

## Missions Means Me: Trade Solitude for Service.

- Good morning, church! Let's start with a confession: How many of you have ever canceled plans just to stay home, cozy up with a blanket, and binge-watch your favorite show?
- Come on, let me see those hands!
- There's something so tempting about carving out "me time," isn't there?
- We guard our schedules like treasures, filling them with work, errands, workouts, and—let's be honest—hours of scrolling or streaming.
- **Our culture celebrates this.**
- It says, "Protect your space. Prioritize your peace. Build your life around *you*."
- And in 2025, with our curated feeds and personalized everything, it's easier than ever to slip into isolationism—a life where our comfort is king, and our schedules are sacred.
- Mark Thompson's life in Vancouver, British Columbia, was the epitome of modern success.
- At 28, he thrived as a software engineer in the city's booming tech scene, coding for a startup that promised stock options and a corner office.
- His apartment overlooked the misty North Shore mountains, and weekends were spent kayaking with his fiancée, Sarah, or sipping craft coffee in Gastown's trendy cafés, or binge-watching on Netflix.
- Raised in a Christian and Missionary Alliance church in Burnaby, Mark had absorbed stories of A.B. Simpson's Fourfold Gospel—Jesus as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King—ever since childhood.
- His parents, active in the church's outreach programs, often hosted missionaries whose tales of distant lands fascinated young Mark.
- But as adulthood settled in, missions felt like a relic of a long-gone era, or at least something for the exceptionally brave or devout — not for a tech-savvy Canadian with a mortgage and wedding plans.
- *"So," he said to himself, "I'll support missions with my paycheck."*
- I imagine, this has been the response of many followers of Jesus after hearing a missionary speak or a missions sermon on a Sunday.
- **I get it**, it's a well-intentioned reflex — a desire to contribute to God's global work by writing a check or setting up a monthly donation.
- While financial support is valuable, and crucially needed, it can become a default response, that lets us off the hook, allowing us to feel involved without truly engaging.
- In our series, **Missions Means Me**, and expanding on the Law of the Seed from last Sunday, we're gonna unpack why missions isn't just about your a donation, but about your entire life surrendered to God's call.
- This isn't about guilt-tripping you into doing more — it's about inviting you into a life that's bigger, bolder, and eternal. Let's dive in.

### John 12:23-24 NIV

23 Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

- Let me pause here before reading today's verse...
- That little phrase — *"But if it dies, it produces many seeds"* — is the heartbeat of God's mission.
- It's not **just** about surrender; it's about what happens because of surrender.
- Your small, daily deaths to self are not losses—they are investments in an eternal harvest that multiplies beyond your wildest imagination.
- That grain of wheat, when it falls to the ground and dies, it doesn't stay dead.
- As we noted last week, the husk cracks, the seed breaks open, and something miraculous unfolds from within.

- From that one tiny seed springs a stalk that produces dozens, even potentially hundreds of new seeds — each capable of repeating the cycle, year after year.
- And Jesus is saying that the spiritual life works the same way.
- Your surrender—your willingness to let go of self-centeredness — unleashes God’s divine math.
- 1 act obedience doesn’t just add; it multiplies.
- This is the engine of God’s mission.
- And we’re gonna unpack that from our next verse...

### John 12:25 NIV

Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

- In this one verse we’ll discover a TRAP, a PARADOX, and an IRONY, that keep us from becoming a full follower on mission with Jesus...

## 1. The Trap of Loving Your Life

### John 12:25 NIV

**Anyone who loves their life will lose it**, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

- The Greek word for “loves” here is *phileo*, meaning “a deep affection or attachment.”
- Jesus is talking about those who cherish their life — their plans, their comfort, their control —above all else.
- And the word “lose” is *apol-lumi*, meaning “to destroy or render useless.”
- In the context of John 12:25, “loving their life” would best be described by a heart that is ruled by self-sovereignty — where we prioritize personal comfort, control, success, or affirmation, even over God’s priorities.
- This **love** for one’s life reflects a reactive posture, where we cling to temporary, worldly things (e.g., status, security, or personal agendas) to define our identity and worth.
- And when this becomes our “normal” state of living, “loving our life” could be seen as a form of idolatry.
- Because what’s really happening is that we’re elevating our **own** desires—our schedules, spaces, or ambitions—above God’s kingdom.
- Ooo, was that a little too sharp?
- Well, not so much, when you realize that self-focused living leads to destructive patterns — like anger, anxiety, isolation, apathy, and worst of all a failure to do our part in the Great Commission — all because we’re trying to preserve a life that wants satisfaction without God being the Lord of it.
- “Loving our life” in this way sets us up to “lose it” because it’s rooted in fleeting, earthly things that cannot endure, rather than in the purposes and mission of God.
- In their paper “**hedonic adaptation theory**,” psychologists and researchers Brickman & Campbell, shows that when individuals prioritize personal comfort, control, and self-focused goals, they often experience temporary satisfaction, but quickly return to a baseline level of happiness.
- This pursuit of self-preservation through material or temporal control fails to provide lasting fulfillment.
- This phenomenon suggests that our general level of happiness is greatly affected by what happens to us.
- What their research shows is that human beings have a baseline level of happiness that moves in either a positive or negative direction after experiencing a major life event or emotionally cathartic experience — good or bad.
- For instance. You hear an engaging sermon on missions, that you really connect with.
- It challenges you, grips you, inspires you to get more committed to missions.
- So, there is an upswing in your hedonic scale.

- But give yourself a little time and a little distance from what you experienced, and you will go back to your baseline level of happiness.
- Happens every Sunday believe it or not.
- We saw **that** with the assassination of Charlie Kirk.
- Immediately after that bad experience, most people experienced a **downswing** in their hedonic scale.
- People were moved by Kirk's life and commitment to helping his country return to its social, moral and religiously conservative roots.
- And when he was killed, people were gruesomely made aware of what was at stake for wanting that for his country.
- Collectively then, there was a huge **upswing** in our hedonic scale.
- Not because Kirk's assassination was a good experience, but it caused people to rally, people committed to a greater engagement in Kirk's values.
- Christians recommitted to standing stronger for their faith.
- But now, a month later, collectively our curve has swung downward, back to our baseline level of happiness.
- **Why?** With enough time and distance from Kirk's assassination we all just went go back to "normal," back to where we were before it happened.
- And we'll see if we're better for it.
- We saw this at 911 too.
- This is why people resign themselves to giving their pennies and prayers to missions.
- Not because there aren't far greater things to invest ourselves in, but because we're always trying to get the maximum amount of happiness from the least amount of effort.
- This is the context of John 12.
- Jesus is speaking just days before His crucifixion, surrounded by crowds chasing their own agendas—some want His miracles, others political power, some want Him crucified.
- In verse 24, He uses the metaphor of a grain of wheat that must die to bear fruit, and now He applies it to us.
- Loving your life — clinging to your own comfort — keeps you like that single seed, locked in its husk, safe but solitary.
- It's the spiritual equivalent of binge-watching your life away, while the world around you cries out for an eternal hope that can only be found in Jesus.
- A shift began in the summer of 2018, when Mark Thompson, our tech guy from BC, nudged by his fiancée Sarah and a persistent youth pastor, signed up for a two-week Envision trip with our denomination to a remote village in Southeast Asia.
- He saw it as a chance to "do some good" and maybe add a meaningful chapter to his life's story, and a positive addition to his resume.
- The village, nestled among emerald rice paddies and shadowed by jungle-covered hills, was a world apart from Vancouver's glass towers.
- No Wi-Fi, spotty electricity, and a language barrier that made his coding skills feel useless.
- Assigned to assist with a community development project alongside local Alliance workers, Mark helped build a small school while joining evening Bible studies.
- One night, under a sky blazing with stars, he met Somchai, a wiry 20-year-old villager who worked the fields by day and sought life-answers by night.
- Over tea brewed on a makeshift stove, Somchai shared his struggle: *"I pray to the spirits," he said, "but they give no hope."*
- He asks Mark, *"Is there a God who knows my name?"*
- Mark fumbled through a response, and ended up quoting John 3:16.
- Mark had always taken his faith for granted, so Somchai's raw hunger for truth pierced him.
- That night, alone in his hammock, Mark wrestled with God.

- The Holy Spirit's whisper echoed John 12:24: "Unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed; but if it dies, it produces many seeds."
- Tears fell as he prayed, *"Lord, I'm not cut out for this. I'm just a coder, not a missionary."*
- Yet, the call was undeniable — and a fire lit by a lost soul, in a small Asian village, urged him to surrender his comfortable life for the sake of lost souls like Somchai.
- **Think about your week.** How much of it is built around you? Your to-do list, your downtime, your need to feel in control?
- We're not bad people for wanting rest or enjoyment, but when "loving our life" becomes a fortress, and we stop engaging in the Great Commission, we shut out the lost.
- When we say, "I don't have time to serve," or "I'll get to that mission thing later," Jesus warns that that mindset leads to loss — not just of opportunities, but of the abundant life He promises.
- That was the TRAP, the TRAP of loving our life.
  - Now the PARADOX, that keep us from becoming a full follower on mission with Jesus...

## 2. The Paradox of Life-Hate Living

- Jesus now flips the script:

**John 12:25** NIV

Anyone who loves their life will lose it, **while anyone who hates their life** in this world will keep it for eternal life.

- This is jarring. Hate my life?
- Isn't that extreme?
- The Greek word for "hates" is *miseo*, which can mean to "reject, or set aside in favor of something greater."
- Jesus isn't demanding a lifestyle of self-loathing; He's calling you to the most audacious freedom imaginable.
- To "hate your life in this world" is to make a radical, daily choice to reject the shallow comfort and reactive fear that keeps you trapped, isolated, and unengaged in God's mission.
- And that helps you justify why you **can** ignore the many missionary testimonies, and sermons and the many calls, to engage more in missions globally and locally.
- It means recognizing that the life of fleeting pursuits — your comfort, your control, your hobbies, or even the subtle safety of "writing a check" — is a cage that keeps you from the eternal life you were made for.
- John 12:25 calls us to a courageous act of surrender.
- To give up the need for control, releasing your self-protective defenses, and choosing to filter every single challenge and decision through the Gospel of Jesus.
- For instance, instead of **isolating** yourself, you know that Jesus commissions his disciple to GO and make disciples, so you take a step toward community.
- Instead of just attending church, become part of it.
- Find a way to serve here, join or start a small group, inviting neighbours to share a meal at your home, or a game night.
- Remember, "hospitality is mission."
- Consider using your home to reflect Jesus' welcome in your neighbourhood or co-workers.
- See, the mission of Jesus is not for a select few; it is the defining lifestyle of every believer.
- This means learning to stop making Jesus an afterthought, and wanting the Gospel to become the default grid for processing reality.
- By boldly saying "NO" to the temporary, you are saying a resounding "YES" to true life.

- You're aligning your entire existence — from your wallet to your conversations — from your hobbies to your 5-year plan — with the grand, unstoppable purpose of God's Kingdom.
- Now, let me tell you about Ethan Chen, a 32-year-old cybersecurity specialist in Calgary, who lived a life many envied.
- He had a six-figure job at a tech firm, a downtown condo with a view of the Rockies, and weekends spent hiking with friends from his Christian and Missionary Alliance church.
- Raised in a Chinese-Canadian family that embraced the Alliance's ambition for global missions — Ethan had always been active in his church.
- He led worship from time-to-time and volunteered at youth camps.
- But missions, to him, meant jungles and far-off villages, not the glass towers of Calgary.
- That perspective shifted during a 2021 Alliance Canada virtual conference, where a speaker challenged attendees to see Canada's urban centers as mission fields, with immigrants, students, and marginalized communities desperate for Christ's hope.
- As Ethan prayed through the livestream, the Holy Spirit stirred him.
- He saw faces — newcomers from Asia, Indigenous youth, homeless men outside his office — each needing Jesus.
- Kneeling by his laptop, Ethan surrendered his career ambitions, sensing God's call not to a foreign land but to his own city, using his tech skills to advance the Great Commission.
- He developed a secure app for a church network to connect refugees with resources, from language classes to Bible studies, and trained volunteers to use digital platforms for evangelism in sensitive communities.
- Balancing his day job, he poured evenings into mentoring at-risk youth in East Village, sharing the gospel through coding workshops that built trust and opened hearts.
- Of course, skepticism from colleagues, burnout from long hours, and the pull to return to a simpler life, still tested his trust in God.
- Yet, through prayer and support from his Alliance church, Ethan saw fruit...
- A Syrian family got baptized in their church; a Cree teenager found fellowship at his church's youth group; and a growing digital prayer group numbering into the hundreds.
- He recently testified to his church family, "God called me to die to my plans right here in Calgary. My code builds His kingdom now."
- Today, as Canada's urban fields ripen, Ethan's tech-driven mission proves that obedience at home can spark a harvest, fulfilling the Alliance's vision of taking all of Jesus to all the world.
- Friends, "hating your life in this world" doesn't mean quitting your job or burning your TV.
- It means daily choices to prioritize God's sovereignty & mission over your comfort zone.
- It is a recognition that our lives are not ours to organize solely for our pleasure.

### 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NIV

You are not your own; you were bought at a price.

- When you "hate" the two hours you planned for gaming and use it to join other brothers or sisters to study God's Word, or to serve downtown at the local soup kitchen, you are trading temporal currency for an eternal one.
- When you "hate" the money you planned for an unnecessary gadget, and give it to a ministry serving the hungry, you are trading temporal comfort for eternal impact.
- **So, what's one comfort you need to learn to "hate" this week?**
- Maybe it's the urge to stay in your bubble or the fear of looking foolish.
- Ask God for the courage to set it aside and step into His mission.
- Friends, freedom and fulfillment await you on the other side of that micro-sacrifice.

- So, we've seen the TRAP of loving our life and the PARADOX of life-hate living...
  - Now the IRONY, that keep us from becoming a full follower on mission with Jesus...

### 3. The Irony of Micro-Sacrifices

#### John 12:25 NIV

Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life **in this world will keep it for eternal life.**

- Missions means me, not just someday, but today, in the micro-sacrifices you make between worldly concerns and the Kingdom of God.
- This trade happens when you deliberately create margin, to either allow for interruptions, or to intentionally partner with others on mission.
- In other words, what does it look like this week, to “keep your life for eternal life”?
- I'm going to introduce you to three micro-sacrifices...

#### Micro-Sacrifice #1: Sacrificing *Busyness* for Kingdom

- What this means is, stop defining your worth by how busy you are.
  - *“Hey, long time no see, how are you doing?” “Oh man, I’ve been so busy.”*
- Why do we all do that? When in reality, most of us are just lying anyway, we're not really that busy.
- In our fast-paced culture, most of us treat busyness like a badge of honour.
- It's a way to make us feel significant or in control.
- And we fear others discovering that we spend most of our free-time scrolling social media or binge-watching TV.
- And, more than you know, this obsession with packed schedules, true or a lie, can choke out God's Kingdom.

#### Matthew 6:31-33 NIV

Why do you worry saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But **seek first his kingdom and his righteousness**, and all these things will be given to you as well.

- That's not just true for the poor schmucks that still work for a living.
- Retirement marks a significant life-transition.
- Particularly for those who have spent decades defining their days by work schedules, and not by the Kingdom of God.
- If our younger years were not spent seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then retirement isn't going to make that any easier.
- Because far too many retirees have developed busyness habits, instead of Kingdom of God habits, and the only way to break those habits, young or old, is to work on the micro-sacrifice of substituting busyness for Kingdom work.
- **To do this, you have to first surrender the worldly metrics of worth** — productivity, status, and busyness — for a kingdom-centered identity rooted in Christ's love and His call to missions.
- That's the basis behind “hating your life in this world.”

#### Galatians 2:20 NIV

I have been **crucified** with Christ and **I** no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

## **Ephesians 2:10 NIV**

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- And we all know the story of Mary & Martha, the two sisters who took a different approach to a visit from Jesus while He was on mission.
- Mary chose to sit at Jesus' feet to learn from Him and worship Him — Martha chose busyness.
- Mary prioritized presence over tasks. And Martha resented her for it.

## **Luke 10:41-42 NIV**

41 "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

- All of us spent our younger years worried and upset about many worldly things, but in the meantime we sacrificed the better thing... the Kingdom of God & His righteousness things.
- And now, we don't know what to do with our retirement.
- **Have you ever considered this...** perhaps your unending doctors appointments and the aches and pains that you feel in your body, are the product of choices to ignore God's kingdom work now that you are free from work.
- Could it be?
- It's kind of like what the Prophet Haggai says about tithing —

### **Haggai 1:4-6 NIV**

4 "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while my house remains a ruin?" 5 Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. 6 You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."

- In other words, because we live for ourselves and not God's priorities, what we do have never seems to be enough. In fact, God is the One who is making it wither away, as payment for our lack of Kingdom work.
- See, folks, the micro-sacrifice of sacrificing Busyness for Kingdom, compels us, young and old, to not waste our precious time, and instead chose the better Kingdom thing.
- And it could be a sacrifice as simple as creating 120-minutes of margin in your week — that's 2 hours of time out of the 168 hours of your week, to do something for His Kingdom.

## **Micro-Sacrifice #2: The Screen for the Soul**

- This sacrifice is the giving up of **Instant Gratification for Intentional Service**.
- So that 2 hour bit of margin in your week, that I talked about a minute ago, might just be found by simply examining your TV time, or looking up your screen-time feature on your phone.

## **Hebrews 13:16 NIV**

And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

- Screens can be a trap, lulling us into passivity while the world around us longs for the love and hope of a Saviour they have not heard about.
- **This week**, identify one hour you'd typically spend on Netflix or social media.
- Use some of that time to write an encouraging note to a missionary, call a home-bound or sick person on the back of the bulletin, visit someone in the hospital, or volunteer at a local charity.

## **Micro-Sacrifice #3: Personal Space for Shared Prayer**

## Acts 2:42-44 NIV

42 (The early church) devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.

- Shared prayer built community and fueled their shared mission, showing the power of opening our spaces to others.
- Your quiet time is a sacred space.
- But God calls us to share our faith, by joining with others in prayers for the advance of His Church.
- This week, perhaps in that 2 hours of sacrificing your time, surrender your instinct for isolation and invite someone to pray with you.
- Call a small group of brothers and sisters who will commit to praying for a Unreached People Group in the 10/40 Window.
- If you don't know what the 10/40 Window is, the spend your first 2 hours of time googling it.
- That may feel uncomfortable and a bit risky, but it's a seed planted in faith, trusting God to send workers into the Harvest.
- So, "hating your life in this world" means surrendering the instinct to keep our faith and prayers private, to learning to pray with others.
- This micro-sacrifice will mean opening your schedule or home to pray with others for the advance of the Kingdom, the GO in the Gospel.
- Pray for the fruitfulness of the Church to fulfill the Great Commission.
- So, 3 Micro-sacrifices. Small sacrifices that embody the words of Jesus in John 12:24...

## John 12:25 NIV

Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

- **John 12:25 challenges us with a radical enigma:** while we cling to the fleeting pleasures and busyness of earthly life, we are only moving toward its ultimate loss.
- However, if we loosen our grip on those temporal pursuits — treating them with a kind of holy disdain — we will secure the abundant, eternal life of God's kingdom.
- This verse calls for a reorientation of our priorities, where the "life in this world" (with its distractions, ambitions, and hurry) is subordinated to the deeper rhythms of faith -- abiding with Christ, seeking His kingdom and His righteousness, and loving our neighbour.
- Brothers & sisters, eternal life starts now, in moments reclaimed from that which is not eternal – like scrolling, binge-watching, the accumulation of stuff, and the pursuit of whatever the world values.
- **At this point in my life, I'm just trying to not miss what is eternal in each day.**
- So, I'm learning to avoid, even hate, those things that distract me and make me unable to be fully present — so that I don't sabotage the eternal life that Jesus promises.
- And I'm not just talking about eternal life, as life after life, and Jesus isn't talking about heaven, eternal life is NOW for those who are in Christ.
- And He promises us so much more LIFE in the here and now, more than most of us realize is possible.
- And He promises that any of us can experience it, but it will take some serious "hating" of those things that are contrary to eternal life, things that rob us of His presence and power.
- And all of that is necessary before missions will ever be on our radar.
- To "hate" life in this world, friends, we have to create space for Jesus.

- And men, listen, the Lord has placed you most importantly on my heart.
- We MEN have to create space for His presence through practices like prayer, silence, and Scripture meditation, and fellowship with our brothers.
- We need this, because we need to be formed by Him, in order to reorient our desires away from worldly attachments toward eternal priorities.
  
- So, I don't know what else to say.
- I know the foolishness of preaching.
- I know that many of you will hear what I saying, but **will you** want the eternal life of Jesus enough, to make the micro-sacrifices necessary, to really embrace it?
- I guess not until you can actually appreciate what you're really missing without it.