TITLE: Telling a Good Story

TEXT: Ex.10:1-2 & 12:21-27; Deut. 6:6-8; Mt. 13:35;

Jn. 3:16-18; 1 Jn. 5:11-12; Ro. 8:17; Jn.14:6

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about storytelling. To talk about story telling you have to talk about storytellers.

 And this world has produced some pretty awesome storytellers. The classics--William Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Will Rogers—my two favorite contemporary storytellers—Paul Harvey—with his famous “And now the rest of the story” segments on radio and Charles Swindol, author of such books as the Grace Awakening and The Finishing Touch---books filled with powerful stories that convey wonderful Scriptural truths.

 I love to hear a good story. Stories transport us into another world. They hold our attention. They become remarkable vehicles for the communication of truth and meaningful lessons that cannot be easily forgotten.

 If a picture is worth a thousand words then a story is worth a million…

 Some of the best stories are those that come from everyday life or from our past experiences.

 Family histories are often held together and handed down from generation to generation through stories. And these strong cords of memory actually become the ties that bind.

 The fact is that God is the one that originally suggested this method of storytelling be used for passing down family and national history and passing down from one generation to the next what God has done among His people.

 **Ex. 10:1 -2 (NIV) 1Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them 2that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD.”**

Why didn’t God just wipe out Pharaoh and deliver the Israelites from the get-go and not mess around with all the ten plagues? Was it to give Pharaoh an opportunity to change his mind, become one of the good guys, and release the people of Israel?

I don’t think so.. God knew how Pharaoh was going to ultimately respond. God knew that Pharaoh would never release the Israelites on his own accord regardless of how many plagues would come his way..

So why did God go through all of this and not just smite Pharaohs army when Moses first went to him? He certainly has the power and ability and right to do so.

 Because God wanted Moses and that generation of Israelites to have a powerful story to tell that would remind and encourage their children and grandchildren and their grandchildren down through the generations of the power, might, love and deliverance of the Lord God.

**“Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them 2that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD.”**

God knew the potential power in a story! How a story helps burn an event into the memory so it can be passed on from generation to generation.

**Ex. 12:21 -27 (NIV) 21Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. 22Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning.**

**23When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.**

**24“Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants.**

 **25When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. 26And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ 27then tell them, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.’” Then the people bowed down and worshiped.**

The Lord says: **24“Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. 25When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. 26And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ 27then tell them,---**Tell them the story of how I passed over all the houses that were marked with the blood of the Passover lamb while the firstborn of all Egypt I destroyed..

 Tell them the story of all the miracles I have done for you in Egypt and how I delivered you from the hard bondage of the oppressor and took you into a land of promise..

 Tell them the story so they will not forget the Lord their God and all that He has done.

 That is how the history that we have recorded in written word today in Scripture was preserved for centuries, even millennium…parents told their children the stories of what God had done and they would tell those same stories to their children and their children would tell them to their children….so from generation to generation Gods laws, love and faithfulness would be passed on from one generation to the next on the back of a story…

**Deut. 6:6-8 (NIV) 6These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.**

The Lord says: **These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7Impress them on your children.**

 There is no better way to impress an important truth to our children, or to ourselves for that matter, then to wrap it in a story.

 Christian giants such as Charles Spurgeon, CS Lewis, Charles Finney were all wonderful story tellers that made their sermons come to life by the stories that they masterfully wove into their messages…

 I can preach a 30 minute message and have a 2 minute story within that message and by Wednesday what is it that you will most likely remember about that message?

 The Story! The Story and hopefully the Scriptural truth that was riding on its back..

 (Don’t feel bad—I can preach the message and by the next Wednesday all that I will probably remember is the story!)

The point is stories are very powerful things. If used wisely they can do a tremendous amount of good.

 They can help etch into our memory important truths that God wants us to remember.

Do you want to know who the greatest storyteller of all time is, bar none?

 Jesus! Jesus loves a good story! Jesus knew how to tell a good story!

Turn with me to Matthew Chapter 13….

**Matt. 13:34 -35 (NIV)
34Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. 35So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:“I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.”**

**34Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable!**

What is a parable?

***par-ab-ol-ay'***

 **a *similitude*”, that is a *fictitious*
*narrative* (of common life conveying a moral truth, comparison, figure, proverb.**

A parable is a story. Particularly a story used to convey a moral truth..

 In Matthew Chapter 13, in one chapter of the bible, in 39 verses of Scripture Jesus tells 5 parables-- 5 stories!

**“I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.”**

 Jesus used stories as conduits to convey Scriptural truths hidden since the creation of the world.

 The story, the parable is what illuminated the truth contained within in it to the minds of the hearers.

 The story became like a metal that the magnet of our mind would grab hold of.

I want to share a modern day parable, a story with you this morning that illustrates my point.

The Art Collector

 Years ago, there was a very wealthy man who, with his devoted young son, shared a passion for art collecting. Together they traveled around the world, adding only the finest art treasures to their collection. Priceless works by Picasso, Van Gogh, Monet and many others adorned the walls of the family estate. The widowed elder man looked on with satisfaction as his only child became an experienced art collector himself. The son's trained eye and sharp business mind caused his father to beam with pride as they dealt with art collectors around the world.

 As winter approached, war engulfed the nation, and the young man left to serve his country. After only a few short weeks, his father received a telegram. His beloved son was missing in action.

 The art collector anxiously awaited more news, fearing he would never see his son again. Within days, his fears were confirmed. The young man had died while rushing a fellow soldier to a medic.

 Distraught and lonely, the old man faced the upcoming Christmas holidays with anguish and sadness. The joy of the season- a season that he and his son had so looked forward to-would visit his house no longer.

 On Christmas morning, a knock on the door awakened the depressed old man. As he walked to the door, the masterpieces of art on the walls only reminded him that his son was not coming home.

 As he opened the door, he was greeted by a soldier with a large package in his hand. He introduced himself to the man by saying, "I was a friend of your son. I was the one he was rescuing when he died. May I come in for a few moments? I have something to show you."

 As the two began to talk, the solider told of how the man's son had told everyone of his-not to mention his father's- love of fine art. "I'm an artist," said the soldier, "and I want to give you this."

 As the old man un-wrapped the package, the paper gave way to reveal a portrait of the man's son.

 Though the world would never consider it the work of a genius, the painting featured the young man's face in striking detail. Overcome with emotion, the man thanked the solider, promising to hang the picture above the fireplace. A few hours later, after the soldier had departed, the old man set about his task. True to his word, the painting went above the fireplace, pushing aside thousands of dollars of paintings. And then the man sat in his chair and spent Christmas gazing at the gift he had been given.

 During the days and weeks that followed, the man realized that even though his son was no longer with him, the boy's life would live on because of those he had touched. He would soon learn that his son had rescued several wounded soldiers before a bullet stilled his caring heart. As the stories of his son's gallantry continued to reach him, fatherly pride and satisfaction began to ease the grief.

The painting of his son soon became his most prized possession, far eclipsing any interest in the pieces for which museums around the world clamored. He told his neighbors it was the greatest gift he had ever received.

The following spring, the old man became ill and passed away. The art world was in anticipation. With the collector's passing, and his only son dead, those paintings would be sold at an auction. According to the will of the old man, all of the art works would be auctioned on Christmas day, the day he had received his greatest gift.

The day soon arrived and art collectors from around the world gathered to bid on some of the world's most spectacular paintings. Dreams would be fulfilled on this day; greatness would be achieved as many would claim "I now have the greatest collection."

The auction began with a painting that was not on any museum's list. It was the painting of the man's son. The auctioneer asked for an opening bid. The room was silent. "Who will open the bidding with $100?" he asked. Minutes passed. No one spoke. From the back of the room came, "Who cares about that painting? It's just a picture of his son. Let's forget it and go on to the good stuff." More voices echoed in agreement.

"No, we have to sell this one first," replied the auctioneer. "Now, who will take the son?" Finally, a friend of the old man spoke. "Will you take ten dollars for the painting? That's all I have. I knew the boy, so I'd like to have it." "I have ten dollars.

 Will anyone go higher?" called the auctioneer. After more silence, the auctioneer said, "Going once, going twice. Gone." The gavel fell.

 Cheers filled the room and someone exclaimed, "Now we can get on with it and we can bid on these treasures!"

 The auctioneer looked at the audience and announced the auction was over. Stunned disbelief quieted the room. Someone spoke up and asked, "What do you mean it's over? We didn't come here for a picture of some old guy's dead son! What about all of these paintings? There are millions of dollars of art here! I demand that you explain what's going on here!."

 The auctioneer replied, "It's very simple. According to the will of the father, whoever takes the son...gets it all."

--Author Unknown

 Whoever takes the son...gets it all!

 A simple story! A parable! Yet what a tremendous and wonderful truth it carries!

Puts things into perspective, doesn't it? Just as those art collectors discovered on that Christmas day, the message is still the same – the love of a Father - a Father whose greatest joy came from his son who went away and gave his life rescuing others. And because of that Father's love...whoever takes the Son gets it all.

**John 3:16 -18 (NIV)16“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**

**17For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.**

**1 John 5:11 -12 (NIV)
11And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.**

**Rom. 8:17 (NIV)
17Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.**

 The message is still the same today– the love of a Father - a Father whose greatest joy came from his son who went away and gave his life rescuing others. And because of that Father's love...whoever takes the Son gets it all.

**17Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.**

 To the men and women of this world the painting of the Son meant nothing in comparison to the treasures of this world. So the Son they wanted to put aside so they could get to what they thought was the good stuff. So the Son was rejected by the majority.

 Little did they know that the Son was the key to the real treasure. The Son was the only way to the inheritance of the Father.

 And so is the truth of the matter--The real truth that rides on the back of the story.

Whoever takes the Son gets it all!

**John 14:6 (NIV)
6Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**

Whoever takes Jesus gets it all!

 This morning, have you taken the Son?

Have you received the promise of one day getting it all as an heir of God, a co-heir with Jesus Christ?

If you have then praise God! Realize that God has given you a story. He has given you the story of your life and you can use that story, what God has done for you, as a vehicle, as a conduit of His saving grace to those He may bring across your path that need to hear and receive that message.

If you have never taken the Son, if you have spent your life rejecting Him thinking that the good stuff of this life lies somewhere else then you need to realize this morning that Jesus is not just the key to the good stuff but Jesus is the good stuff and He wants to meet with you today!

Whoever takes the Son gets it all!

Prayer