

Message Series: **'Deep and Wide: Past, Present, and Future'**

Message Title: **'The Main Thing'**

Scripture Source: **Matthew 28:18-20, 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2**

Speaker: John Garner

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### **Meaning and the Main Thing**

This church means different things to different people. Many of us feel deeply about RBC, this church family has deep meaning for many people...a safe place to ask questions, a warm and welcoming community, a place to contribute through service, opportunities to grow in biblical knowledge, an environment to freely and passionately worship and praise God...and the list goes on. All of these personal realities are healthy and important, yet we must not confuse personal meaning with collective mission. As a church family, Jesus has given us a singular mission to diligently, prayerfully, and practically pursue and fulfill. Our God-given mission to 'make disciples', here and abroad.

Matthew 28:18-20: *"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

On the front of our bulletin our name is given and our singular mission is stated.

**"Leading people to passionately follow Jesus."**

Jesus intends that we actually engage in fulfilling his stated agenda. To help people become thoughtful and passionate followers of Jesus. One life at a time. For 68 years this has been the 'main thing' of RBC. Many of you could tell your story of coming to faith in Jesus and learning to follow Jesus and his teachings. You would say...'I am your mission RBC.' The 'reason for being' of this ever evolving community of faith, hope, and love. From RBC's beginnings in Niagara Falls, through name changes, leadership changes, building and location changes, the 'main thing' mission of Jesus has given purpose and direction, in very hard and uncertain times and in wonderfully exciting and fruitful times. There has been a resolve throughout our history to be faithful to the singular mission of Jesus. And when that mission has truly been the 'main thing' God has worked powerfully in people's lives...in the past, present, and we are assured, in the future. There will be a growing depth of spiritual growth and vitality, relational connectedness, compassionate and practical acts of service and a warmth and wisdom of welcome and reach to others.

### **Practicing What He Preached**

Jesus was profoundly single-minded when it came to his 'reason for being'...his main thing. Luke 19:1-10 Read the story thoughtfully and see how Jesus 'practiced what he preached' to others. Zacchaeus, a lost soul, yet redeemable! Jesus connected with one lost soul and showed him mercy, explained to him what and who really matters, and saw Zacchaeus transform from a self-indulgent, self-promoting man to a humble, teachable and compassionate follower of Jesus. And Jesus made it startling clear that his 'main thing' was people...reconnected to God and experiencing character and conduct transformation to become more and more like Jesus.

### **Our 'Main Thing': 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2**

What and who mattered to Jesus has been entrusted to us as a church family. Paul makes this clear in his articulate writings to a first century church in the city of Corinth. Let's explore the passage. What do we learn? Embedded in his words is the centrality of a 'message and mission'. Vss.18-19

What word jumps from the page? Reconciliation. This is profound. The clear implication is that humanity was separated from God because of sin...the failure to love God supremely, others sacrificially and ourselves wisely. Sin had to be punished because God is holy, righteous and perfect. Romans 3:23, 6:23.

Jesus was sent to pay the penalty for our sin, to save us from ultimate judgement and to enable us to be in a warm and secure relationship with God. Paul is resolved and passionate about fulfilling the 'main thing' mandate.

### **Motivated: 2 Corinthians 5:11-17**

What fueled Paul's actions? What needs to fuel RBC ministry actions?

- Reverence for God: vss.11-13
- Love...being loved by Jesus and loving others in response: vss.14-15
- Uniqueness of Jesus: vs.16
- Potential for life transformation: vs.17
- God's unfailing power: vs. 18

How we need to ask God over and over again that He would grow in us the convictions and motivations that will keep us engaged in living out the 'main thing' of 'leading people to passionately follow Jesus.' That's one reason for our Worship and Prayer Gathering, Sunday September 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. This kind of God centered, others-oriented mindset and heart beat doesn't just develop in our own strength...we need the work of God's Spirit within us personally and among us collectively.

### **More than Talk**

So, we have been talking about 'Deep and Wide: RBC @ 70' a fair bit since last October. What has God been doing through us over the last number of months? At RBC we use the images of 'table, text and towel' to talk about environments and engagements that help us live out the 'main thing' of making disciples in Jesus' name. Refer to the insert that explains what the Three T's are about!

#### **Table (connecting relationally with God and others); Text (learning)**

- Sr High retreat
- iIdentify training sessions
- Easter services and Journey to the Cross
- 2 Baptismal services
- Movie Nights
- Anniversary Potluck
- Breakfast with the Pastors
- Volunteer Appreciation Night
- Worship and Prayer Gathering
- Vacation Bible School
- Carnival on the Lawn

#### **Towel (serving others)**

- Week of Compassion (Gillian's Place)
- Here We Grow Garden, with Project Share
- Week of Compassion (Backpacks, with Project Share)
- His Mansion Mission trip
- Camp Bring a Friend, many children from FACS, Big Brothers and Big Sisters
- Membership Sundays

Friends, God works through people to serve, guide and direct people, into a relationship with Himself and to meet real needs through compassionate actions and activity.

### **A Look Ahead: Where we are Headed in Specifics**

As we look from now to December, using the environments and engagements of the table, text, and towel, here are some concrete plans and ministry initiatives.

#### **Table time –**

- Today, our Fall table launch!
- Evergreens launch for seniors
- Movie night
- Welcome lunch

#### **Table and Text –**

- Journey group launch
- Men's and women's Bible studies
- Worship and Prayer Gathering
- Baptism service
- Missions weekend
- A Night in Bethlehem
- Christmas services
- Next Steps – 'iDentify' training

#### **Towel –**

- Ongoing partnership with Project Share
- Week of Compassion

Friends, these are plans we have. We are open to adjustments along the way. Yet, everything we do, we are purposeful about asking this question: Does this event, activity, ministry help us 'lead people to passionately follow Jesus?' Are we being true to the 'main thing' Jesus asked us to prayerfully, purposefully, and practically engage in?

### **And You are Needed**

A few people can't fulfill the mission of Jesus. Your contribution is needed. Every single follower of Jesus has a significant contribution to make in seeing 'the main thing' fulfilled, one life at a time.

To that end, will you do at least 2 things coming out of this service? Will you reflect carefully on these core passages, 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2 and Matthew 28:18-20? Will you ask God to embed with you...and others the heartbeat and mindset of Jesus?

And, will you mark on your calendar/device, Sunday, September 27 @ 6:30 p.m. for our Worship and Prayer Gathering as we collectively draw near to God in worship and prayer...asking God for leadership, courage, compassion and wisdom to be unwaveringly committed to being a 'Main Thing' church...that grows 'deep and wide' for his Honour and the good of all sorts of people.