

God's Story: The Power and Purpose of the Gospel

(Selected) Preached at Harambee by Pastor Michael Gunn on July 5, 2009

"Most men are not satisfied with the permanent output of their lives. Nothing can wholly satisfy the life of Christ within his followers except the adoption of Christ's purpose for the world that he came to redeem. Fame, pleasure, riches are but husk's and ashes in contrast with the countless and abiding joy of working with God for the fulfillment of his eternal plans"

J. Campbell White
Mission Leader

Intro

God's goal in creating this world is to display His own glory! (**Isaiah 43:7**) Because of the sin that is so ingrained in humanity, we rebel against this very idea and subsequently either refuse to glorify God or mitigate it through our own religiosity. It is easy to be "working" for God, while in reality be working against God and His glory in this world. It is easy to get caught up in seeing God's work in salvation as an isolated work He did for our own sake. We build our churches with this in mind. Questions like, "*How can we make our churches grow?*" and "*How can we please the people in the church to make them stay?*" become the strategic vision of our churches when we have forgotten the purposes of God in salvation.

While it is true that there are many themes in the bible, I believe every theme is interwoven into one purpose of God: His own glory.

I would like to take a look at God's story as it relates to His purpose, which should help us understand and yield to his will more perfectly! I want to look at some of the highlights of His story here today:

From the Head ...

Act 1 Creation (Genesis 1:26-27)

Humanity is created last and called "very good," (**1:31**) and is made in God's image. We are given the task to fruitfully multiply, have "dominion" over the earth and to "subdue" it and "fill" it. (**Genesis 1:28**) Our purpose is clear as little image bearers of God, displaying His glory. (**Isaiah 43:7; Numbers 14:21**) We are to fill this earth with His glory!

Act 2 The Rebellion

As in all subsequent thrillers, the good is upset by a dilemma the rest of the story works to resolve. As we see the grand-story (Meta-Narrative) in scripture, humanity wasn't content with the god-glorifying work that God had given them, but desired to make their own name great. (**Genesis 3:1-7; 11:1-4**) This is man's bent – to glorify himself. To this John Piper writes, "*The instinct of self-preservation in fallen man seeks fulfillment not by trusting God, and thereby exalting His name, but by employing his own human genius, thereby making a name for himself.*"

Acts 3 The Promise (In 7 Scenes)

The rest of the bible unpacks a simple promise made in **Genesis 3:15**. In this verse we see the protagonist/hero of our story (God) promising the antagonist that he will be judged for his deception. His judgment will be a crushing blow of destruction heaped on him by the "seed" of the woman, which piques interest in the fact that a woman was never poetically referred to as having "seed," but was usually seen as the "garden" in which the seed was placed. This is a reference to the fact that an offspring would one day come from a woman to destroy evil. (**Genesis 22:17-18** cf. **Galatians 3:8**). This act has at least 10 scenes where God demonstrates His faithfulness to this promise.

Scene #1 The Call of Abraham (**Genesis 12:1-2**)

This is in clear contrast to the story at Babel, where humanity desired to make its own name great. In the call of Abraham, God promises to make Abram's name great, which will result in God's glory. (**Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:20-21**) God intends to be glorified through His people. (**Isaiah 49:3**)

Scene #2 The Exodus

In the Exodus, we do not see the faithfulness of the people of Israel, but we do see the faithfulness of God to His promise to redeem His people in order to display His glory to the nations. (**Exodus 14:4, 18; Ezekiel 20:5-9** cf. **Psalms 106:6-8**)

Scene #3 The Commands of Glory: The Giving of the Law

When God called His people, He clearly expressed His desire that they would glorify only Him. (**Exodus 20:3-5**) To have "*no other gods before Me,*" simply commands the honor due His name. To love God is not to serve Him, but to delight in Him. It is in honoring God and worshipping Him that we find our joy! And as John Piper writes, "*God is most glorified in us, when we are most satisfied in Him.*" Following the rest of the commands becomes natural as we find our delight in the Lord!

Scene #4 Disobedience and Wandering

Even when God gives us clear commands that would honor Him, we simply don't desire to obey Him. But God in His mercy often spares us for "*His name's sake*," (**Exodus 20:21** cf. **13-14**) which means to protect His glory; the reason He created in the first place.

Scene #5 The Desire For a King

Even though God was Israel's king, they desired to be ruled by another, and requested a king to rule over them. In spite of their insubordination, the Lord remained faithful to His promises "*for His name's sake*." (**1 Samuel 12:19-23**) Preserving a people for Himself was more important in His plan than to destroy them for their sin.

Scene #6 A Sanctuary of Glory

In spite of humanity's sin, Solomon (David's Son; 3rd king of Israel) built a temple in order to honor the name of the Lord, and to request His blessing on the people of God. (**1 Kings 8:41-45**)

Scene #7 Exile and Restoration

The exile of God's people had to be a horrible time in Israel's history. It must have felt like God had abandoned them and His promises to their fathers; but once again, through His mercy and because of His promise and His own glory, He redeemed His people. (**Isaiah 48:9-11; Ezekiel 36:22-23, 32**)

Act 4 The Promise Fulfilled

In the New Testament we find the fulfillment of what the Old Testament has pointed to. Jesus is the hero of this story. His work on the cross pays the just penalty for humanity's rebellion. It is **Genesis 3:15** realized! However, we come to realize that Christ came not with the sole purpose to save us from our sin, but to glorify His Father in Heaven. (**2 Corinthians 4:6; John 4:34; 7:18; 12:27-28**) God's glory is represented in showing His righteousness through the righteous work of Jesus on the cross. (**Romans 3:25**)

Act 5 The Consummation

In the end, Jesus the hero returns to establish what He began in His church; a kingdom that will glorify God on the earth. (**2 Thessalonians 1:9-10; Revelation 21:23**) God finishes His story with a creation that glorifies His name in all the earth.

... to the Heart

Everything God does is for His glory! His purposes work toward that end. Salvation is a by-product of this, because His glory is displayed in His supreme love, and His desire to keep His promise and show mercy and grace to a rebellious people. His glory is also displayed in a righteous judgment to all who continue in rebellion.

We will never be in perfect concert with God's story or His will in our lives, but His story reminds us that we exist to glorify Him. (**1 Corinthians 10:31**) We will always fall short in our faithfulness, but He is always faithful and because of that, we can rejoice and have hope that in our imperfections we are accepted, because of His perfection!!

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