

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Glen Weber's Sermon on August 23, 2015
"The Epic Story #5 –
Reading the Story Backwards"**

[In today's sermon, part 5 of a 5 part series, Senior Pastor Glen Weber shows us that God's story doesn't ever have an ending, but rather it has a new beginning as told in book of Revelation.]

Notes:

Introduction:

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

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

1. God has put the desire for humans to love a great story.
 2. What is your story? How has God become a part of it?
 3. One chapter, especially bad in our life, doesn't tell your whole story.
 4. The backstory of God, which began before he created anything, helps us find our place, purpose, and part in the Epic story.
- Greg Williams' sermon between parts 2 and 3 titled, "Restlessness, showed in Matt. 10-11 – John the Baptist's and Jesus' disciples expressing restlessness in their situation.
 - And how Jesus called them to put their burden on Him and put their rest in Him – which ties into this series.

Theme Scripture:

Ephesians 2:10 (The Message), He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.

Introduction:

- In our previous message we learned that our backstory is the greatest love story ever told.
- His backstory helps us to know God and His love for us.
- The Bible tells us perfect love casts out fear, so why do we allow fear to hold us back?
- It's because we still need to get to know the author of the story and the backstory.
- Because God's story of rescue and redemption is your backstory, let's look at how the backstory affects your story moving forward.

The end of your story is a victory:

- As we shall see later, Jesus is the beginning and the ending of your story.

- We know that there is victory for us in our story through Jesus Christ.
- In the Revelation we are reminded that His Epic Story is still continuing in that heaven will once again come down.... permanently, and that all sadness and tears will be chased away forever.
- The story really doesn't have an ending; it has a new beginning.
- When we say yes to Jesus, we say yes to being a part of creating the continuation of His love story.
- Pastor Glen loves how John 1:12-13 is phrased in the Jesus Storybook Bible.

**John 1:12-13, For anyone who says yes to Jesus
 For anyone who believes what Jesus said
 For anyone who will just reach out to take it
 Then God will give them this wonderful gift:
 To be born into a whole new life
 To be who they really are
 Who God always made them to be-
 Their own true selves-
 God's dear child.**

- That's who we are – God's dear child.
- And the most amazingly wonderful thing about this story is that it is your story too!
- And it is your story because God is always saying yes to you.

God loves us:

- What is one of the first words a 1-2 year old child learns – sometimes even before Dada and Mama? No!!!
 - Eat your food. No!
 - Pick up your toys. No!
 - Time to go to bed. No!
- We do not accept their “no” do we?
- That's because we love them and know what is good for them.
- Our “yes” is bigger than their “no.”
- Even in those times in your life when you say no to God, he says no to your no.
- In other words, God says, “Nope, I love you too much to take that no answer for eternity.”
- God says, “So, I say no to your no, which is saying yes to you.”
- God says, “Not because I'm forcing you to accept my love and be in the story, but because you are already in the story and I will never stop loving you.”

Movie – “God's Not Dead?”

- Willie Robertson (Duck Dynasty) has a cameo appearance where they ask him about the importance of his Christianity.
- He says he must respond to God, then he says, “If I deny or abandon Him, He will deny and abandon me.”

- That isn't true!
- Jesus said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."
- His love for us is NOT based on our obedience.
- When we say no to Him, He still says yes to us.

God's yes!

- Jesus is God's yes to you, not only through his past actions, but by the fact that He is with you always – even when you don't feel or know His presence.
- It's people's "no" that puts them in hell, not God.
- They are forgiven by God but they refuse to accept His forgiveness.

2 Corinthians 1:20 (The Message Bible), Whatever God has promised gets stamped with the Yes of Jesus. In him, this is what we preach and pray, the great Amen, God's Yes and our Yes together, gloriously evident

- When we say yes to God, we say yes to leverage our interests, gifts, and whole person to be part of something bigger.
- When we say yes to God, we say yes to an adventure!

Merging our story with His:

All the great stories pretty much follow the same storyline. Things were once good, then something awful happened, and now a great battle must be fought or a journey taken. At just the right moment (which feels like the last possible moment), a hero comes and sets things right, and life is found again. – J. Eldridge

- Through Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension things have been set right.
- Life has been found again.
- However, we live in the tension of the already and not yet.
- While the finished work of the cross has given us victory over death (the already), we are still waiting on Jesus' return to experience the eternity that has been written in our hearts (the not yet).

The End of the Beginning and the Beginning of the End (Eternity):

- The end of the story helps us have a better perspective on what we are experiencing now.
- Our story takes on new meaning, even though we still deal with the brokenness and heartache of our life in this world.
- Before creation it was planned that Jesus would come and die for us.
- All of the biblical story is about the fall of man and God's working to redeem humanity – even when they were saying "no" to Him.
- Part way through the story, (John 1:1-14, God became flesh in the person of Jesus.
- He became one of us in order to restore us to a relationship with Him.

- The book of Revelation (at the end of the Bible) tells us the “end of the beginning” – that in the end God completely overcomes evil and sin and death and sadness!
- However, 1 Thess. 4 and many other places tell us that Jesus will appear again – as a glorified human being – as King of kings.
- 1 Thess. 4 also says that He will bring those who have died with Him and those of us who are alive will meet Him in the air.
- Revelation tells us that when Jesus appears again, He will come to this earth which He has been creating new again.
- AND He will live here with us and be our God!! FOREVER!!
- Thus, this is the beginning of the end, however, there is no end to the end – it goes on for a eternity as humanity lives with God forever on this earth and who knows where else!!

Dealing with our current brokenness:

- As a result of the brokenness and heartache we see and live in, it is easy to try and satisfy the longings of our heart by mimicking the culture that surrounds us and striving to build a kingdom of our own.
- We can be blinded by our circumstances and forget the bigger story, and fall into a story that is so much smaller and will not satisfy the longings written on our hearts.
- In the face of the culture’s pressure we may even develop habits and practices as ways of coping but such “coping mechanisms” only give temporary relief.
- We need to tell our children and grandchildren about our family history, which will give some insight to their current story.
- How would you live differently if you believed that your backstory was true – that you were created for your own Epic story fueled by God’s unending love?
- The only way to break free of the tension you face is to turn your eyes to Jesus, who is the beginning and end of your story, whose life, death, and resurrection gives you victory in your own story.
- Continually remind yourself you are part of his story.

Hebrews 12:2-3 (The Message Bible), Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he’s there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!

- Developing a life-rhythm of positioning yourself before God helps you “keep your eyes on Jesus” when you are tempted to be distracted by the trappings of this world.
- Disciplines like reading about Jesus in regular Bible reading, thinking about what you read (meditation), and talking about what you read (engaging in small group communities) allow you to know Jesus, and the way he is God’s eternal yes to you.

- The sacrament of communion is a wonderful reminder of the finished work of the cross and the resulting victory in your life. It helps you to hear a sort of “proactive echo” of the big yes that you will hear when Jesus returns.

Jude 24-25 (The Message Bible), And now to him who can keep you on your feet, standing tall in his bright presence, fresh and celebrating—to our one God, our only Savior, through Jesus Christ, our Master, be glory, majesty, strength, and rule before all time, and now, and to the end of all time. Yes.

- Taking the time to look to Jesus through prayers and sacraments helps you form your imaginations, and opens up your heart and mind to fathom that your story is part of God’s Epic story.
- And God’s story is all about relationship not religious rules and regulations.

Your role in the Epic story:

- When we don’t see ourselves as part of the bigger story, or we believe the lie that God is holding out on us, the tendency is to try to write our own story.
- This story becomes all about me! We think we are building our own castle, but without God we are actually building a prison.
- Here’s the key: woven into the fabric of your being is the gospel – the Good News – and knowing the gospel is the larger story helps you figure out this life you are living.
- Knowing the gospel helps you say yes – on a daily basis.
- Saying yes is a call to share the love and compassion he has given to you.
- Saying yes is weaving your backstory (his story) into your present story.
- Whenever you say yes to communion with him, it leads to a yes to a commission to be empathetic to the people around you as you share his love.
- As our theme scripture says:

Ephesians 2:10, (The Message Bible), He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing.

Conclusion:

- The invitation God offers you is relationship – relationship with him and with his children.
- When you commune with God, he rubs off on you and your heart becomes more like His.
- You start to have more compassion for the people around you.
- Just like Jesus’ movement from heaven and his entrance into our world changed the ending of your story, His love fuels you with compassion to move and enter the stories of the people around you.
- Weaving your story with God’s Epic story, and the stories of the people he has placed in your life will drastically shift the trajectory of your story.
- This is another reason why saying yes is a practice and not an event.
- When you say yes to something, you are inevitably saying no to something else.

- The new outward movement of your life may cause you to say no to some things that you used to say yes to.
- Just as Jesus' ultimate yes was his prayer from the cross, "not my will but yours be done," your yes is also a yes of surrender and trust, knowing that what God has for you is always better than any story you could dream up for yourself.
- So when you ask yourself the question, "What is most life-giving to me?", it often helps clarify the areas of your life where you are being called to say yes.

Questions to ponder:

- What in your life is most life giving to you?
- When do you feel most energized?
- What do you most look forward to?

- What do you need to take a step toward Jesus today?
- What are you being called to say "yes" to?
- Is there anything that you feel you need to say "no" to, in order to respond to God?

- What is God offering you?
- What is God asking of you?
- Are you offering yourself to God?

Closing Prayer: