

Jesus Stories and Stories Jesus Told (Living in a Parable)

Matthew 16:1-21

#34 in our series “Jesus Stories” & #1 in our “Stories Jesus Told”

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Prayer

Lord God, thank you that you love us as we are. And we pray that we would love you as you are. You are good, but we're not always so good; we are not a good judge of good. But, Lord God, you are a good judge of us. Would you come with your Word and judge the hell out of us and judge your heaven back into us? Be glorified in us, Lord God? And we pray that you would help us to preach. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Message

For over a year we've been preaching through “Jesus Stories” (that's stories in the life of Christ) from the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) not John, because a few years ago we preached all the way through John. Well, this week, I'd like to transition from “Jesus Stories” to “Stories Jesus Told.” Jesus called these stories “parables.”¹

Matthew 16:1-4

And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven.

A sign from the sky. (“Heaven” and “sky” are the same word.)²

[Jesus] answered them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening. You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” So he left them and departed.

The Sadducees and Pharisees (that is the Religious experts on signs.) ask Jesus for a sign, which is profoundly ironic. Jesus has just fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish and the twelve disciples collected twelve baskets of leftovers. Five is the number of the Torah. Twelve is the number of Israel.

Then Jesus leaves Israel and goes to Gentile territory where He feeds four thousand people with seven loaves and a few fish. This time the disciples take up seven large baskets of leftovers. Four is the number of the four winds and seven the number of all creation. Jesus is the “bread of life” for all nations and his ministry is drenched in signs.

But now, back in Israel, the religious leaders can't read them or don't want to read them. So they ask for a sign “from” (or more accurately translated “out of” the sky, that's like saying: “Jesus hand us the moon.”³

¹ Parables are signs, symbols, or archetypes; it's one thing that reveals another thing. It's a comparison and usually a story. *Para* means alongside, *ballo* means put, *paraballo* means put alongside, *para balay* means parable.

² They do this to test him and He is God's Word. They are judging the judgment of God.

Jesus responds, "Look at the red sunrise. The whole sky is a sign and you can't read it." "The whole sky is a sign and you want a piece of the sign." "Why?"

You know sometimes if you seize control of a sign . . .

[Image of a sign with an arrow that points right]

[Image of a sign with an arrow that points left]

You can make it point in any direction you like.

You could take a sign like this:

[Image of a sign that says "ONE WAY"]

Cut it up and make it say this:

[Image of a similar looking sign that says "NO WAY"]

You could take a love note cut it up, rearrange the letters and turn it into a ransom note.

"Show us a sign out of the sky."

[Image of a blood red moon]

This is what the ancients referred to as a "blood moon." It's a lunar eclipse. The moon turns red for the same reason the sky turns red at sunrise and sunset. Well, in Joel 2:31, the prophet Joel wrote:

The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord.

In the Revelation, at the opening of the sixth seal the sun goes black and the moon becomes like blood, as if the moon bleeds.

On the news, you may have heard about the recent series of four blood moons. It began on April 15th last year and the fourth of the tetrad comes on September 28th of this year. So some religious leaders have said, "Jesus will return on that date." But because Jesus said, "No one knows that date," other religious leaders say, "Well, something's going to happen and it has to do with Israel." ⁴ Because this blood moon is on Passover, support Israel by giving to my ministry

³ Last week there was a beautiful red sunset above the Red Rocks just west of our house and so I climbed Mt. Falcon above the Red Rocks and put a piece of the sky in a jar. "Isn't it beautiful" No? It's dead.

⁴ Two of the blood moons fall on Passover and Tabernacles (which isn't hugely surprising since the Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar.)

or voting for this candidate, or something bad could happen – like the Tribulation and Jesus could come back!”

Last week the Huffington Post ran this headline

Michelle Bauchman: “The Rapture is coming and it’s Obama’s fault.” Now, Michelle Bauchman didn’t say that, but I read and listened and she did imply something like that. She made some valid points, but what does it all mean? And is it good or bad to have Jesus come back? So, should I vote Republican or Democrat? And let me tell you, it’s not just Michelle Bauchman that will be taking signs out of the sky and telling you what they mean.

It’s important to understand that the Sadducees were the ruling liberal elite of Jesus’ day and the Pharisees were the popular conservative leaders of Jesus’ day. They did not get along with each other except in this: Together they come and ask Jesus for a “sign from the sky” and together they entice Israel to chant, “Crucify him. Crucify him.”⁵ Both groups claim to be experts on the law and signs.

Well, I find it fascinating that someone in the Bible tells us exactly what the “blood moon” means. And he’s not an expert. He’s a fisherman, named Peter. In Acts chapter 2, when the Holy Spirit fills the tabernacle (that we now call the church), and they all start worshipping in the languages of the nations, Peter stands up and says,

This is what was uttered through the prophet, Joel: “In the last days . . . I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh” and the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the day of the Lord comes . . . and it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Peter says, “This” is “that” and he seems to believe that they all saw what Joel prophesied: The sun turned black. (It happened from noon to 3 p.m. as Jesus hung on the cross). And there was a blood moon. Using Kepler’s laws of motion and computer calculations, astronomers now point out that there was one (and only one) lunar eclipse on a Passover Sabbath while Pontius Pilate was Governor of Judea⁶ and it occurred on April 3, 33 A.D. There are many other reasons to believe that Jesus was crucified that day (even including seismic data from the Jordan rift valley). Well, that means that the witnesses to Jesus’ death saw the sun turn black – that day, and also saw a blood moon that night. The sun went black from noon to 3 p.m., when Jesus died. The moon rose that night in full eclipse. The eclipse began below the horizon at 3 p.m. as Jesus cried, “*It is finished*” and “*delivered up his Spirit*” “*The life giving Spirit.*”

Now just think about that. All the experts saw the signs, but none of them knew what they meant (at least not yet).⁷

They crucified Jesus as the moon moved into the shadow cast by the earth.
They crucified Jesus because they didn’t want the light.

⁵ They both comprised the Sanhedrin. That was like their Senate.

⁶ See www.bethlemstar.net

⁷ You know Caiaphas was the High Priest. He was the ruler of the liberal elite and he spoke perhaps the greatest prophecy of all time. John 11: 50 “*It is better . . . that one man die for the people than that the whole nation should perish.*” He spoke the prophecy, but for him the arrow pointed in just the opposite direction. He had no clue as to what it meant.

They didn't like what He meant: He loved the last and least.

He forgave his enemies (Canaanites and Romans).
He refused to support the violent political aspirations of the nation state of Israel
because that's not how his Kingdom comes.

Well, they all saw Jesus and then took his life on the tree because they didn't like what He meant. Jesus said to the Sadducees and Pharisees, "*You cannot interpret the signs of the times.*" I think it's interesting that when Matthew records Jesus' words he uses the Greek word *kairos*. In Greek, there are two words for "time:" *chronos*, from which we get "*chronology*," and this other word, *Kairos*. *Chronos* is like the squares in my calendar. *Kairos* is like the stuff within each square (events, appointments, people). *Chronos* is like empty time, and *kairos* is, like, time filled with meaning.

The Sadducees and Pharisees had all sorts of calendars, but didn't know what anything meant. Jesus says, (Mathew 16: 4 ESV)

"an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah."

"The sign of Jonah" is "Jesus Christ crucified" "descended into *Sheol*, (like Jonah) and risen on the third day." Maybe if we get that sign we can read all the others.

Well, Jesus says, "only the sign of Jonah" and he leaves them and departs across the sea with his disciples. Matthew 16: 5 – 6 (ESV)

When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. Jesus said to them, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

This week, at our staff Bible Study, Kimberly and Angie reminded us of what leaven does: it puffs up bread with gas (technically "yeast farts"). Then Kimberly quoted 1 Corinthians 8: 1 "*This knowledge (knowledge of the law) puffs up, but love builds up.*" The Sadducees and Pharisees puffed themselves up with "this knowledge." They were experts in the law and so they made themselves bigger with nothing but emptiness. And the snake said to the woman, "*take the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil . . . make yourself like God.*" "Puff yourselves up."

1 Corinthians 8: 2 Paul, (the former Pharisee) continues:

This knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

In the Bible, there are two ways of "knowing."

1. You can take knowledge OR
2. You can be known.

Well, the Sadducees and Pharisees take knowledge to gain control. But, you have to surrender control to be known by Love and thus know Love.

The Sadducees and Pharisees puff themselves up with nothing, but to be known by Love, is to be filled with something – God is that something. Now just hold those thoughts.

Matthew 16: 5 – 12

When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. Jesus said to them, "Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, "We brought no bread." But Jesus, aware of this, said, "O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

I love that scene in the Gospels and it reminds me of this scene in Guardians of the Galaxy.

Clip from *Guardians of the Galaxy*

(Scene opens inside a ship with four characters facing the controls and talking.)

Rocket Raccoon: *I have a plan!* (Pushing buttons, repeatedly) *I have a plan!*

Drax the Destroyer: *Cease your yammering and release us from this irksome confinement.*

Peter Quill: (Looking out the side window and turning to the front.) *Yeah, I'll have to agree with the walking thesaurus on that one!*

Drax the Destroyer: *Do not ever call me a thesaurus.*

Peter Quill: *It's just a metaphor, dude!*

Rocket Raccoon: (Rapidly pushing buttons) *These people are completely literal. Metaphors are gonna go over his head.*

Drax the Destroyer: *Nothing goes over my head. My reflexes are too fast and I would catch it.*

Gamora: *I'm gonna die surrounded by the biggest idiots in the galaxy!*

I wonder if Jesus ever felt like that? - "I'm gonna die surrounded by the biggest idiots in the galaxy!" And yet, He's with them, knowing them in their empty illusions.

They just saw Jesus feed Israel and the nations. They've just crossed the abyss in a boat with the Bread of Life, and they're worried about bread. Jesus says, "*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*" And they say, "Right! But *we don't have any bread!*" They say this to the Bread of Life.

Jesus says, "Guys! I'm not talking about bread," and yet He *is* talking about bread and leaven. The whole thing is a metaphor, a *parabolay* in Greek. That is, the leaven and the bread are not

just leaven and bread. Neither are the fish, or the baskets, or the boat, or the sea, or the crowds, or the Sadducees and Pharisees, or the fact that they forgot to bring bread!

As we've preached through all these Jesus Stories, I do hope that you've seen that Jesus believed nothing happened to him by accident. His life was a story that God was telling and using all creation to do so . . . He believed nothing happened to him by accident and nothing happens to you by accident. Actually, Scripture is clear that you are a story God is telling with Jesus.

In the beginning was the word and the word (the logos) was with God and the word was God. All things (that includes you and your story) were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made. . . And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth . . .

And we nailed him to a tree in a garden because we didn't like the story God was writing . . . But now, I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me just point out that Jesus seemed to believe we're, like, living in a parable. That means that all creation is a sign, a metaphor. So, why do we speak in metaphor? Well, if I say, "a thought went over your head," I'm using a physical picture to describe a spiritual reality. (I think it's a bad use of the term) but . . . we often refer to the physical reality as the *literal meaning* and the *idea* as the metaphor. We tend to think the physical is more real than the spiritual. But Jesus seemed to think the spiritual is more solid, permanent, and real than this whole world.

Jesus seemed to think that this whole world was the metaphor
And what it meant was truly solid and eternal
Like gold buried in a field
Like a pearl hidden in an oyster
Like the meaning hidden in each day.

So, if you don't pay attention, you could live your life - never having lived – your life. It would be just one empty calendar day after another. But if you sought first the Kingdom and his righteousness, you could live your life eternally having each day filled with meaning, that is "*eternal life*."

Well, Jesus seemed to think everything is a metaphor, so you're living in a parable and the days of your life form a story. God writes that story, and you're a character in that story. God writes your story. And everybody says, "How nice." We think that means that God gives us a list of instructions on how to write a good story. If we take that "*knowledge of the good*" and use it to write our story, we say (with false humility), "Well God wrote the story." And if we screw up we say, "If only," "If only I let God write the story."

But, you see, something utterly fantastic happens in Matthew 16: 5-12. (At first it seems like a contradiction, but, one eternal day, we'll see that it's not.

This is the fascinating thing that happens: the disciples screw up!

They forgot the bread (on so many levels).

They think, "If only I had remembered the bread."

Like you think, "If only I remembered the keys – I wouldn't have missed the meeting,"

"If only I looked in the rearview mirror – I wouldn't have backed over my own child,"

"If only..." "If only..."

Do you see? They screwed up and Jesus acts as if God never stopped writing the story.

In fact, once Jesus enters the picture, He gives new meaning to all the empty time they've spent worrying about bread, and turns that fact into the Gospel . . . of Matthew that we're reading today.

He redeems their time.
They thought, "If only."
And Jesus acts as if there is actually no "if only."
Jesus acts as if, in the words of Paul:
"God accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will."
God does all things so anything God doesn't do—isn't actually done.

Well, they screw up. But God never stopped writing the story. In 2 Corinthians 2: 13, Paul writes that he missed an *"open door"* because he was worried about Titus. Worry is sin. He screwed up, but then he writes, *"Thanks be to God who **always** leads us in triumph."* God never stopped writing the story almost as if *"where sin increased, grace abounded all the more"* and that's the story. Adam and Eve screwed up. Can you think of a bigger screw up?? But did God ever stop writing their story? We sinners all screwed up. We crucified Christ on a tree in a Garden. Did God ever stop writing the story? No. That is the story from the foundation of the world, the Gospel of Jesus, the Christ.

Well, I'm pointing out that Jesus seemed to think

You Are Living In A Parable. So:

1. All creation is a metaphor
2. God writes The Story
3. Everything happens for a reason (a "logos")

That may sound "nice" at first, but actually, there may be nothing more offensive. For, as suffering and sorrow soon reveal to us: If everything happens for a reason, it's definitely not *our* reason. We didn't choose it.

See? Every time I say, "If only," "If only," what am I saying? "If only I'd remembered the bread," "If only I'd gotten a check-up," "If only Eve hadn't taken that fruit," "If only Jesus hadn't gone up to Jerusalem and got himself crucified." Whenever I say, "If only," aren't I saying, "God's reasons are not my reasons." "I don't comprehend God's reason or trust God's reason." "In fact, I may hate God's reason, whatever that is . . ." The biblical word for *"reason"* is *logos*, and Jesus is the *Logos* in the flesh—whom we crucified on the tree.

Now, if your head is spinning, it should be . . . But, for now, just ponder this one idea: you're living in a parable – a story that God is telling for a reason. Jesus told stories, and we are a story Jesus told and is telling.

How To Read A Parable &
How To Live Your Life:
(if you trust that the Author is Good)

So, maybe the way we read parables is the way we should live our lives. If we trust that the author is good, we do these things:

How To Read A Parable &
How To Live Your Life:
(if you trust that the Author is Good)

✓ You Pay Attention

We pay attention because we know everything happens for a reason. We trust that the author is good and so the reason must be good. C. S. Lewis wrote:

Where a God who is totally purposive and totally foreseeing acts upon a Nature which is totally interlocked, there can be no accidents or loose ends, nothing whatever of which we can safely use the word merely.

Nothing “merely” happens in a parable, for the author picks each detail for a reason. Even though it can be disheartening and even terrifying,

There’s a reason the Prodigal squanders an inheritance.

There’s a reason the dogs lick Lazarus’ sores.

There’s a reason that the master shuts the door on “sons of the kingdom”.

There’s a reason that the king casts the one man without a wedding garment,
Into outer darkness,

And yet calls him “friend.” Be curious.

The French mystic, Jean Guyon writes:

You must utterly believe that the circumstances of your life, that is, every minute of your life, as well as the whole course of your life – anything, yes, everything that happens – have all come to you by His will and by His permission. You must utterly believe that everything that has happened to you is from God and is exactly what you need . . .

If the author is good – you pay attention. You live your life with your eyes open. You don’t deny, repress, or hide from the truth, for you know everything happens for a reason.

How To Read A Parable &
How To Live Your Life:
(if you trust that the Author is Good)

- ✓ You Pay Attention
- ✓ You Expect Confusion

Yet, you expect confusion because the author's reason is not your reason. That's why He's telling the story: to give you new reason, that is, new meaning.

Sometimes I've preached and people have said, "That was very confusing. And God is not a God of confusion." And therefore, what you said is not of God." And I just want to scream, "Have you never read the Bible?" Just about every time God speaks, people seem to get pretty confused!

Moses seemed pretty confused by that burning bush.
Saul, the Pharisee, seemed pretty confused by the burning light on the road to Damascus.
Jesus would show up, tell some parable that utterly baffled everyone,
And then walk away.

They couldn't comprehend his meaning, but over time, his meaning comprehended them.
That's how stories work: you lose your life in the story and then find the story in you. It changes you.

Remember how the Word of God met Jacob at the edge of the Promised Land? He met him as a man and beat the hell out of him. I bet Jacob was confused, but he wrestled all night long and in the morning, the God-man blessed him – gave him new meaning. He was no longer "Jacob—the liar." His name was "Israel," which means wrestles with God.

You *will* be confused and, like Jesus said, "*In this world you will have tribulation.*" He doesn't rapture us out of tribulation; He wrestles with us in the midst of tribulation. You know, if God is really the creator and therefore the author of your story, you really only wrestle with one person in this life, and that person is the Word of God.

Well, the Word of God is not confused, but you are deeply confused.

How To Read A Parable &
How To Live Your Life:
(if you trust that the Author is Good)

- ✓ You Pay Attention
- ✓ You Expect Confusion
- ✓ Yet You Always Seek The Meaning

So keep wrestling, - keep seeking, keep asking, “What does it mean?” “What does He mean?” Better, “What do you mean?” But, see? It’s never just bread or wine. It’s never just a mustard seed or fishing net, and it’s never just sex or just a house, or just a bride. You know, it was never just a tabernacle, or temple, and it wasn’t just about the blood of sheep and goats.

Hebrews 9: 9 was a *parabolay*. It was about something else . . . and it was never just a man hanging on the tree, in the garden, where Christ was crucified. It was the “*word of God:*” truly man, but not just man. And He truly died, but that’s not the *end* of the story.

Harry Blamiers writes,

“If there is one word the Christian secretly wants to use to describe the unbeliever’s outlook, it is literal . . . like the child who takes the play for reality. “Hamlet is not really dead,” you explain, “He is an actor. He also lives a life outside the theater. He has a wife and family and, far from being dead, he is probably now at home with them enjoying a late supper.”

Stop taking this world so literally! Jesus literally died; that was no act. Jesus literally died on the cross – but the *meaning* is life and it’s eternal. He is eternal and He is the reason.

Now, I dare you to think of anything more confusing, painful or horrid than what Jesus endured on that cross. But is there a better meaning than that which Jesus revealed on that cross?

- The heart of God was revealed on that cross.
- The word of God was revealed on that cross.
- The *Logos* of God was revealed on that cross.
- The logic of Love was revealed on that cross.

The reason for **all** things is Jesus. Jesus is the meaning of every parable and Jesus is the meaning of your life. He is “the reason,” but maybe not your reason – (the one you chose).

Like I was saying, if you think the author is good, you trust his reason – the plot, so you:

1. Pay attention.
2. Expect confusion
3. Keep asking what does it mean?

How To Read A Parable &
How To Live Your Life:
(if you trust that the Author is Good)

- ✓ You Pay Attention
- ✓ You Expect Confusion
- ✓ Yet You Always Seek The Meaning
- ✓ You Surrender Your Meaning to His Meaning

And

4. You surrender your meaning to the author’s meaning and receive new meaning.

But if you don't trust the author and his meaning, you'll just stop reading or you'll try to change the meaning. You won't read the sign

[Image of a sign that reads "ONE WAY"]

You'll take control of the sign

[Image of a sign that reads "NO WAY"]

Cut it up and give it your own meaning. The Sadducees and Pharisees took Jesus, cut him up and crucified him, and tried to give him their own meaning – that is, "We write the story, - not you." Every time you sin, that's what you're doing. You're crucifying the Word of Love and declaring, "I write the story – not you, not love or the Word of Love."

Maybe the Sadducees and Pharisees couldn't read the signs because all the signs meant love. And love is not something you comprehend. Love is someone that comprehends you. So you can't take it like fruit on a tree. You must receive it like a bride receives a bridegroom.

Matthew 16: 12

"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees"

Next verse: (Matthew 16: 13-17 ESV)

*Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do **you** say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon-Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven."*

Did you get that? Peter discerned – he read the "signs of the times." The experts couldn't, but the fisherman did because he knew Jesus, or I should say Jesus knew him. Jesus wasn't a law he could control. Jesus was a living presence that filled each moment –like *kairos* in Peter's *chromos*—like a constant prayer, communion. And yet, even Peter didn't trust entirely (or even much at all). In just a few verses, Jesus will explain that He must "*go to Jerusalem*" "*and be killed and on the third day, rise.*" That's the sign of Jonah. (The sign that's "*given to the evil and adulterous generation*" that seeks signs, but not what they signify, what they mean).

He said to Peter, "*I will be killed and on the third day rise.*" Well, Peter rebukes Jesus saying, "*May it never be*"—"Jesus that's the wrong story." And Jesus rebukes Peter saying, "*Get behind me Satan.*" The night Jesus is arrested, Peter denies him three times. Peter screws up in a massive way, but God never stopped writing his story. Peter wrote himself out of his own story, but God wrote him back in and that's the story. It was *always* the story.

When Peter screwed up, he went back to thinking, that for him, it was just about fish. He went back to just fishing. But Jesus rose from the dead, filled him with his Spirit and made him a "fisher of men."

So "*where sin had increased, grace abounded all the more.*" Where Peter had made himself a coward, Jesus revealed that God had made him the Rock (eternally the Rock). Think about it: If God is the creator, and He tells your story with His word. You really have only one life you can live. And any life, other than that one life, isn't really life - it's a false life. It's a puffed up life. It's

an empty life – full of empty time – like empty squares on a calendar. It's a life without meaning, for the meaning is love and God is Love.

You see, we've all crucified love and we've all puffed ourselves up with knowledge, with pride, shame, and fear. We've all created empty lives but God is still the author of the story. Yes, we tried to seize control of the plot – that's "the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

We tried to change the meaning. We tried to seize control of the plot and so we crucified the plot, and even that, especially that, is the plot. We write ourselves out of God's story and He's already written us into His story and that's the story, and it's there at the tree that we learn to trust the plot.

So: "*Where sin increased grace abounded all the more,*" and God floods our lifeless lives with life – eternal life, the life of Love. He fills our empty past, present, and future with himself. The meaning of your life is Jesus and He's revealed in the place you chose "not Jesus." Jesus means "God is salvation." Grace. The meaning of your life is Jesus (Peter picks up the communion wine pitcher) and because Jesus fills all the empty places in your puffed up earthen vessel (Peter picks up an empty cup and fills it with communion wine). The meaning of your life is also you – the *real you*– (Peter hold up a cup that was once empty filled with communion wine–the life of Christ)–not the you that you have constructed with sin, but the you that God has constructed with grace. With your life, God is telling you who He is and who you eternally are, who you truly are and you are very, very good.

And, by the way, in Psalm 89: 37, God refers to the moon as his "*faithful witness in the sky.*" The moon faithfully reflects his light upon the earth. In Revelation 1: 5, Jesus is called, "*the faithful witness.*" So that paints quite a picture. April 3rd, 33 A.D., the experts in the law "puffed up with knowledge," the "evil and adulterous generation" "seeking signs" crucified the *meaning* of all signs. They crucified the meaning and that is the meaning: you can't stop the Word of God and the word of God is grace. His life poured out will fill all things including "the evil and adulterous generation." God writes the story and Jesus is his faithful witness. Jesus is "the blood red moon."

Communion

And so He took bread, and He broke it saying, "*This is my body, given to you. Take and eat, and do it in remembrance of me.*" Remember the bread! Remember the bread! Remember the bread! And don't beat yourself up for not remembering the bread, okay? Remember the bread!

And in the same way, He took the cup, saying, "*This cup is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. (I already poured it in that cup), Drink of it all of you...(maybe every cup is different). Drink of it, all of you, and do it in remembrance of me.*"

You are an earthen vessel. Maybe you are even a vessel of wrath. He calls you to this table to become a vessel of Grace– a vessel holding Grace–to become who you always and most truly are is grace. In Jesus' name believe the gospel, come to the table, and worship. Let's bring our empty vessels and let him fill them with meaning.

Prayer

Now close your eyes. You need to do something. And I don't think this is easy to do, okay? But I want you to say this, you can say it silently in your heart after me, "Lord God, in Jesus' name, Thank you for my life – every minute."

And now I know what some of you are thinking. You're thinking, "Thank you for my life!?? Peter, look at me! I've been beaten. I've been abandoned. I've been abused. It's like I've been stripped naked, people have whipped me, they've mocked me, they spit on me, my body is broken, and on top of that I feel like I bear the shame of the world, and I'm nailed to wood." Right. Thank him for your life. Because, you see, it's not your life. And He is making something absolutely *brilliant* out of you. If we are joined with him in a death like his, we will surely be joined with him in a resurrection like his! That's the story, and it's always been the story from the foundation of the world.

You're his tabernacle that He is filling with his life, his glory, his blood. You're his bride that He is filling with himself. You're his body now, at work in this world, making all things new. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Benediction

You are the light of the world. You are the city set on a hill. You are the Body of Christ. You are the "Guardians of the Galaxy." If you saw the movie, you know the Guardians of the Galaxy are five screw-ups and misfits that, in the course of the story, learn to love, and love changed the meaning of their past, present, and future.

Peter is their leader and he saves the Galaxy by bearing evil power in himself. He, dies, and then lives. They wonder how did he do that? It turns out his mother was human and his father something else. Who would've thought of such a story? See? *God* writes the story so keep reading! Don't drop out of the story:

1. Pay attention.
2. Expect to be confused.
3. But, Don't stop seeking the meaning. And
4. Surrender your meaning for God's meaning.

In other words, believe the gospel, in Jesus' name, amen.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.