

The Story
The Big Bang
1/11/14

- The drunk husband snuck up the stairs quietly. He looked in the bathroom mirror and bandaged the bumps and bruises he'd received in a fight earlier that night. He then proceeded to climb into bed, smiling at the thought that he'd pulled one over on his wife.
 - When morning came, he opened his eyes and there stood his wife. "You were drunk last night weren't you!" "No, honey, he groggily replied." "Well, if you weren't, then who put all the band-aids on the bathroom mirror?"
 - Sometimes, when we think we can hide, we find that we can't. This morning, we are going to read about some people who thought they could hide. But, you know, even if we can pull one over on another person, there is One who we can never fool or really hide from.
 - This year, we as a congregation, have made commitments to read the Story of the One from who we cannot hide. It is the Story of God as found in the Bible.

- If this is your first Sunday or if you haven't been around lately, you might not know that we last week, we embarked on a church-wide campaign called The Story. For at least 31 weeks of this year, we are going to read a chapter each week of this book which is a condensed, chronological reading of Scripture. This past week, we were supposed to read Chapter 1.
 - Last week, we were challenged to make some commitments. In your bulletin, there are some inserts. One of them is a commitment card with five commitments for this Story campaign. We were all challenged to make some commitments of reading a chapter a week of the Story, reading The Story together as family devotions, getting involved in a LIFE Group to dip deeper into what we are learning and reading, attending worship services and to align our lives with God's story.
 - We then turned these cards in...if you were here or you haven't turned in your commitment card, you can do so today and just give it to me after the service.
 - In your bulletin, you will also find a bookmark with questions that would be good to ask as you read each chapter of The Story. There is also the reading plan for January and February so you know exactly what to read each week.

- One of the things we are going to seek and find as we read God's Story is that there are really two stories within the Bible. There is the Upper Story and there is the Lower Story.
 - The Upper Story tells the big picture of God unfolding throughout history. God's Upper Story shows us why God is doing what he is doing.

- The Lower Story contains the human experience of the Bible. If we only look at the stories of the people in the Bible without understanding God's reasoning in his Upper Story, some of the stories in the Bible seem out of focus, confusing and we might question why in the world they are in the Bible.
 - But, God's Upper Story brings clarity to the Lower Story. So then, we need to be people who live within the realm of God's Upper Story rather than just on our own human experience or Lower Story. It is in God's Upper Story that we will find spiritual growth and knowledge.
 - This morning, we are going to learn right upfront what is central to God's Upper Story. So, let's get started.
- The beginning of our journey through the story of the Bible is like the beginning of an action-packed movie. If you miss the opening minutes of a movie with its fast-paced scenes, you will not understand the rest of the story.
 - Have you ever been to a movie with someone who likes to talk? I surely have. Someone who is talking to you during integral parts of the movie and then later they don't know what's going on and so they ask you and you say, "I don't know because you were talking to me!" I may or may not be married to one of those kinds of people!
 - It is the same with the Bible's grand Story. If you miss integral parts, like the beginning, you can get lost to the meaning of the whole story. The Story opens with a "big bang." Now, before anyone gets upset that Pastor Angela is an evolutionist, listen well. No one really knows what happened in the beginning. We don't know. None of us was there! In the end, it doesn't really matter. Science and faith don't have to be on completely different pages about creation.
 - I had a biology professor in college who said, "My science tells me how the earth was created and formed. My faith tells me who did the creation and formation." I agree.
 - I would assume there was probably a big bang as God said, "Let there be light" and BANG! There was light! I'm assuming there were lots of big bangs as God spoke things into being. I'm also assuming there was some evolution – not in the form of monkeys turning into people; but as God formed and created and developed his creation, there was some evolution.
 - But, the biggest bang was not how things were created it, but the real "Big Bang" is the revelation of God, the Creator, the main character of the Grand Story who was behind the creation in the beginning, behind the story of humanity and behind the ending as well.
 - The Bible Story introduces the real Big Bang in Genesis 1:1, which says "In the beginning, God..." In those first four words, we are introduced to the Story's main character: God.

- This introduction of God, the real Big Bang, is a call for us to know God and to believe in God, to put our faith in God.
- In fact, if you can believe the first line of the Bible, that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, you shouldn't have a problem believing anything in the Bible.
 - I mean, if God can speak the universe into existence then healing deaf and blind people, sending a whale to swallow a person, raising people from the dead, sending a flood – none of that seems beyond his capability!
- After the Bible introduces the real Big Bang, the next “big bang” is presented. This big bang is creation – all the things that God created. Therefore, the “big bang” of creation is not an impersonal accident, but the creative purpose of a personal God.
 - You might be interested to note that the Hebrew word used here for creation means “to bring into existence something from nothing.” This word is only used of divine creative activity and not of anything designed by human hands.
- Because creation comes from the hands of the divine, there is a pattern to creation. The big bang of creation is presented poetically and artistically in this pattern. There are two main divisions of creation found in Genesis 1:
 - Days 1, 2 & 3: God created places. Day 1—Light and Dark, Day 2—Sky and Water, Day 3—Land
 - What did God say? “It was good”
 - Days 4, 5 & 6: God created the things to put in the places. Day 4—Sun and Moon/stars, Day 5—Birds and Sea creatures, Day 6—Animals and human beings
 - What did God say? “It was good”
- After each day with a new creation for that day, God looked at what he had created and said, “It's all good.” That's part of the Upper Story – God creates and it is all good. Until he created one last creation to be his core passion, his special creation.
 - The “big bang” of creation concludes with God's core passion: human beings. When he created humans, what did God say Genesis 1:31? “It was very good.”
 - I don't know about you, but often when I look in the mirror, I think, “This isn't good.” But God never thinks that way about me or about you!
- If you need a self-esteem boost today, let's look at **Genesis 1:26-27**.
 - If you are reading from your Bible, you might want to circle “us” and “our.” This is referring to the Trinity. God, in community as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are creating together.
 - This means we are the most unique of all creation because we are created in his image. No other creation was made in the image of God.

- Think about it for a minute and soak it in: All the beauties of creation are secondary to you. Randy Frazee describes God’s passion like this, “While the creation of the heavens and the earth and the other one hundred billion galaxies is impressive, it is not the point of the story. Mount Everest, the Grand Canyon, the stark beauty of the Sahara, the cascading elegance of Victoria Falls – combine these and thousands of other jewels of his creative powers and you’re not even close to identifying the core passion of God. Those are just display cases to highlight his real work of art.
 - We are his real work of art! We are loved in a way the other creations are not loved. Though we may look in the mirror or at our lives and say, “No good!” God says, “You are awesome!”
- Now, in Genesis 2, we see how God first created man and then decided it was not good for man to be alone, so he created woman. Some have asked why he didn’t just create them at the same time and why man came first.
 - Well, some male scholars believe that God created man before woman because God didn’t want advice from the woman all the way through creation.
 - On the other hand, some female scholars believe that God looked at man and said, “I can do better than this!” And so, when he finished with woman, God said, “Whoa, man! I did it! That is how God came up with the name “woman.”
 - Regardless, of what side of this debate you find yourself on, God’s creation order does not set up a social order. According to Genesis 1:26, both men and women are created in the image of God. One is not more in the image than the other. God created us equally in his image.
- We, both men and women, were created in his image so that he could be in relationship with us. He created us to enjoy and love and communicate with us.
 - In God’s Upper Story, God already experienced perfect community within the Trinity. He could have continued to enjoy that perfect community forever, but he wanted to share it.
 - And so, he created human kind. He wanted to enjoy the same kind of relationship with us that he enjoyed within the Trinity. He desired to bring his community to a place where it could be enjoyed by others. He wanted to do life with us and to walk beside us in life, both in the deepest valleys and the highest mountains.
- If you are a parent, you get it. At some point, you felt that pull to share your life with another human being – one that you would create together, that would be a little like you and a little like your spouse.
 - Everything changes when a child enters your life and even though it’s not all baby kisses and snuggles (and instead, it’s a lot of baby puke, dirty diapers,

- sleepless nights, worry and temper tantrums); the love and joy you have is indescribable and your passion is your child.
- God's supreme passion is to be with us at all costs.
- So, God gave his core passion a perfect Garden in which they could live and he could do life with them. He could walk with them in the cool of the evening and talk with them. And, he took great care to give them everything they needed.
- Many scholars believe that the location of this garden was a fertile area where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers meet in modern-day Iraq. How ironic is that? Iraq certainly is no longer a paradise.
 - In order to give you some reference as to where things happen, there is a map in the front inside cover of The Story. You might want to draw a tree between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to represent the Garden of Eden – God's gift to his most prized creation.
- Then, in selfless love, he gave them something else. Freedom. Human beings were created to freely choose relationship with God. Adam and Eve were created with the freedom and power to choose. God does not force love.
- And so, the story introduces the tale of two trees in Genesis 2:9 and 17. The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil present a choice.
 - Some may ask why would God set them up? It's God's fault because he set them up! That's not true. In order to provide a way for them to accept or reject his divine vision, God set two trees in the middle of the garden so that they could make that choice to listen to him or not. You don't have freedom of choice if there are no options from which to choose.
 - For a while, God and his prized creation lived in harmony as they accepted his vision to be with them. We don't know how long they lived in harmony with God. We do know that this gift of freedom would be the catalyst of the next big bang: the big bang of the Fall.
- This part of the story begins with the introduction of Satan, God's enemy and nemesis, represented here as a snake. The mission of Satan is to steal, kill and destroy anything that God loves. So, he goes after us with a vengeance because God loves us more than anything.
- In the Genesis account, Satan disguises himself as one of God's creation so that he could not be easily recognized by Adam and Eve for who he really was and is. He does the same today.
- In fact, let's explore the tactics that Satan used to entice Eve to make the choice to reject God's Word.
- The first tactic is to Question God's Word. "Did God really say?..." asked the serpent in Genesis 3:1.
 - The second tactic is to Deny God's Word. "You will not surely die," refuted the serpent in Genesis 3:4.

- The final tactic is to Reverse God's Word. "God knows if you eat, you will be like him," lied the serpent in Genesis 3:5.
- Can you hear him hiss those words to Eve? Have you heard him hiss those words to you? He still uses those very same tactics on us. Hissing out his questioning, denying and reversing of God's Word. And, we still fall for it. While he laughs.
 - I found a video. It's a little on the longer side, but it gives a dramatic account of the Fall and it's affects. It just might help us better identify when Satan is hissing in our own ears that which is not of God.
- Isn't that last line chilling? And, the serpent, he just smiled. He got what he wanted. Adam and Eve rebelled against God and ate from the forbidden "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" and God's Upper Story vision to be with people was ruined by the choice made. Looking in the Lower Story, we find that man sins and everything falls apart.
 - God told Adam and Eve that if they ate from those trees, they would die. We might think that is such a drastic punishment. Death, though, to God is not just about a physical death. That's why Adam and Eve didn't drop dead as soon as they ate the fruit.
 - Instead, death is to be separated from God. This, most often, is a relational death between us and God.
 - Satan knew that and he knows that now. Relational separation from God is his goal for all of us for then physical death will bring eternal separation from God with no hope of restoration.
- But God has another plan. In his Upper Story, the rest of the Bible is about God's pursuit to get us back. God's Upper Story focuses on the relentless pursuit and restoration of what was lost in the Fall. Everything in the Lower Stories of Scripture and in the Lower Story of our own human experience revolve around God's Upper Story to restore us to him. But, God's plan to get us back has to take place within the Big Bang of the Damage / Consequences of Sin.
 - His plan to get us back had to take place where now Death (separation from God) became the reality. His plan to get us back had to take place where community with God was broken.
 - His plan to get us back had to take place where community with each other as husband and wife, brother and sister, human and human is strained because of the consequences of sin.
- His plan to get us back had to take place where sin became part of the human DNA. We now have a sin nature. Because of Adam and Eve's role as the first humans, their disobedience became an inheritance for the rest of us. Because Adam and Eve chose a different vision than God's vision, sin became part of their spiritual DNA and they produced more sinners.
 - We see this played out in how they respond. They try to hide from God.

Then, they try to blame someone else – Adam blames Eve; Eve blames the snake; they even try to blame God for his creation. Sin certainly has crept in and has corrupted the perfect environment God created. And so, they could no longer stay in the garden.

- We also see the sin DNA, the sin nature played out in their own children, Cain and Abel. Cain, who didn't want to give his best to God, was jealous of his brother and ended up killing him in that infamous story of Cain and Abel.
 - And, as the population continued to grow on earth, this sin nature becomes clear because when given a choice, men and women choose evil over good. In fact, Genesis 4-9 present the sin nature permeating the human race so much so it was nearly impossible to find anyone who remembered God or who lived right with God.
 - Theologians call this the doctrine of depravity which suggests that human beings inherently will choose evil over good – that we are unable to “be good” all the time on our own, leaving us unfit for God's community. See, authentic love and community require both parties to choose each other, but from the beginning, mankind chose to reject God.
 - We see this lived out even in our young children, don't we? Without even having to think about it, young children know how to lie to avoid getting into trouble. Young children will spit, hit and bite to get their way or to get the toy they way. The sin of selfishness and self-preservation rules.
- But, within the Upper Story of God, we find the most mind-boggling thought – that even in our state of sin, selfishness and rejection of God – God wants us back!
- So, he devises a new plan. A do-over so to say. Take the most righteous guy he could find, save him and his family to repopulate the earth and destroy the rest.
 - God calls Noah to build a huge boat and sent two of every kind of animal for the great do-over. The heavens and the earth poured out water to cover the earth. Finally, it stopped raining. Finally, the waters started to recede. Finally, there was dry land again.
 - Again, as a point of reference, on the map in the front inside cover of your Story book, you might want to draw an ark where it say Assyria.
- Yet, even the flood could not erase the sin nature. The flood erased the wicked human race, but did not erase the sin nature from Noah and his family. The sin nature went into the ark and it came back out.
- Genesis 9:20-23, which was not in The Story, happened not long after the flood waters recede and it tells of Noah being a sloppy drunk and his son disrespecting him and dishonoring him. And, the sin nature lives on and on and on passed down through the generations to you and to me.

- In our Lower Story, we find that we need a solution for our sin problem. The solution to restoring mankind to the kind of relationship we once had with God in the garden will not be found with us.
- So, even in the beginning of the story of creation, the Bible Story offers a “big bang” salvation clue in Genesis 3.
 - The first clue is found in Genesis 3:15 which is actually part of the consequences of curse because of the sin of Adam and Eve and says, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^(a) and hers; he will crush^(b) your head, and you will strike his heel.
 - God is saying that One is coming that will crush the head of Satan. The one that is coming is the offspring of Adam and Eve. Satan is going to strike the heel of the offspring of Adam, but he is going to crush Satan’s head.
 - For us on this side of history, we know that Jesus is coming! And that while the Friday of the crucifixion, Satan struck the heel of Jesus, Sunday was on the way! On Sunday, Jesus crushed Satan’s head by destroying sin and death in one big blow through the power of the resurrection!
- The other big bang salvation clue is found in Genesis 3:21 which says, “The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.”
 - After Adam and Eve sinned and became aware of their nakedness, they made fig leaf clothing to cover their nakedness. God took away the fig leaves and covered Adam and Eve with the skins of animals.
 - For God to restore human beings it will require the shedding of blood. The people in the flood shed their blood. But, restoration was incomplete. As we will read in the Old Testament, God set up a sacrifice system where the blood of animals was shed to cover the sins of the people. But, restoration was incomplete.
 - A perfect sacrifice was needed that could not be found in creation, but who was the Creator and Savior, Jesus.
- From the big bangs of the creation and flood stories we discover the value of all human beings. Regardless of what Adam and Eve and Noah did, regardless of anything we have done that was against God, God wants to be with us. Think about that. You. God wants to personally be with you.
 - God’s Upper Story has not changed. He still wants to do life with us in a perfect, loving community of unified fellowship. From this point in the story until the final chapter of the Bible, we see God’s single passion unfolding, one story at a time.
 - He want to give you and me the opportunity to return to the garden, where we will live with him forever. At great cost to God, God will do everything

possible to get you back. You are valuable. True, lasting self-esteem begins by believing what God says about you. He says you are very good!

- And, as we read God's pursuit of us in upcoming chapters, it changes the way you read the story of the Bible forever...