

**SHINE ... Through Gospel-Drivenness**

***U-B-U We-B-We***

**August 28, 2016**

**PRELUDE – Jesus**

**Worship Songs – King of Love / Transition  
/ Jesus**

**Announcements – Shannon**

**Feature – Shine / Offering**

**Drama – Opportunity Knocks**

Well that was awkward, wasn't it? If we could play that scene out a little further, how do you think Teresa might be feeling about what just happened? If she sat down in her office and closed the door and reflected on her interaction with her co-workers, what kinds of thoughts would be going through her mind?

On the one hand, if she was a committed Christian who took seriously the call of Jesus to be light in a dark world (which is what we've been talking about for the past several months), she *might be* somewhat encouraged because Marta was aware that she had a relationship with Christ.

On the other hand, if she also understood that the call of Jesus goes beyond lighting to inviting; from merely *illuminating* the way of life in God's Kingdom to *pointing* the way to the Kingdom (which is what we're talking about in this series on Gospel-drivenness), I think Teresa might feel a little frustrated, because *here was a great opportunity to do that; a great opportunity share her faith and she was unable to.*

- She didn't have the right words.

- The timing and circumstances weren't conducive to that kind of discussion.
- Then there was her skeptical co-worker who clearly *did* have the words and didn't really *care* whether or not the circumstances were conducive.

In addition to being a little intimidated by him, I think Teresa might also feel demoralized and defeated because she had no answers to his criticism and challenge.

And I'm pretty sure she would be feeling all of those things ... because that's how pretty much *all of us* feel in that kind of situation. We want to be light in the way Jesus has called us to be. And we want to see other people have the opportunity experience what we have experienced. We *want* to go beyond lighting to inviting, but we're not

theologians. We're not "apologists" – intellectual defenders of the faith.

And so, with regard to this aspect of following Christ, we tell ourselves that we're just going to have to take a pass. We're going to have to hope and pray that the Martas in our world somehow run into someone who can "witness" to them better than we can.

I mean, we'll keep working on being more generous and gracious and God-centered and good – all those other aspects of being light that we've talked about over the past several months. But verbally sharing our faith with others? Explaining the Gospel in a way that someone else can understand? Handling the tough questions someone might ask? We're just not wired that way.

That's more than we can handle.

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Of course, at this point, some might say “well, Rick, there *are* some really good training programs that teach individual Christians how to do those things. And there *are* some really good presentations that people can learn which will help them explain the Gospel whenever they have the chance. If anyone really wants to, they can get better at this.”

I would agree with that. There are some good resources and you can, if you're a Christian, get better at sharing the content and story of your faith. And that's a worthy goal and a worthy investment of time for anyone who chooses to do so.

But what if there was another way? What if there was a way to spread the good news – the gospel – that didn't require us to become something we're not? A way that didn't require us to do something that was so far outside of our personality and our internal wiring that we just freeze up (like Teresa did) whenever we're in that situation?

There is such a way and it's actually what we're talking about in this series: the way of Gospel-drivenness ...

**... which we've defined as the motivation to spread the Good News (i.e. "the Gospel") through the determined, charitable, strategic investment of personal resources.**

To be a gospel-driven person (as I said in

the first week of this series) ...

- Does not mean you need to quit your job and go into full-time ministry.
- It doesn't mean you have to talk to strangers and present them with "The Four Spiritual Laws" or any other "gospel presentation."
- And it doesn't mean you have to learn how to intellectually defend the faith by debating with skeptics.

Gospel-drivenness isn't about how to *do* something. It's about how to *be* something – or someone; someone who has a desire, a longing, a compulsion to use whatever they have at their disposal to make it possible for other people to hear the Good News. But here is the key: people who are gospel-driven don't do that haphazardly. They

have a plan. They make determined, charitable and strategic investments of their personal resources.

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Now, last week we talked about what we mean by “charitable.” If you were not here or watching our livestream, I encourage you to go back and check out the message through our app or website.

Bottom line, the idea was that “charity” means being moved by compassion to give something *you have* to someone who *doesn't have* it and needs it, and that's what spreading the gospel is all about. A Gospel-driven person knows that he or she has something extremely valuable. And because we care about others we want



them to have it, too. Our motivation is charitable.

Next week we'll talk about being determined and even tenacious (and why that's so important) but, this morning, we're going to talk about what we mean by "strategic investments of personal resources." And of the four messages in this series, this is the one I'm most excited about because I think this concept is:

- a) extremely biblical (maybe even *the most* biblical way of thinking about spreading the Gospel) and
- b) extremely liberating and encouraging (especially if you've ever found yourself a situation like the one we saw in the drama).

## A Gospel Review

But before we get into that I want to ask you to bear with me as we go back one more time to the very beginning and make sure we're all on the same page about what the Gospel actually is.

After all, if you're going to be a Gospel-driven person you need to have clarity about the good news that we're trying to spread. (And remember, the word Gospel literally means "good news.")

Unfortunately, most people don't have clarity. What most people have is a version of the Gospel that is partially correct but misses the main point. And because it misses the main point, the good news doesn't seem worth getting all that excited

about.

Here's what I mean:

**Most people would say that the Gospel goes something like this; “if you’ll be sorry for your sins and believe in Jesus, then when you die you’ll go to Heaven instead of Hell.”**

They might not be too clear on exactly *what it is* we need to believe about Jesus ... or why sitting on a cloud floating around with a white robe and harp in between eternal church services could *ever* be described as “Heaven” ... but, for most people, the good news coming from Christianity is that you can get an eternal fire insurance policy (so to speak) and avoid Hell. And you can get it for free because Jesus paid it all.

Now, there is some truth in that. Jesus *did*

pay it all, therefore “salvation” – freedom from condemnation for our sins – is free.

But, honestly, as I said in the first week, this “news” doesn’t sound all that good to me *personally* – and I’m a pastor! I’m not motivated by the idea of harps and robes and clouds and never-ending church services (as much as I love and value what we do every Sunday morning) *because human beings are made for more than that.*

And the true and full Gospel – the good news as Jesus and his disciples proclaimed it – takes that reality into account.

See, the good news is not that someday God will take people out of here to where He is.

**The good news is that God *has* brought, *is* bringing and *will* bring**

**Heaven to Earth through Christ ... and anyone can be a part of it by repenting and believing.**

*“The time has come,” Jesus said.  
“The kingdom of God has come  
near. Repent and believe the  
good news!”* Mark 1:14-  
15 (NIV)

Change your thinking and believe that Heaven is as near and now as it is far and future.

Now, to understand why that’s the good news, you need to first understand the bad news. Long story short, God created this world but everything in it – including you and me – has been messed up and cursed by sin. It – and we – are headed for destruction. That’s the bad news.

But it would not be morally right for God to leave His creation and those creatures created to reflect His image (you and me) to perish without somehow providing a way for everything to be set right. That's why He took on human flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth who, in His death, atoned for sin. And now, there is no condemnation for anyone who believes in Jesus; that He really is God in the flesh – the savior who died and rose again.

And because there is no more condemnation, God is morally justified in renewing, restoring and regenerating everything. In other words, *Heaven coming to Earth and transforming everything.*

- First, in the physical body of Jesus as He was raised to a new physical life

that can never again die and can somehow exist inside AND outside of time and space. God *has* brought Heaven to Earth.

- Second, as we are given the Holy Spirit and the church and are being transformed from who we are into who He has called us to be. God *is* bringing Heaven to Earth right now.
- And finally, when Jesus returns and remakes everything including our dead or dying bodies. God *will* bring Heaven to Earth.

**This is why the Apostle Paul writes:**

*With eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in*

*glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*

*And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day ...*

*... when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. We were given this hope when we were saved.*

*Romans 8:20-24*

*(NLT)*

I love that last line. *This*, Paul is saying, is what we hope for. *This* is what we're looking forward to. *This* is the promise of



the Gospel ... which is why:

- To anyone who longs to see this world become all it could be, all that it was intended to be;
- And to anyone who longs to see love and unity and health and prosperity among all people instead of hatred, discord, disease and poverty;
- And to anyone who desires to see humanity fully-flourishing in every way possible – economically, socially, spiritually, morally, emotionally, physically;

To anyone who wants that kind of a world to exist, THIS vision, this possibility – no, this REALITY of what God has done, is doing and will do – is truly good news. In fact, *it's the best news EVER.*

And furthermore ...

- The fact that you don't have to try and clean up your act to get in on it;
- The fact that all you need to do is to turn to Jesus in humble admission that you're a sinner in more ways you can count (even if you're not a huge outrageous sinner)
- The fact that all you need to do is confess your need for a savior and believe that Jesus is that savior – that He died on the cross to pay for your sin and that He rose again as the firstborn, the first fruit of everything God has planned
- The fact that all you need to do is repent and believe instead of trying to somehow win God's favor?

That just makes “the best news ever” *even better* news! This is the greatest news the world has ever heard. Do you *see* that?

Now, what I’m going to say in the rest of this message I’m going to say to Christians. But, some of you sitting here this morning are going, “I have never heard anyone explain that before. This is so different and so radical. What do I do?” Exactly what Jesus said, “repent and believe.” “God, I’m living this way without you. No consciousness of you, no awareness of you. I don’t really care what you think. But I’m wrong. I want to turn around and go *this* way. I want you to be the Lord of my life. I want you to be my Savior.” And you receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord, and you’re in! That’s what this means. And I hope

some of you today will do that. When you go home this afternoon, or tonight when you go to bed, you say, “Jesus, I heard this thing this morning that I’ve never heard this way before. I accept you. I believe in you as my Savior.” And you’ll be born again, the scripture says. And you’ll get to be part of what God has done, is doing, and will do.

## **A Simple Strategy**

Now, if we’re Christians who have heard and believed this good news, not only are we the most blessed of all people on the face of the Earth, we are also given by Jesus the glorious assignment of somehow *spreading it* to others.

**As Jesus told his very first followers**

## **after His resurrection:**

*“Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.”* Mark 16:15 (NLT)

“Out of a heart of compassion, offer what you have in Me to those who don’t have it and who desperately need it” (which, again, is why gospel-drivenness is *charitable*).

The question is ... how do we do that – how do we preach the good news to everyone – without all of us quitting our jobs, standing on street corners handing out tracts and becoming preachers? How do we spread the gospel without everyone trying to become something they’re not? How do we get the word out in a way that matches how God has uniquely designed us and wired us up? In a way that takes full advantage of

the personal resources that God has provided each of us individually – things like our gifts and talents and experiences and training and wealth and wisdom?

That's where strategy comes in because, remember, Gospel-drivenness is the motivation to spread the Good News (i.e. “the Gospel”) through the determined, charitable, *strategic investment* of personal resources.

And by the way, remember that we call whatever it is we're going to do strategically an “investment” because Jesus said we never ever truly sacrifice or give anything up for Him and the sake of the Gospel. Whatever we do with our personal resources to spread the Gospel is coming back to us *and then some* either in this life or

in the life we're going to have when Jesus returns and makes all things new.

Now, let's talk about strategy.

And I should say at the beginning that, unlike the definition of Gospel-drivenness, what I'm about to share with you isn't something I just made up. It isn't something new or modern. In fact, what I'm going to share with you with very few exceptions has been *the primary strategy* for spreading the gospel in community after community for generation after generation since the earliest days of Christianity – almost 2000 years ago.

The strategy comes down to one simple word. Ready?

## **The strategy is “church.”**

Let me say that again in case you missed it. I know it went by really quick. *The primary strategy for spreading the gospel is “church.”*

Of course, even though the word “church” is simple it’s also a little nebulous because it conjures up different images to different people.

- To some, “church” means what we’re doing right now. “Church” is an event you go to – typically a worship service. For example, “we went to church this morning and the pastor had a really great message.” (Just an example).
- To some people, “church” means a building. For example, “The air



conditioning in parts of the church is no longer working and we need to buy two new rooftop units ASAP to fix the problem” (which, by the way is true. I’ll tell you more about that at a later date).

- To some people, “church” means an institution or a hierarchy. For example, “during the Reformation of the 1500s, the Protestant *Church* split from The Catholic *Church* which had previously split with the Orthodox *Church* in the Great Schism of 1054.”

But when I say “church” – specifically, when I say *the strategy for spreading the gospel is “church”* – I don’t mean any of those things.

When I say the strategy for spreading the gospel is – and has been for centuries – “church,” I mean ...

**Followers of Jesus joined together in a local fellowship, collectively working together to proclaim in word and deed the Good News to the people around them.**

Let me say that again because that isn't very simple.

The strategy for spreading the gospel is – and has been for centuries – *church* ... which is *not* fundamentally an event or a building or an institution. “Church” is followers of Jesus who band together in a local fellowship, collectively working together to proclaim in word and deed the Good News to the people around them.

Now, *the way* those followers of Jesus might work together to proclaim the Gospel to those around them might include services. It might make use of a building. It might develop into an institution. But, fundamentally, at the core, “church” is not any of those things. Those things are just tools and methods.

At the core, the church is followers of Jesus who band together in a local fellowship and God’s plan is for them to work together to spread the gospel by what they say and what they do.

For example ... as Luke writes in the book of Acts, chapter 2. Following Jesus’ resurrection and his return to His Father and the sending of the Holy Spirit ...

*All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.*

They were banded together in a local fellowship. Luke continues:

*A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders.*

*And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great*

*joy and generosity — all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.*

### **And guess what happened?**

*And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.*

*Acts 2:42-47 (NLT)*

In other words, their life together – their collective positive influence in word and deed – caused the Gospel to spread throughout their community. It caused people who were not Christians to want to be Christians. And that’s what happened.

And this was not an isolated occurrence. Fast forward 30 years from the formation of the first church in Jerusalem to a completely different part of the world: the

city of Philippi which was a retirement community for Roman soldiers. That's about as far away as you can get culturally-speaking from the Jerusalem. But there's a church there – many followers of Jesus who have banded together in a local fellowship.

And the Apostle Paul writes them a letter.

**Here's part of what he writes to them at the very beginning.**

*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.*  
*Philippians 1:25-27 (NIV)*

What's he saying? God's plan is for you all to work together *as one* to spread the gospel by what you say and what you do.

## **Sweet Freedom**

And we'll talk about what that looks like in just a minute but, first, I want you to notice something about both of these situations. In neither case was there a movement or an instruction for everyone to quit their jobs and start preaching en masse. Instead ...

- It was “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the great gift you have been given in the Gospel.”
- It was “keep devoting yourselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals and to prayer.”

In other words, “*be the church*. Collectively work together to proclaim in word and deed the Good News to the people around you.

Now, here’s what’s really cool about that.

**If we’re supposed to work together to spread the Gospel, then that means it’s not all up to any one individual ...**

... which is a good thing – a freeing thing – because no one individual can do it all. No one individual has everything that it takes to share the gospel and then help a person believe in and receive Jesus and then grow up in their faith to become a mature disciple of Jesus.

Instead, each one of us, if we’re a Christian,



has a piece of what it takes to do that ... which is what Paul describes in one of his letters to the church Rome. He writes that

...

*Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.*

*In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously.*

*And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly. Romans 12:7-12 (NLT)*

To the church at Corinth he repeated the same thought:

*Our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. 1 Corinthians 12:7-18 (NLT)*

**... a thought which he also echoed in his letter to the Christians at Ephesus:**

*He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. AND ... as each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. Ephesians 4:11-16 (NLT)*

As each part does its own special work – not *some other part's special work* – as each part does its own special work, the body of Christ – the church, the local fellowship of believers – is able to proclaim together in word and deed the Good News to the people around them (among other things).

You don't have to be anything but you. If you will be you, we can be we.

That's the primary strategy. And it has *been* the primary strategy since the very beginning of Christianity.

## **A Practical Implication**

Now in the few minutes that I have left for this message, I want to give you just one

practical implication of all of this, then we'll be finished.

Here it is: Because the primary strategy for spreading the Gospel is “church” ...

**A gospel-driven person joins a local fellowship and invests their personal resources. (repeat)**

They find a church where they feel good about putting their gifts and talents and experiences and finances and whatever else on the table and they say, “I’m in. And here’s what I have to offer. I want to work together with you all in whatever way I can to help proclaim in word and deed the Good News to the people around us.”

A gospel-driven person joins a local fellowship and invests their personal

resources.

“Well, duh, Rick. That’s pretty obvious, isn’t it?”

You would think so. But you would be shocked (or maybe you wouldn’t) at how many people – Christians who really do love Jesus – do not join a local fellowship. They don’t go to the intro class or membership class and find out what that church is all about and how it is trying to spread the gospel in their community.

You would be shocked (or maybe not) at how many people – Christians – think the local church is just a nice-to-have if you can fit it into your schedule ... or if you like the message series the pastor is currently preaching ... or if you’re not mad at

someone.

You would be shocked at how many people – Christians – never go beyond just showing up on Sunday morning. And I don't want to downplay the importance of that and the value of that. Showing up is a big deal. If people who say they love Jesus take a pass and sleep in on Sundays what we do here in this room is affected. Negatively.

That's why the writer to the Hebrews says:

*Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.  
Hebrews 12:25 (NLT)*

But it takes a lot more than just showing up

to make a church function full-throttle. It takes every Christian in some way or another investing for the church to be everything it can be; every Christian being generous with financial assets and giving not randomly but regularly; every Christian stepping up to volunteer in some way, again, regularly not randomly.

Now, I understand why some people can't do those things. Some people have legitimate reasons. We're underwater financially. We're having to care for someone in crisis.

But honestly, for too many of us, we're just lazy. Or we're distracted. Instead of investing in the greatest rescue project in human history, we're goofing off.

And here's the impact. I need you to mentally rewind all the way back to the drama before this message to see it. What if Teresa could have responded, "I can tell you what's happened to me as a Christian but I'm not a theologian. I can't answer your deep questions about God. I can't answer your points of contention with Christianity.

"But I know people who can. If you want to know and understand better, I'll pick you up for church Sunday morning. You can bring your kids because we run an awesome Children's program because of awesome volunteers. You can come with me to my small group (leader) or to Ladies Night at the K because we have some great ladies ..."



Of course, that assumes that Teresa is involved in a church and that her church is full of people who are gospel-driven; people who understand that the primary strategy is for Christians to join a local fellowship, so they can collectively work together proclaiming in word and deed the Good News to the people around them.

That's why this matters so much. We're all counting on one another. We need one another.

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Some of you get this ... thank you.  
Some of you have never thought about this  
... you need to think about this  
Some need to rearrange priorities.

<prayer>

**Feature – Here I Am Send Me /Matt Papa**

## **CLOSING COMMENTS**

1. Pick up refrigerator magnets
2. Opportunity to volunteer and small groups
3. Prayer pastor

Endnotes