

*The story we live within*

We are living into a deep, ancient, and powerful story. It is a story which encompasses our entire lives. God wraps us up into this story and expects us to respond to the story, to tell the story, to feel it and experience it, and then retell the story. We do that through prayer, through song and hymns, through our fellowship with one another, through our preaching and our testimony of our experience.

The Psalms show us that the story covers everything. Your fear, your anger, your frustration. Even your hate. The Psalms show us God can take it. We don't need to protect God from our feelings. We don't need to justify the sense that God did this or that to us. What we need, the reason we pray, is for God to protect us, for God to justify us, for God to suffer with us. The story of God in history and in our lives is meant to shape and form the story we will tell.

*The story lives through us*

When we become aware of the story of God in our lives, we begin to see that the story is really living through us. We think we chose the story we will tell, the story we want to live into. But it turns out that the story, the Word of God, if you will, wants to tell its story through you. That is the great paradox of faith, though, isn't it? We believe we chose what we will believe, but the deeper we get into the whole relationship with God and Christ, the more we realize that God chose us, just like God chose Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, the Prophets, Jesus, the disciples, you and I. The story is living and being told through each of us.

*The Road to Emmaus ... again*

We began talking about the Psalms of Disorientation on the Road to Emmaus with the devastated disciples. Notice what Jesus does with them. On page \_\_\_\_\_, He says,

*"What are you discussing with each other as you walk along?" (Lk 24:17).*

Another way to say this would be,

*"What is the story you are telling each other right now?"*

The story we tell ourselves and one another has great influence on how we experience the world, and it also influences how we want the world to see us. I am not going to go so far and make the 'New Age' mistake and tell you that the stories we tell create the reality in which we live.

That is the beginning of wearing the blinders of rose-colored glasses and ignoring serious problems that are right next to us. But what I will say is that the narrative we speak and the stories we listen to influence greatly how we perceive the world and the people around us. As a result, those stories influence the decisions we make, the things and people we ignore, and the ideas that will remain unheard and unspoken.

The disciples on the Road to Emmaus are doing what we all do: we tell our personal story to another person, then we look for reinforcement of the opinions we hold and the feelings we have, then, upon receiving that acknowledgment, we ally with that person so we can have a shared story about how we see the world. We universalize our personal experience in a very real and tangible way by doing this. This is part of how we build strong relationships with one another. We all do this.

But what defines a disciple, a follower of Christ, and what defines even friendship in the Christian sense of the word, is the understanding that we live beyond our personal stories. We live into a greater story. And if the story is truly great, like the one we tell about God and Jesus, the story lives through us. We become written into the fabric of a fantastic, epic, enthralling adventure of mind, soul, body, and strength.

This is why Jesus says to the disciples, after they tell their personal story of devastation and loss:

*<sup>25</sup>Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! <sup>26</sup>Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’ <sup>27</sup>Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.*

### *Psalm 22 and Jesus on the Cross*

When we are dealing with the disorientation of loss and deconstruction of our lives through death, disease, destruction - whether it be emotional, physical, mental, or spiritual - the world closes in. In fact, the world becomes very personal. We take it personally, the death, the suffering, the pain, the horrors. And we should take it personally. This is why the Psalms are so helpful in our prayer lives. All of this is taken up in the Psalms.

The Psalms of Disorientation have several expressions in the 150 Psalms. In fact, 60 of them deal with the disorientation that comes from all that we have talked about here. One of those Psalms seems to point directly to Jesus. Psalm 22, on page \_\_\_\_\_, is often spoken of as a prophetic Psalm because much of it resonates with Jesus’ crucifixion. Jesus himself points us to the Psalm by quoting its title from the Cross. If you turn to page \_\_\_\_\_, Jesus says in Mark 15:34:

*<sup>34</sup>At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’*

I would like to suggest another way of thinking about the prophetic. Rather than predicting the future, which is the traditional way of thinking about prophecy, and rather than just God’s word being spoken into a present situation that has future possibilities and influence, I would like us to think about prophecy as one of the ways we allow God’s story to be told through us. Jesus is our model for what it means for God to tell God’s story through us. Or, Jesus shows us what it means to give over our entire lives to the greater story of God in the world. Psalm 22 shows us how.

On the Cross, Jesus summons the story of Psalm 22 by calling it out in a loud voice:

*“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”*

It is as if Jesus is telling us, *And now, I submit to the story of God as told in Psalm 22.*

Remember, when someone says the first line of a Psalm in Scripture, they mean to refer to the entire Psalm. So let's just go through and see how God's story is invoked into Jesus' experience on the Cross.

Turn to Psalm 22 on page 500. Leave your finger there and turn to Mark 15:29 on page 54. There it says:

*<sup>29</sup>Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, <sup>30</sup>save yourself, and come down from the cross!'*

Then turn back to Psalm 22. Go to verse 7-8. It says,

*<sup>7</sup>All who see me mock at me;  
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;  
<sup>8</sup>'Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver—  
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!'*

Matthew 27:43 also references verse 8, on page 33.

Look at verse 14 in Psalm 22. It says,

*<sup>14</sup>I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint;  
my heart is like wax;  
it is melted within my breast;*

This is an allusion to tears. But it also presses into Jesus' crucifixion when the centurion pushes his spear into Jesus' side. Turn to John 19 on page 114. Look at what happens here at verse 33:

*<sup>33</sup>But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup>Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out.*

Water pours out of Jesus' side. Also notice what John says about this following, in verse 35:

*<sup>35</sup>(He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) <sup>36</sup>These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled,*

For our purposes today, this statement could be understood to mean,

*This is the way the story of God has been lived out in the life of Jesus Christ. Our testimony, our story, spoken to others continues the story of God through us.*

Verse 15 in the Psalm reads,

*<sup>15</sup> my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,  
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;  
you lay me in the dust of death.*

Go back up a few verses in the Gospel of John to verse 28.

There it reads,

*<sup>28</sup> After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' <sup>29</sup>A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.*

I hope you are getting a sense of how Jesus is allowing Psalm 22 to live through him, allowing the story to become renewed and retold through his experience. Look at verse 16 in Psalm 22.

*<sup>16</sup> For dogs are all around me;  
a company of evildoers encircles me.  
My hands and feet have shriveled;*

According to early church writers, the more appropriate word for shriveled would be *mauled*. "*My hands and feet have been mauled*". Some of the early church writers understood this to be a direct reference to the nails in Jesus' wrists and ankles.

Right after verse 16, 17 says

*<sup>17</sup> I can count all my bones.  
They stare and gloat over me;*

This is a reference to being stripped and was a way of humiliation.

The saying that 'clothes make the man' was held to be true back then, just as today. Being stripped of one's clothes publicly is intended to humiliate a person on many levels. Turn to page 32, the Gospel of Matthew. Look at what the guards do to Jesus.

*<sup>27</sup> Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. <sup>28</sup>They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, <sup>29</sup>and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'*

And finally, all four Gospels testify to verse 18 in Psalm 22:

*<sup>18</sup> they divide my clothes among themselves,  
and for my clothing they cast lots.*

We can choose any of the Gospels for this, but let's look at Luke 23, verse 34, on page 89.

*<sup>34</sup> Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots to divide his clothing.*

## *Bottoming Out*

This is the disorienting experience the disciples on the Road to Emmaus are living into, having born witness to Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. Their lives are devastated, destroyed. The disciples are living through a time of lament, a time of sorrows. But they have forgotten the story they agreed to be a part of when they agreed to follow Jesus.

This is what Jesus reminds them of - the greater story. The Gospel of Luke says, on page 90, at verse 27:

*<sup>27</sup>Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.*

The disciples have bottomed out. Their lives have been destroyed. The Road to Emmaus is a weird place, because it is on that road where we realize, when we are telling our own story over and over again, looking for reinforcement and acknowledgment, that we have no future. Everything we have devoted our lives to is done. The tunnel has no light at the end of it. And it is right there, on that dark, painful, devastating road, that Jesus shows up. The Road to Emmaus is exactly where a different story begins to be told.

## *Living into the Story - The Story Living into Us*

The Psalms are full of Psalms that do not end well. And many of us here today have tendrils and remnants of stories in our lives that also did not end well. But Psalm 22 presses us into the New Life we will discuss more next week. Things are bad for the writer of this Psalm, just as they are for the disciples on the road. Their story is not wrong; their experience is not wrong. They are simply unaware, or they have forgotten, of the larger story.

Look at verse 21:

*From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.*

*<sup>22</sup> I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:*

*<sup>23</sup> You who fear the Lord, praise him!*

*All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;  
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!*

*<sup>24</sup> For he did not despise or abhor  
the affliction of the afflicted;  
he did not hide his face from me,  
but heard when I cried to him.*

Something has changed. We are not told what has changed.

But I think it has something to do with what we see in the disciples on the Road to Emmaus. God somehow has enfolded the tragedy and suffering of the Psalmist into a greater story, a story that deserves to be told among the community of those *who fear the Lord*, a story that deserves to be told because God *did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him*.

Jesus references Psalm 22 from the Cross, then he allows the story of Psalm 22 to live through him upon the Cross.

Why would he do that?

Why would he want us to look to Psalm 22 in his suffering and death?

I think it is the same reason he appears to the disciples on the Road to Emmaus.

Jesus' suffering is important in the same way the Psalmist' suffering is important, and in the same way the disciples' suffering is important. It is important because it is part of a greater story. And that story is the story of God wanting to live through Jesus, and through those disciples and through each of us. Jesus wants us to read his life through to the end of the Psalm, and he wants the disciples to read their own lives through to the end of God's story, which is Jesus' resurrection lived through each of us.

The New Life we are being pressed into *through our suffering, through our lament*, is really a great story. It is a story that wants to live through you. Listen to some of that story:

*<sup>25</sup> From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.*

*<sup>26</sup> The poor shall eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek him shall praise the Lord.  
May your hearts live for ever!*

*<sup>27</sup> All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the Lord;  
and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before him.*

*<sup>28</sup> For dominion belongs to the Lord,  
and he rules over the nations.*

*<sup>29</sup> To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;  
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,  
and I shall live for him.*

*<sup>30</sup> Posterity will serve him;  
future generations will be told about the Lord,*

*<sup>31</sup> and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,  
saying that he has done it.*

*Amen*