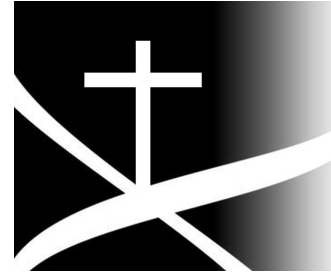


Ancient Future Mission (Week 1): Go and Be
Yesterday's Sermon - In 10 Sentences or Less



Ancient Future
Mission
• Go and Be
• Go and Love
• Go and Tell
• Come and Belong

- 1) As theologian and church historian Gerald Sittser writes, "Christian back then (in the ancient Roman empire) had every reason to fail. But they succeeded." This is a series to learn why and how so that we can try and do the same.
- 2) Over the course of this series, we'll be summarizing why earliest Christianity grew in four ways, the first of which is seen in Philippians 2:14-16: "Go and Be."
- 3) As the synonymous words "blameless, innocent, and without blemish" infer (2:15), most fundamentally Christians "shine like stars" in the world through their character, choices, and morality.
- 4) In short, It isn't enough to proclaim Christ with our lips if we don't imitate Him in our lives.
- 5) That phrase "shine like stars" is drawn from a crucial Old Testament text, Daniel 12:2-3, about our eschatological (that is, ultimate/final/future) hope: thus, Jesus' resurrection pulls God's future into the present, and we as Christians can live like resurrection people in the here and now, which makes us "shine" distinctively in a dark world.
- 6) So what kind of distinctive Christian behaviors make us "shine like stars" in the world? Paul's choices are pretty surprising - don't grumble about or argue with each other (2:14).
- 7) Paul knows that the outside world is watching how we within the church treat and interact with each other, and if we "grumble about and argue with," or otherwise disrespect or marginalize each other, we invalidate our witness to them.
- 8) Not "grumbling" or "arguing" are also fascinating because they are so seemingly mundane or pedestrian. When wanting to "shine like stars" to the watching world, you'd think we'd want to highlight all the big things Christians do, e.g. how much money we give to missions, how many local service projects we've done, and the like, but, no, Paul says that it's the so-called little things - how we treat and speak to each other daily - that matters most.
- 9) But it should also be noted that if Christians in America 2023 were to take Paul's pastoral counsel and commit to not complaining, not arguing, respecting each other, and doing the hard work being at peace with one another, we would indeed "shine like stars" in our fractured, angry, polarized culture.
- 10) So, to summarize, if we won't just "go and be" Christians in our daily conversations, our everyday actions, our weekly priorities, and within our own congregations, it doesn't matter what else we do to share Jesus: "go and be" is the foundation upon which all other Christian witness is built.

Quotes to Reconsider

New Testament scholar N. T. Wright on Christians being God's "resurrection people" in the present day: "Easter was when hope in person surprised the whole world by coming forward from the future into the present...Our task in the present is to live as resurrection people in between Easter and that final day, as a sign of the first and as a foretaste of the second. To hope for a better future – for the poor, for the sick, for the lonely, for the depressed, for the hungry, for the homeless, for the downtrodden, and, yes, for the whole wide, wonderful, and wounded world – is not something else, something extra, or something tacked on to the gospel. And to work for that surprising hope that comes forward from God's ultimate future into our urgent present is not a distraction...but is the central, essential, life-giving heart of Christian mission and witness... Jesus is raised, so we have a job to do, we must act like His heralds, and make His kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. The message of Easter is that God's new world has been unveiled in Jesus Christ and validated by His resurrection, and you're now invited to belong to it."

Three Greco-Roman sources from the 100s CE/AD on the distinctive lives of the earliest Christians, the last of which is a letter written by a Christian to a Roman dignitary in defense of the faith:

Galeo (physician; 129-199 AD): "Both their (Christian) men and women show courage in the face of death, self-control and self-discipline, self-restraint in matters of sex, food, and drink, and a keen pursuit of justice, seeming to have attained a moral pitch not inferior to that of the best philosophers."

Celsus (philosopher and friend of emperor Marcus Aurelius; latter half of the 100s AD): "These Christians view all people as having equal dignity before God. In their private houses we see wool-workers, cobblers, laundry-workers, and the most illiterate yokels, who would not dare say anything in front of their elders and masters, gather and share together."

- Epistle to Diognetus (130-200 AD): "Christians are not distinguished from the rest of humanity by country or language...They follow local customs in dress and food and other aspects of life, but also demonstrate the remarkable and admittedly unusual character of their citizenship in heaven. They share their food but not their wives. Though dishonored, slandered, insulted, and cursed, they bless in return and offer respect. They love those who hate them."

More to Explore This Week

- 1) Want to revisit our previous Sunday series on how we can learn from Paul's sermon in Athens how to communicate Christianity to those completely unfamiliar with it? Here's the link to that series page - [Sermon Series "Lost in Translation" - KirkWood Presbyterian Church](#)
- 2) Some scripture reading on the remarkable yet ordinary moral and attitudinal distinctives of the early Christians, as advocated by the apostle Paul: [Ephesians 4.17 - 5.5 NRSVUE](#) and [Colossians 3.1-17 NRSVUE](#) and [Rom 12.9-21 NRSVUE](#)
- 3) Pastor Chris mentioned this article in the sermon yesterday, which contains some great advice for how to live agreeably with other Christians as the world around us watches: [Warning: The World is Watching How We Christians Treat One Another - Frank Viola](#)
- 4) A 16 min. video interview with Michael Frost (remember him from the book, "Surprise the World"?) talking about the holy "weirdness" of Christianity: [Keep Christianity Weird, Interview With Michael Frost](#)
- 5) A piece by Michael Frost on four instances in church history when the church got "weird" for better: [Four times the church got weird... and was better for it](#)
- 6) On the high calling of distinctive Christian character focused on love and holiness: [To Bear the Character of God - Chris Webb](#)
- 7) Anyone remember this song from the play Godspell, "You are the Light of the World": ["Light of the World" ~ Godspell \(1973\)](#)