



Sermon – 10/23/2022
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The Story of Scripture

Come behold. Come behold the wondrous mystery. See, there was a mystery to the universe. But God revealed Himself to us and He revealed His plan for the universe to us in the words, in the story of Scripture. It's a plan of God's people living in God's place, in line with God's purposes in the midst of God's presence. In other words, it's a story of a kingdom. And this is the story of how that kingdom comes.

You see, before there was time, before there was anything, there was God. He has existed throughout eternity as Father, as Son, and Holy Spirit and He was perfectly happy and He was perfectly holy and He needed absolutely nothing but Father, Son, and Spirit. They decided to create and they created a beautiful world. At the very height, at the apex, the crown of that creation were image bearers, humans who were designed to represent God, to reflect back to the outside world, this is what God looks like. They were designed actually to take God's delegated authority and to rule and reign on God's behalf around the world as vice regents or under kings with God's own power. And God gave them a place. He gave them an idyllic garden that had everything they needed. But it wasn't just a place, He also gave them a purpose. He said, "I want you to be fruitful. I want you to be multiplied. I want you to have dominion over the land. And I want you to spread My glory around the world." But on top of all of that, He gave them His presence. He walked with man in the garden, happily loving, happily leading His creation. And what we see in this Garden of Eden is a blueprint for God's design for the universe. We see God's people, Adam and Eve, living in God's place. Eden, living in line with God's purposes, being fruitful, multiplying, having dominion in the midst of God's presence with God Himself.

But man, who was designed to represent God, decided to rival God and rebel against Him. And when man chose to disobey God, it created a rupture more cosmic and more seismic than anything the universe has ever seen before or since. And what it left us with, what it left man with was a relationship with God that was ripped apart with a broken nature that could not and would not and cannot and will not ever choose to please God or follow God. But it wasn't just humanity. It was creation itself, it was cracked with evil and wicked and apex predators tearing each other and humanity apart. The world was designed to live in harmony but now we exist in a state that is not the way it was designed to be. And you and I walk around with sinful and

broken hearts. In a sinful and broken world. But even right in the aftermath of that original sin, right in the shadows of that rebellion, God comes in with a promise. And He says, "It will not always be this way because I am sending One who will roll back the curse, who will defeat death, who will take the serpent that tempted you and stamp out his head and He will bring a new city. He will bring an everlasting kingdom where God's people will live in God's presence just like they did in the garden." In other words, God is promising to re-Eden the entire universe. He's promising to restore creation itself.

And while creation began with one couple, Adam and Eve, the promise of this kingdom starts with another couple. Abraham and Sarah. And we meet them advanced in age. They're elderly and they don't have any children. And God comes to Abraham and He says, "I will give you a son. Not only will I give you a son, I will give you so many offspring. You won't even be able to count them. They will outnumber all the stars in the sky. But not only will I give you a son, I'll also give you a land. I'll give you a place and I will bless you and whoever blesses you because of My presence with you, they will be blessed. And whoever curses you will be cursed because of My presence with you." And once again, we hear an echo of that same refrain. God's people in God's place living with God's presence. And that promise of a Son, that promise of a coming kingdom starts to be fulfilled when the elderly Abraham and Sarah have a son and they name him Isaac and he grows and he's a teenager. And then the news comes from God that God wants Abraham to kill his son Isaac. You can imagine the horror. You can imagine the disbelief. This is the son through whom the promise is coming. How can you promise that You're going to build something to do something? If You kill the one through whom it's coming? But Abraham obeys. For Abraham so loved the Lord that He gave his only begotten son and he was willing to sacrifice him. And you can imagine the horror of having to prepare for your own son's death, of preparing the materials, of taking the wood up the mountain and putting your son on the altar to sacrifice him. And as he holds the knife up, God says, "Stop." And He prepares a substitute. So, Isaac doesn't have to die. And God knows that Abraham trust in Him because he would have given his only son. And Abraham's faith is so strong he doesn't know how, he doesn't know why, but he believes that not even death can terminate God's covenant promise. And nothing can terminate God's promise, but the lives of many others would be terminated because we see a little bit earlier in the story in the book of Genesis, that the earth was filled with people and that they were increasingly given over to corruption and evil and wickedness. And God comes down and He says, "I'm going to judge the earth so I can renew it. And there is no one across the face of the planet that I can find that is following Me except one person." One man who walked with God who was said to be righteous and his name was Noah. And God tells Noah, I want you to build an ark and I want you to gather your family in it. And I want you to find two animals of every kind and I want you to put them in the ark." And then God sends rain. He sends waters of judgement. And that water fills the earth and it blots out all life was not in the ark. And we see that if you are going to escape the judgment of God, you must be bound up with His righteous one.

And what we see after that, years later, we hope, we would hope that the people of God would be in the land of God experiencing the rest and the presence of God. But where do we find them next? We find them in slavery. We find them in captivity in Egypt under the thumb of pharaoh in need of a deliverer. And God provides them one in a man named Moses. A man whose name means drawn out of the water. And that's exactly what he does. Bringing them safely through the judgments inflicted on pharaoh, inflicted on Egypt, but literally through the waters of the Red

Sea where they do not drown like the people do in the flood of Noah. They walk safely through dry land and out of captivity, out of the thumb of Pharaoh, into freedom. Out of the waters of God's judgment. And once they're there, God speaks to them and He gives them a law. He gives them ten words. And these words are designed to show these people who God has called, My own. This is a little bit of how you are to act because these laws reflect who I am as God. And what I want you to be as a people, is I want you to be a mirror reflecting to the world around you, this is what God is like. You're to be a light to the nations. The problem was the people of Israel weren't and they turned away from God again and again and again. And instead of being a light to the nations, they decided they want to be like other nations in sin, in idolatry. And one of the ways that that manifests itself is their desire for a king. They want a king. So, God gives them one. And that's when we meet a man named Saul, the first king of Israel. He's a man of might. He's a man of conquest and he comes on the scene and he starts gathering and bringing together and coalescing all of these tribes. And Israel starts to grow and have power and he has what starts to look like the formation of a kingdom. But Saul is also a man of rage and though he starts off well, he ultimately fails and he's destroyed by his own jealousy. And so, what we see after that is Israel will have a king but God is looking for a different kind of king. He's looking for a ruler that will be a man after His own heart. And He finds this little shepherd boy born in the middle of nowhere. A man, a little boy named David. And David grows in wisdom and he grows in stature and he grows in might and he ascends to the throne of Israel with great might and power and military prowess and political power. And Israel grows and develops and blossoms to the biggest it has ever been in the history of this people of God. But David fails too. First in adultery, and then in murder. But David thinks back to the promises of God and he says, "I remember God's promise of God's people and God's place living in the midst of God's purposes, All In his glory. God, I want to come to You. I want to repent and I want to build You a temple. It is in a shack. It's in a tent. It's in this little ark. I want to build You something glorious here in Jerusalem. God's place where God's people can worship You." And God says, "No. You will not build a temple for Me because I don't need a favor from you. When it comes to bringing salvation to My people, when it comes to bringing the kingdom of God to this earth, I will do this on My terms, not beholden to any man. But David, I will make with you a promise. I'll make with you a covenant. You won't build the house for me. I will build a house for Myself and I'll do it through one of your sons." And His throne will have no end. The temple that He builds will last forever.

And then, the great king David dies. And his son, Solomon, ascends the throne. And his son, Solomon, continues to raise Israel even higher and even more gloriously. And his son, Solomon, builds a glorious, beautiful temple. It sounds like all of the promises are coming true. But then Solomon dies. His reign doesn't last forever. And the sons of David all start to rival one another for who will become king? Who gets to be next? Such that the nation of Israel actually splits in two and there's a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. And then the people of God lose their place. Because God gives Israel over to captivity because of their disobedience. First, to the people of Assyria, and then to the people of Babylon. And the Babylonians destroy their temple. And it's fitting that it's the Babylonians under whom they're in captivity because the Babylonians come from a place called Babel. And we remember Babel from earlier in the story in the book of Genesis, where the people of God were attempting to build their own name, build their own glory. And God comes down in judgement and He says, "That's not going to happen and I'm going to confuse your language and I'm going to disperse your people." But here, it's not the speech that's confused. It's the people of God who are confused and dispersed and

wandering and wondering. Why? How? When will these promises come true? Because the might of the people of Israel has cracked. They are living in idolatry. They're living in sin in exile with no temple, no presence, no power, no nothing. And the prophets, they come on the scene and they remind the people of God, "These are the promises of God. This is how you are to live. This is what I promise is coming." But most of the people don't listen. They continue in sin. They continue in idolatry. But there's still a few. There's still a remnant that cling to this promise. And the promise of this kingdom is ever faint like a still, small voice echoing down through history.

But hope, it starts to awaken when Ezra and Nehemiah take the people back into the land and the people are rejoicing at the reading of the word. And they're in God's place and they decide, we're going to build a wall around God's place to show that God is with us and we're going to rebuild a glorious temple and it will be beautiful and powerful and God's presence will be with us. But it wasn't. God's presence was not with them because what we see is that the people of Israel wanted God's place. They wanted the privilege of God's presence, but they weren't willing to live in line with God's purposes to get it. And God says, "You do not receive My saving presence on your terms but only on Mine." And it leads the people of God to a cry. Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel. And ransom is what is needed because exile once again is what comes next because God gives the people of God over to the Greeks. The Greeks have them and then the Romans come in and Israel is under the oppression, under the authority with no power under the Roman Empire. And what they want so desperately is power and freedom and autonomy. What they want is a king. They want a king on a throne full of power with a sword in his fist. But Isaiah, the prophet, comes in and reminds people of God, "You want a king, you want freedom, you want this empire toppled. But let me tell you what your future king will be like. He'll bear no beauty or glory. Rejected and despised, a man of such sorrow will cover our eyes. He'll take up our sickness. He'll carry our tears for His people. He will be pierced. He'll be crushed for our evil, our punishment He'll feel. But by His wounds, we will be healed. And then the prophet Micah comes in to remind them of this future king. From you, Oh Bethlehem. You nothing, little backwater, small among Judah, a ruler will come who is ancient and strong.

But centuries passed until it came to pass. A new dawn on a silent night because in the little town of Bethlehem, in the city of King David, a son of Abraham is born. And according to the prophet Isaiah, he will be Emmanuel, God with us. And this little baby is born to the virgin Mary and he's given the name Jesus, which means deliverance. And that name, Jesus, in Hebrew is Yeshua, which we translate ordinarily into English as Joshua. And it's no mistake that Jesus's namesake, Joshua, is the man of God who led the people of God into the land, the place of God. And what we see is all four of the Gospels in Scripture opening with the brightness of a new day. Where for centuries, it's been always winter but never Christmas. It's been always exile but never rest. And here is this One, Jesus, the deliverer of God's people. Yeshua, the person who is bringing them to God's place. Emmanuel, God with us, bringing us God's presence. Brothers and sisters, in the birth of this little baby, there is an announcement being made. The kingdom of God has arrived. And we see, despite the grandeur, despite the majesty of this God taking on flesh becoming man. After that, it seems like nothing happens. It's quiet for a long time. Years go on. And in that and through that, we learn something about the kingdom of God. Because it's just like God to want to take something small, something lowly, something that seems insignificant. Like what looks like to the outside world, a little

baby born to a couple that looks like a shotgun wedding in a redneck town. But in that and through that, God is infiltrating a broken world. And He is conquering sin and death and satan. But that conquest is gradual. And that little boy Jesus turns into a young man Jesus. And that young man, Jesus, learns carpentry from Joseph and lives what is probably a small, peasant life in the town of Nazareth. And that young man, Jesus, grows into a man, Jesus. And about the time He turns thirty, He goes out and He starts to attract a following for Himself and He starts preaching and proclaiming a message. And that message is the Kingdom of God is at hand. And people don't know what to make of this Jesus. On the one hand, there's astonishment. Look at this One who's speaking with such power, with such authority in the synagogue. And on the other hand, there's longing because these people want to come to Him. They want to see miracles. They want to be healed. They want these demons to be exercised. But on the other hand, He's often met with skepticism and quiet rage because He threatens the religious establishment. And He's constantly confusing and confounding these religious henchmen. And even His own followers who don't know what to make of Him, to those who want to name Jesus, who want to make Him a king to topple the Roman Empire, He confuses with His refusal to take up arms or to take on a crown. For those who want to entrap Jesus, He moves around and He surpasses them and he supplants them with the knowledge of Scripture that they themselves don't possess. And for those who want to use Jesus to fill their pockets, or to fill their bellies, He comes in with these mysterious parables, or with these expectations that are so shockingly high that it makes the cost of following this Nazarene seem just too high.

But there are some people who do follow him. Twelve disciples who spend almost every day, almost every hour following this man around the holy land. And even they, they want a Messiah, but they want a king that will topple Caesar that will topple the Roman Empire. They want military and political power and they want it now. And they're asking Jesus all the time. "When you come into your kingdom, who's going to sit at your right hand? Who's going to sit at your left? Who's going to be in your cabinet? Who's going to be having power with you?" And Jesus says, "I'm not answering that question because I've got a question of my own. Who do you say that I am?" And one of His disciples, a man named Simon Peter, says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus says to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood, has not revealed this to you, but My Father, who is in heaven." And here we have it. Come, behold, this is the first time in the Scripture that someone is professing and proclaiming that Jesus is Lord and He is admitting to it. He is saying, "I am the line of Jesse. I am the son of Abraham. I am the promised one who is coming. Look at this mystery that was unveiled to the Messiah," He said, "Rejoice in it." But what's incredible is what follows this announcement. What follows this brilliance that Jesus is the Messiah is not triumph but what comes next is torture. And He tells His disciples the next thing that has to happen is I have to be killed. I have to die. And Peter says, "We will never let that happen." And Jesus says, "Get behind Me, satan." What the apostles are wanting is somebody on an earthly throne bringing power, bringing glory right now. But Jesus is doing something different. He's making moves that will suit Him, not on an earthly throne but on an eternal throne. But the pathway to that crown first goes through the cross. So, Jesus sets His face like flint toward Jerusalem. And He's betrayed by one of his own disciples. And He's unjustly arrested. He's falsely accused. He's sickeningly sentenced to the most heinous, most cruel, most painful, most humiliating torture in form of execution that the Roman Empire could conceive of. Crucifixion. And He's handed over the authorities and He's beaten mercilessly until He's weak and bloodied. And the man who was raised to be a carpenter is so weak that he can't lift up a piece of wood and He has to be

helped. But He's not just beaten, He's also mocked in words but also in deeds. And they fashion a crown of thorns and they put it on His head and they put a sign above the cross that says, King of the Jews. And to anyone there who saw Jesus hanging on the cross naked, writhing in His own blood, filling with blood in his lungs and suffocating, the message would have been unmistakable. I don't care what your sign says. This is no king. He's got no power. He's got no place. He's got no army. He's no king. But the declaration that was being made would have been even clearer and even deeper and even more unmistakable to the people of God who remembered the words from the book of Deuteronomy that said, Cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree. And Jesus is on the cross and He dies. And there is a declaration being made. This one on the cross bears the curse of God. What kind of a Messiah is this? We find out. Because three days later, Jesus who was killed, Jesus who was executed, is risen from the dead, bodily, victoriously, triumphantly. And when He is being raised from the dead, there's a new declaration being made. On Friday, in torture, the message was, this one is cursed. But on Sunday, the message is this curse has been conquered by the Christ. Christ is risen from the dead, trampling over death by death. Oh death, where is your sting? Oh grave, where is your victory? We now stand in the light because the glory of God has defeated the night.

And in light of the resurrection, everything suddenly becomes increasingly clear. Because for years, people couldn't figure out why Jesus was living the way that He was living. He could've had fame. He could've had power. He could've had glory. People were following Him. But He refuse to live for the present. Instead, He looked and worked toward the future by reliving the past. He took the past, all of Israel's failure and He relived it but He relived it faithfully. And in the resurrection, we see Jesus is doing that. And He's showing, I am the truer and I'm the newer and I am the better Adam. Who is tempted in the garden and failed. But Jesus was tempted in the wilderness and prevailed. Jesus is showing that, I am the truer. I am the newer. I am the better Noah. I am the righteous One who will lead you safely through God's judgment. He's showing He is the truer, He is the newer, He is the better Abraham. Who was called to go away from his home and create a new people of God. Jesus comes out from the comfort and the home of His eternal resting place in heaven, takes on flesh, and creates new people by the power of His blood. And in the resurrection, we see too it becomes clear that His death was not an execution, it was a deliverance. We see that Jesus is a truer and a newer and a better Moses. Moses led the people through an Exodus out of slavery. Jesus leads us, not out of pharaoh's tyranny but from underneath the thumb of sin and satan. Moses is giving the blood to cover over the death that will come upon the people of Egypt. Jesus is coming in covering us with the blood of His own covenant so that we won't just walk through with Him out of the Red Sea but into eternity. We see Jesus, His death is a victory. And He's a truer and a newer and a better David. David, this low-born boy who became a king. Jesus, this low-born boy, born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, becoming a king. David, this one who fought victories for his people such that the victories that he won became the victories for his people. And Jesus doing the same thing, winning, securing a victory that we did not could and would not ever secure on ourselves. And what we see in the resurrection of Jesus is the kingdom in the crucifixion looked like a dead hope and a lost cause. But what we see is the cross is not primarily the place of Jesus' execution. It's the place of his enthronement. On the cross, Jesus takes on the duties of a king. On the cross like a king, Jesus fights for His people. On the cross, for a kingdom, Jesus represents His people. Accepting their sin on the cross. Jesus, like a king, makes peace for His people. And at the same time, we see the resurrection is not just the vindication of Jesus, it's also the vanquishing of satan. Because the one power that satan wields is the power to charge a penalty of death to

anyone who sins. But that death penalty couldn't stick to one in whom it couldn't find any sin to latch on to. And when Jesus is risen from the dead, He is disarming and defeating satan.

And what we see when we think back to that serpent in the garden in Genesis three, in the resurrection, that serpent has been defanged and soon, his head will be crushed by the risen Jesus. But the risen Jesus must rise further still. He must ascend to be with His Father in heaven until He brings heaven down to earth in the form of an everlasting kingdom. But we're to rejoice in that because when Jesus ascends, the Holy Spirit descends to us. And what that means is if you are in Christ, you no longer have to fear death. Because the power that conquered sin and satan, the power that raised Jesus from the dead now dwells in you. And just as surely as it raised Jesus from the dead, someday it will raise you as well. What this also means is that there are some of you in here who feel uneasy right now. And that's because deep down you know you've never made a decision to follow after Christ. And that's a bad thing because whether you think of yourself this way or not, whether you would call yourself this or not, it means you are an enemy of God. But what is the message of the story of Scripture? When you feel a pang, an anxiousness, an uneasiness in your heart at a time like this, what we realize the Scripture is telling us is that feeling that you're feeling right now has a name. Because that feeling is a person. The Holy Spirit. And He's convicting you of sin right now. And He's offering you a rescue right now. Because for thousands of years, the church has made a royal announcement. Jesus Christ has conquered sin and satan and He and He alone is the rightful King over all the universe. And that announcement demands a response. But when that announcement is made, the Holy Spirit works in hearts to convict of sin and to offer a promise, to offer a rescue that if you turn away from your sin, if you confess and trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then, He will offer you newness life. He will make you new. A new creation, one of God's people to live eternally in God's place in the midst of God's presence forever. So, right now, make that decision. Pray. Come and talk to one of us as soon as we start singing. But what this also means is that some of you need to be connected to the place where God actually rules. You see, one day, God will rule over entire universe. Jesus will come down as King visibly, triumphantly, ruling uncontested over every square inch of the universe where every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God. But right now, there's one place where Jesus rules right now the way He will one day rule over the entire universe. And that place is the local church. Where Jesus rules as our head and our King. And Jesus says, those who claim allegiance to the kingdom of Jesus Christ must proclaim that allegiance in the waters of baptism and pledge their lives in membership to the local church. Because Jesus in the resurrection is not just disarming satan, He's also arming the church. He's giving gifts to the church. So, the church isn't just a place that you get to when you can or it's a good thing if you can do it. The church is the front lines of the place where Jesus through the gifts of the Spirit is completing His victory over sin and satan. And it's where you as a Christian are stationed to serve. And what we see, the power of the local church, the beauty of the local church, is it is designed to be a portrait of what is to come. It's designed to be a preview of a movie that's yet to be played. It's designed to show this is what the coming kingdom of Christ will look like when Jesus returns. And that return is what we look toward. And that return is what we long for. Because Jesus has promised that He is coming back to Earth. Not that we're going to die and go to float up in the clouds in a choir for eternity. No, He is coming back here. And when he does, we will be resurrected from the dead. And He will bring heaven down to earth and He will renew His people and resurrected bodies. He will renew His creation. And what He brings when He defeats satan and when He defeats sin is so radically transformed that creation is

spoken of is a new heaven and a new earth. And Jesus invites you to live with Him there in God's eternal kingdom. Because there, we will see the face of God and we'll be transformed. We will feast in the house of Zion. We will sing with our hearts restored and Jesus will wipe away every tear and death will be no more. And the last statement from Jesus that we have in the Bible is a promise. Surely I am coming soon. That's our hope. That's what we're longing for. Jesus is making all things new. He's making everything sad come untrue. And so we end where we began. There was a mystery to the universe but God has revealed Himself to us. He's revealed His plan for the universe to us. It's a plan of God's people resurrected. Of God's place in a renewed creation of God's present ruling and reigning triumphantly reestablished with man for eternity. Come behold is what Scripture invites us to do. Come behold the wondrous history of the faithful Triune God. It's a history that comes to us as a mystery. A mystery that comes to us in the form of a story. A story that's true. A story to find yourself in. A story to live in because this is the story of Scripture. And it's a story you.