

End-month news, March 2020 by Jim Harries

On Sunday in Church, I shared the first message. My message encouraged people to be satisfied with what they have and with who they are. It was almost as if even as I was speaking ... I realized that this wasn't going to go down well. Later others pulled us back into line with the more widespread African message: "We will succeed! We will be victorious! We will be the head and not the tail! We will win and prosper!" The latter, though, is not about 'reality' in the way the West sometimes understands. It's more like when you say 'cheer up' to someone even when there is little evident cause to be cheerful. That of course is hope in Christ: that goes beyond any negativities the world might throw at us.

I continue, as I have for a long time, to keep a foot in two camps. One, minister 'on the ground' in Africa. Two, keep up with and keep informing the West. Please pray that I keep this balance right. I am of late more convinced than ever that I need to spend yet more time educating the West. Fortunately or unfortunately, the West controls us in Africa, while knowing and caring very little about what is actually happening on the ground, and especially; in people's heads. As part of this conviction, after wide consultation with supporters, my advisory board, and our leadership structure in the AVM (Alliance for Vulnerable Mission) I have begun making plans to make a trip to the USA in the Fall (Autumn) of 2021. I am in the throes of approaching universities, seminaries, bible colleges, and to some extent churches, especially in big urban centres like Chicago and Los Angeles. I hope, as I have done in the past, to be given opportunities to lecture, lead seminars, take classes, and more generally build relationships with and share with scholars.

My planned flagship-theme for the above trip is more pointed than usual. I feel convicted to tell Western people that their hammering down the baton on 'racism' in the West is trying to universalize things that just aren't true; everyone around the world is neither Christian like the West, nor secular like the West. Ignoring that, i.e. ignoring the need for the Gospel and ignoring the need for people to *learn to be* secular (instead of assuming them to be already secular) can do enormous damage in Africa. What is universal to all of mankind is not, after-all, secularism, but God and his love and grace.

For once, I submitted an article of mine to a 'secular' journal. I really expected them to reject it ... instead it has been accepted. Then the editor wrote: "*We feel deeply edified by the things you have said in it for which express our special thanks.*" Give thanks for reaching journal editors with the Gospel of Jesus!

If the Coronavirus pandemic becomes a very serious problem in Africa, then it will be a problem that the West has made for us. This is because:

1. Europe is being given as the model for how Africa is to respond to the pandemic. Whereas in Europe, perhaps intelligent approaches to self-isolation could bring benefit, here the practicalities are such that efforts to prevent people intermingling may themselves bring human disasters, like economic collapse, leading to famine, cholera,

and social strife. It is particularly gutting to see the West ignore what should be the vital role for churches in today's crisis. (Because the West ignores it, we are here also forced to ignore it.)

2. Traditional Africa does not use modern medicines to prolong life. As a result, the people currently dying in their droves in Europe, are for us already long gone. The exception being people with HIV on ARV drugs (provided free from the West) and a very few others being kept alive by Western medical technology. If those people go down with the virus, that will be a very serious calamity, but again, not a home-grown one – the source of the calamity will be the West.

We are still praying that Africans may have some special singular genetic immunity, or that the climate and context will somehow prevent the virus from infecting all.

(Some of my readers may be upset that I am blaming the West for Africa's problems. Yet, the West is so dominant here, leaving people so little room for maneuver, that one can do little else.)

To bring you up to date, people were chased from our local market yesterday (24.3.20) by police, in an effort to stop them intermingling. Both ladies who went to the market from my home, morning and evening, ending up running, but the latter had got food before she was forced to do so. (We buy the food we need on the day that we need it.) The hospital at Maseno is gearing up for Corona. We are all praying!

For more discussion on global Corona activities from Jim Harries, see [here](#).

Jim