

SHINE ... Through Gospel-Drivenness

Charity Case

August 21, 2016

PRELUDE – Great God Who Saves

Worship Songs – Great God Who Saves / This Is Amazing Grace

Communion

Good morning everyone.

One of the traditions of the church since its earliest days has been to formally remember together (as a gathered body of believers) the amazing grace that has been given to us in Christ. Jesus himself asked us to do that from time to time in what we typically call “communion” or “The Lord’s Supper.”

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for

you; do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 1

Corinthians 11:23-25 (NIV)

So, in the next few minutes, that’s what we’re going to do. We’re going to remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the cross as we share in communion together. We’re going to remember – and experience, I hope – that our God is a God of grace and mercy.

Now, whenever we do this, there are always some who think “well, Rick, I’d really like to participate but I just don’t feel worthy of receiving communion today. I haven’t felt close to God. I’ve been pretty sinful lately.

And I always say “that’s OK. I understand how you feel. But you should come and receive it anyway because Jesus said ‘I have not come to

call the righteous. I have not come for the people who feel close to God or who think they are worthy.”

Jesus came, as the song said, to save “a wretch like me; those who were blind and could not see”; *people who know they are not righteous*; people who know they have fallen short of the perfection for which God intended them.

And communion is meant to remind us of that; to remind us that our standing with God is not the result of anything we do or don't do. It's about what Jesus did. It's totally *grace*. In sending Jesus to atone for our sin, God treats us far better than we deserve. He offers us far more than we have earned. And there are no strings attached.

As Paul wrote to one of his protégés, Titus.

He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth

*and new life through the Holy Spirit.
He generously poured out the Spirit
upon us ...*

*... through Jesus Christ our Savior.
Because of his grace he declared us
righteous and gave us confidence
that we will inherit eternal life.*

Titus 3:5-7 (NLT)

So, during this next song, I invite you to get up from your seat and go to one of the communion tables, take a piece of bread, dip it in the juice, eat it and then go back to your seat. And be confident and thankful that acceptance and forgiveness is not about how good *we* are but about how good *Jesus* is.

Be thankful that God is a God of grace.

**Just As I Am (Cotrell) / Communion
Transition / Prayer – Nathan**

**Ministry Moment – Video
Feature – Alleluia, He Has Loved Us / Offering**

What a fun song ... and also a great segue back to where we left off last week!

As you know if you were here or you watched our livestream or caught the message later through our app or website, last Sunday we began talking about what we're calling (for lack of a better term) "Gospel drivenness" ... which is the fourth of the five "G"s we've been focusing on since last spring – five rare and winsome characteristics that enable those of us who are believers in Jesus to light up the world around us (which is part of the mission He gave us). We started with *generosity* then moved to *graciousness* and then to *God-centeredness*. And then last Sunday we began talking about *Gospel-drivenness*.

A Quick Review

And, in that message – the first of this series – I wanted to accomplish two things.

- I wanted to define exactly what I meant by the term.
- I wanted to make sure that all of us are clear on exactly what the Gospel (or good news) actually is. (Remember, we learned that “Gospel” is simply an old-English word that means “good news.”)

So, here’s how I defined the term.

Gospel-drivenness is 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.

A person who is driven by the gospel or good news has a desire, a longing, a compulsion to use whatever they have at their disposal (their

personal resources) to make it possible for other people to hear that Good News. And they express or implement this desire, longing and compulsion in a way that is strategic, determined and charitable.

Now, as I said last Sunday, contrary to how it might sound at first, this series isn't about how to witness for Jesus or how to share your faith with others (though that's important and valuable). My goal in this series isn't to teach you how to *do* something; it's to teach you how to *be* something. For unless you become a Gospel-driven person, even talking about that kind of stuff is going to feel like something you *have to do* that you really don't *want to do* especially if you're an introvert or don't have a lot of theological training.

But that's what's so great about this characteristic of gospel-drivenness. You don't have to be an extrovert or a preacher and you don't need to *become* an extrovert or a preacher.

Anyone who believes in and follows Jesus can be gospel-driven.

In fact – and this is the promise I made last week – once you understand what Gospel-drivenness *is*, you'll *want to be* a gospel-driven person. Not only will it result in a great reward in the life to come (which is actually the promise Jesus made – not me), *your whole life will take on a new sense of purpose and meaning*. And I think it will become clear why I say that as we get into further into this.

Now, one more point by way of review before we do get further into this.

When you think about generosity and graciousness and God-centeredness and goodness (which we'll begin looking at in a few weeks), I think it's pretty obvious how those truly are light-shining-in-the-darkness characteristics because, as I have said repeatedly,

very few people live like that in this culture. Very few people, for example, live with the unconditional predisposition (the no-strings-attached made-up-mind) to treat “them” (people who don’t like us and who are not like us) better than they deserve because that’s how God treats us in Christ.

So when you and I do that – when we treat people who don’t like us and who are not like us better than they deserve and better than they would expect (which is how we defined graciousness), *it’s a surprise to them* and anyone else who is watching. And it causes a reaction: “Nobody lives like that. Why do you?”

It’s like a light-switch gets flipped and suddenly they catch a glimpse of a whole different world with a completely different way to live. The light shines on God and His Kingdom – His reality and His way of living ...

... which is what Jesus said is supposed to

happen because of those who belong to Him, right?

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

... which is another way of saying “so their opinion and perception of God will be raised higher.”

And whenever we're generous or gracious or God-centered or good, because those characteristics are so rare in our culture, that's what happens. The light comes on and people are impressed by the effect that knowing Him is having on us and, quite often, they're curious about that and are drawn to Him.

However – and this is very important – gospel-drivenness (the motivation to spread the good news through the determined, charitable,

strategic investment of personal resources) *doesn't typically have that same effect.* It doesn't "wow" people like the other "G"s.

But we're talking about it as part of this SHINE concept because, as we saw last week ...

Our purpose, our role, our function as Christians is intended to go beyond simply *lighting to inviting.*

In other words, if you're a Christian; if you're a follower of Jesus, part of God's purpose in your life is that your experience with Him has the effect not just of turning on the light for others to *see* but also so that they know that *they, too, can come to God and experience Him* just like you.

This principle is taught all throughout the New Testament but the prime example is the story we talked about last week, where Jesus comes to the well just outside of the town of Sychar in the province of Samaria and meets up with a woman who, after conversing with Him for a while,

realizes that He is no ordinary traveler and no ordinary man. Somehow, He knows all about her life though He had never met her!

So, we read 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)

For two whole days they listened to Jesus’ teaching.

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)

A Question of Motive

Now, I want to take this story a step further than we did last Sunday and I want to ask you to think about something. *Why would this woman do this?* What's her motivation for sharing what she knows and even going so far as inviting everyone else to come and see for themselves?

Remember, she has quite a reputation in this town – 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's coming to the well by herself in the middle of the day.

See, in that part of the world and in that culture, the women would typically go to draw water early in the morning before it got too hot. And they would go together, partly because of the safety in numbers but also for the fellowship with each other. *But not this woman.* She's either been ostracized because of her lifestyle or she's

embarrassed and ashamed and avoiding the other women. Whatever the reason, she is an outcast among the people of her village.

Point being

- If anyone ever had a reason to keep something to themselves ...
- If anyone ever had a reason *not* to share the good news that “hey, I think I might have just met the guy who is the Messiah sent from God” ...
- If anyone ever had a reason *not* to invite others to come and see for themselves ...

... it's her!

But that's exactly what she does.

Why? What's her motivation? To put it in terms of our definition ... what is driving her to share the good news?

I think that it's *charity*. Charity.

You know what charity is, right? And I don't mean "a charity" like the United Way or Restoration House or Hillcrest. I'm talking about the quality of being charitable as a person.

Charity is being moved by compassion to give something *you have* to someone who doesn't have it and needs it.

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For example:

- Charity is when you hear about people in Louisiana who have lost everything in the flooding and you feel compassion. And then because you have more than enough, you write a check.
- Charity is when you look at all the shirts

hanging in your closet and you think about people who don't have either a closet or clothing and you feel compassion for them. And then you put together a bag of clothing and take it to Hillcrest Ministries.

- And charity is what was going on in this story. In spite of how she felt about herself and/or how she had been treated, she was moved by compassion because they did not know what she knew and had not experienced what she had experienced. So, she shared her experience with them and invited them to see for themselves.

That's why a gospel-driven person is someone who is motivated to spread the good news not just through the determined and strategic investment of personal resources (which we'll talk about next Sunday and the next). Their investment is also *charitable*. Whatever they do in this regard comes from a heart of compassion because *they* have something that *others* do not

have but desperately need.

There's a fascinating passage in one of the Apostle Paul's letters that illustrates this kind of compassion. If you know anything about his personal history and background, you know that Paul was of Hebrew descent and a devoted member of the Pharisees (who did not like Jesus at all and were in constant conflict with him). That's why, for many years before Paul become a Christian, he was an avid persecutor of Christians and the church.

But, at one point, on one of his journeys he met Jesus and he repented. He changed his mind about Him. He realized that he and his fellow Pharisees were wrong to have rejected Jesus; that they were wrong to have participated in having Him killed. And he became a believer in and a follower of Jesus.

Now, listen to what he wrote about his former friends.

My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief for my people, my Jewish brothers and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed—cut off from Christ!—if that would save them.

They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's adopted children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them his law. He gave them the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises.

Romans 9:2-4 (NLT)

In other words, if anyone should believe in Jesus – if anyone should enjoy the benefits of believing in Jesus – it should be them. How heartbreaking, how bitter of a pill to swallow, that they of all people do not believe. “I wish with all my heart,” Paul was saying, “that *they* could have what *I* have in knowing Jesus. And I would do anything to see that happen.”

That's charity. That's compassion. And it's part

of Gospel-drivenness – the motivation to spread the good news to others through the determined, *charitable* and strategic investment of personal resources.

Messed-Up Motives

Now, one reason why it's so important to understand that the underlying motivation for spreading the Good News is “charity compelled by compassion” is that we Christians so often get it wrong.

And when we get it wrong it actually has the effect of repelling people – of pushing them away from God instead of pointing them to God. Most people can sense whether or not our motives are right when it comes to how we approach them about church or Christ or Christianity.

By “getting it wrong” I mean that instead of being motivated by love and compassion for people who need what we have, we're motivated

by something else – something that’s more about ourselves than about them.

And these other motives are usually very subtle. You probably wouldn’t recognize them in yourself unless you intentionally thought about it or someone (including the Holy Spirit) called you on it.

There are three of them.

Sometimes our motivation for spreading the Gospel is our own internal need to be “right.”

We really want to spread the good news but not so much for the benefit of others as we want to affirm our own intelligence for having figured it out. The more we talk about the Gospel, the more our ego is fed because realize just how right we’ve gotten it and how wrong everyone else has gotten it.

How do you know if this is your underlying

motive?

- Whenever you have a conversation about Christ or the church does it often turn into an argument? Does it become about winning or losing and proving your point?
- Do you feel a sense of superiority to those who do not believe when you talk about your faith?

If so, you're probably motivated more by being right than you are by compassion and charity.

Sometimes our motivation for spreading the Gospel is our desire to impress other Christians with how spiritual we are.

After all, being light to the world around us is *really, really, really* important and the better job we do at that (including the more people we invite and who respond to our invitation) ... well, that's *obviously* an indication of how spiritual we are and how much God is using us.

How do you know if this is your underlying motive?

- Do you ever tell yourself that you're the only one who is "on fire for the Lord" while everyone else is lukewarm?
- Do you feel like you're special – in an advanced kind of way – compared to other Christians because you can easily talk about your faith and explain the gospel?

If so, you're probably motivated more by impressing other believers than you are compassion and charity.

Finally, sometimes our motivation for spreading the Gospel is our sense of obligation and duty to do whatever Jesus says.

Not that doing what Jesus says isn't important. Obviously it is (or it should be). But our

motivation for spreading the good news, again, isn't so much for the benefit of others as it is our own pride in knowing that we're doing what God said to do.

How do you know if this might be your underlying motive?

- When you think about the call to be “light for Jesus” does it feel like just another “to do” on a long list of “to dos” from God?
- Do you ever feel like spreading the gospel is all up to you and that no one else will do it if you don't?

If so, you're probably motivated more by obligation and duty than you are by compassion and charity.

Now, the reason I know about these three messed-up motives is that, at various times, they have been *my* motives.

- I needed to be right
- I wanted to impress other Christians with how spiritual and committed I was
- I needed to do my duty for Jesus

And in those times, looking on from the outside, I might have done some of the things that Gospel-driven people often do, but I was not a Gospel-driven person because *I wasn't living out of the Gospel myself*. In other words, I wasn't letting the Good News of what God has done, is doing and will do through Jesus of Nazareth guide and permeate my thinking. I wasn't experiencing what so many of the Biblical writers call “the joy of salvation.”

For instance, in the words of Isaiah ...

I am overwhelmed with joy in the Lord my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a

*bridegroom dressed for his wedding
or a bride with her jewels.
Isaiah 61:10-11 (NLT)*

That's the joy of salvation. That's rejoicing in the good news.

So, whenever you're motivated by the need to be right, or the desire to impress, or the need to do your duty, that's a sign that you're being driven not by the gospel – the good news. You're being driven by the bad news. The bad news is that you and I are sinners and we're never going to be able to measure up to God's standard no matter how hard we try.

And to keep trying to do that (I need to be right, I need to impress, I need to do my duty) is a prescription for a joyless existence. It's living as *if there is no good news.*

What Have You?

And that's really the point I'm getting at. Charity is being moved by compassion to give something you have to someone who doesn't have it and needs it. But *if you don't have it* – or if you're living like you don't have it – *you can't give it.*

Stated more positively ...

**If you're going to be a gospel-driven person
you need to be a gospel-livin' person.
<repeat>**

I really like the sound of that. In fact, I like it so much I want you say it with me out loud. Ok?

“If you're going to be a gospel-driven person you need to be a gospel-livin' person.”

In other words, the good news of what God has done in Christ needs to be the foundation on which you build your life. It needs to be at the core of who you are and your life needs to emanate from that core. You need to live out of the gospel before you can give out the gospel.

How does that happen? How do you do that?

Well, there isn't a magic bullet. For myself, personally, I have discovered four things that help me. Maybe they will help you.

1. Regularly remind yourself of what the gospel (truly) is and rejoice in it.

We talked about this in detail last week so I won't go into it again this morning other than to say that the gospel is a whole lot bigger than most people – even most Christians – think it is.

Most people believe that the good news is “Believe in Jesus, then when you die you get to go be with Him in Heaven instead of Hell.” That is good news but it is not THE good news. THE good news is much greater than that!

THE good news is that in Jesus – through his death, burial and resurrection – God has brought, is bringing and will bring Heaven to Earth ... and

you can be a part of it not by trying hard to please God, not by trying hard to clean up your act, not by saying you're sorry for all your sins and promising to live a better life going forward. You can enter into the Kingdom of God Jesus said, by faith: by repenting (by changing your mind about Him and what it means to follow Him) and believing that he is who he says he is – the Messiah – and that he died on the cross for your sins and rose again as the first of all that God is going to do to renew, restore and regenerate everything – including you!

If you're going to live out of the gospel you have to constantly remind yourself of what that good news truly is and get pumped up about it – and it is worth being pumped up about!

This is why church is so important. It's why times of communion are so important. It's why singing songs of worship together is so important. We need to be reminded of the good news and encouraged to rejoice in it because we

so quickly forget what it's all about.

2. Continue to acknowledge your need of the Gospel and be grateful you heard it.

Continue to pay attention to the fact that you fall short of God's intentions – that even though you might be growing and changing because of Christ, you're still a sinner and you still need a savior.

And when you do sin, don't deny it or sugarcoat it or rationalize it. Admit it. Confess it to God (and to anyone you might have hurt by it). "I'm sorry if I offended you." No, "I messed up. I did wrong. I am sorry."

And then be grateful that all of your sins past, present and future, known and unknown have already been washed clean from your soul by Jesus. They are no more. Jesus has atoned for you.

Third, if you want to be a gospel-livin' person

who can be a gospel-driven person it's wise to ...

3. Make friends with others who are gospel-livin'.

Regularly get around other people who have the same goal as you do; who are also trying to root and establish their lives in Christ and in the good news of what He has done, is doing and will do.

You need them in your life to counteract all the bad news people you run into plus Facebook and FoxNews and MSNBC or whatever flavor you're drinking. You need them because they can remind you of the good news when you forget it.

Where do you find these kinds of people?

Look around you right now. There's a whole church full of them.

And you can get to know some of them by joining up in a small group. And what do you know, we just happen to have a small group rally

today?! Right after this service stop by one of the tables and see if there is a group that fits you.

So ...

- Regularly remind yourself of what the gospel (truly) is and rejoice in it.
- Continue to acknowledge your need of the Gospel and be grateful you heard it.
- Make friends with others who are gospel-livin'.

And finally ...

4. Avoid focusing too much on your current (temporary) circumstances.

Don't get too up or down about what your life is like right now because right now is not eternity. "Right now" (if you are a believer) is going to turn out to be such a small, small sliver of your total existence as a human being.

That's why Paul could write:

We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you.

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever. 2

Corinthians 4:14,16-18 (NLT)

And that, friends, is good news because of the good news!

Let's pray together.

<prayer>

Closing Feature – My Hope Is In You (Shust)

My hope is in You, Lord, all the day long

I won't be shaken by drought or storm

My hope is in You, Lord

All the day long I won't be shaken by drought or storm

CLOSING COMMENT

1. Prayer pastor
2. Dismiss early for small group rally
3. Don't pick up AL kids until 10:30/12:00.

Endnotes