

Shine Through Gospel-Drivenness
What's So Good about the
Good News?
August 14, 2016

PRELUDE – Rejoice

Worship Songs – Rejoice / Transition / It Is Well / Made New /

Feature – Sunshine Song

It was a hot day – probably mid- to late-July when temperatures can top out at around 105 degrees – and the sun beat down on the man's head. Traveling since sunrise, he and his friends had been hurrying – wanting to make their way as quickly as possible through this part of the country – and sweat poured off his brow as they walked along the dusty road. Just when it seemed the little band could go no further, they

came upon a well on the outskirts of a small city.

As the man sat on the rock ledge of the well to rest, his companions offered to go into town to buy food for their lunch. He consented and, soon, he was alone. He closed his eyes and thought to himself, “if only I had a bucket so I could draw water from this well.”

A few moments later, the woman arrived. It wasn't the normal time when women came to get water, and it was unusual for a woman to come to a well alone. But this woman was different. We don't know her name, but we do know that she was an outcast in a land of outcasts. But all of that was about to change ... because the man sitting at that well was none other than

Jesus of Nazareth.

The 4th chapter of John's Gospel tells us that Jesus asks her to draw a drink for him, too, as she fills her bucket. And a dialogue begins. In the course of the conversation (which turns out to be longest recorded exchange between Jesus and anyone else in the Bible), Jesus specifically identifies her greatest sin and her greatest need and reveals to her that He is the Messiah; that He can give her "living water" – the kind that brings eternal life – if only she would ask. Amazed by what he knows about her and by what He is saying to her, she believes him.

Just then, Jesus' disciples return and the woman does the most astonishing thing. Leaving her bucket at the well, she sprints

past them back into the town; a town where she has quite a reputation – and not a good one because *she's been married five times and the man she is currently living with is not her husband*. That's why she comes to the well in the middle of the day, alone. Embarrassed and ashamed, she is avoiding the other women of her town.

But none of that matters now.

John writes that ...

The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village and told everyone, "Come and meet a man who told me everything I ever did! Can this be the Messiah?"

So the people came streaming from the village to see him.

John 4:28-30

(NLT)

John goes on to tell us that ...

Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, “He told me everything I ever did!”

When they came out to see him, they begged him to stay at their village. So [Jesus] stayed for two days, long enough for many of them to hear his message and believe.

John 4:39-41 (NLT)

Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe because we have heard him ourselves, not just because of what you told us. He is indeed the Savior of the world.”

John 4:42 (NLT)

In other words “Thanks for sharing your story. Thanks for shining the light. Thanks for (in the words of Jason Mraz) sending out your ray of sunshine so that we could meet Jesus ... for ourselves ... and believe.”

Let’s pray together before we continue.

Father in Heaven, I want to stop right here and thank You for that unnamed woman who so long ago took the risk of inviting the people of her village to share the experience she had with Jesus.

And I thank You that the people of that little town were amazed not only by what *she* told them but by *their own* experience with Jesus – so amazed, in fact, that in the months and years that

followed they took the risk of inviting others in the non-Jewish world in which they lived to know Jesus as they knew Him.

And I thank You that their light kept spreading throughout the gentile world and then down through the centuries to where we are today, here in the Kansas City Northland. We are indebted to them for their faith and their willingness to invite others to share in it.

So I pray that what we do this morning and over the next several weeks will enable us to let our light shine in the same way, that others may meet Jesus for themselves and believe.

I ask this in His Name and for the sake of His Kingdom. Amen.

A Quick Review

I suppose that's a good way to introduce once again the subject that has consumed us over the past three months here at North Heartland. It was May 8th when we began what will eventually turn out to be the longest series of messages I've ever done in my life!

And with good reason – at least, in my opinion – because now, more than ever, Christians and churches need to shine for Christ. Now, more than ever, this world needs to see the light not just of a better way to live but the light of the truth about who our God is and what He has done and

what that can mean for them.

This is our calling according to Jesus.

*“You are the light of the world—
like a city on a hilltop that
cannot be hidden ... Let your
light shine before others, that
they may see your good deeds
and glorify your Father in
heaven.” Matthew 5:14,16
(NIV)*

So we've been talking about how to practically go about doing that. What kinds of good deeds and character qualities have the effect of bringing light into the darkness of our culture? What traits and behaviors can produce astonishment in people who do not know Jesus; astonishment that leads them to say “no one lives like that. Help me understand why

you attempt to do so.”

To this point we've identified three: generosity, graciousness and God-centeredness.

Generosity, we discovered in the month of May, is the premeditated, calculated, designated emancipation of personal financial assets to the people and causes God loves.

Generosity is not the same as giving because everybody in this culture gives at least something some of the time because everybody can be motivated or guilted into giving when there's a need. But few people organize their lives around the principle of generosity. Few people follow a well-thought-out plan for how much they're going to give and when and to what or whom.

So *that* kind of giving – generosity – is unique and it makes all the difference. It empowers great things to happen that otherwise wouldn't happen – like churches and other non-profit organizations that simply cannot exist on random acts of giving here and there (as much as those acts of giving are welcomed and appreciated).

The second light-shining-in-the-darkness characteristic we looked at (during the month of June) was *graciousness*.

And we defined graciousness as the unconditional predisposition to treat “them” better than they deserve because that’s how we – as sinners who constantly fail God and fall short of His intentions for us – have been treated by God.

Jesus didn't come for people who have it all together. He didn't come for people who liked Him. He came for people like that outcast woman at the well in the outcast country of Samaria. Ignoring the centuries of animosity that existed between Jews and Samaritans, he treated her with respect. Looking past the stigma of her sin, He treated her with dignity. His graciousness was so remarkable that, when the disciples returned, John writes that they couldn't fathom why Jesus would have even been talking to her.

And when we treat others that same way – specifically those who are not like us or do not like us – it's just as remarkable. It's like light shining in the darkness because *no one lives that way*. In this world it's “get even

when they get you” or “get them before they get you.”

And then last month we talked about God-centeredness.

God-centeredness, we learned, is the humble, accountable, obedient and dependent submission to the Supreme Being in the Universe (God).

And the reason this characteristic is so unique is that almost everyone in this culture believes in God but very few are actually God-centered. Very few live with the accurate perspective:

- That it’s all about Thee and not about Me.
- That everything I have is ultimately Thine and not Mine

- That “Thus” trumps “Us” (what God says trumps what we and our culture think is “right”)
- That the power to be and do what God wants you to be and do *is* not all up to you. The power comes from the Holy Spirit who comes to live in you when you believe and receive Christ for yourself.

Now, if you’re new here or you missed any of those messages you can watch, listen or read them on our app or our website. But, today we’re going to shift gears and move to the next characteristic of Christ-followers that not only shines the light but actually goes a step beyond it.

Beyond Lighting

I'm calling this characteristic "Gospel-drivenness" ... which, I'll admit, is somewhat of an awkward title as the idea of being "driven by the Gospel" (and remember that the word "gospel" literally means "good news") ... the idea of being "driven by the good news" isn't something that typically comes up in casual conversation. But it's extremely important for followers of Jesus to understand what it is –

... and by the way, I need to say that what I'm talking about this morning is intended for those who *are* followers of Jesus. If you're not a Christian – if you're still in the process of considering the claims of Jesus and Christianity – you don't have to do anything with I'm saying today. You're welcome to listen in and understand more,

but there's no expectation that you'll do anything about this.

Anyway, as I was saying ...

It's extremely important for Christians to understand what it means to be gospel-driven because Jesus calls us to go *beyond lighting to inviting*.

Let me say that again. If you're a Christian; if you're a follower of Jesus, He calls you to go *beyond lighting to inviting*.

We've already seen a great example of that this morning. To anyone who would listen the woman at the well said, "Come and see this man who I met! I think he might be the Messiah!"

In fact, that pattern of inviting others was

typical of those who followed Jesus. Again, in the Gospel of John, we read that one day Jesus decided to visit the hometown of Peter and Andrew. While he was there he said to Philip: “Come, follow me.” And Philip did.

But John tells us that Philip also did something else.

Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, “We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth.” John 1:45 (NLT)

“Nazareth!” exclaimed Nathanael. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

“Come and see for yourself,”

Philip replied. John 1:46
(NLT)

And Nathanael did. And he, too, believed and began to follow Jesus.

See, it's possible to be wonderfully generous and gracious and God-centered and to have people say "wow, you're really different" (and to mean that in a good way, not a weird way). It's possible to be generous and gracious and God-centered and a whole host of other winsome characteristics that stand out in a world full of sin and darkness *and also* miss the mark of what God desires to happen because of our light.

Remember what Jesus said the goal was?

“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and <do what?> glorify your Father in heaven.”
Matthew 5:16 (NIV)

The light that radiates from our lives as Christians isn't intended just to impress people with what He's done for us. “Wow, lucky you. The sun keeps shining upon you while I struggle.”

Instead, the light is intended to direct them *personally* to God *for themselves*. It's intended to direct them to discover the good news for themselves ...

... which is why Jesus also said to His followers:

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.

*And you will be my witnesses,
telling people about me
everywhere—in Jerusalem,
throughout Judea, in Samaria,
and to the ends of the earth.”*

Acts 1:8 (NLT)

It's why Paul wrote that ...

*We are Christ's ambassadors;
God is making his appeal
through us. We speak for Christ
when we plead, "Come back to
God!" 2 Corinthians 5:20
(NLT)*

There's a sequence; a process of "light then invite." Live in such a way that people see what good things God is doing in you because of Christ and then invite them to experience that same thing for themselves. Go beyond lighting to inviting.

That's why it's so important to become not just a generous or gracious or God-centered person but also a Gospel-driven person.

A Definition

So, what is a Gospel-driven person? What is Gospel-Drivenness?

Before I give you my definition, I think it might be helpful to define what it is *not* because there are a lot of misconceptions in the mind of most Christians these days. And just the thought of some of those misconceptions is enough to turn us off because we don't want to be "like that."

So, here goes:

- To be a gospel-driven person does not

mean you have to stand on street corners and preach about Jesus (though some people who do that *truly are* driven by the gospel).

- It doesn't mean you need to quit your job and go into full-time ministry (though some people who do that *truly are* driven by the gospel).
- And it doesn't mean you have to talk to strangers and present them with "The Four Spiritual Laws" or any other "gospel presentation" (though some people who do that *truly are* driven by the gospel).

And gospel-drivenness doesn't mean ...

- You have to become an obnoxious Bible-thumper who badgers family and friends to repent.

- Or an intellectual defender of the faith who debates the minutiae of apologetics with skeptics.
- Or an argumentative culture warrior who rails against the decline of God-fearing morality and virtue in our country.

To be a Gospel-driven person you don't have to be any of those things (and you probably *shouldn't* be some of them!) because ...

Gospel-drivenness is simply the motivation to spread the Good News (i.e. “the Gospel”) through the determined, charitable, strategic investment of personal resources.

Let me say that again. Gospel-drivenness is the motivation to spread the Good News through the determined, charitable,

strategic investment of personal resources. It's the desire and the intention to use whatever I have at my disposal to make it possible for other people to hear the Good News.

Now, I know that some of you are thinking: "OK, that's interesting, Rick. Where did you get that definition?"

So, I'll tell you. I just made it up. But I spent *a lot of time* in making it up, so the words that I'm using in it are significant.

And over the next few weeks, I want to unpack them for you because I think they will give you a whole new perspective on this issue – one that is so inspiring and encouraging – especially if you've been a Christian for some time. And I say that

because one of the things that a lot of long-time Christians *absolutely dread about being a Christian* is the idea of “witnessing.”

If you grew up in an evangelical church you know what that is, right? “Witnessing” is where you have to go to someone else and explain to them how to become a Christian and – possibly, hopefully – lead them to pray a prayer where they invite Jesus into their life.

Not that that’s a bad thing (because it’s not) ... and not that it isn’t worth learning how to do (because it is) ... but that’s not what Gospel-drivenness is all about. Being a gospel-driven person is so much more than trying to explain “getting saved” to someone (which, by personality and giftedness, *some of us are just not wired to do.*

And that's OK).

So, over the next few weeks, as I define what I mean by Gospel-drivenness, I want you to take a deep breath and relax because I'm going to talk to you about how to *be* something not how to *do* something, OK?

And I'll make you a promise. *When you understand it, you'll want to be it.* When you understand what it means to be a Gospel-driven person you'll want to be one because it will give your life a new sense of purpose and meaning *and* it will also bring you a great reward in the life to come.

That's why I use the word "investment" in the definition. Gospel-drivenness is an *investment* that comes with a huge positive payoff.

And that's not *my* promise. That's the promise Jesus makes.

“I assure you that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits upon his glorious throne ... everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will inherit eternal life.”

Matthew 19:28a,29 (NLT)

If you're a follower of Jesus, you will never give up your time, talent or treasure to make it possible for other people to hear the Good News without it eventually coming back to you. That's why whatever we do in the service of the Gospel is never really a sacrifice but an investment. You're

going to get it all back and then some. That's the promise Jesus makes.

What Is the Good News?

And we'll talk more about that in the coming weeks but, in the time I have left today, we have to get one thing very clear. To be a Gospel-driven person requires that we know and understand what the Gospel actually *is*. And not so much so that we can explain it to others but so that we know and understand *what's* so *good* about it; why the "Good News" really is good news.

Now, if you know anything at all about Christian history and theology, you know that since the second century A.D., countless authors have written countless volumes endeavoring to explain the Gospel

with all of its magnificent qualities and all of its intricate implications. And I've left myself about five minutes.

And I've done that intentionally because if we're going to be gospel-driven people who can light and invite (through the determined, charitable, strategic investment of personal resources) we've got to keep it simple!

So, let's see if I can do it. And let me begin by talking about what the Gospel is *not* that most people think it *is*.

If you were to randomly go around asking people "what is the Gospel? What is the good news of the Christian faith?" most (whether they're Christian or non-Christian) would say it's "just believe in

Jesus and when you die chances are you'll get to go to Heaven instead of Hell." Now, some might add that you also have to try and live a good life in addition to believing in Jesus but, for most people, the good news of Christianity is that you can get an eternal fire insurance policy and it doesn't cost a thing because Jesus paid it all.

Now, I don't know about you but, to me, fire insurance isn't something all that motivating even if it is free. I mean, no one that I know is all that excited about having a fire so they can cash in on the policy. Fire insurance is your last resort. It's better than *not* having fire insurance but it's not something you hope you ever have to use.

And a lot of people feel the same way about the Gospel as they understand it. No one

wants to spend an eternity in any place the Bible describes as Hell so, if you *have* to choose, Heaven is obviously the better option. But, the idea of floating around on a cloud ... with a harp ... wearing a white robe ... and attending never-ending church services for all of eternity?

Honestly, to me (and I'm pretty sure that preachers aren't supposed to say this) ... *that* sounds like hell. It doesn't sound like something I would describe enthusiastically as "good" because that is not what God created humans to be and do. We're not spirits presently trapped in a body who one day will be set free to become unconsciously melded into His spirit forever and ever amen.

However, and fortunately, the good news –

the Gospel – thank God *is not that!*

So what is it? It's very simple.

In the book of Mark chapter 1 we read that

...

*Jesus went into Galilee,
proclaiming the good news of
God.*

Awesome! Here it comes!

Are you ready?

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

The good news is not that someday God will

take you out of here to where He is if you change your mind about Him (repent) and believe. It's that God and the way He has designed and intended things to be (as they are in the Kingdom of Heaven) to be is coming *here*, to earth.

Actually, that's not totally accurate.

The good news is that God *has* already brought, *is* currently bringing and *will* in the future bring Heaven to Earth.

And the resurrection of Jesus is the beginning of that. In His physical body, God did in a very *small* part of creation what He is going to eventually do in *all* of creation. He's going to renew it, restore it and regenerate it to the paradise it was intended to be before sin and death spoiled it. The good news is about what already

happened in Jesus, is happening right now and will happen when He returns. Everything about human existence that's wrong will be set right.

The good news is that God has brought, is bringing and will bring Heaven to Earth.

Actually, that's not totally accurate. There's one more part to it.

The good news is that God *has* brought, *is* bringing and *will* bring Heaven to Earth ... and you can be a part of it by repenting and believing.

You can begin to experience the Kingdom of Heaven right now as your heart and your mind and your character are transformed. You'll still have to deal with the sin and pain of this fallen world but in your spirit

you will be renewed. The Kingdom of God will come to life *in you* as you put into practice the teachings of Jesus.

And you don't have to do anything to earn it – salvation, we call it – other than repent and believe in Jesus.

And that friends, is the good news.

Let's pray together.

<prayer>

Amen.

Ministry Moment – Video

**CLOSING COMMENTS – Rick / Offering
@door**

1. Multiple people to do those jobs
2. Ending early to go visit. DO NOT PICK UP KIDS FROM AL. THEY ARE GOING UNTIL 12.
3. Offering @door

Endnotes