

Sunday, July 30 ,2023 *“The Great Biblical Narrative”*

*Psalm 119 Part 5 (105-112) 840 VU Refrain 5*

*Genesis 2:9, 16-17 and 3:6-7 and Revelation 22:2-19*

We continue in our Summer Series of “At Your Request” with “The Great Biblical Narrative.” Just what does this mean and how might we understand this ‘great story’ we call the Bible? A narrative is a story that have 7 characteristics including plot, characters, point of view, setting, theme, conflict, and style. This is what is usually taught in secondary school when great books are read and re read in order to discover these characteristics. Understanding how these elements work in a novel help us better to analyze narratives and to determine meanings whether intended or not by the writer. Yet the Biblical Narrative is often seen to be more complex than a novel—people have been discovering plots, subplots and overall themes and stories for generations. So we must begin with the idea that the Great Biblical narrative begins with creation and ends with the New Heaven and New Earth or what might also be called the Restoration. What is shared in the middle books of the Bible develop the story with sub stories of people’s lives interacting with each other and with and without God.

The Great Biblical Narrative is the ultimate story of rescue and redemption of fallen humanity through the coming of the Messiah. This means that the Biblical story starts at the 1)beginning in Genesis and leads through to 2) the Fall in the Garden of Eden, 3) prophesy of the Promised One Messiah, Jesus birth-life, ministry, death and resurrection so that 4)all humanity may be redeemed and restored. Thus the four parts of the narrative of Scripture as being creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. Each part of this narrative provides insight into the nature of God, reality, and the implications of sickness and disease.

These elements include the following: tension and resolution, thematic and realistic narrative; author, narrator, and world view; narrative time and space, flat and round characters, basic plots, especially the battle narrative along with repetition, sequence, slowing down, and gaps.

So we look at these 4 parts in light of what we know as the Bible. In Genesis, God creates a world of perfection with creatures of all kinds. He creates a human Adam and enables him to live freely and at peace in the Garden of Eden. He builds a relationship with God who

gives him the gift of life without end or stress or worry. God then created woman as a partner to Adam. God also made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But God also gives the instruction—not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for if they do they shall die.

Then Satan enters into the world- how we are not sure—why would God the creator of all things allow Satan-devil- evil one to be a part of Eden? Who is this evil one? Some say a former follower of God who turned away yet has a strong power which overcomes many. Taking the form of a serpent with the ability to speak, the woman and the man are tempted to disobey God's only instruction. They choose to fall away from God's provision of life. They disobeyed God and they were then removed from the Garden of Eden and as the serpent suggests they would be like God knowing good and evil. They also will know pain in childbirth and be required to labour and will return to the ground in death. They are removed from Eden so that they would not eat from the tree of life which would enable them to live forever. The gift of life God first gave to Adam and Eve has changed and the relationship between God and people is broken. Sin has entered the world.

But God did not give up on people; as God wants a relationship with all whom God has created.

Throughout history as recorded in the Old Testament books- there have been times when people lived following God's teachings and laws; and there have been times when they turned away. There have been times when God was with the Hebrew people as they battled others and when those who had believed turned away. These are the stories of people—like Abraham, Sarah, Noah, Moses, Joseph and all the descendants. But the people grew to realize that they could not be in full relationship as other people battled, harmed or overtook them. The people were not capable of living as God intended. And so Prophets started teaching and preparing those listening of the promised One who would redeem them that is save them from sin. This Redeemer or Messiah was to come and change the world. And so the people waited for generations; hundreds of years went by.

Until one day God spoke to Mary and Joseph about the baby she would carry and give birth. She would be the mother of Jesus the One born to live and die. As Christians we are believers in the promised Messiah/Christ- Jesus for He is the One who was born to save all people from sin. He was the one who took it upon himself to bear the sins of the world, to sacrifice his life for the sake of all others. He was the one to die on the cross for all who would believe. This is Jesus. His story is recorded in the Gospel Books of Matthew, Mark Luke and John. And it is His story that calls us together to worship and be as one. For Jesus taught us how to love as God loves. He taught us how to live as God first intended. Yet we know that sin still exists and people turn away. But we also know that Jesus saves us and redeems us if we confess our sins and seek forgiveness.

The letters of Paul in the New Testament describe the early church of Jesus Christ and how people came to know the story of Jesus Christ as Saviour. These churches established foundations as we know them to be – sacraments baptism, Holy Communion and the reason to gather in praise of God who redeems us and loves us.

The full story of the Gospel is fulfilled through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. God's mission is to save us from our sin that is to redeem us. But we are also to work with God's people around the world so that all will turn to God. For as what is revealed to us as the future of God's creation is the restoration as recorded in Revelation 21-22. A new heaven and a new earth, holy city, and the river of the water of life. The water is flowing freely near God's throne which is in the middle of the street. On either side of the river is the tree of life producing fruit to eat, leaves for healing. God's good creation which has been marred by sin is restored.

The Great Biblical Narrative may be defined in and through love of God.

Because God was the Creator- he made the world/ universe and all that it contained. He created people in his image and took delight in them. He loved them. But when they disobeyed, God did not kill them but offered them life in a new way filled with pain and labour. People lived and through the generations they drew close, followed God's teachings and turned away. They became disheartened and God promised a Messiah/ Christ. Out of love for His creation- people God sent Jesus to redeem them. Out of love his Son became the means by which people

could be forgiven and reconciled with God once again. Out of love God gave and still gives people the opportunity to live His way in and through love.

And out of love, God in Christ established the church to show all of us how to live and love as God first intended. And it is because of love that we are given not only the gift of forgiveness in Jesus Christ through his resurrection from death, but we also have the promise of being with God for all eternity. Even until and beyond the time of the New Heaven and New Earth. This is because God loves us. This is the great story of love from God to all people whom He created and this is the Biblical narrative which calls us to have hope for today and for tomorrow. God loves us- each of us and it is through learning about Him that we may come closer to Him. It is through learning and reading the Bible that we come to know God as the one who is the I am, the Almighty, the Father and is also the Son who saves and the Spirit who is with us even in this moment. It is in understanding God as creator, redeemer and sustainer as our Loving God, that we can give love and love God in return.

The tree of life was present in Eden and will be present in the new heaven. How we live and learn about what it means to live our earthly life is a life-long endeavour. Our key resource is the Bible- inspired by God to teach us what we need to know so that we may be perfect and prepared in good works. For this is what it states in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: so That the people of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." But it is up to us to learn and desire to learn more about this Biblical story. It is up to us to teach the next generation as well as each other what it means to be faithful in obedience to God and what we are called to do and say each and every day as disciples of Jesus.

The great biblical narrative is God's gift of love written as a story of love out of love for you. It is up to you to learn and hold on to these beloved words of life for life here on earth and in to our eternal life.

Let us reflect on these words as we pray:

God of love we praise you for your gift to us the Bible as the source of all stories of people of faith of hope and of the promised One Jesus. Encourage us to engage the Bible so we might know more about what it means to live for you and hold the words of hope in our hearts for our lives. Be with us O God we ask and help us to understand and know the depth of your love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.