

**Sermon Notes of
Guest Speaker Robert Meade's Sermon on August 16, 2015
"The Epic Story #4 – The Back Story"**

[In today's sermon, part 4 of a 5 part series, Guest Speaker Robert Meade shows us that God's story is the backstory to our story which helps us find our place, purpose, and part in the Epic story.]

Notes:

Introduction:

- This is the fourth sermon on our series of "The Epic Story."
- The series is based on this year's SEP curriculum.

Today's theme Scripture:

John 17:24 (The Message), "Father, I want those you gave me to be with me, right where I am, so they can see my glory, the splendor you gave me, having loved me long before there ever was a world."

Opening prayer:

Over the previous three sermons in this series, we have discussed the following:

1. God has designed humans to love a great story.
2. What is your story? How has God become a part of it?
3. One chapter doesn't tell your whole story.

Today's message – Introduction:

- Do you ever feel alone?
- Have you ever felt like no one "gets" you?
- Like no one understands your story?
- Do you sometimes get the sense that you are in this thing called life all by yourself?

- It's not unusual to have times of doubt, loneliness, or isolation, especially if you have been abandoned at one time or another.
- Your life, your experience, your story may seem like it is disconnected from all others.
- You may feel alone right now, even while sitting in the midst of a lot of people at church today.

- But as one famous poet (John Donne) put it, "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main."
- In other words, we are all connected.
- And most importantly, no one's story sits outside of the grand story of God.

- Yes, your story is unique and special.

- Yes, it is your story, but all of our stories are a part of the story God has been writing since the beginning of time.
- God's story is the backstory to your story.
- This backstory is common to us all, giving your life – your story – meaning and depth and truth and purpose.

Defining backstory:

- A backstory is like a prequel (the story or events that precedes the story).
- The backstory in a film or piece of literature is intended to give history, believability, a reference point and context to the plot of the story at hand.
- And your backstory is the grandest of them all.

Star Wars example:

- The first movie, “Star Wars” – now called “A New Hope” – started with a lot of questions.
- What brought the world to this point?
- Who was Darth Vader and where did he come from?
- How did the Empire start and who were the rebels?
- We had to wait until 1999 – when Episode 1 – Phantom Menace – came out to start getting answers.
- Episodes 1-3 are the backstory.
- This year Episode 7, “The Force Awakens,” is being released.
- The series was a brilliant idea by George Lucas.
- Many of us waited 16 years to get the backstory.
- That's longer than some of our teens have been alive.

God's backstory:

- God's story or prequel – is much more fascinating than George Lucas'.
- God's backstory – found in the Bible – shows that from the very beginning, God's intention has always been love, redemption, rescue and reconciliation.
- All of the stories in the Bible serve as the foundation, the fuel, the formation of your story.
- You may have never heard that before – you may have thought the Bible was simply God's story or Israel's story –
- or even an instruction manual on how to live.
- But the Bible is God's backstory to help you see how precious and how important all of us are to God.

Questions about our life:

- At various times in our lives we find ourselves asking some important questions:
 - Who am I really?
 - Why am I here?
 - Where will I find life?

- What does God want of me?
- The incredible answers to these questions come only when we know the backstory – or as some might call it – the rest of the story.
- Knowing the backstory that leads to the start of your story helps you find your place, purpose, and part in the Epic story.

Our backstory:

- Many stories begin with, “Once upon a time, in a land far, far away...”
- Or, “In a time long, long ago...”
- Your story, our story, God’s story begins a little differently.
- In a land far, far away, even before there was land –
- Once upon a time, in a time long, long ago, even before time was measured, the Epic story began.
- Indeed, your story is connected to a story that has always been and always will be.
- We know every great story has a beginning, but would you believe your story – the greatest love story of all time – is set with eternity as the back drop.
- That’s hard to fathom, but it’s true.
- God has set eternity in our hearts.
- Often we think of eternity only in going forward forever, but eternity is also going back forever.
- For example, when we think about “The beginning...” we often think of the front of the Bible and turn to Genesis.

The beginning:

Genesis 1:1-5 (The Message), First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don’t see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God’s Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

God spoke: “Light!” And light appeared. God saw that light was good and separated light from dark. God named the light Day, he named the dark Night. It was evening, it was morning—Day One.

- But Genesis isn’t the very beginning.
- When we look back on the story of God we need to look back before humans, before the earth, before anything was created.
- We have to start with John 1:1-5.

John 1:1-5, (The Message), The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one. Everything was created through him; nothing—not one thing!—came into being without him. What came into existence was Life, and the Life was Light to live by. The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn’t put it out.

- Much happened prior to this life we humans are living, things you must understand.

- Something happened before our moment on this stage.
- Something came before us. Something preceded us.
- The backstory is vital to know because it means everything to us.
- And that's because that "something" is really someone!

The Trinity relationship:

- John was peering back into the mystery of God's own life before anything else existed, and he was trying to unveil this so we could better understand.
- Before anything else, there was a fellowship, a heroic intimacy, something called the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – three in one amazingly perfect relationship.
- The Trinity isn't just a "thing" that was relational but the Trinity is the very essence of pure relationship.
- God – the Trinity – is a relationship. Father-Son-Holy Spirit in the most loving, unified relationship you could ever imagine – in fact, much more than you could imagine.
- And everything created was created out of that relationship.
- You were created out of that relationship.
- And as amazing as it may sound, you were created to be in that relationship of God.
- This is what you were created for.
- The heart of all things is a love relationship - a personality, a fellowship of hearts, a community, a Trinity.
- We were created to be in a relationship with one another and with our Triune God.
- Our reality is relational to the core. The backstory is that God had all of us in mind all along.

The backstory – our story:

- We were made in the image and likeness of God, which is love and relationship.
- Sure, there are times you feel like love has left you, like love has passed you over.
- But our feelings can disguise the truth. Feelings can lie to us.
- One example, when you were young and at the store and suddenly you couldn't see your mom, or dad, you felt scared and all alone.
- But you weren't alone. You weren't abandoned.
- You just felt like it because your emotions took over.
- Even when we feel like love has left us, it hasn't – that's because love is God and God is love.
- You need to know love is real and that you are loved.
- God's love really does endure all things.
- A world of love has been planned for you and waits for you to recognize it.
- Love is the backstory, the history behind our story.
- Love is the fuel for our future story.
- And love is here now, shaping your story today, and love's name is Jesus.

Love's name is Jesus:

- This reality of love existed before creation, it is the source of creation and one day it will put all creation back together.
- And it is never absent from the present, because Jesus is never absent from the present.
- In love, Jesus is right where he wants you.
- Love is the heart of the eternal story, the Epic story, and your story whether you know it or believe it.
- Let's look at what Jesus said the night he was crucified...

John 17:24-26 (The Message, Father, I want those you gave me to be with me, right where I am, so they can see my glory, the splendor you gave me, having loved me long before there ever was a world.

Righteous Father, the world has never known you, but I have known you, and these disciples know that you sent me on this mission.

I have made your very being known to them—who you are and what you do—and continue to make it known, so that your love for me might be in them exactly as I am in them.

- The Father loved Jesus before time began.
- Jesus is with God and is at the heart of who God is – love.
- And Jesus longs for you to know where you belong, with Him in that love.
- He tells us –

John 15:9 (The Message), "I've loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love."

- Similarly, in our theme text in Ephesians, we see God's backstory in our story.

(Eph. 2:4-8 (The Message), Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us! Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah. Now God has us where he wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role

- All the love in the universe – from the very beginning of the universe – is ready to fill your story.
- Trust Him enough to let Him do it.
- The most important part of our story is the role that God plays in it.

Closing Prayer: