

**Sermon Notes of
Assistant Pastor Fred Stevens' Sermon on September 6, 2015
"What's the Story?"**

[In today's sermon, Assistant Pastor Fred Stevens shows that everyone has a story about his or her life and that God has invited us to become a part of His story.]

Notes:

Introduction:

- When someone says "Wassup?" What do they mean?
- It means, "Hello, what's going on in your life?"
- It means the same as, "What's happening, Dude?"
- When someone says that to you, they want to connect with you and interact with you

- What's going on here today?
- Why are we in church?
- What is God doing in our lives today?

The Epic Story:

- Everyone has a life story.
- Our story isn't finished. It's still being written.
- And, most importantly, we can have God in our story.

- Now God has a story, as well.
- The most amazing thing is that God wants all of us in His story!
- God has invited us to be in His Epic Story!

Even atoms have stories:

- *"The universe is made of stories, not of atoms."* – American Poet, Muriel Rukeyser
- Things have stories like your family heirloom, for example.

Groups Have Stories:

- There are various types of groups
 - Church groups like New Hope
 - War Veterans
 - Services organizations

- There are various groups from the Bible
 - The Children of Israel
 - The Egyptians
 - The shepherds
 - The disciples
 - The Pharisees

- First century Christians
- What do we learn from the story of these various groups?
 - We can learn valuable lessons from their stories – both good and bad.

What is a Group?

- Two or more people with something in common.
- People who interact with each other.
- Or have a relationship with each other.

- Families are groups.
- The family of Man has a story.
- Another name for man is Adam

- Adam and Eve said, “We can decide what is right and wrong, good and evil on our own.”
- But they really couldn’t.

- The story of the Family of Israel shows that Israel said they could follow God and His ways on their own.
- But they couldn’t.

The Bible:

- A Collection of Stories with an amazing impact
- The focus is Jesus, especially the New Testament.
- We learn from Jesus, as the second Adam: “Only He Can”

- Conclusion: We can’t; He can!
- But we can through Him.

Our relationship with God the Father through Jesus:

Jesus said: John 14:1-4, (The Message), “Don’t let this throw you. You trust God, don’t you? Trust me. There is plenty of room for you in my Father’s home. If that weren’t so, would I have told you that I’m on my way to get a room ready for you? And if I’m on my way to get your room ready, I’ll come back and get you so you can live where I live. And you already know the road I’m taking.”

- God is building something amazing
- Not made of stuff, but made of people who choose to be part of it.
- It is only constructed through Jesus.

- When God made the universe, the angels were astonished.
- Recently scientists are discovering more and more astonishing facts about the universe.
- For example, not all the galaxies are evenly distributed – some are in a unique order.
- Just think how astonished the angels will be at the final creation of God’s family.

Ephesians 2:19-22 (The Message), That's plain enough, isn't it? You're no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You *belong* here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all – irrespective of how we got here – in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day – a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home.

- God's family includes everyone, not just Israel but also the Gentiles.
- Jesus is guiding us to help build God's family.

God's eventual goal is often called:

- Kingdom of God
- Zion
- Heaven
- Jerusalem

- This is a structure like no other.
- It's bigger, more intricate than anything else.
- And it's living, eternal.
- And it's all made up of relationships.

- This is the most important thing happening, and it's happening here and everywhere.
- All groups are being invited into God's family.
- Hallelujah! Praise God!

God's plan for us:

Psalm 147:1-6 (The Message), Hallelujah!

**It's a good thing to sing praise to our God; praise is beautiful, praise is fitting.
 God's the one who rebuilds Jerusalem, who regathers Israel's scattered exiles.
 He heals the heartbroken and bandages their wounds.
 He counts the stars and assigns each a name.
 Our Lord is great, with limitless strength;
 we'll never comprehend what he knows and does.
 God puts the fallen on their feet again and pushes the wicked into the ditch.**

**7-11, Sing to God a thanksgiving hymn, play music on your instruments to God,
 Who fills the sky with clouds, preparing rain for the earth,
 Then turning the mountains green with grass, feeding both cattle and crows.
 He's not impressed with horsepower; the size of our muscles means little to him.
 Those who fear God get God's attention; they can depend on his strength.**

12-18, Jerusalem, worship God!

Zion, praise your God!

He made your city secure, he blessed your children among you.

He keeps the peace at your borders; he puts the best bread on your tables.

**He launches his promises earthward – how swift and sure they come!
He spreads snow like a white fleece; he scatters frost like ashes,
He broadcasts hail like birdseed – who can survive his winter?
Then he gives the command and it all melts; he breathes on winter – suddenly it's
spring!**

**19-20, He speaks the same way to Jacob, speaks words that work to Israel.
He never did this to the other nations; they never heard such commands.
Hallelujah!**

- These are God's promises.
- This is God's big story.
- God invites us to be part of it.

- We need to constantly renew our involvement with God.
- The first Adam was tempted to eat and he died.
- The second Adam invites us to eat and live.

Communion:

- Jesus provides all that is necessary to be a part of God's family.
- Jesus is the "Bread of life."
- Jesus shed blood, represented by the cup, cleanses us from all sin.

Closing Prayer: