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Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
Final Resolution
John 14:1-6; Acts 1:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 22:1-7
Jeff Germo, October 28, 2018

This is our final sermon in this overview series through the Bible. Today is number 49. Next week Brian Down is going to take us back to an Old Testament Festival called the Year of Jubilee. Interestingly, there is no record of that festival ever being observed by Israel. It was supposed to take place after seven sets of seven years, so it would begin in the fiftieth year and was to be celebrated all year long. The festival is all about trusting God and caring for his people. I won't steal any more of Brian's thunder.

A year ago last September we started this series, beginning in Genesis, the very first book in the Bible. Today we are landing on the very last book of the Bible, Revelation.

[2]

The premise that has weaved its way through this series is that:

- 1. All history is God's history.**
- 2. His creation has purpose.**
- 3. History is moving towards a final conclusion where one day everything will be made right.**

All sin will be dealt with. Every wrong will be made right. Death will be no more. Pain and suffering won't exist. And Satan will be vanquished. There will be resolution to everything.

[3]

In Genesis we saw that God created people with purpose in mind. He created us for relationship with himself and with each other. He put the first people in a Garden and gave them everything they needed. Everything was perfect. God's *shalom* was very evident. There was no fighting. There were no family squabbles. No selfish ambition or greed or ego or anything that would get in the way of intimacy in relationships between people, or between people and God. There was no anxiety at all. Nobody wanted for anything. It was paradise. Can you imagine a place like that?

[4]

Then along came Satan and tempted Adam and Eve with independence. He told them a lie. He told them they didn't really need God. They could be their own gods and rule their own destiny. They chose to believe the lie and when confronted by God they deflected blame in every direction but themselves. They pointed their fingers at each other. They pointed their fingers at Satan. They even pointed their fingers at God and blamed him.

Ever since that time all creation has been out of whack. The perfect relationship Adam and Eve had with each other was broken. Trust was no longer a given. And since that time, relationships have not been easy. Has anyone else noticed that? It takes a lot of work to have good relationships. That is a result of the fall.

Not only was relationship broken between Adam and Eve, but it was also broken between them and God. Trust was gone there as well. Because God is holy and perfect and just, he could not have relationship with an imperfect people. All of God's creation was cursed.

[5]

Since that time, God has been working towards a resolution. **He is up to something.** He set a plan in motion. In Genesis 12, about 1800 or 1900 years before Christ, God called Abraham to gather a people who would be all about restoring God's *shalom* (peace) to the earth so that the humanity he created to love would be brought back into relationship with himself. They became the nation of Israel. Their God-given purpose was to bless every nation.

[6]

That, in short, is what **the Old Testament is about, God using his people to bless every nation on earth with his love, and to get them ready for the second stage of his plan.**

As the story unfolds we see that they didn't do a very good job of it most of the time. More often than not they forgot their mission. They thought it was about them. The purpose God gave them to be a blessing often got lost because of their very human desire to make life about themselves. That same natural tendency plagues us all.

[7]

We most naturally move away from God, think life is just about us, and lose our purpose.

That's why relationships are so hard. We tend to think the world revolves around ourselves. It's the most natural thing for us.

I wonder what we would see if we zoomed in to the average home in Campbell River, or anywhere in the world, for that matter. What would the relationships be like? And what if we could zoom in even further to the thoughts of the average person in Campbell River. What would we see?

Or, what if all of our thoughts were projected up on this screen for everyone to see. What sorts of things would we see? I doubt very much that any of us would like all our thoughts and emotions broadcast for public viewing. I do not want to know what you really think of me. I think we would very quickly find out that we are all more similar than we think. We think we aren't, but really we are.

I've talked with many many people over the years about these kinds of things and what I hear over and over again is that most of the people who come into the church look around at everyone sitting in the pews and think that everyone else has it more together than they do. The result is that we have a whole lot of pretending going on.

There are those who have an opposite view, of course. They think that they have it all together and everyone else is a train wreck, but I think most people don't think that. I think most people know that they are not okay. There is something not quite right. "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark," as Shakespeare wrote in Hamlet.

I got a phone call last week from someone from out of town who asked if we could baptize her. I asked her permission to talk about this this morning. She is a brand new believer who didn't feel comfortable talking to someone from her own church because she felt like she might be judged. She thought that everyone else in the church were good Christians, unlike her. She is broken and has struggles. I had to break the news that we are all in the same boat. All of us. "We all have sinned. All of us wander away," the Bible says. It is the human condition ever since the fall.

There is nobody in this auditorium who does not struggle with relationships. There are many reasons for that. The main reason stems from the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

[8]

Sin moves us to focus on ourselves and keeps us covering up and pretending. That is one of the consequences of the fall. Relationships were broken. And God, since then, has been fixing the problem.

So, as the narrative continues, Israel repeatedly went their own way, attempting to do things without God. And God, through his prophets, over and over again called his people back to himself and to the mission he had given them. That went on for almost two thousand more years until God set the second stage of his plan in motion. Somebody needed to make things right. Through his prophets he told his people he was going to do something to bring them back. Our sin needed to be dealt with so we could be brought back into relationship with God and with each other.

About 700 years before Jesus, this is what God said through his prophet, Isaiah:

[9]

Isaiah 53:3–6 (NLT)

3 He was despised and rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. 4 Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins!

[10]

5 But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. 6 All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.

Who is the prophet Isaiah talking about here? Jesus, of course.

[11]

That's why God came down to us, as one of us. Because God is perfectly holy and just, he cannot tolerate sin. He has to deal with sin. His justice demands it. If he didn't he would cease to be perfect and just and would not be a God who is worthy of our worship.

In the Old Testament God set up a temporary system whereby the sins of his people could be forgiven. An animal's life would be sacrificed to pay the penalty for the sins of God's people. Over and over again animals would be sacrificed. It was a never ending ritual. God promised them through Isaiah and other prophets that one day he would put an end to all of that with one final sacrifice.

In order for his plan to work there would need to be a perfect substitute to finally, once and for all, pay the penalty for the sins of the world. The Bible tells us that God became man.

[12]

John 1:14–18 (NLT)

14 So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. 15 John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' "

[13]

16 From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

So, God became man, and then he gave himself as the final perfect sacrifice to end all sacrifices. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

While Jesus was still walking the earth with his disciples he told them several times what was going to happen. He told them that he would be wrongly accused, arrested, beaten and whipped, tried in front of the religious authorities, and then hung on a cross to die, but that he would be raised to life three days later. His disciples had a difficult time grasping this.

[14]

John 14:1–6 (NLT)

1 "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. 2 There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to

prepare a place for you? ³ When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.”

[15]

⁵ “No, we don’t know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

[16]

He made it very clear that he was on a short term mission on earth. He lived his life on purpose and he died on purpose so the sins of the world could be atoned for. And then he rose from the dead to defeat sin, death and Satan. He did all that as part of his rescue mission so that we could be brought back into relationship with God and spend eternity with him in heaven. Unlike us, he never lost sight of his purpose.

Here’s what Paul wrote to the church in Rome:

[17]

Romans 3:21–26 (NLT)

²¹ But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. ²² We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

[18]

²³ For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. ²⁴ Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.

[19]

²⁵ For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, ²⁶ for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

That was the second stage of God’s great rescue mission completed by Jesus. But, it wasn’t the end. Jesus made the way so our sin could be dealt with so we could be brought into relationship with God. But, as you may have noticed, we still have a sin problem.

After he was crucified Jesus rose from the dead and showed up to many of his disciples to teach them how to live while he was gone.

Ryan and Emma are doing the Alpha program with the youth right now, and they have had some amazing God moments. Last week, in one of our staff meetings, Ryan told us about their night at youth the previous Tuesday. They all watched the video which was about Jesus’ death and resurrection and then they went to their small group discussions.

You need to know that the majority of kids that come to youth are not church kids. Many of them had little or no knowledge of Jesus until they started coming to youth. In the group Ryan was in were several boys who were very curious. And, by the way, I asked Ryan to get permission from the boy I am going to talk about. This one boy said that he had heard a little about Jesus before, but he had no idea that he rose from the dead.

[20]

And then he said, **“If Jesus rose from the dead that kinda changes everything, doesn’t it?”**

Isn't that great? The resurrection of Jesus changes everything. If Jesus stayed dead, we are still lost in our sin. But, he did rise from the dead, and it really does change everything.

Ryan walked around and peeked in on the other groups after his group was done and he saw one of his other youth leaders passionately and very clearly presenting the good news of Jesus to his kids. They were all ears, leaning in. We have the privilege of hearing these kinds of stories every week from all the staff.

So, Jesus rose from the dead, but that's not the end of God's great rescue mission. There's more. Jesus's death made us right with God, and his resurrection gave us life, but we still have our incessant battle with sin. It plagues us. God is not done. He is still up to something. His plan is not done. Here is how Luke wrote about that in the book of Acts.

[21]

Acts 1:1–11 (NLT)

1 In my first book I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions through the Holy Spirit. 3 During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

[22]

4 Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. 5 John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." 6 So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?"

[23]

7 He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

[24]

9 After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. 10 As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"

[25]

Some day Jesus will return. There is a lot of disagreement among Bible scholars as to how these events will unfold. Jesus said that the details are not for us to know. We do know that one day he will return and make all things right. Satan will be completely vanquished. He will no longer be able to heap shame and guilt on God's people. He will no longer be able to tempt people with sin. He will no longer be able to wreak havoc on God's creation. All sin, death and Satan will be done with. The *shalom* of God will finally be restored to the earth. Everything will finally be resolved.

Today there is an almost universal longing for peace in the world. But it seems so elusive. The world has gone crazy. Look at the divisiveness everywhere in the world. I think there is a collective awareness from all of creation that something is not quite right. We all know it. Is it just me, or are there others who think the world has gone nuts? Does anybody else long for there to be some sort of resolution? Or is it just me? The Bible says all creation longs for that day when things will finally be resolved.

Here's what the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome:

[26]

Romans 8:19–25 (NLT)

19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20 Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. 22 For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

[27]

23 And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.

[28]

24 We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. 25 But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.)

Ever since the Fall, at the beginning of time, there has been a disharmony, or a dissonance that everything and everyone experiences.

[29]

We are living between “the already” and “the not yet.” When Jesus died and rose from the dead, he defeated sin and death and bridged the gap between us and a holy God. God dealt with our sin problem and made it possible for us to have relationship with him. There was a resolution of sorts.

There is still, however, a resolution that we are waiting for. The Bible says that all creation is longing for a final resolution.

We have been reading a lot of Scripture this morning, and we aren't done. I want to read a couple more passages about what the end will look like when Jesus returns to make all things new.

[30]

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (NLT)

13 And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

[31]

15 We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves

[32]

17 Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. 18 So encourage each other with these words.

And then to the very last book in the Bible which is probably the most difficult book to understand. As a matter of fact, much of it is impossible to comprehend, simply because of all the mystery of the infinite

God in it. The Apostle John wrote this book about a revelation he received directly from Jesus about what the end of times would look like. Let's go to the very last chapter of the last book in the Bible.

[33]

Revelation 22:1–7 (NLT)

1 Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.

[34]

3 No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. 4 And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. 5 And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.

[35]

6 Then the angel said to me, “Everything you have heard and seen is trustworthy and true. The Lord God, who inspires his prophets, has sent his angel to tell his servants what will happen soon.” 7 “Look, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the words of prophecy written in this book.”

[36]

And then down to verse 20, the last two verses in the Bible.

20 He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon!” Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! 21 May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s holy people.

Whether we know it or not, this is what we are all longing for.

[37]

I was working on my sermon at Starbucks on Friday. I had a particularly busy week and I was still struggling to get over a cold that had been plaguing me for a couple weeks, so I had to work on my day off. I was praying about how to end the sermon when a man sat down near me. I greeted him and asked how he was doing. He said he was doing alright, but had been struggling with some health issues. He told me that he is on multiple medications for various health issues and he is having difficulty getting the meds balanced. He frequently ends up in the hospital.

He said that he is bi-polar and struggles with clinical depression. His body doesn't produce dopamine or serotonin in correct amounts. He then went on to tell me that he had an infection a few years ago that got out of control and attacked his colon, which they consequently had to remove. So now he can't digest food that most of us can enjoy.

He also told me that he would end up in the hospital from time to time to protect him from harming himself and that he had been on suicide watch for a couple years.

I was feeling so bad for him. I thought to myself, “Wow! I am never going to complain again.” And then he said, “It may sound strange, but when I had three massive heart attacks a few years ago and they told me I might not make it, I kind of got excited that I might finally be done with this battle so I could go home to the Lord.” I told him that it didn't sound strange at all and that is exactly what I am preaching on. I asked if I could pray for him before I left. And, by the way, he gave me permission to use his story in this sermon.

Every single one of us is in the middle of a story that has some really hard parts. Some stories seem to be filled with more pain than not, but every story, if it is a good one, is filled with things we want to

resolve. There will come a day when Jesus will return and make all things right. Everything will one day be resolved.

[38]

We are living between “the already” and “the not yet!” And while we are waiting, Jesus has given us some things to do. We are to be a blessing to the nations. We are to live our lives on purpose, looking for the divine appointments he is setting up and loving the people around us so they see Jesus in us and join us on our journey towards the heart of God. That is living our lives on purpose.

I am going to close with one more passage of Scripture. This is another prophecy from Isaiah, looking past all the stuff we are in the middle of right now to that time when Jesus will return and resolve everything.

[39]

Isaiah 65:17–19 (NLT)

¹⁷ “Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore. ¹⁸ Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people will be a source of joy. ¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem and delight in my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more.



Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
The Final Resolution
Week of October 28, 2018

Objective of this study: To see more clearly the overarching story of God and how he wants us to live our lives on purpose with him, as we look forward to his resolution of history.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us.]

Welcome (5 minutes)

Describe a time when you waited for something that seemed to take forever, and then the feeling when you received resolution.

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Isaiah 65:17-19** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything “jump out at you”?**

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

Word (30-45 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Describe the “overarching story” that has been told over the past 49 sermons in the overview of the Bible series. What have been some highlights for you?
3. Read Isaiah 53:3-6; John 1:14-18; John 14:1-6; Romans 3:21-26; Acts 1:1-11; Romans 8:19-25; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 22:1-7; Isaiah 65:17-19.
 1. Trace the ‘map’ of tension and progress towards resolution in these passages.
 2. What do you see about God's purpose and the purpose for Jesus' mission on earth?
4. What is God's purpose for us?

Work (30-45 minutes)

Sermon Quote: “Every single one of us is in the middle of a story that has some really hard parts. Some stories seem to be filled with more pain than not, but every story, if it is a good one, is filled with things we want to resolve. There will come a day when Jesus will return and make all things right. Everything will one day be resolved.”

4. What does ‘between the already and the not yet’ mean?
5. Describe the tension between ‘the already’ and ‘the not yet.’ What are some sources of this tension?
6. How have you personally experienced this tension? What are some things you long for resolution about?
7. How do relationships reveal our brokenness? (Think about the ‘zoom in’ thing from the sermon.)

Sermon Quote: “We are living between “the already” and “the not yet!” And while we are waiting, Jesus has given us some things to do. We are to be a blessing to the nations. We are to live our lives on purpose, looking for the divine appointments he is setting up and loving the people around us so they see Jesus in us and join us on our journey towards the heart of God. That is living our lives on purpose.”

8. What happens when you forget your purpose? (Talk about yourself.)
9. What happens when you remember it? (Talk about yourself.)
10. What is your picture of your purpose now, after this sermon and this sermon series?
11. What are you looking forward to, as God brings his great resolution?
12. Read Isaiah 65:17-19 again, meditatively. Spend time praising God for his great plan, for how he loves people, and what he has in store. Ask him to help you live your life on purpose, to notice people around you to love, and to join God in the divine appointments he gives you.

Prayer

1. Spend the rest of the time praying for each other. **Praise God together for how he works, and how he allows us to partner with him to accomplish things in his kingdom.**
2. Here are some things you can pray about for the church:
 - A. That, as a church, we would actively and purposefully engage in the mission of Jesus in Campbell River.
 - B. Our church board and staff as they lead us to live out the mission of Jesus
 - C. River Kids ministry as they reach out to kids in our community.
 - D. **Our missionary of the week:** The Dewar Family with First Story Ministries
 - E. **Local CR church:** Pastors Barry and Nancy Kaardal at the Vineyard Church