

“Long Story Short - Jesus”

Scripture: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

Graphics: puzzle, Jesus, birth, ministry, death, resurrection

Big Truth: The Bible tell us the grand story of God’s redemptive plan for the world. Though Creation, the Fall, Israel, Jesus, the Church, and New Creation, the Bible is sufficient for our salvation. Every person who comes to Panama UMC is called to love God, self, others and the entire creation because God created the universe complete, purposeful, from and for community.

Focus phrase: We follow a king whose birth was scandalous, whose ministry was challenging, whose death was offensive, and whose resurrection was restorative.

1. Introduction

A. Don’t you just love a good **underdog story**?

- i. When I was 10 years old, I remember the “Miracle on Ice” at the 1980 USA Olympics. That unlikely Men’s Hockey team defeated the mighty Soviet Union. They were big underdogs. The USA team played some great hockey up until that point - despite having a team made up of amateurs and college players. The Soviets, on the other hand, were made up of players with a rich history playing together. Their defeat by the underdog USA team led to the famous Al Michael's line “Do you believe in miracles? Yes!”
- ii. Or how about THIS one: An out-of-shape, has-been, arm-breaking, boxer from Philadelphia named Rocky Balboa took on the undisputed heavy-weight champion of the world, Apollo Creed, in the classic movie “Rocky.” Rocky Balboa was an ordinary Joe who’d taken too many shots to the head. But you couldn’t help but love him for the gentleness behind his brutish ways. The underdog boxer stole our hearts with his “Yo Adrian!”

B. Yet, in all of human history, THE greatest underdog story is of a Rabbi from Nazareth, born under sketchy circumstances who gathered around him a ragtag group of young apprentices.

- i. This miracle man loved underdogs, so he healed the sick and broken, lifted up the downtrodden and pushed back against bullies.
- ii. He challenged the religious and political authorities of his day to the point that they conspired together to kill him on a cross on a garbage dump.
- iii. This underdog was no ordinary man because three days after burying him in a borrowed tomb, he rose from the dead and changed human history.
- iv. Though he never wrote a book, never led an army, never founded a city or built a building, the movement he began has spread from a few dozen people to one-third of this planet's population today.

- v. This underdog's life splits human history from history BC, "before Christ" and history "AD", anno domini, "in the year of our Lord."
 - vi. More books have been written about him than any single person, ever. More schools, hospitals and orphanages have been established in his honor.
 - vii. The greatest underdog in all of human history is of course, Jesus.
- C. Today, as we begin Part 4 of our Long Story Short sermon series, we're excited to make the shift from the Old Testament to the New Testament. I'm thankful for lots of resources for this series that have come from a book called Long Story Short by Joshua McNall and from my friends at Grace Church in Florida.
- D. So far, we've looked at Creation, The Fall, and Israel. Today we move to Jesus, then the Church, and the New Creation - 6 parts of this 30,000 foot view of the whole story of the Bible from beginning to end.
- i. In week 1, we were in Genesis 1 and 2 which paint a portrait of a loving Creator who spoke and fashioned a complete and purposeful **Creation** for human beings to enjoy, care for and tend.
 - ii. Genesis 3, in week 2, is not just **The Fall** of Adam and Eve, but **our falling** with the gift of free will. We so often sinfully declare our autonomy and independence from God.
 - iii. Last week, we looked at the third movement in the Bible - the history of God's people, **Israel**. Israel's cycle of **destiny, disobedience and deliverance**, starting with Abraham and Sarah, is **OUR journey too**.
 - iv. Today, we make our way past the 39 books of the Old Testament into the 27 books of the New Testament. We begin this time in the New Testament with, of course, this amazing underdog named Jesus.
 - v. Knowing the **WHOLE** story of the Bible helps us when we read very specific **PIECES** of the Bible. It helps us put the **WHOLE** puzzle together.
- E. Jesus was and is God's ultimate solution for the sin problem of our planet. Creation was perfect, the Fall broke that, Israel couldn't follow God perfectly, but God **STILL** loves His creations.
- F. Jesus came to once-and-for-all reestablish the relationship with God we enjoyed in creation by **beginning a movement**...NO, not just a **movement**, but a **revolution; a revolution of love**. When I think of God's plan in Jesus, it's not just a movement...it's a **revolution!**
- G. Remember that in the creation stories, we were made to love God, ourselves, each other and yes, even the creation well. The sin in the world and in our lives makes a mess of that mission.

- H. Jesus is the answer to that sin problem. So today, we're going to focus on four distinct parts of his life that tell the story of this Jesus revolution: **his birth, his ministry, his death and his resurrection.**
- I. Before we get there, though, remember that the Bible **challenges us to allow Jesus to define and describe himself.** We don't make God in OUR image. God has made US in HIS image. This is one of the reasons we need to be students of the entire Bible. Paul wrote THIS about Jesus in Colossians 1:15a (NRSV): *"He is the image of the invisible God..."*
- J. If you want to know what God is like, don't look at yourself or the people around you...look at the life of Jesus. Jesus was God in the flesh.
- K. The four biographies of Jesus, in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, paint a picture of a Jesus who came to start a **love revolution** that challenges our selfish, sinful ways and replaces it with his own character.
 - i. Jesus' revolution was **revolution of character** that makes **mean people nice, angry people peaceful, dishonest people honest.** He takes addicted people and makes them sober. He came to turn **enemies into friends.** He came to tear down dividing walls of race, gender, economics and education. Jesus radically invited **outsiders** to come in.
 - ii. Yet the Jewish crowds and disciples with Jesus repeatedly wanted to make Him into a revolutionary King who would overthrow the Romans with brute force.
 - iii. Jesus was a **different kind of King** who started a **different kind of revolution.**
- L. So for today, we're going to consider what it means for you and me to join **"the Jesus revolution"** "following a different kind of King."
- M. And I think you'd agree with me that we need the Jesus revolution to turn the hearts of people in the human family back to God and one another. Ours is a world of division and hate, polarized to a ridiculous degree right now during this pandemic.
- N. It'll take the Jesus revolution to transform the deep inner character of people to fix what ails our broken planet. Imagine a people who not only SPEAK the words of Jesus but DO the works of Jesus. That'll change our world. That's a revolution!
- O. Let's PRAY...I can't WAIT to talk about Jesus this morning! Wahooo! **PRAY!**

2. Scripture

- A. This Jesus revolution has begun! You're invited again today to be part of it! Here are four things about Jesus you need to consider:

B. First, to be part of the Jesus revolution, you must follow a King whose **birth was scandalous**.

- i. I think you'll agree that nothing is as exciting as the birth of a baby.
- ii. Yet, Jesus' birth story was **scandalous!** It certainly wasn't the culturally-acceptable birth of a boy in the first century.
- iii. If you read the story in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, it doesn't take long to see that it's filled with scandal.
 - a. His parents, Mary and Joseph, **weren't married**...and she turns up pregnant. In those days, capital punishment usually followed a disgrace of this sort - capital punishment!
 - b. And yet, it's into this exact circumstance that the Jesus revolution began.
 - c. Angels appeared to Mary to reassure her that her soon-to-be-born son would be a different kind of King...one that would lead a revolution.
- iv. Grab your Bible and go with me to Luke 1:31-33:

“And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

- v. In a nation and culture that had kings for as long as they can remember, this announcement would've been more than a little odd to Mary. Even though Joseph was indeed in the royal line of David, he was far removed from that royal blood - living life as a carpenter in tiny little Bethlehem with a young girl from nowhere Nazareth. Kings were from important places like Jerusalem...not the sticks. This was scandalous.
- vi. And the angel said that Mary's son's reign would **never end**. As far as Mary and Joseph have ever known, kings come and kings die. But this angel said that Jesus will rule FOREVER. Scandalous.
- vii. Add to all this the fact that Mary would conceive and give birth while being a virgin. God was declaring that this Jesus was a VERY different king who would start a revolution...and this Jesus was 100% divine + 100% human.
- viii. These are the scandalous origins of our King...this King we follow.

C. Second, to be part of the Jesus revolution, you must follow a King whose **ministry was challenging**.

- i. Except for a few days at the age of 12, when Jesus got lost from his parents during the Jewish Passover festival, we don't have much information about Jesus from his birth until he was 30 years old.

- ii. The Bible says that Jesus grew up in a small village called Nazareth, a hamlet of about 400 people, 12 miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee.
- iii. At 30, Jesus was baptized by John, tempted by the devil for forty days and nights in the wilderness and emerged as a Rabbi, Preacher and Healer.
- iv. Most Bible scholars talk about Jesus' teaching, preaching and healing ministry, and you'll agree, as challenging (to put it lightly) to both the religious and irreligious people of his day and ours.
- v. As a teacher, we see Jesus reading the Torah in the synagogue and teaching with parables, a common teaching method of Jewish Rabbi's in the first century. But what makes Jesus the revolutionary a different kind of King with a radically different kind of teaching he gave. It was Jesus' challenging teaching ministry that differentiate him from other Rabbi's and revolutionaries of his day.
- vi. For example, Jewish Rabbi's taught their students to love their neighbors. This was commonplace for the Jews and in a world filled with hate and animosity would have been a challenge. But if we read the teaching of our Rabbi about who and how to love in Matthew 5:43-44 (NRSV), we get a radically different message:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,”

- vii. This was then, and still is now, unheard of. Most people, would not argue with being a good, loving neighbor and hating your enemies. But Jesus amps up who and how we love. “Love your neighbors.” Check. “Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!” “Are you serious Jesus?”
 - viii. Maybe the original Greek says something else. There's got to be a loophole for hating murderers, tyrants and Patriots fans! But nope.
 - ix. This was the kind of radical Teacher Jesus was. Jesus taught other radical things about prayer, money, what it means to be “first,” and maybe most importantly who God loves. Jesus' radical teaching got him in hot water. This is the King we follow. Challenging...
 - x. And it was his scandalous birth and challenging teaching that got Him killed...so...
- D. To be part of the Jesus revolution, you must also follow a King whose **death was offensive.**
- i. The great crowds he drew made everyone nervous. Many wanted Jesus to overthrow the Roman government. They called out “Hosanna,” a Hebrew phrase that means “Save us please” as he rode in on a donkey like a king

coming in from victory. All this made the religious and the governmental leaders of their day concerned that the miracle man from Nazareth would lead an insurrection.

- ii. In a mutually coordinated plan, the Jewish leaders and local Roman officials conspired together to have Jesus killed. The Jewish leaders were concerned that they were losing their influence over the people. And the Roman leaders didn't want anyone or anything to "rock the boat" of relative peace in Israel.
- iii. So after being betrayed by one of his own apprentices, Judas, Jesus was taken to the High Priest who sent him to Pilate. The Jewish leaders had limited power to penalize the upstart, rabble-rouser. Only Pilate, as a Roman official, had the power and authority to have Jesus killed. After interrogating Jesus once and flogging him, Pilate hoped the bloodthirsty crowd would be satisfied. But he was wrong. Pilate wanted to let Jesus go. But the Jewish leaders told Pilate he was no friend of the Roman Emperor if he released him. They claimed that Jesus claimed to be a King. They've got Pilate backed into a corner. John 19:13-14 (NRSV) tells us what happened next:

"When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, 'Here is your King!'"

- iv. Pilate called Jesus their king - tongue-in-cheek no doubt. Whether he knew it or not, Pilate was speaking the truth. Jesus WAS the King of kings but they couldn't recognize him.
 - v. Sadly, the conspiracy between the Jewish and Roman leaders worked. Jesus was crucified. Ironically, a sign was hung over Jesus' head that read, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." This was who he was. On that Good Friday, few could see the truth of the sign. Jesus death was an offense. And it's offensive because criminals die on crosses not kings. This is the different kind of king we follow when we join the Jesus revolution. Jesus was a king who died on an offensive criminals cross. He's no ordinary king. This is the King we follow. And his death was offensive.
- E. Finally, Jesus was a King whose **resurrection was restorative.**
- i. We just celebrated Easter and we know "the rest of the story." It's indeed the best of the story. Jesus was resurrected from the dead.
 - ii. The story of Jesus' resurrection was and is no myth. Verifiable eyewitnesses saw Jesus with their own eyes. They touched, embraced, talked, walked and ate with the resurrected Jesus.

- iii. A few weeks ago we looked at the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus after Jesus' death. In that scene, hope was restored to two down-cast disciples as they talked with the resurrected Jesus about the Scriptures. That story was repeated over and over as people met the risen Jesus.
- iv. This resurrected, different kind of king restored their hope and today, 2000 years later, can restore **yours** too. Your heart can be strangely warmed by the presence of the resurrected Jesus. This is the King we follow.

3. Conclusion

- i. Are you ready for a Jesus revolution? It isn't about political power or religion. It isn't a revolution of education or government or economics.
- ii. It's a love revolution whose goal is to change us and offer hope to a hopeless world.
- iii. Over the past 3 months, we've been struggling through this pandemic and finding ways to do everything we can, from simply surviving to thriving.
- iv. Some people have said that this pandemic is turning more and more people's hearts to Jesus Christ. I don't know about that...we'll see. But what I DO know is that those who are currently following this scandalous, challenging, offensive, restorative underdog Savior King, will will keep loving people. And those people WILL see something (SOMEONE) who gives them hope.
- v. We can't give people hope. But we can love people and show them the hope that we have in this underdog King of all Kings.
- vi. And in the process, this scandalous, challenging, offensive, restorative, underdog King CAN and WILL restore the world's systems, and relationships, and governments, and schools, economies, and every part of our society.
- vii. Yet, his favorite things to restore are you and me...and the ones who don't know him yet. He came for the underdogs like you and me.
- viii. This is the King we follow...let's get out there and do it! PRAY!