

복음 Matthew 12:3-9 씨를 뿌리는 자가 뿌리러 나  
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나오나 으므로 말  
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새의 결실을 하였느니라 귀있는 자는 들으라 하시니

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### **MUSIC**

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## **Postmodernism in Korean-American Christianity**

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Western Christianity has had a powerful role in South Korean modern history. From the late 19th century, white missionaries from America and Europe brought their expression of the gospel of Jesus Christ which affected not only the religious landscape, but also the sociological landscape. In Christianity, many Koreans found a voice of freedom against oppression and injustice, especially during wartime. Due to these factors, Christianity (more specifically, Protestantism) became immensely popular and continues to be a very prominent religious and cultural force in South Korea.

During the wave of Korean immigration of the 70s and 80s, many Korean immigrants found their social support in churches. As a result, a unique expression of Korean-American Christianity arose to meet the needs of the first generation and, consequently, their second generation children. More prominent was a powerful enmeshment of a culturally Korean Christianity with conservative evangelicalism. This, in turn, led to a powerful sense of witness and mission, but also to the grips of guilt, shame, pietism, and disciplinarianism. As we see today, a result is that many second-generation Korean-Americans are struggling to find reasons to practice the Christian faith and are leaving the church.

What Postmodernism seeks to do is to put a mirror to ourselves and ask us who we are as a body of Christ. Postmodernism, a reaction and a response to the effects of modernism of the late 19th to the mid 20th century, is a philosophical and cultural movement that seeks to deconstruct the motives and the methods of the way we engage the world around us. If modernism sought objectivity, established cold systems and created borders, postmodernism seeks to reclaim the subjective self, hold truths in tension, and live in light of the narrative. Modernism was what the American missionaries inadvertently took with them to Korea as they evangelized the gospel. Assuming their understanding of the gospel to be the absolutely true version, and having the

Koreans conform to their version of Christianity is indicative of modernism's influence. And what we see today with the Korean megachurches, hierarchical structures, and rapid mission work is the product of that modernist era. The postmodern hermeneutic seeks to break that down by getting to the core of the thought process and reorienting ourselves in a more relational and contextual way.

In this seminar, we will ask ourselves how modernism may have negatively affected the Korean-American church theologically and culturally, and how postmodernism may be a helpful, if not healing force, in restoring the beauty and mystery of the Christian faith. Modernism has created the insular, inward-focused, ordered worship environment. Can postmodernism allow the doors of the Korean-American Christian mind to be opened to an infinite set of possibilities that God puts before us? We hope to take a step into these waters.

### **Worship as a subversive act**

Throughout this contemporary Christian age, worship in the ecclesial environment was an experience to consume. Whether it was a choir and an organ, or the worship leader and the band, the congregation was waiting to be led in an experience. But we must ask ourselves if worship is merely to be something to enjoy, or an expression of the gospel intended to subvert the structures of our society. The Emergent Church has made it a point to ask the question, "Does not the gospel reposition ourselves in the story of redemption?" Yet all too often the gospel has merely spoken to our individual souls. So the songs we sing are to affect the individual's relationship to God as the music is to please the individual. However, the gospel is not individualistic. The gospel is holistic and just, and so should our worship be. But we must also identify the injustices we experience in our society today, whether it is in the Korean-American community or the world at-large. What do the songs we sing say about the world around us? What do the songs we sing say about ourselves? We must even ask if our worship experience is honest in expressing how we feel about God and the brokenness we see around us.

In this seminar we hope to engage in practices ranging from songwriting to imagining different worship spaces. We hope to see what an infinite God has in store for us as we engage in an infinite practice.

## **Identity and Creativity, pt. 1/ pt. 2**

### **Why identity matters in worship**

There is the commonly held notion that worship is simply response to God, a declaration to God as in Rev. 4, "Holy, Holy, Holy." And while that is true, that indeed worship will always have this eschatological dimension, it is healthy to remember an aspect of worship that appears in the Scriptures in Exodus 15, where the Israelites sing the first song after the Lord has delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh. In other words, as much as worship arises from the Otherness of God, there is a very real and profound dimension of worship that reflects and remembers our collective stories and God's intervention and encounter with us. Worship does not just declare who God is, but also can inform us and shape our communities. In short, worship forms our identity just as much as it is born from our identity.

In most Korean-American congregations, we often pay very little attention to this notion of worship as shaping the community and vice versa, and it is usually in this lack of attention where our worship has lost its cultural distinctiveness. In essence, we say nothing in particular about how we as Korean-Americans have encountered God, and this reinforces a lost sense of identity in the next generation. This problem is becoming more and more apparent in the Korean diaspora where our Christian faith tends to find no root in its ethnic identity, and therefore becomes estranged to many of the youth who are beginning to find little or no value in the ethnic church.

Clearly then, identity matters in worship and must matter more. But what is identity? What are its dimensions? This conversation invites us into deeper thoughts about what identity is and how it relates to power and subcultures, particularly as we develop identity with ethnic communities of faith. From this, we will engage the notion of identity and its relationship to worship.

Once we have established a relationship between identity and worship, we must engage a deeper discussion of creativity and the role of the church to once again take on the role of curating worshipful art in and through the Korean-American community.

### **Praxis of Emerging worship in a Korean-American context**

Inevitably, given the landscape we are describing, we must face the question, what then does worship sound/look/taste/feel like? Here we will experiment with creating a worship environment for a church context. We hope to utilize what was learned in the tracks and manifest them in practice.

### **Suggested Reading Material for Emerging Worship track**

- *How (Not) To Speak of God* - Peter Rollins
- *The Next Evangelicalism* - Soong-Chan Rah
- *The Great Emergence* - Phyllis Tickle
- *Emerging Churches* - Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger
- *Emerging Worship* - Dan Kimball
- *The Spirituals and the Blues* - James Cone
- *Prophetic Imagination* - Walter Brueggemann