

The Gospel According to Us

Miscellaneous

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Message

We all come to this place in different places feeling different things. And that's what makes church so hard sometimes because people are in so many different places. And so, I'd like you just to figure out where you are, how you're feeling right now. I used my high tech capabilities to write out six words and you need to pick one.

Choose a word that describes you now: Happy Sad Angry Peaceful Confused Ashamed
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[Peter whistles a theme song from game show as he gives time to decide]

Stand up if:

You're Happy – hear the word of God.

Ecclesiastes 6: 2-3a.

It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting. For this is the end of all mankind and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter. Sit down. Go ahead, just sit down.

You're Sad or sorrowful, stand up. –

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice. Have no anxiety about anything, but in all things through prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I'll say it, Paul says. So sit down.

You're Angry – go ahead and stand up.

Matthew 5:22

"Whoever is angry at his brother is liable to judgment."

You're Peaceful

Matthew 10:34, the words of Jesus, the Christ:

"Do not think I've come to bring peace on the earth but a sword."

You're Confused (Stand up even if it wasn't your word.)

1 Corinthians 14: 33

"God is not a God of confusion, but of peace."

Now, if you feel Ashamed, – (You don't have to stand up.)

Romans 10: 11

“Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.”

It's confusing because we think we should all be the same all the time. In our success driven, Modernistic world we think being a Christian as having arrived at some state of complete perfection. So everyone should be the same all the time. We can't agree on what “the same” is so some groups are into being happy. Some groups say that to really be a Christian is to be sad and are into being sad, some into being angry, some peaceful.

What if Christianity isn't so much about reaching some independent static state of perfection so much as it is about *knowing Jesus*? Getting to know a person? (And that's perfection.)

Philippians 3: 7-11

*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth (In other words, “nothing else is worth as much as this.”) of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish—scubula—crap, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith of/in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may **know** him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

It's all about the surpassing worth of knowing him.

How do you get to know someone?

You spend time with them. And when you spend time with them:

- You want them to tell you stories. For example, you go to friend's house and hear stories (not degrees). You want them to tell you about the things they did as a kid, adventures they were in, failures that they've had. You want to hear stories. That's how you get to know a person.

Think of a favorite story. Think of someone in a story, someone you liked (Frodo, or Sam, or Spiderman, or that Rose from *The Titanic*.) Ask yourself, did they feel those things? Did they just feel *one* of those things: happy, sad, angry, peaceful, confused, ashamed? Were they always sad? Always happy? If they only felt one of those things, it wasn't a story, right? And you didn't really meet the person in the story. If they were always simply one thing, it wouldn't be a story and you wouldn't know them.

You know, stories store things. The root is the same word. A story is a “storehouse” and what a story stores is the meaning (logos), or it stores a person. The Bible is full of stories. It's not a cookbook, not a rule book, like if you've ever read the Koran, it's just rule after rule, after rule. The Bible has rules, but they're all part of a story, and it's in a story.

- To really get to know someone you *share* stories. In other words, you go camping, you go on vacation, and you hope that something goes wrong and that you live through the trauma together. You go to war together, you share stories and live life together.

So, what if Christianity is about getting to know Jesus?

Stand up if you said you were:

Happy – Can you think of a time when Jesus seemed happy?
(Accused of being a glutton and a drunkard)

John 15: 11

“Those things I’ve spoken that my joy might be in you.”

Sad – Can you think of a time when Jesus was sad?
(He wept over Jerusalem.)

Isaiah 53:3

“He was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief.”

Angry – Can you think of a time when he was angry?
Woe to the Pharisees? Clean temple.

Ephesians 4: 26

“Be angry but don’t sin.”

At peace – Can you think of a time when he was at peace?
(He fell asleep on boat.)

John 14: 27

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you.”

Confused– Can you think of a time Jesus was confused?

Mark 13: 32

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Ashamed – Can you think of a time when Jesus was ashamed?

Hebrews 12:2 *“... he endured the cross, despising the shame...”*

2 Corinthians 5: 21

“For our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God.”

Jesus lived a story called the gospel.

We are to live a story that becomes gospel – His gospel.

Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3: 58 *“A time born, a time to die, a time to weep, laugh – mourn, dance embrace refrain from embracing, silence , speak, love, hate (even though I think it’s a sin.) a time for war, peace. All are part of a story, Gospel.*

Romans 11: 32 *“God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.”*

So all is about the gospel story, which means all is about God having mercy. In other words, it’s all about getting to know Jesus—the heart of God—the mercy of God.

God is not satisfied to just *tell* us his story. God wants to *share* with us his story. He wants to go camping together. He wants to share with us his story and thus, give us his heart.

Ever wondered why does life have to be so hard? So traumatic? Why do we have to feel these things? Because God doesn't want you to just *know* some stuff. God wants you to *know his heart* – who is Jesus. He's not just shaping your head, but your heart, so he wants you to feel what he feels (laugh when he laughs and cry when he cries.) He tells us his story. He shares with us his story and in so doing, gives us his heart.

So, what matters is not whether you feel happy or sad, but that you don't feel happy or sad, alone. He wants your story to become his story. What matters is that you give your happiness, sadness, anger, peace, confusion and, even shame, to Jesus. If you give Jesus your shame, then it becomes his shame. Right? And you participate in the fellowship of his sufferings. If you give him your sadness, then your sadness is not your sadness – it's also his sadness. You commune with him in his sorrow over a fallen world. Your story becomes his story—a communion. Your story becomes the gospel—his gospel—according to you.

And you know Jesus. Almost as if you're his body or something! The last few months I've struggled with a whole lot of emotions that I don't always know what to do with. I think it's best to share them with Jesus and surrender them to him. Over the past few months I have felt betrayal, loneliness, misunderstood, sorrow.

I gave to Jesus this: Is this how you felt when you wept over Jerusalem? Is this how you felt? When Peter denied that he knew you. This is how you felt? Is this how you felt when sins were laid on your back? (It's a little because I'm a sinner too, but he even takes that and feels that.)

In Philippians, Paul says, "*I count it all as loss for the surpassing worth of **knowing** Christ Jesus my Lord.*" That's a powerful word in Greek. That's how Adam and Eve get pregnant. "Knowing." You were made to **know** Jesus.

[Peter encourages the congregation to break into small groups and share the word they chose to express how they were feeling at the beginning of the service and then to pray for one another: that that word would be part of Jesus' story, that they'd experience it with him and ask the Holy Spirit to help them know how to pray for each other.]

Song

Prayer

You want us to know you and we know where your story ends up, the wedding supper of the Lamb. We thank you that we're going to have stories to tell, in your name, Lord Jesus, Amen.

About the Future

Many people have been praying for me, for us, from several places, and they said not to preach a traditional type sermon for a time, perhaps several weeks. That felt right to me. But I've asked why? And I think he has a few reasons:

1. Healing. My healing. I need some time (I am on this severance package) to heal and work through some stuff.
2. Remind us that our *lives* preach and we testify to love. We each have a testimony, gospel according to each person in room. So, in next few months in worship we will be:
 - a. Testimonies of Christ in us – I'll still be here leading in worship.
 - b. Some devotionals every few weeks.
3. Discover together God's dream for us. So, in other words, there is a gospel according to *you*, and there is a gospel according to *us*. We believe God wants to give birth to something out of the lives and relationships in this room.

God called me to keep preaching his Word and I plan to, but the Sanctuary is Christ in us. We have some ideas – Downtown, without walls, made of broken pieces that he brings together in a new way, house groups in different parts of the city that meet one week out of each month. We don't know, but whatever it is, I think it comes out of the relationships in this room. It happens in worship as we bring the broken pieces of our lives and surrender them to him.

Communion

It happens like this: On the night Jesus was betrayed he took bread and he broke it saying, "This is my body given to you. Take and eat. Do this in remembrance of me." And in the same way, after supper and having given thanks, he took the cup and he said, "This is the new covenant in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you. Do it in remembrance of me."

And so, we all come with our different stories, our different feelings, and emotions. We surrender them to Jesus at this table, and he enters us; he lives his life in us. I mean, almost as if we are almost his body. That's how much he wants to know us and he wants us to know him.

So, we invite you, if you want him. If you don't want him, that's fine. You can stay right where you are. But if you want him, come to the table and just surrender yourself to him: your happiness, sadness, your anger, shame, whatever. Give it all to him so he shares it with you and you're no longer just living your story, you're living his story and testifying to love.

And remember as you receive communion, worship. And you know, a great thing to do in worship, especially as you're thinking about this, is think about the word you chose at the beginning. And think about Jesus *with you* in that word. I mean, I was losing it as we were worshipping because I was thinking about a few incidences in the past few months and Jesus standing next to me, because he is next to you. He's not just next to you he's in you. So, let's come and worship him.

Benediction

Listen to these verses,

Colossians 1: 24 "*I fill up what is lacking in Christ's affliction – for sake of the body.*"

Colossians 3: 3, 4, Paul writes, "*For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life appears, you'll appear with him in glory.*"

1 Corinthians 1: 30 *And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,*

Do you understand? We are his body. We are living his death and resurrection, the story of his mercy in us. I mean he really wants to know you, almost as if you're like, his bride, his body, his temple. And so, may you not only believe the gospel, may you *know* it deep, in every fiber of your being, for that's your destiny and that's why you were created, in Jesus' name.

He's living out his death and resurrection—the story of his mercy in us. Come to table and let your whole life be a communion with him.