

Action beats “Bling” ...every time!

2 Samuel 5: 1-5, 9-10

Mark 6: 1-13

“Bling!” Bling, that ostentatious show of jewellery and fine clothes, furs, big cars; the stuff you see in the movies and on the streets. The disciples didn’t have any of that. They were sent out to teach and heal with nothing. Proving actions beat bling, every time.

When going over the scripture passage and doing some research I came across some interesting notes. It says in the time of Jesus ministry itinerant teachers roamed the towns carrying fancy staffs, wearing two tunics and carrying large bags to collect the proceeds of their teaching. They used their clothes and accessories in other words their “bling” so people could pick them out of a crowd. They were called itinerant Pagan preachers by this author, but I suspect they were merely philosophers and teachers from other religions, from other areas. There was a myriad of religions at that time and many competed for followers of their own. And when I read that passage again in the light of that simple comment about the tunic and the staff, the disciples were sent with nothing. Sent out with prayers to teach the good news of the Kingdom of God under cover. Take nothing, no identifiers, nothing fancy to proclaim your status, no bag to collect offerings, no decoration whatsoever. Take nothing but the good news to preach along with the authority and power to back your preaching with action.

And so, they went out, village to village spreading the marvelous news of God’s Kingdom. When the village ignored or refuted them they cast the dust of that village from the soles of their feet and moved on. They had nothing to make them stand out, nothing to catch the eye of the passerby, just words supported by their actions. Actions beat bling, every time. Well today the two tunics and flashy staff have fallen by the wayside, but the concept of look or style being paramount remains. Power suit, power ties, power dress still rule our day. The flash of the Rolex replaces the gilded walking staff and the Gucci wallet or purse has replaced the collection bag, but people continue to be drawn to and respect and revere a well dressed individual, sometimes on sight alone. Would you respect the word of your banker if he or she were dressed like a skater dude from the local skate park? Who is suspect at the local 7-11, the baggy jeaned youth or the man in the suit and tie? And at a bus stop at night are you more comfortable with someone dressed in jeans and ragged shirt or wearing a London Fog top coat and Stewart

Weisman pumps? But who has brought hardship down upon ordinary people? Who has robbed them of their savings? People such as Bernie Madoff, the king of the Ponzi scheme world, the chief executives of Nortel and Enron and Goldman Sachs; all clean cut, extremely well-dressed individuals that fits today's fashion decrees as trustworthy people. Much like those itinerant teachers in Israel, always willing to share their knowledge for money.

The disciples would have a hard time in today's world showing up with nothing; no cell phone, no Amex card, no Mercedes, no Armani. But why should they have a hard time? Mother Teresa had not use for haute couture or wasting her precious resources on outer appearance, but her actions for the poor in India spoke volumes and her work carries on today. Terry Fox, a person imprinted on the minds of Canada for bringing cancer into the spotlight and his attempt to cross Canada on foot is commemorated every year by adults and children. Terry had no use for three-piece suits or Italian loafers. Shorts and a t-shirt were his trademarks. Many might remember Michael Fehr, former city councillor, incredible hard-working politician who stood up for his Ward at Council. The first openly gay city councillor who continues to advocate for the gays and lesbians of this city and province. Not once did he every don a tie. That symbol was solid business person and it drove Councillor Hayter to distraction, but Michael made it very clear that he was more interested in working, in action than in fashion or tradition. Some people, leaders of society, drivers of business, dress to the nines, thousands spent on maintaining what society accepts as trustworthy, turn out to be deceivers, criminals if they are caught, takers of ordinary folks' money, and returning heartache and pain. 1On the other hand many people work for others, dedicating their time and talents and lives for the betterment of their fellow human beings and not a shred of designer clothing in sight.

The missing part of the scripture is they never tell us how they did. How did they fair while they were out doing their preaching? It says they went out and proclaimed all, they repented all who would repent, and they cast out many demons, but what else? How did it go? John the Baptist was executed for his preaching. How did the disciples avoid that same fate? Was it their actions of healing and driving out demons that proved the validity of their preaching? That physical demonstration of God's grace flowing through them; did that convince people to protect and shield them from the authorities both Roman and Jewish? Did their actions prove the word of God was indeed accessible to common people; that it was not restricted to just the ruling class? The disciples did it in plain clothes. We have examples of ordinary people doing extraordinary things today. Proof it takes more than wearing respectable clothes to be effective. A Rolex doesn't make someone automatically good, but it doesn't make them automatically a Ponzi scheme either. Actions are what define us, for good or bad. Simple robes don't make someone a disciple either, it is what you do, what acts you perform that defines who you are. Actions are far more important than fashion. Our actions define us, refine us, and show others what they can expect from us much more than our choice of clothes and bling.

Amen.