

If Not Us, Who?
His Story, My Story, Our Story
Week #2 Message
John King

- We are in the second week of a sermon series called “His Story, My Story, Our Story.”
- And here’s the big idea of this whole sermon series.
- God’s great story has been unfolding throughout history, and His desire is to redeem the entire world to himself.
- Each of us has our own story of past and present experiences, of overcoming adversity and hardship, and developing passions in our life. My story is different than your story; your story is different than mine. That’s the way God planned it, and that’s a good thing.
- And yet God in His economy invites all of us as we live out our story to join Him in his grand story to redeem the world and expand the Kingdom of God.
- And so today I’m going to share about our identity, and especially our identity in Christ.
- I’d like to begin by reading parts of an e-mail that I received from Derek Mauldin here at McBIC this past week. He’s been reading the devotional readings and attended a small group with me. Here’s what he said:
- I have been struggling with how my story is meant to line up with our story and (God’s) story. When I left Allenberry, I didn't know what I was going to do, but I knew I wanted to help people. I'm really good at math and felt finance was the way to go. I set out to earn a degree in Business w/ a Financial Planning focus. As I went through my course work I realized I did not feel led to be a Financial Planner....so, now what?! About a year ago when I came to this realization I was content in knowing that I was learning so much (about taking) care of my own finances. Then I felt God leading me to turn this knowledge into some type of ministry / mission work. I have talked to Shawn Greenland a few times about this briefly, most recently after our board of trustees meeting earlier this month. Last Thursday night (coincidentally the same day we started this (group)) we had a friend over for dinner. She explained that in addition to being a dietician as her day job she is also working some hours with a Christian group

giving dietary advice to those who cannot afford to see one normally. I thought...aha! I could do that with finance. I have set-up a meeting with the director of the group and look forward to seeing how this goes. My first thought before this came up was working with McBIC to see if there was a need for that with the church or different ministries...

- You better believe that I'm going to talk with Derek about this... Anyone else want to join him?
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- SO as I start the message today, I'd like to tell you a story. A story about my family.
- My backstory.
- In our small groups, we are learning that every good story starts with a main character.



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- I was born the 5th of 6 children to my mom and dad who were very Mennonite in their upbringing.
- My family was very musical, and for those of you who know me and my family, you may find it interesting that when I was a young child, my family started singing together as a family in various churches and places all over Northern Indiana as a kid.
- That got passed down to me and us now with The King's Strings.
- I digress...

- Most of the memories I have of my childhood involve my relationship with my father who grew up in a small family of two children in West Liberty Ohio. My dad met my mom in that town and were married. My parents moved to Mentone, Indiana because there was a funeral business that they could purchase and start a life there.
- My dad was a hard man, and often an angry man. And now that I have lived outside the home for about 30 years, I can say that he was a depressed man.
- He seemed to always be right, never wrong.
- And as a younger child, I did my best to hide in my home. I didn't create waves. I hid from the wrath of my father and an older sibling.
- And the only place that I could find love was through participating in things outside my home.
- So I excelled in school, football, band, the high school musical, and other things.
- And as I was doing all of those things, if I was honest with myself, I was waiting for my dad to tell me that he was proud of me.
- In other words, my identity was wrapped up in how my father saw me.
- I wanted so much for him to accept me and tell me that I have what it takes.
- Son, I'm proud of you. You are excellent in school. You are a leader on the football field and in the band. I'm so proud of you.
- But that affirmation never came...
- So as a response, I tried to please people.
- But my dad was so wrapped up in his own physical pain that it was impossible for him.
- He had viral meningitis and encephalitis when I was in the elementary school.
- When he was finally feeling better after about 8 years, he was hit by a drunk driver and miraculously survived.
- But the next four years of his life were filled with physical pain that deeply impacted his depression, in my opinion.
- And almost one year after Cindy and I were married, 25 years ago this past summer, he died suddenly from an asthma attack.
- Our family grieved and came together...

- Counseling class 3 months later.
- “I forgive you.”
- Now, I don’t know why I said that. Those words didn’t seem to come from me, and yet I knew that was what God wanted me to do – to forgive. But I didn’t want to forgive him. But I did it anyway.
- “You don’t have control over me any more.”
- This is part of my story... It’s part of who I am.
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- I am so proud of you, son.
- Most men deeply desire to have their father say that they have what it takes to be a man.
- And so out of that need comes our Scripture passage for the day.
- Matthew 3
- Let me ask you... What was the most significant moment in Jesus’ life and ministry?
- Was it his crucifixion? His resurrection? His teaching? His miracles?
- Some theologians say that for Jesus, the most significant moment of his life and ministry was this moment we are going to read about.
- His baptism, and especially what happened afterwards.
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- Matthew 3:17 (parallel passage in Luke 3)
- ¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”
- ¹⁵ Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.
- ¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”



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- In one of the most central events of Jesus' life and ministry, Jesus was baptized, and then the Holy Spirit came upon him. He encountered God's love that completely overshadowed him. God affirmed his identity, and empowered him for ministry.
- THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED!
- **Message paraphrase: "This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life."**
- This is my boy! I'm so proud of him.
- Brendon Manning writes that the baptism of Jesus was a profound personal experience where he encountered the love of the Father in a way that burst all previous boundaries of understanding.
- Can you even imagine that scene. Overwhelmed with the love of God the Father, and the Holy Spirit descending on him like a symbol of peace. And a voice from heaven saying to everyone within earshot...
- **"This is my Son, chosen and marked by my love, delight of my life."**
- Encourage people towards baptism
- By the way, does anyone know what happened right after this scene of Jesus' life? Where did he go after this?
- He was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tempted by Satan.
- And then after that he was led by the Spirit to begin his public ministry, and he ended up in his local synagogue and read from Isaiah 61...
- But before he did anything, before he began anything in his public ministry, before he did any miracles, before he taught anything, he embraced his role as God's son, chosen and marked by the

Father's love, empowered to operate in the strength and power and authority of God.

- Pretty amazing, huh?
- I never had that from my dad.
- And I bet that many of you didn't have that experience where your father/mother affirmed you in that way.
- But there is a God in heaven who made a way for you to have that kind of identity. And he empowered Jesus Christ to pave the way for you (through his death and burial and resurrection) to be adopted into His family and be a child of God.
- This overwhelming calling by God was not just for Jesus alone.
- It is also for you.
- It's also for me.
- It's for all of us.
- This is part of my story. Is this part of your story?
- Has God called you by name, called you his son/daughter?
- Have you received the title of child of God? Have you taken your rightful place?
- You don't have to live as a slave to fear anymore.
- You are a child of God.
- You are CHOSEN, you are LOVED, You are CALLED
- 1 John 3:1-3
- See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³ All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

The Message - **3** What marvelous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it—we're called children of God! That's who we really are. But that's also why the world doesn't recognize us or take us seriously, because it has no idea who he is or what he's up to.

²⁻³ But friends, that's exactly who we are: children of God. And that's only the beginning. Who knows how we'll end up! What we know is that when Christ is openly revealed, we'll see him—and in seeing him,

become like him. All of us who look forward to his Coming stay ready, with the glistening purity of Jesus' life as a model for our own.

- The problem with this passage is that far, far too many people live their lives thinking that they are not good enough, that they don't have what it takes, that they are a piece of trash, that they are only worthwhile if they can "do" something.
- We've been talking in our small groups about stories, right?
- What are the elements of a good story?
- First of all, there is a hero of the story, there is a main character.
- And who is the main character of the story of all stories?
- Jesus
- But here's the thing...
- Because of Jesus Christ, because of the work of Christ on the cross... and in the tomb... He has paved a way for each of our stories to have significance for eternity.
- Our lives mean something to God.
- Because of Christ, our lives can have eternal significance.
- So what does this mean, friends?
- If God's Holy Spirit came over Jesus and overshadowed Him, He can do that for you, confirming your identity.
- So what does that mean?
- It means that
- You Are:
- 1. Chosen
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- Read 1 Peter 2:9 - 12
- ⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
- God chooses YOU, warts and all. Back story and all. Weakness and all.
- It doesn't matter what you bring to the table.
- Why? Because your role is to declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

- I have NEVER once met someone who made any profession of faith in Jesus because of a theological argument/discussion.
- But I have met hundreds and thousands of people who have become followers of Jesus because of someone else's STORY.
- So God calls you out of wherever you are to share your story with the world.
- You are God's plan A. There is no plan B.
- You're it!
- You Are:
 - 1. Chosen
 - 2. Uniquely Gifted
- My story is not your story and your story is not mine. I was not created to live your story nor you mine. God has written your story and you have lived it, through many dangers, toils, and snares.
- So, Rejoice in the gifts and talents God has given to you and seek Him to find out how they fit into your story. The Church is God's Plan A to reach a broken world. You are Plan A to reach the people around you. No one else but you has the unique gifts and talents needed to fulfill the mission God has for you. You don't need anyone else's story; live the one you've been given.
- Donald Miller
- One of the best ways to thwart God's work in you is to compare yourself and compare your story to others.
- Man, if I had the opportunity to be like Pastor Layne and his influence in the community, I would do such-and-such.
- If I had the spiritual insight that Pastor Susan did, I would be able to give so much time to minister to women.
- Man, I wish I could play the guitar like Hersh and lead worship.
- I wish I could have a big family like the King's.
- No you don't!
- Our story is crazy.
- But it's our story that God has been creating for our family for 26 years, and many years before that.
- Live your story. Invite God to author your story, and as the main character, live it.
- You Are:
 - 1. Chosen

- 2. Uniquely Gifted
- 3. You are More than a Conqueror
- Let me read Romans 8 to you.
- ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?
- ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, ^[k] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- What does this mean? It means that your identity is safe and secure in Christ, and that no matter what the future may hold, you have already won! And you will win for all eternity, even though for a time you may suffer trials of many kinds.
- And finally (and not really finally)
- You Are:
 - 1. Chosen
 - 2. Uniquely Gifted
 - 3. More than a Conqueror
 - 4. Called
- So if God chooses you, if He uniquely gifts you for His purposes with a story that is uniquely yours and no others', and if he promises you that you will win and be more than conquer, then he calls you to partner with him in His grand story of the redemption of the world..
- What will you say to the call of God on your life?
- Throughout history, as God calls people to step out and serve Him, they often have a similar response.
- Most people have the tendency to say, "Who me?"
- **That's why I love the story of Moses.**



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- He was adopted, he was raised in the home of the people who were enslaving his people. He took matters into his own hands by killing an Egyptian. And then he lived in exile for 40 years.
- Then God appeared to him in the form of a burning bush.
- Most people think of God appearing to Moses where Moses looks like this: the Charlton Heston pose
- But the reality, if you read Exodus 3-4, is that Moses gave every excuse that he could give. “Who me?” Who am I?
- But what happens if...?
- But God, I don’t have the ability to speak...
- Please, Lord, send someone else.
- Jews and Christians regard Moses as one of the greatest leaders of all of Scripture. And here he is giving excuses...
- **What excuses have you given to God for not responding to him?**
- Friends, will you be willing today to open yourself up to God’s view of you today? Are you willing to allow God to choose you, to uniquely gift you, to allow you to win despite your circumstances, and are you willing to allow God to call you to live out the story that he is writing for you?
- What would you do today if you knew without a shadow of a doubt that God was with you?
- **Worship Team**
- **As we close, I’d like to come back to the story of Jesus at His baptism, and recognize that God’s response to Jesus that day is not only for him. It’s for you as well. It’s for me.**
- **But John, I never received a blessing from my own dad.**
- **That’s right. Me neither. I didn’t.**

- **So we want to give you that opportunity.**
- **I want to invite you to come forward today and receive a Father Blessing from the Lord.**

- **Six core longings - father, what 3 words come to mind**
- **Core longings**
- **Love, security, purpose, significance, understanding and belonging**