Many of Jesus' parables conclude with an element of surprise.¹⁴

For example, the poor, the lame, and the blind are the guests at the great supper; all the workers in the vineyard receive the same wage; and the tax collector goes home justified. A dishonest steward is commended; a widow receives justice; a shepherd finds his lost sheep and a woman her coin.

The detailed beauty and drama of his stories are masterful.. The prodigal wallowing away in the dirt and grim of a pig pen. The humiliation and pain of the violated man on the Jericho road? Have we lost this artistry in our ability to communicate well with our cultures?

Each generation of the church in each setting has the responsibility of communicating the gospel in understandable terms, considering the language and thought-forms of that setting.

Francis Schaeffer

Sunday, January 24, 2010

I would propose that our 'setting' today is increasingly the challenge of making our story visually understandable. Is a picture really worth a thousand words? In this age of multimedia and mass communication, it often seems so. Recent research supports the idea that **visual** communication can be more powerful than verbal communication, suggesting in many instances that people learn and retain information that is presented to them visually much better than that which is only provided verbally.

“Something is happening. We are becoming a visually mediated society. For many, understanding of the world is being accomplished, not through words, but by reading images.”

—Paul Martin Lester,

“Syntactic Theory of **Visual** Communication”

Sunday, January 24, 2010

“Pictures have a direct route to long- term memory, each image storing its own information as a coherent ‘chunk’ or concept.”⁵ If this is so, then it follows that the more **visual** content in a presentation, the more memorable the information will be over the long term. The psychologist Jerome Bruner of New York University has described studies that show that people only remember 10% of what they hear and 20% of what they read, but about 80 percent of what they see and do. OneHope had almost the exact same results with 8 to 12 year olds in W. Africa using audio bibles, print bibles, storytellers and the addition of simple visual cards that the children could use to retell chronological bible stories.

“Throughout history words and images have occupied separate domains. We have been forced to think of ourselves as either word people or visual people, that wide gulf is at last being bridged. There is a compelling case for considering visual language-the tight integration of words and visual elements-a truly new language with the distinct syntax and semantics expected of a language”

Robert. E. Horn, Visual Language: Global Communication for the 21st Century

Sunday, January 24, 2010

This new visual language has exciting and scary possibilities for the Churches mission. John Culkin one of Marshal McLuhan's major interpreters has written 'The alphabet is a funnel. All sense data must henceforth be squeezed into and through the narrow passage of print. The audible, the pictorial, the tactile, the olfactory – all get translated into the visual and the abstract ... Reality is squeezed through the funnel of the alphabet, so reality comes out as one drop at a time; it is segmented, sequential; it is fragmented along a straight line; it is analytic; it is abridged; it is reduced to one sense; it becomes susceptible to perspective and point of view, it becomes uniform and repeatable." Visual language loosens the tremendous restrictiveness of the alphabet and prose. With visual language, the funnel can be circumnavigated. Of course, human condition and world view act as filters.

Seeing is encountering reality with all of your being. To encounter reality deeply, you cannot leave part of yourself behind. All of your senses, your emotions, your intellect, your language-making abilities – each contributes to seeing fully.

-Robert McKim

Sunday, January 24, 2010

The Stanford professor is right we the church must use all the senses, but or work is futile if we don't rely on the most powerful one of all, not text or intellect, not oral or visual, but the unseen language of God's Spirit. Paul puts it like this in 1 Cor. 2:

¹⁻²You'll remember, friends, that when I first came to you to let you in on God's master stroke, I didn't try to impress you with polished speeches and the latest philosophy. I deliberately kept it plain and simple: first Jesus and who he is; then Jesus and what he did—Jesus crucified.

³⁻⁵I was unsure of how to go about this, and felt totally inadequate—I was scared to death, if you want the truth of it—and so nothing I said could have impressed you or anyone else. But the Message came through anyway. God's Spirit and God's power did it, which made it clear that your life of faith is a response to God's power, not to some fancy mental or emotional footwork by me or anyone else.

⁶⁻¹⁰We, of course, have plenty of wisdom to pass on to you once you get your feet on firm spiritual ground, but it's not popular wisdom, the fashionable wisdom of high-priced experts that will be out-of-date in a year or so. God's wisdom is something mysterious that goes deep into the interior of his purposes. You don't find it lying around on the surface. It's not the latest message, but more like the oldest—what God determined as the way to bring out his best in us, long before we ever arrived on the scene. The experts of our day haven't a clue about what this eternal plan is. If they had, they wouldn't have killed the Master of the God-designed life on a cross. That's why we have this Scripture text:

No one's ever seen or heard anything like this,
Never so much as imagined anything quite like it—
What God has arranged for those who love him.

But you've seen and heard it because God by his Spirit has brought it all out into the open before you.

¹⁰⁻¹³The Spirit, not content to flit around on the surface, dives into the depths of God, and brings out what God planned all along. Who ever knows what you're thinking and planning except you yourself? The same with God—except that he not only knows what he's thinking, but he lets us in on it. God offers a full report on the gifts of life and salvation that he is giving us. We don't have to rely on the world's guesses and opinions. We didn't learn this by reading books or going to school; we learned it from God, who taught us person-to-person through Jesus, and we're passing it on to you in the same firsthand, personal way.

¹⁴⁻¹⁶The unspiritual self, just as it is by nature, can't receive the gifts of God's Spirit. There's no capacity for them. They seem like so much silliness. Spirit can be known only by spirit—God's Spirit and our spirits in open communion. Spiritually alive, we have access to everything God's Spirit is doing, and can't be judged by unspiritual critics. Isaiah's question, "Is there anyone around who knows God's Spirit, anyone who knows what he is doing?" has been answered: Christ knows, and we have Christ's Spirit.

True Love

trueloveculture.com

Sunday, January 24, 2010

A 4-hour meta-narrative of the story of God and Man from Creation to a new heaven and a new earth in 62 movements created for urban music tribes. Text can be changed into any language, music soundtrack can be adapted to any genre. This one is techno-house...