



Participating in God's Story
Talk To Me sermon series
By Becca Anderson, 11.03.19

BIG IDEA: We are invited to participate in God's Story both at the Communion Table and in prayer.

What is God's Story?

- It is the Gospel. That God created, and we are the climax of that Creation, God's image-bearers who will rule over Creation on God's behalf. God created humanity and blesses us so that we can bless Creation. Our original vocation is to tend and care for what God has made. But, humanity chooses to rule in our own way, taking rather than tending and caring, and disrupting the flow of God's blessing.
- God attempts to restart this flow of blessing first through Noah, then through Abraham. Abraham's descendants become God's chosen people who God will make a blessing to others (Genesis 12:2). They will be called Israel.
- But Israel becomes enslaved in Egypt, experiencing bitter oppression and genocide. God rescues the people of Israel with various plagues and finally through the Passover. God judges Egypt, but this judgement of death passes over Israel because they have smeared the blood of a perfect lamb over their doorposts. And God makes Israel this promise: "I am the LORD, and I will free you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with mighty power and great acts of judgement. I will make you my own special people, and I will be your God. And you will know that I am the LORD your God who has rescued you from your slavery in Egypt." (Exodus 6:6-7)
- Even after this great rescue, Israel still doesn't live into humanity's original vocation. So God comes incarnate in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ shows Israel, and then all of creation, how to live and rule in the Kingdom of God, how to relate to each other with grace and redemption. Through the life of Jesus Christ, humanity learns what it really means to be an image-bearer of God. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are able to trust that living as image-bearers in the Kingdom of God is our true vocation, no matter the challenge or suffering that comes along with it, and that this faith and effort has an eternal hope.

Jesus gifts us two spiritual practices to remind us of God's Story:

1. Communion: "He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." After supper he took another cup of wine and said, "This cup is the new covenant

between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.” This reminds us of God’s promise to Israel at the first Passover, a promise of freedom and belonging.

- a. We are free from being a slave to sin (John 8:31-38) and free from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15).
 - b. We are free to be heirs in God’s Kingdom (Titus 3:3-7), free to serve others (1 Peter 2:16, Galatians 5:13) and to set Creation free (Romans 8:20-21).
 - c. We also belong to each other.
2. Prayer: For me, prayer can be an isolating, discouraging practice. I often feel like the Israelites when they didn’t want to listen to God’s promise because they were too discouraged by their brutal enslavement.
- a. Communion reminds me of God’s promise for belonging.
 - b. I take that promise of belonging home through the practice of praying the hours. This is a practice of praying specific prayers at specific times and connects back all the way to the time of Christ. The times include Morning, Midday, Evening (Vespers), and Compline (bedtime). The prayers come mostly from the Psalms but also from other Scripture. These exact prayers have been prayed for hundreds and hundreds of years.

At the Communion Table I am reminded of God’s bigger story when we remember that Christ’s death and resurrection bring us freedom and belonging until He comes again. In prayer, I am reminded that I am not alone, that I belong to the other participants in God’s Story who have come before me, are here now, and will come behind me.

NEXT STEP:

What does it mean for you to be a participant in God’s Story? How can embracing God’s Story bring you freedom and belonging?

FOR MY PERSONAL TIME WITH GOD THIS WEEK:

1. Study more closely these verses about freedom, what we are freed from, and what we are freed for: John 8:31-38; Romans 8:1-2; Galatians 4:8-9; Hebrews 2:14-15; Titus 3:3-7; 1 Peter 2:16; Galatians 5:13; Romans 8:20-21; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18
Reflect on ways you are free to live as an image-bearer of God who tends and cares for Creation. In what ways could this freedom make your life different?
2. Study more closely these verses about belonging, both belonging to God and belonging to each other: 1 Peter 2:9; Galatians 3:28; Romans 14:7-9; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Psalm 24:1
Reflect on the fact that you are not alone and feel this belonging to encourage you.

RESOURCES:

- *The Divine Hours* by Phyllis Tickle: This is a three volume set. You can also access the same prayers at this church’s website: <https://annarborvineyard.org/resources/pray-the-divine-hours/>
- *Out of Sorts* by Sarah Bessey
- *Meditations of the Heart* by Howard Thurman