

Our Place in God's Great Story

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[0 : 0 0] So the chair's for me. In case you're wondering, my back lasts about five to ten minutes before it gives out.

I did something to it this week, and so we're going to do this a little differently. John Hinkson tells me that during the Reformation, this is how preachers would preach. They would sit ex-cathedra in the chair, and the audience would stand and listen to the sermon.

So, but given Jeff's exhortation to not lord it over you, I thought you guys can sit too. So anyway, this is a part of God's continuing process of teaching us all that it is in his weakness, in our weakness, that his power is made perfect.

So we're going to do this a little different today and see how it goes and pray that the Lord will bless our time together. So with that, in the book, *The Two Towers*, Sam Gamgee, wondering as he talks to Frodo Baggins, while they're sitting actually at the mouth of the tunnel into which they will encounter Shelob, the giant spider.

He says this, Still I wonder if we shall ever be put into songs or tales. We're in one, of course, but I mean, put into words, you know, told by the fireside or read out of a great big book with red and black letters years and years afterwards.

[1 : 3 5] And people will say, let's hear about Frodo and the ring. And they'll say, yes, that's one of my favorite stories. Frodo was very brave, wasn't he, dad? I, my boy, the famousest of hobbits.

And that's saying a lot. You know, in this brief encounter, Sam wonders aloud whether the story of his life, the story of their lives, will ever be told.

Whether it will ever find significance in being part of something greater. A legendary tale, one of the stories of great heroes and the stories of overcoming insurmountable odds.

And of course, we love stories because they often inspire us with these themes and with these ideas. I wonder if you've ever wondered or longed or imagined that your life might be a part of a bigger story than that.

Well, I think, in fact, we live in a story where narratives give our lives meaning all the time. They give it purpose and significance.

[2 : 3 9] And we might find those stories in different places. Some of us might find the story of our families, our grandpa and our great grandpa. And maybe the story of immigrants coming to America from other parts of the world.

Maybe some of you are living in other parts of the world and God's brought you here for a season. But your story of where your family has come from gives you meaning. Some of us find story in thinking through our gender, our ethnic or racial background, the place of origin that we come from.

You know, the times in which we live and the culture we've grown up in, they shape our story as well. And maybe some would agree here this morning that, in fact, the best way to think about this is that we get to shape our own story.

We get to be like those little books, you know, choose your own adventure. We get to shape our own story and make our own significance in life. But I wonder, too, if some of us this morning feel like, you know, there's not a lot there.

Actually, I don't know there is a bigger story. My life seems full of meaninglessness, drudgery. I wonder whether there is a big story that gives it purpose or not.

[3 : 54] And, you know, I think that it's very easy to fall into this, particularly when we're facing suffering. Because when we're going through trials, when we're going through hard times, often it feels like our lives get small.

Our perspectives become short. And we struggle to make it day to day and to think about the big picture. There's just no way. But it's in this theme of finding ourselves in a bigger story that brings us to our passage this morning in 1 Peter.

We're continuing in our series in 1 Peter. And we're going to be looking at just a few verses. 1 Peter 1, verses 10 through 12. And remember what we've already learned.

Peter opened this by writing to a group of people he called exiles. Those chosen by God out of the world and yet still living in a world in which they no longer fit.

We're citizens. And then we looked last week at the great hope and promise that what God has done in salvation for us in Jesus gives us great hope for the future and joy in the present, even in the midst of difficulties and sufferings.

[5 : 08] And from this then, he launches into our passage this morning. And this story reminds us of the story. The story that the readers are in.

The story that we are in. To give us encouragement. It is the story of salvation. And it's not just a story like a fairy tale, but a story that is actually true.

So let's look together. 1 Peter 1, verses 10 through 12. Let's read this together. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully.

Inquiring what person or time the spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not only themselves, but you in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

Things into which angels long to look. Let's pray as we look at God's word for a minute. Lord, we ask for your help this morning. Lord, I ask for your help that I would speak your word clearly and proclaim it as I ought.

[6 : 29] Lord, I pray for all of us that our hearts would sit under your word. And Lord, this morning that we would be in awe. That we would be in awe of what you have done to make yourself known.

Lord, that we would know the salvation that you have brought. And Lord, that we would have the privilege of being your children, your sons and daughters in this world.

Oh, Lord, we pray that you would be with us by your spirit this morning. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So as we look at this, I think what we see is Peter reminding his audience and reminding us this morning of the story of the progressive way that God has revealed his great plan of salvation in the world.

So let's look at it. When you look at it, you know, he starts in verse 10. He says, concerning this salvation. This is what he's been talking about. This is what he's going to continue to talk about throughout the whole passage.

He says, concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours, searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what persons or times the spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted, when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

[7 : 48] What in the world is he saying here? What he's saying is that the prophets of old preached about the grace and the gospel concerning Christ, even though they didn't fully understand what they were talking about.

So let's break that down and think about what looks like. We're actually going to spend a bunch of time looking at some Old Testament passages, not in depth, but just referring to them and seeing how they relate to Christ so that we can see what this looks like in reality.

I threw at Kevin these verses about 15 minutes before the service. So I think we're going to be good. All right. He says we're good. So he'll put the verses up on the screen as well as we look through, because it's amazing when you start to see all of what God has done in revealing himself through scripture.

And particularly here, thinking about how the prophets of old predicted or talked about the coming of the Christ and what he would do for them. And the thing you want to start with is that even in the Old Testament, and I don't know if this is revelatory to you or not, but the Old Testament prophets were talking about the grace that would come through Jesus Christ.

And in the Old Testament, there are hints and whispers and paradigms and pictures, as well as specific predictions that all point us to Jesus Christ.

[9 : 16] So you have things like the theme of sacrifice of atonement, whether it be in Genesis 22 and Abraham and Isaac, or whether it be in the temple and the day of atonement and the scapegoat being sent out.

There are pictures of these things. There are pictures throughout the Old Testament of people taking up roles of prophets who would speak for God and priests who would stand between the people and God and intercede for them and kings who would rule over them.

And we see all of these as pictures of this Jesus who is going to come and fulfill and be the ultimate prophet, priest, and king for us in the church.

Let's think about this in specifics, because what it says is they would talk about Christ and his sufferings and the subsequent glories.

So here are a few examples of where we see that. Psalm 22, 1 and 2. Friends, you know, these were the words that Jesus himself took up as he was hanging on the cross.

[10 : 39] In Matthew 27, 46, he spoke these very words and applied them to himself, said, this is a prayer. Or perhaps one of the most famous passages that's well known about the sufferings of Christ in Isaiah 53.

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him.

He had no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. And upon him, the chastisement that brought us peace. But upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace.

[11 : 48] And with his wounds, we are healed. We will see this in chapter 2 of 1 Peter. That Peter says, this is about Christ.

It was Christ who suffered in this way for us. This is what Isaiah was proclaiming would come for the people. And not only the sufferings, but friends, the glory is also revealed.

So in Isaiah 61, you see the prophet saying these words, The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to utter and the opening of the prisons for those who are bound, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, to grant to those who mourn in Zion, to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, a garment of praise instead of a faint spirit, that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

And friends, if you remember in the book of Luke, when Jesus begins his public ministry, he walks into the synagogue. He opens to this passage and he says, In this day, that passage is fulfilled because I am here to bring all of these promises to you and to the world.

[13 : 19] And in Daniel chapter 7, verses 13 and 14, Daniel said, And friends, when we look in Matthew, chapter 24 and 26, or when we read the book of Revelation, particularly verses 4, chapters 4 and 5, we see this son of man being Jesus, the one who fulfills all these roles and takes all of these places of privilege and brings this great kingdom.

So, friends, we have to stop and think. Isaiah and Daniel and the psalmist and Psalm 22 and others, they wrote these things, but Peter says they didn't fully understand what they were saying.

They understood the themes, I think. They understood the ideas, but they didn't know the time and the place. And so they searched and inquired. What did they search and inquire?

Well, I think they searched and inquired the words that God had given them, first and foremost. Secondly, they would have searched and inquired the words of others in that time, the prophets that were speaking at the same time, and those who had spoken before, to try to understand how all these pieces fit together.

It's like putting a puzzle together without having all the pieces, and certainly without having the box to look at. They're trying to figure out, what does this look like? But they searched and they looked to understand.

[15 : 13] And yet, even as they were doing this, they were proclaiming God's truth, even though they knew that they hadn't seen what it would truly look like. This is what happens in Deuteronomy 18, verse 15.

God is speaking through Moses, and he's saying, the Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from among your brothers. It is to him you shall listen. And throughout the rest of the Old Testament history, no prophet could be like Moses.

Or we see in 2 Samuel 7, you know this, the great promise that God gave to David as he was taking up his throne, that one day when your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up for you offspring after you should come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

He will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.

He promises an eternal kingdom. And Solomon couldn't be the fulfillment of all of this. And so David and Solomon must have known, there's another one yet to come who is a greater king than this.

[16 : 26] So throughout the whole Old Testament, we see that even in the Old Testament, people knew that they were pointing ahead to something. And that's what Peter is telling us here.

This whole Old Testament story has a direction and a pointing, and it has a force behind it as well. Because we see that what Peter is saying is that the Holy Spirit was speaking through this.

The Holy Spirit was actively participating and directing these people to write these things. Look with me really carefully. There's a pronoun here that's really important. In verse 11, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ.

It was not when they predicted the sufferings of Christ. It wasn't they were wondering when I was talking, what was I talking about? They recognized that it was the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ that was speaking through them.

And so we see God, the Holy Spirit, central in this revelation of God's great story. Peter will reaffirm this in his second book.

[17 : 41] In 2 Peter 1, verses 20 and 21, Peter writes this, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of scripture came from someone's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

And so we need to recognize that as God is revealing his story historically, progressively through people, he is superintending the whole thing through his Holy Spirit.

And that Holy Spirit that did so throughout the whole Old Testament, Peter is reminding them, it's continued now in your day, because this is how you heard about this grace that came in Christ as well, because someone came and proclaimed it to you.

And verse 12 tells us, how is it? They came and proclaimed it to you in the Holy Spirit, through the Holy Spirit, because of the Holy Spirit's enabling and prompting.

And so God is in this process, and the Holy Spirit particularly has this purpose of taking the truth of what God has done and making it known, revealing himself through the scriptures, through the writers, and through the proclamation of the gospel for all of us.

[19 : 01] This is how the writers of the New Testament came to know about Christ. This is how the readers, the initial readers, the recipients in Asia Minor, came to know Christ.

And friends, this is how we have come to know Christ today, because someone moved by the Holy Spirit, shared with us, someone prompted you to pick up a book or a Bible that pointed you to the truth of Christ.

And this is how God has been revealing himself in this story throughout the whole time. So what does this mean for us? How do we think about applying it?

Well, friends, there are so many things we could say here. The first thing I want to say is, one, this book is a unique book. God has given it to us because it is the way that he has revealed himself to us.

And God has moved the writers of these words by his Holy Spirit so that we might know him. So 1 Timothy 3.16, all scripture is breathed out by God.

[20 : 11] It is profitable for us for reproof, for correction, training, and righteousness. The Old Testament writers knew this unity of the Bible and saw it together.

So Paul writes in Romans 4, 23 and 24, he writes this, he's talking about Abraham and what happened to Abraham said, but the words it was counted to him, that is, Abraham was counted righteous because of his faith in God in the moment, said, but the words it was counted to him were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also.

It will be counted to us who believe in him, who raised from the dead, Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

Or think about later in Romans 15.3, for Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, the reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.

For whatever was written in the former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope. Or you see Paul writing again in 1 Corinthians 10.11.

[21 : 25] Now these things happen. And he's talking about the cursing actually of the people in the Meribah for their unbelief and their falling into sin. He says, now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction on whom the end of the ages has come.

And friends, this is the amazing thing. So the Old Testament writers knew they were pointing ahead. The New Testament writers look back and see all that was happening in the Old Testament, pointing ahead, and all of this finds the climax, the high point, the pinnacle of all that God has revealed in his work is the person and work of Christ.

It's all about Jesus. And the storyline that he's telling in the center of it at the most important thing that happens in the whole story is the life and death and resurrection of Christ.

Right? And so this is what Jesus himself even said about the scriptures. In John 5, he says, you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life.

And it is they that bear witness about me. It is also what Jesus said to the disciples on the road to Emmaus that Tosin read earlier. Do you remember what he said?

[22 : 45] Oh foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. So Jesus himself is saying all of this is pointing to me and my work and my suffering and my victory over sin and death at the cross in the resurrection.

So the scriptures themselves teach us that this is how we're supposed to read the Bible in a Christ-centered way. We talk about being gospel-centered here at Trinity.

That's code word for being Christ-centered in some way. That we read the whole Bible through the lens that God is doing this work of redemption and the centerpiece of it is the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And God is gracious as part we would understand the significance of Christ and what he's done for us. So what does this mean for us in application?

[23 : 58] Well, friends, let us be like the Old Testament prophets. Let us be those who search and inquire diligently to look and to see, to understand that this two-thirds of the Bible that maybe you're tempted to ignore because you think it's not about Jesus.

It is about Jesus. And that you would learn to read it so that you could see Jesus in all of scripture. That you could see all of how God prepared the world for the coming of Jesus.

How he revealed Jesus. And then how he worked out the proclamation of Jesus in the age to come, which is the age that we're in now, the age of the church. This is where we find ourselves in this picture.

And friends, as we study this and as we study this word that is unlike any book that you can read over and over and over again and continue to learn more and more by doing so, let us be in awe.

Let us be in awe of the work that God has done. Friends, this in fact, I believe is the pastoral import of this passage.

[25 : 05] This is sort of my second point. This may be just a one point sermon with a really long application. So if you're taking notes, this is my second point, but it might just be application. So because the pastoral intent of this passage in revisiting what the prophets of old, he wanted to say, do you remember this salvation that I've just talked about and how wonderful it is?

Here's the big picture of where it fits in this story. The prophets of old looked ahead and they longed to know what they were talking about. Then Jesus came and he did all that he did in his life and death and resurrection.

And you're on the way of it. And he looks at this church, he looks at his church, his audience, who are suffering for the name of Christ.

And he says, do you recognize what a privileged position you are in? Because you know what the prophets long to see. You know fully the times and the places of how and the unique person of Jesus Christ.

And you have this privilege of being after the cross and the resurrection to be able to see these things. And it's not only the prophets in the past long to, but even, you see in verse 12, even the angels in heaven long to look.

[26 : 30] And the word there, long to look, is this cool word. It's kind of like, you know, in the sound of music when they have the big party and the kids get to sit on the stairs and they get to peek through the railing to see what's going on below?

That's exactly kind of the picture that Peter is painting here. The angels get a peek into this glorious work of redemption that God is doing through Jesus Christ in the church, in us.

Paul reminds us of this in Ephesians 3.10 where he says that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places and that's talking about the angelic, the supernatural realm.

He says what God is doing in the church is the centerpiece and the spirits and the angels are looking on in awe of this amazing work.

And this is for you. Look again at this passage in 1 Peter. Do you see? What you have is the grace that has been proclaimed throughout this time.

[27 : 41] The prophets of old, they were serving you and they recognized that. This is what others have come and preached and proclaimed to you so that you would know this amazing message.

The message of grace of Jesus' suffering and his subsequent glory. that Jesus came, took on human flesh, that he offered himself up in our place, dying, suffering on the cross on our behalf, rising from the dead in victory over sin and death, now offering forgiveness of sins and a new life to all who put their faith in Christ.

This is the central work. And the Old Testament prepares us for it. the New Testament reveals it and then works it out in our lives.

And this is the story that Peter wants to remind the church in Asia Minor and want to remind us today. This is the story that we are in.

And friends, if you are one of those who wonder, does my life have meaning? What's my bigger story? I don't have a bigger story. I don't have anything that makes my life make sense.

[28 : 55] Peter says, no, that's not true. You are a part of the greatest story ever told. The story that God throughout history has been working to call a people for himself.

That he would call us out of exile in our sin into his family, into his story, into his kingdom where we will conquer the greatest enemy of sin and death because of what Jesus has done.

and we will reign with him forever in a kingdom of unimaginable beauty. And this is the story that makes the sufferings and the trials that you are facing today light and momentary.

That makes the trials that you are facing today, and I'm not minimizing them, I'm saying, in light of this greater story, Peter's saying, this is why you can hang on.

This is why you can keep going. This is why you can trust and believe and hope in Christ and not be a fool in doing so because there is a greater story that God has placed you in.

[30 : 01] And this is the most important story of your life, more important than any other one you would hold on to. This is the most important story of your life if you would simply let it be so, if you would believe and trust in Christ.

This is what Peter exhorts and encourages his readers in this. So with that, let's pray together. Lord Jesus, we praise you.

We praise you that there is this grand story and that, Lord, we have a place in it. Lord, I pray this morning that we would be encouraged. I pray that, Lord, even in the face of the trials that we are facing, both big and small, or Lord, in the preparation for trials if today is a day in which we are relatively at ease.

Lord, I pray that the knowledge of this great story and of your revelation to us in the scriptures, Lord, that we would be encouraged, encouraged to take hold of this salvation and to continue on in it.

Lord, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.