

**Message Series: 'Here We Are'**  
**Message Title: 'Shine Together!'**  
**Scripture Source: Matthew 5:14-16**  
**Date: Sunday, March 22, 2015**  
**Speaker: John Garner**

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### Clarity of Identity

Jesus wants his followers to possess a high degree of clarity about who they are and how they are to live in the world around us. In his most famous message known as the 'sermon on the mount' Jesus is articulating who and what really matter at the end of the day...and during the day.

Compassionate and righteous character matters, rooted in grasping the love of God at a deeply personal level and cultivating a growing love for God and others. Jesus yearns that those who call themselves 'Christian' or who are considering becoming his followers understand his heart for them...and others.

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house." Matthew 5:14-15

Jesus uses a 'down-to-earth' reality to drive home a critical truth. Jesus knows that they know what the purpose of light is...to dispel darkness. Jesus is reminding his followers and would be followers of their God given identity. To be conduits of light in a dark and dangerous world. Light is often used to describe truth, beauty, love, hope and righteousness. Darkness is often used to describe unrighteousness, lies, deceptions, fear, need, confusion and hopelessness. Scripture/illustration

Jesus made this astounding claim about himself. John 8:12

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

Jesus is stating that he is the source of understanding and insight into who God is, who we are...and can be and how we should live and relate in a world that is so confused and frantically self-absorbed.

And...Jesus says, as those who choose to be my followers, you are conduits of light in the midst of all kinds of darkness. Be clear about your identity. Don't hide your light. Your purpose is to lead people to experience the love, grace and truth of God, revealed perfectly in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. That is who you are, now live your identity out...beyond the walls of the church. Do this individually AND as a church community, day in, day out.

### Implement Our Identity Together

How do we shine brightly in the world around us? How do we draw attention to the heart of Jesus and meet real needs...the pressing needs of the lonely, the poor, the oppressed, the overlooked and marginalised, as a 'here we are' church?

What did Jesus instruct us to do?

"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds..."

'Your good deeds'...of course at an individual level, but also as a church community, we must 'traffic' in good deeds persistently and practically. We simply must...if we are truly his followers. Acts 1:1

“of all that Jesus began to do and teach...” What Jesus began, we as a church are mandated to continue...’to offer spiritual hope and practical help in Jesus’ name.’ Our ‘here we are’ practical initiatives centers on ‘offering practical, compassionate help in Jesus’ name.’

“good deeds” – “ a thing that is not only good, but it is winsome, and beautiful and attractive...the tragedy of so much so-called goodness is that in it there is an element of hardness and coldness and austerity. There is a goodness which attracts and a goodness that repels.” Ouch! (Barclay)

It is not only what we do, it’s how we do it that matters. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 Very strong language.

“The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.” Galatians 5:7

### **Influence & Investment**

Over the last 2 years we have worked diligently at ‘letting our light shine’ through good deeds done in Jesus’ name...our evolving partnership with Project Share and different collective activities done...food drives, ongoing food tithe, the vegetable garden, Coldest night of the year walk, gifts to our ‘friends on the lane’ that many of you heard about last week.

I am grateful to God for so many of you that participate in these ‘good deed’ initiatives. And I think what moves me deeply is not only what gets done, but the heart behind the doing. Such expressions of compassion, humility, and gratitude...I heard this as Stephen interviewed Audrey and Jerry last week. Folks, when you hear the phrase ‘here we are’ think about a heartbeat and mindset of RBC, not just a program. Programs can come and go...heartbeats and mindsets stay...if cultivated tenaciously and are strengthened by God’s Spirit, they guide us in what we do in Jesus’ name. ‘Here we are’ is a pulse, not a program of RBC. Pulse: “a throb of life...the regular throbbing of the arteries caused by successive contractions of the heart.”

And as we ‘offer practical help in Jesus’ name’ some will be introduced and become connected to the good and generous God we serve. “...so that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:16. For some, our practical and compassionate actions will open a window of understanding regarding the character and heart of God and the saving work of Jesus.

### **What’s Next?**

Visit our ‘here we are’ expo in the cafe. There are tangible things to be done in Jesus’ name. And we need many people banding together. There are some things God is asking us to do that can’t be done by a few people. Many people are needed. Including a person like you.

Please listen to Stephen as he paints a picture of our next church wide initiative.

### **‘I’m In.’**

Will you be an active builder of God’s kingdom here in Niagara? Will you ‘express your faith’ through loving deeds of compassion? Let’s shine together!

**Shine Together: Compassion in Action**  
**Further Study for Groups or Individuals**  
**Sunday, March 22, 2015**

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**Connecting**

1. Read the story below and then read Matthew 5:14-16. Talk about how the 'Team' effort in community can help us as individuals to live out the teaching in these verses.

Share about a time when this was true for you.

*Ellen watched as her neighbour, Meg, dealt with a volatile marriage and then separation. With several children and no job, Meg's future was dim. Though on one occasion Ellen intervened, she felt overwhelmed by the situation and was almost reluctant to serve Meg and her family.*

*Then Ellen's small group in her church community decided to take Meg's family under their wing. Members brought meals. Others hired Meg's teenagers to babysit and often spent time just talking to them as they dropped them off at home. There were many phone calls to include Meg's kids in family events and opportunities that would be fun for the kids. Group members made themselves available to talk to the family and encourage them as they faced life without their father.*

*It was humbling for Ellen to see this group in action beyond what she was willing to do. Being involved in the day-in-day-out drama sometimes numbed Ellen's servant heart, so it was enormously helpful to have others with whom to share this important work.*

**Growing**

Compassion is the ability to feel or see another person's need, along with the decision to address that need through action. Jesus had both strong feelings and a firm commitment to act. He trained his disciples to show the same compassion to others. We cannot truly serve out of our giftedness without Jesus' kind of compassion.

1. Read Mark 6:30-44. The apostles have just returned from their first ministry trip on their own, without Jesus with them. How does Jesus care for their needs in verses 30-32?
  
2. But then other people with needs turn up. What is it about them that moves Jesus to compassion (vs. 34)? How would you put this in your own words?
  
3. What compassionate thing does Jesus do for these people? What needs does he address?

4. The Disciples have less compassion for the crowd. What factors limit their commitment to serve the crowd's needs (vs. 35-37)?
  
5. Today we use the term 'compassion fatigue' to describe the tendency to become numb to others' needs when we feel overwhelmed by them. Our televisions broadcast endless images of suffering in one part of the globe after another. Charitable organizations deluge us with mail. Our churches offer long lists of opportunities to serve; our family and friends also have needs.  
Do you ever feel compassion fatigue? If so, how do you respond? If not, what do you think protects you from it?
  
6. How does Jesus respond to the disciples' compassion fatigue (vs. 37-41)?
  
7. In what areas of your life is Jesus saying each of the following things?  
"Come with me...to a quiet place and get some rest."  
  
"You give them something to eat. [I will multiply your resources.]"

### **Surrendering**

Take a moment of quiet reflection and simply finish this sentence: "Father, I need your help today with..."

Share this with your group or a spiritual friend. Take a risk, and let someone treat you with compassion.