

MISSION BELLS: 5. SENT

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Colossians 3:12-17

Today we come to the conclusion of this sermon series I have called *Mission BELLS*. As I've said, the Mission part tells us what we should do, the BELLS part tells us how we are to do it. The word BELLS is an acronym for the five Missional Habits laid out in Michael Frost's book called "Surprise the World." We have spent the past four weeks of this Season of Lent looking at the Missional Habits of bless, eat, listen, and learn.

The first week I asked that you go out and bless three people in some way. The second week I asked that you intentionally eat with three people to show Christian hospitality (as you continue blessing). In the third week of listening, I asked that you engage in prayer with God, to listen to God. Last week for the second L, I asked that you learn. By learn, Frost asks that we simply make it a habit to read the gospels. If we are going to be evangelists for Jesus Christ then we need to know the story of Jesus Christ. We are not to ignore the rest of the Bible, but we make a special effort to read and reread, to marinate in the gospel accounts.

Today we come to the final letter in the BELLS acronym and that is the letter S and it stands for the word SENT. This one's a little difficult to grasp because the word sent doesn't really reflect what Frost is asking us to do. In this chapter of his book, Frost is asking that our fifth missional habit should be to engage in a practice of intentional missional journaling. We're not talking about keeping a journal with entries like, "Dear diary. Today I went to the library and then to the grocery store." You have a calendar for that. Intentional journaling is much more.

For us as Christians, Frost wants us to journal the ways that we have been alerting others to the reign of God. We can make weekly journal entries or just set aside time at the end of each week to look back over the past seven days and recall how we've somehow announced or demonstrated God's universal reign in this world, even if it's just in the smallest of ways. Now, that may sound silly, but if we are going to take seriously the command to evangelize the kingdom of God to the world, then we need to be reflective about what we do and how we do it.

So, in your journal, write down the small things as well as the big. Ask yourself questions. Pose challenges for yourself. Evaluate what you have done. Re-read earlier entries. Reflect on your blessing, your hospitality, your prayer, and your learning, and process your actions. Look for patterns; look for the work of the Holy Spirit acting in your life as you evangelize to others and demonstrate God's kingdom.

Now, you are probably asking yourself, what does this missional journaling have to do with the word Sent. Well, the author makes a connection with being a missionary. And missionary comes from the Latin word *missio*, which means sent. Christian missionaries are those who are sent to carry the gospel into the world.

Now to be honest, I don't quite get the connection either. I think the author is making a bit of a stretch here. After all, he had this great system of B-E-L-L and he needed a fifth letter. His first option might have been B-E-L-L-Y. And he would need a word that starts with y—yacht, yellow, yawn... There's nothing helpful there. And besides, who would preach about the BELLY system of evangelism?

The other option is BELLE, with an e. But that is a Disney princess, so probably wouldn't work either. And we'd just end up confusing God's kingdom with the magic kingdom.

So, Frost needed to go with BELLS, and that is fine by me. You will just have to remember that S stands for journaling. If it helps, you can think of 'scribbling' or 'scrapbooking.'

The scripture reading that I chose for today is from the end of Paul's Epistle to the Colossians. Paul writes this letter in response to some unknown behavioral issues plaguing that congregation. And Paul's instruction to them is that they should live anew in Christ.

To accomplish this, Paul tells the people that *as God's chosen ones* they should *clothe themselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience*. They should *forgive one another* in the same way that God has forgiven them. And most of all, they should *clothe themselves with love*. But not just any love, *agape* love—God's love, sacrificial love.

To be a Christian, they should dress up like a Christian, so that they can show the world who they are.

And this is exactly the theme that has been running through this sermon series and through the BELLS of missional habits—putting on the clothes of Christ. The term that I have been using is the one that Michael Frost uses in his book "Surprise the World." That term is Questionable Living.

Questionable Living is a powerful idea. It means that, as Christians, we are to live and act in such a way that it causes people to sit up and ask questions, to ask why we are doing what we are doing. And as I mentioned last week, Questionable Living doesn't just pose the question, it answers the question as well. A follower of Christ should live in such a way that people don't just ask why, but they also see the answer in our actions. When you do something in the name of Christ, they are to say, "Why? Oh, I get it. Christ." Questionable Living is both the question and the answer. That is how we are to live.

That is why we've been talking about Missional Habits these past five weeks. These habits define a Questionable Life—blessing, eating, listening, learning, and reflecting. As Paul writes to the Colossians, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you deeply*. When Christ dwells within us, we can't help but live questionably, we take on the clothes of Christ.

I brought this sermon series to you not just because it is the Season of Lent, but also because in just two weeks, I will be starting a three-month sabbatical. And this is my homework for you. I want you to continue performing these habits while I am gone. In fact, it is my hope and prayer that these habits will take on a life of their own and that you will excel in living and sharing the gospel of Christ to this community. I want to return and witness amazing things.

You don't need me here to do this. Just do it.

What we see in Questionable Living, and what we see in our reading from Colossians, is a call to live in *compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and love*.

Nowhere in there is the command to seek to be called great. Nowhere in there are we to demand adulation and praise for what we do. If you want to leave a legacy, then become a developer and build buildings. Or lead armies, or amass great wealth. Do those things so that people will point and say, "what a great person you were."

The forty days of the Season of Lent are meant to echo the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness. After his baptism, the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to fast and pray. And while there, he was tempted by Satan. And what Satan offered him was food, security, and power, including all the kingdoms of the world—in other words, the opportunity to be great. But Jesus rejected Satan's offers as tests of his own faithfulness. Jesus could have been great, but he would not have been Christ.

For us to be disciples of Christ, we are to wrap ourselves in the clothes of Christ—in humility and love and service to others.

As Jesus says, *let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven* (Matthew 5:16). Our light should shine, and brightly, but for the purpose of giving glory to God, not to ourselves. I know this is tough. We are programmed to bring glory to ourselves; we are taught to seek out praise and acclamation. That is the world's measure of success.

But it is not the measure of discipleship. And we are called to be disciples, evangelize the word of Christ, to show *agape* in all that we do.

We are called to lead such lives that through our words and actions, we will
“Surprise the World.”