

The Gospel Stories Are Being Written

「Intro」

Hebrews 12:2

“Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Faith has an Author. Jesus is writing the story of your faith. In that story, there may be pain and suffering. But the story does not end there. Jesus has prepared an epic ending and will finally bring your story to completion beyond countless flaws and obstacles of sin. Faith becomes whole as we look to the Author of our faith.

Praying without a story

I have some sense of what it feels like to be deserted by God. During one year in particular I was in agony. A week didn't go by where I didn't burst into tears. Toward the end of that year I began to wonder if I had God wrong. Was my view of his gracious heart skewed? Had I overestimated his grace?

When we forget that our stories are being written by God our faith can grow cynical and cold.

God is weaving a larger story. He is shaping a more precious faith within us. God's provision and comfort often come at the end, and He humbles us every time and ultimately receives our heart worship. We fail but God never does.

No Story	Story
Bitter	Waiting
Angry	Watching
Aimless	Wondering
Cynical	Praying
Controlling	Submitting
Hopeless	Hoping
Thankless	Thankful
Blaming	Repenting

Praying within the story

Remember these three points to remain in God's larger story.

1. Don't demand that the story go your way. (In other words, surrender completely.)
2. Look for the Storyteller. Look for his hand, and then pray in light of what you are seeing. (In other words, develop an eye for Jesus.)
3. Stay in the story. Don't shut down when it goes the wrong way.

We sometimes ask God just to fill in the blanks. But God is more than that; He is the Storyteller. As we enter His story He receives glory.

The end of the story is hope

The world offers two kinds of stories: comedy and tragedy. A comedy is fun but not real. A tragedy is real but depressing and dark. God's story always ends with hope. Joy and delight. God is "able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us..." (Eph. 3:20). Our hope can be great because God is. Our lives are not meant to wander between comedy(denial) and tragedy(reality). We will find wonder at the end of our stories.

「Application」

- Take a moment to reflect on your current situations. What kind of ending comes to your mind? Read Jeremiah 29:11 and proclaim the ending of your story which God is leading you into.

Jesus is writing gospel stories

If what you are expecting is a worldly ending, you will be disappointed. But if it is a gospel ending, you will experience a great joy.

The gospel, the Father's gift of his Son to die in our place, is so breathtaking that since Jesus' death, no one has been able to tell a better story. The Father wants to draw us into the story of his Son. There is no better story. If we stop fighting and embrace the gospel story God is weaving in our lives, we discover joy.

The gospel stories always have suffering in them. But in Jesus that suffering becomes meaningful. Outside Jesus's story suffering becomes tragedies, but in Jesus, suffering blossoms into beautiful flowers.

The end of history

Let's read Revelations 7:9-12

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

The end of human history will be a gathering of a great multitude from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages to give glory, blessing, thanksgiving, and honor unto the Lamb. Our Sunday worship services are partial realization of this eschatological worship. The grand gospel story, which began when God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans 4,000 years ago, is continually being written through our lives.

「Sharing」

Our Sunday sermons have been on the relentless march of the gospel in the Book of Acts. How has these gospel stories blessed or inspired you?

「Outro」

Jesus told us not to despair but to pray. Let us not give up in the middle of the story but renew our hearts and give our lives to Him who is sovereignly weaving our lives into gospel stories.

- 1) Share your prayer requests with other members and pray together as a group for the next month. Let us pray that we will see gospel stories coming out of them.
- 2) The Table, a church event scheduled for later this year, invites people who are not baptized or confirmed to share the gospel with them. Look to see if there is someone who needs to hear the gospel around you and pray together for them.