

DEEP SIX STUDY

September 19th, 2021

The Story Project – “A Meaning No One Can Steal”

MESSAGE HIGHLIGHTS (You can view the full message on Facebook or at live.capecodchurch.com/live)

Opening: It's week two of *The Story Project*. Last week we laid a foundation with one Big Idea: all of this – the whole story – is about God's desire to give us *life*; or as Jesus put it, “life to the full.” But we might ask, “What's the point? Isn't the gospel just about what Jesus did, and what we have to do in return?” But discovering the “why” of the gospel gives real meaning to our lives – a meaning no one can steal.

1. Why “Why” Matters – A Generous Gospel (John 3:16-17 NIV; John 3:18-21 NIV)

- Reading John 3, we're inclined to shorten the gospel to a “courtroom version”: we sinned (fell) and have been rightly judged and condemned, but Jesus intervened to redeem us and set us free from that. While this version is true, it's incomplete, because it starts at the Fall. If we want to get to the heart of the gospel – to the reason it's such Good News – then we have to go all the way back to Creation – back to the ultimate “why” behind the story.
- The idea and theology of “a generous gospel” must go back to the very beginning of “why.” If not, the gospel can sound threatening and adversarial – a “turn or burn” version based in fear.
- The big “why” of the gospel – why it matters so much and why it's so generous – is because it's rooted not just in what Jesus did for us, but also in why God created us (and everything) in the first place: *because He lovingly and generously wanted to give us the gift of life.*

2. Revealing a Meaning No One Can Take Away (John 10:10 NIV & NLT; John 10:11-18)

- Down deep, we all want a life of meaning and purpose – a life that “makes a mark in the world,” a life that matters. For most of us, that means we're going to take something we love to do or something we're good at and pour ourselves into it. Then we describe ourselves in terms of our “success” at that thing – and call that the meaning of our lives.
- However, if we try to create meaning for ourselves, we have to ensure that our meaning *matters*. To do so, we have to *measure* it – and live for how *others* measure it. Unfortunately, what we measure can easily become our master, and if we stop “measuring up,” we suddenly lose the meaning of our lives. This *created* meaning is, by definition, transient and temporary.
- The good news is that there is a meaning that isn't created, it's *revealed*. It's there to be discovered, to be found – in Jesus.
- John 10:10 famously tells us that Jesus came to give us life. But if we keep reading, we find that that gift of “full life” is only enabled when we “give him the keys” – when we become his. When we accept the gift, he *owns* us, so to speak – our job, our relationships, our platform.
- We resist giving up the keys because we naturally resist authority – mostly because we've seen it abused so often in our lives. Jesus says “I want to own you,” and we resist because we don't trust him. That's the decision that brings life and meaning: to trust him with our lives.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE

These passages may provide additional insights related to the subject of this week's message. Verses from NLT unless otherwise noted.

Genesis 1:27-28; Proverbs 3:5-6; John 5:24; John 17:1-3; 1 John 5:20

Video of the Week: [The Tree of Life](#) by the Bible Project

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. When you first heard the gospel, was it the “courtroom version” (i.e., we stand condemned for our sins but can be saved from judgment by Jesus) or something different? If it was different, how was the gospel presented to you?
2. The “courtroom version” is certainly the most often-heard depiction of the gospel (in America, at least). Why do you think that is?
3. The “courtroom version” of the gospel *seems* to be highly effective (who wouldn't want to avoid the judgment of God?). Why, then, do you think it's important to tell the whole story of the Good News – the story that begins with creation? Or is it?
4. What, in your view, is the most common type of “created meaning” that people strive for today? Why do you think that is?
5. How does knowing the “why” of the gospel (i.e., that God created us in order to give us the gift of life) give real meaning and purpose to our lives?
6. The young adult generations (Millennials and Gen Z) are notoriously suspicious of authority. How might we present a “complete gospel” to them to overcome their hesitation to “give up the keys”?