Let It Shine

Reflection by Charlene Christianson, Erie, CO.

“This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine. This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.”

This is the song I remember singing as a little girl in church. But, if I’m being honest, I sang the words without understanding the true meaning of what “letting my light shine” would mean in my life.

I remember the first time I felt the warmth of that light. I was eight years old and it was the day I was baptized. My sister swore the reason I chose to be baptized so early was because I wanted the grape juice and crackers, but it really wasn’t. I loved Jesus. I remember that day so clearly and I remember feeling a warmth that I couldn’t describe. But now I know, it’s the feeling of coming home.

I also remember the first time it felt like that light was blown out. At the age of 14, my mother told me, as we were driving home from school, that my parents were getting a divorce. The feeling I had at that moment in my life was as though the ground beneath me was swept away, and everything that felt secure, was no longer. I had lost my home and I harbored an anger that began to change me from the inside. It took me years to forgive my parents, to give them grace, to accept that, like me, they are human.

For years after my parent’s divorce, I felt a sense of loneliness. I tried to be strong on my
I’ve learned that trying to be strong on my own is exhausting, and ultimately, it’s impossible. I can follow a set of rules that I think will lead us to a happier and healthier life, but that does not compare to what the spirit of Jesus does in my life. Jesus is my home. He is my constant, when everything feels out of control, He is the one who touches my life, gives me peace and tells me that I’m home.

There is a love and hope that is so strong, it only comes from our Heavenly Father. Jesus shines hope into our lives and forgives us in our darkest places. When we fall, He gives us faith to stand. He restores our soul. Jesus is the only one who can drive out the darkness with His light. I’m so thankful that He gives us mercy that lights the path before us and it is His light that people see through us when we are acting as His hands and feet.

I want the love of Jesus to shine in my church. But, I’m afraid our church has forgotten that it is His light that gives people hope, His love that saves the lost and the lonely. We are called to go higher and deeper, to go where our Heavenly Father leads us. But this means we have to allow ourselves to be vulnerable and let our walls down, to follow a path that may not be so easy and understand our true need for His light and love. The sinners are not “those” people. We are the sinners, we are the lost, we are the lonely and the hurting, and Jesus loves us, all of us. In my search to find my mission for Christianity today, to find a vision for my church and home that I want to raise my own children in; I found this text.

"The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor his anger forever; He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him." Psalm 103:8-13

Jesus’ love is so great, He forgives us, all of us, no matter how many times we fall down. He loves us, unconditionally. His compassion runs deep, and we cannot comprehend His grace.

What if our church could shine the light of God as described in Psalm 103:8-13? Slow to anger, abounding in love in this broken world, not accusing or harboring anger. What if we could have so much love for those around us that all possible wrongs are removed? What if we could show compassion to our children, to our loved ones and to strangers? I want a church community who demonstrates this to my children.

What if my children loose their way? Who will light their way back to Jesus’ love? What if the ground is swept away beneath them and they find themselves in a dark place? What if your daughter is the high school girl who gets pregnant outside of marriage? What if your son is the drug addict who ends up on the streets? What if you are the one who finds yourself in a broken marriage?
I want to be the one who meets people in their darkest moment and I hope that the light of Jesus shines within me in their dark place. I want to be the friend, who will host your daughter’s baby shower, hug her and tell her she is not alone. I want to be the one who flies out to find your son on the streets and brings him home. I want to be the friend who wraps you in the love of Jesus and the hope that allows you to pick up the pieces.

And if it is my son is the one who finds himself alone in your church parking lot some day, hopeless, broken, lost and alone, my hope is that it will be the church, where he will know he is loved, unconditionally, no matter where he has gone or what he has done, he will see the light and know that he is home. That is letting your light shine, that is grace and that is the love of Jesus.

Recalibrate

1. How has your life been touched by grace?
2. God is not done with me and he is not done with you either, because he is giving us a heart like his. Do you think He is done with our church, or could He still be working on the heart of our church as well?
3. How difficult is it to be vulnerable? How much does our pride get in the way of sharing the message that we are all in need of Jesus?

Feel free to send any thoughts or comments to Charlene Christianson.