

Kenmore Baptist Church Message Outline 14/3/10 (AM-PM/DB)

SIGN II: *Pointing People to Jesus as a STORYTELLER*

(Luke 4:14-21; 8:1-15; 13:18-21)

Remember the story of the sower who cast gospel seeds on every soil looking for a fruitful response? *What's our seed? What's my message?* Evangelism isn't about offering our world the Church now and Heaven later. Instead, we must be storytellers who open ears by sharing the Gospel of the Kingdom which sprouts now and is full grown later when Jesus returns and sets everything right. But *Kingdom stories follow Kingdom deeds*. A radical Christian life provokes questions to which the answer is the gospel—we *must tell our story walking, living and sharing God's reign*.

So if you want to point people to Jesus, then be a STORY TELLER ...

Forget about Heaven to tell good news now.

INTRODUCTION: THE CHARGE OF IRRELEVANCE

- “Raw Sex”: irrelevance forces a bait and switch
- Is “Heaven” an escapist opiate of the masses?
- Confirming suspicions—world-denying Christianity
- *True Story: In Search of a Christianity Worth Believing In*, by James Choung ... *What's our story?*
- ***Irrelevant*** is out, ***Integrated*** is in (Colossians 1:15-20)
- If you want to point people to Jesus, adopt the ***Sign of the Storyteller***: *Forget about Heaven to tell good news now.*



THE STORYTELLER: SOME BACKGROUND TO LUKE 8:1-15

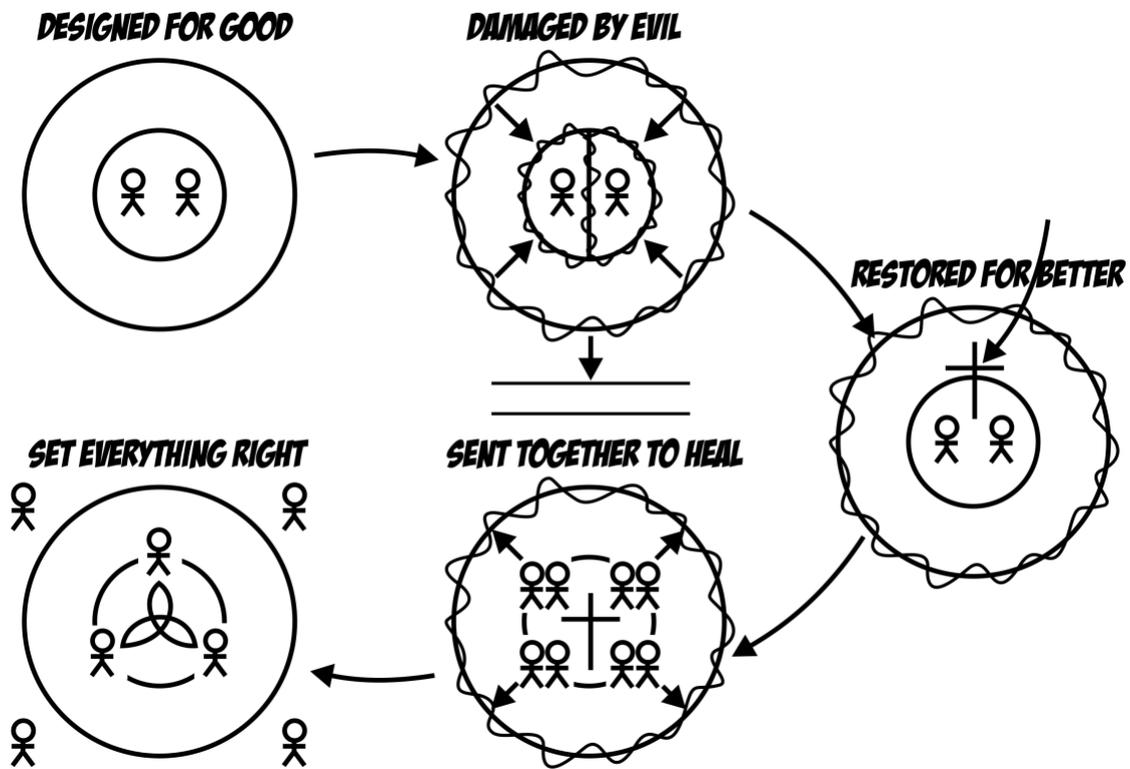
- Jesus—the master storyteller ... crowds flocked without false advertising (v. 4)
- Accessible, yet somewhat obscure (vs. 5-10; cf. Isaiah 6:10; 43:8; Ezekiel 12:2)
- Stories as a way of sowing seed in every soil, without casting pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6)
- My focus here is not on the soils, but on ***stories, seed, and sowing***

Why A STORY?

... The crowd gathered and Jesus told them a parable (v. 4)

Stories Invite Us In, and Send Us Out

- ***Inkheart***: the power of a story to create and imagine new possibilities
- Creative power in God's Word, the seed (Luke 8:11; Isaiah 55:11; John 1:1-4)
- ***Stories invite us in***: they bypass “watchful dragons” to see the world differently
- “Thank God You're Here”: understanding the story we're living in
- ***Stories send us out***: we improvise according to the story we think we're in
- Plant Physiology: Seed Core + Seed Coat ... the Gospel Core (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) + the Gospel Coating (Mark 1:1, 14) ... stories help seeds sprout in parched soil



Designed for good... We were made to love God, love each other, and cultivate this garden planet (Genesis 1-2; Job 7:17-18; Psalms 8:3-9; 19; 144:3-4; Matthew 22:37-40; John 1; Ephesians 2:8-10)

Damaged by evil... Instead we've despised God, abused others, and vandalized our world—"Sin" pollutes, perverts and destroys life (Genesis 3; Isaiah 59; John 8:34; Romans 1:18-32; 3:23; 6:23)

Restored for better... We're forgiven, freed, healed, and transformed by Jesus' sacrifice (Isaiah 52:13-53:12; John 3:16; 10:10; Acts 4:12; Romans 5; Colossians 2:13-15; Hebrews 2:14-15)

Sent together to heal... Jesus has empowered us with God's Spirit to live the resurrection hope (Luke 4:18-19; 12:31-37; Matthew 20:25-28; 28:18-20; John 13:34-35; 15:5-27; 20:19-22; Acts 1:8)

Set everything right... Jesus will return to judge evil, deal with the powers, and set everything right—a transformed world, God with us, and real peace (Psalms 96; 98; Isaiah 2:2-4; 65:17-25; Acts 17:31; Romans 8:18-25; 1 Corinthians 15:21-58; Philippians 2:1-11; Revelation 11:18; 21:1-8)

WHICH STORY?

... Jesus proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom of God (v. 1)

When Your Story Is Straight, The Seed Will Sprout

- "Knowing" ... Twisted plot-lines: *Pagan* (other-worldly paradise); *Platonic* (escape earth to a pure spiritual home); and *Gnostic* (secret knowledge saves insiders)
- If the crowds don't press, and the crops are poor, check the seed (Matthew 11:12)
- Setting the story straight as we point people to Jesus:

✘ **STORY #1: CHRISTENDOM—CHURCH NOW, HEAVEN LATER**

“If you were to die tonight, do you know for sure that you are going to be with God in Heaven? And if God were to ask you, ‘Why should I let you into My Heaven?’ what would you say? ... If you accept Jesus, then escape the world’s sinking ship and keep your soul safe in the Church. It’ll prepare you for eternity with God in Heaven, your true home.”

Granted, the Church is a key part of God’s plan, and Heaven is our immediate “home” when we die, *BUT ...*

- ✘ The “Church” is God’s missional community, sent through Christ’s scars to absorb evil and bring peace to a fallen world (John 20:19-21) ... it’s not a religious club for those lamenting the break down of Christendom, who want to escape the world’s problems
- ✘ “Heaven” is essentially God’s throne, where His rule is complete (Acts 7:49). It’s less the place you go when you die than a spiritual dimension parallel to Earth, opened up when “Heaven invades Earth” (Genesis 28:12-13; 2 Kings 6:17). Thus we pray “Your Kingdom come and Your will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven” (Matthew 6:9-10)
- ✘ “Heaven” is never used in the New Testament as an evangelistic carrot for when you die, nor is it described as our eternal resting place and hope. Our real hope, the main game, is “*life after life after death,*” the resurrection of all things, with the New Creation where Heaven comes to Earth (Matthew 24:35; Acts 24:15; Romans 8: 18-23; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; 2 Corinthians 5:1-2; Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 1:10; Hebrews 12:26; Revelation 3:12; 6:14; 21:1-3). Heaven is not our home, so travel light but get established on Planet Earth (Jeremiah 29:1-7)!
- ✘ The Kingdom of Heaven is not *from* here, but it is *for* here: that is, Earth (John 18:36). Announcing “the Kingdom of Heaven” is a call to rethink and align our lives with God’s rule which Jesus brought from Heaven to Earth (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 16:19)
- ✘ This world will be judged and refined (2 Peter 3:7). *Even so*, any work done in the power of God’s Spirit and built on the foundation of Christ will pass through the judgement, forming building blocks and architecture for the New Creation (Matthew 25:13-40; 1 Corinthians 3:9-15; Ephesians 2:10; Hebrews 12:26-28). Whether we’re caring for an intellectually impaired child, or planting sequoia seeds—whatever aligns with our created purpose of loving God, loving others, and cultivating this earth, all for His glory—*it is not* wasted effort, re-arranging the chairs on the Titanic. Instead, *it is* holistically living our mission in the here and now, which God will use and reward.
- ✘ ***Implication: When it comes to evangelism, forget about Heaven and focus on the Now and the New Creation. Our faith is world-embracing, not world-escaping.***

🌱 **STORY #2: THE KINGDOM OF GOD—SPROUTING NOW, FULL GROWN LATER**

*Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and ... was teaching in their synagogues: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim **good news to the poor.** He has sent me to proclaim **freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.**” ...*
“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:14-21)

- ✚ “Jesus’ evangelization was no less and no more than a holistic proclamation of the present, imminent, and inbreaking reign of God” (Mortimer Arias). Jesus proclaimed the Gospel like this: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:14-15)
- ✚ The Kingdom is “God’s total answer to humanity’s total need” (E. Stanley Jones). We have good news to tell right now, that is individual, corporate, and cosmic: spiritually, economically, politically, physically, and environmentally (Isaiah 58:3-14; Micah 6:6-8)
- ✚ The Kingdom is “*now and not yet*,” both present (Mark 1:15) and future (Matthew 6:10), gradual (Mark 4:26-28) and climactic (Matthew 25:1-6). It spread like a wild mustard bush, or leaven in a loaf (Luke 13:18-21). Though we are co-workers in the Kingdom by the Spirit’s power (1 Corinthians 3:9), we will receive the New Creation as a gift from God, not built by human hands lest we boast (Hebrews 11:8-16; 12:28)
- ✚ The Kingdom is “Christlikeness Universalized,” so we must point both to “The Unshakable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person” (Acts 28:31; Hebrews 12:27; 13:8). In short form, our message is that “Jesus is Lord.” We share and embody this message
- ✚ “The Church is the preview community, the foretaste and the harbinger of the coming reign of God” (Darrell Guder). We call people to ‘life abundant’, and demonstrate the quality of such life in the community of Jesus—loving God and others, cultivating Earth ... The Gospel always marries Kingdom words and deeds (Matthew 9:35; 11:5), compassionately meeting physical and spiritual needs (Luke 10:1-9; John 4:10-15).
- ✚ ***Implication: We have an integrated message to tell the world that really is good news. Seeking first the Kingdom leaves us with a “salvation imperative” right now.***

HOW TO TELL THE STORY? ... *Every soil receives, but only those with ears to hear respond (v. 8)*

ON EVERY SOIL, IN EVERY WAY, SOW THE GOSPEL SEED

- Subtly planting seeds that Sign post the Kingdom for those wanting to see
- Seeking creativity for a story saturated society: Walker Percy & Alasdair MacIntyre

A WORD ON PLOUGHING ... *Good soil eventually yields a hundred fold harvest (vv. 8, 15)*

TELL YOUR STORY WALKING: LIVE AND SHARE GOD’S REIGN

- What St. Francis *did* and *didn’t* say (Matthew 5:16; 25:31-46; Mark 16:15; Romans 10:15; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; James 1:22): walk and talk
- Radical Kingdom deeds prompt questions to which the answer is the Gospel story
- Alan Alexander: A model of ***telling your story walking***

CHALLENGE:

Adopt the Sign of the Storyteller ... Forget about Heaven to tell good news now

(1) Get your story straight: *Irrelevant is out, Integrated is in. Salvation is holistic, look for ways to share the whole Gospel. Practice telling The Big Story.*

(2) Tell your story walking: *Kingdom Deeds and Kingdom Words travel together. In everyday life, how can you better model “life abundant” as a Sign pointing to Jesus? How can you subtly plant seeds that sprout Kingdom fruit?*