SERMON NOTES – 10/18/26

THE STORY OF YOUR LIFE – ‘Resolution

Exodus 12:29-36

Big Idea

Every good story involves a **character who wants something, overcomes conflict, and reaches a resolution**. But a meaningful resolution doesn’t necessarily mean achieving everything we originally hoped for. Sometimes the greatest accomplishment isn’t reaching our destination, but discovering who we’ve become through the journey. God invites us to live intentionally, courageously, and faithfully, allowing our experiences to shape us more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

What Makes a Good Resolution?

- Throughout this series, we’ve explored four essential elements of a good story: **a lead character, an objective, conflict, and resolution**.
- Resolution is how a story reaches its conclusion—but a good ending doesn’t always mean that everything turns out as expected.
- Sometimes the most meaningful stories involve people who experience setbacks, failures, and disappointments but refuse to give up.
- What ultimately matters isn’t simply whether we achieve our objective, but **how the experience transforms our character**.
- A meaningful story is one in which we become different people because of the journey we’ve taken.

Finishing What We Start

- In *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years*, Donald Miller tells the story of participating in a cross-country bicycle ride.
- One of the riders, known as **“Iron Mike” Barrow**, had experienced a difficult past marked by addiction, broken relationships, and painful personal failures.
- Mike had begun rebuilding his life through God’s grace and was determined to become a different person.
- His reason for riding across America wasn’t simply adventure or physical accomplishment. He wanted to prove to himself that he could **finish something he started**.
- Having abandoned important commitments earlier in life, Mike was determined not to repeat those mistakes.
- For Mike, finishing the ride represented something much greater than reaching the East Coast. It was evidence of the transformation already taking place within him.

Winning Isn’t Everything

- The film *Friday Night Lights* tells the story of the 1988 Permian High School football team from Odessa, Texas.
- After overcoming tremendous obstacles, the team reaches the championship game but loses on the final play.

- Donald Miller was struck by how compelling the story remained, despite the team's defeat.
- The following year's team actually won the championship, but the filmmakers believed the earlier team's struggles made for a more meaningful story.
- **A good resolution doesn't always require the winning touchdown.**
- Sometimes giving everything we have, persevering through adversity, and refusing to surrender are more important than the final score.
- The significance of our story isn't determined solely by whether we win or lose, but by the character we demonstrate along the way.

The Beauty of the Journey

- Wilson Bentley, a pioneering photographer of snowflakes, spent his life studying their remarkable beauty and individuality.
- He discovered that each snowflake's appearance was shaped by the conditions it encountered while falling through the atmosphere.
- Temperature, altitude, wind, and countless other factors influenced its final form.
- In a sense, **the beauty of the snowflake was the result of its journey**.
- Our lives are shaped in similar ways. The challenges, disappointments, joys, and struggles we encounter leave their marks upon us.
- Even the scars we carry can become part of something beautiful when we allow God to work through our experiences.

Moses Finally Hears the Words He's Been Waiting For

- Moses' story began with a burning bush and God's invitation to lead the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt.
- After initially resisting God's call, Moses confronted Pharaoh and demanded freedom for the Israelites.
- Pharaoh repeatedly refused, bringing tremendous conflict and suffering upon the people.
- God responded through a series of ten plagues, culminating in the devastating death of Egypt's firstborn.
- Finally, Pharaoh summons Moses and Aaron and tells them to leave Egypt with the Hebrew people.
- After years of slavery and a long struggle for liberation, **the Israelites are finally free to begin their journey toward the Promised Land**.

Passover: Remembering God's Deliverance

- The final plague becomes a defining moment in Israel's history—so significant that God establishes a new beginning in the Hebrew calendar.
- The Israelites are instructed to sacrifice a lamb and mark their doorposts with its blood.
- When death comes upon Egypt, the marked homes of the Israelites are spared.
- This event becomes the foundation of **Passover**, an annual celebration remembering God's deliverance of the Hebrew people.

- The community gathers around a shared meal to remember God's faithfulness and the extraordinary events that led to their freedom.
- Their story of liberation becomes something future generations will continue to remember and celebrate.

Every Ending Is Also a Beginning

- Pharaoh finally allows the Israelites to leave, and the Egyptians even provide them with silver, gold, and clothing for their journey.
- It would seem that Moses' story has reached its happy ending.
- But Pharaoh soon changes his mind and pursues the Israelites, trapping them against the Red Sea.
- After their miraculous escape, the people will spend forty years wandering through the wilderness before entering the Promised Land.
- What initially appears to be the resolution of one story becomes the beginning of another.
- **Life rarely offers a final set of closing credits.** Each resolution opens the door to new challenges, opportunities, and chapters in the larger story God is unfolding.

Jesus Reveals the Nature of Love

- Storytelling teacher Robert McKee argues that great stories reveal what people believe is worth living for—and even worth dying for.
- One of life's most important questions is how we understand and express **the nature of love**.
- For Christians, the ultimate answer is found in Jesus Christ.
- Just as the Passover lamb's blood marked Israel's deliverance from death, Jesus, **the Lamb of God**, gives himself so that we might experience forgiveness, redemption, and abundant life.
- The cross reveals a love that is sacrificial, generous, and willing to give everything for others.
- Following Jesus means allowing that same love to shape the stories we choose to live.
- **The greatest stories aren't simply about what we accomplish for ourselves, but what we're willing to give for the sake of others.**

Live Your Story Boldly

- Robert McKee concludes his book *Story* by encouraging writers to approach their work with courage, accepting the possibility of rejection, ridicule, and failure.
- That advice applies equally well to the stories we live.
- We cannot create meaningful lives without taking risks, facing challenges, and occasionally experiencing failure.
- Rather than allowing fear to determine our choices, we are invited to live with **courage, intentionality, and faith**.
- Our actions communicate our values more powerfully than our words.
- When we live stories shaped by Christ's love and grace, others notice—and our lives become a witness to God's transforming power.

A New Chapter for Market Street UMC

- These principles apply not only to individuals but also to our congregation.
- Market Street UMC is preparing to begin a new relationship with First Presbyterian Church in Mabank.
- We don't know exactly where this journey will lead or what challenges may arise along the way.
- But uncertainty doesn't mean we should avoid the story God may be inviting us to live.
- Just as God accompanied Moses and the Israelites into an unknown future, **God promises to accompany us as we step into this new chapter together**.
- Our calling is to move forward with faith, courage, and openness to the ways God may transform us through the journey.

Takeaway

The story of your life is still being written. There will be moments of accomplishment and celebration, but there will also be disappointment, conflict, and unexpected detours. **The measure of a good story isn't simply whether we reach our intended destination—it's who we become along the way.** Like the snowflakes shaped by their journey, our experiences help form the people we are becoming. And like Moses, we discover that one chapter's resolution often becomes the beginning of another.

God invites us to live intentionally rather than simply allowing life to happen to us. We are called to pursue objectives worthy of our lives, persevere through conflict, and follow the example of Jesus by giving ourselves in love and service to others. **So live boldly. Take faithful risks. Trust that God is with you. And allow the story of your life to become part of God's much greater story of love, grace, and redemption.**

Sources Cited

Donlad Miller, A Million Miles in a Thousand Years
H.G. Bissinger, Friday Night Lights
Robert McKee, STORY: Substance, Structure, Style and The Principles of Screenwriting