

Lost In The Story

1. Warm-up Question: On Sunday Jeff told a couple stories about his recent brush with COVID. How has COVID directly or indirectly affected you in recent weeks?
2. On Sunday we focused on an encounter between Jesus and two unnamed heroes who offered Jesus comfort and support on the cross. Read John 19:16-30, found on p. 3.
3. Let's focus first on verses 28-30, where after 5 grueling hours on the cross and near death, Jesus says how thirsty he is and someone gives him a sponge soaked in sour wine. The term "sour wine" refers to a cheap, vinegary tasting wine Roman soldiers often drank. The jar of wine at the cross was probably there for the soldiers, but one of them decided to give Jesus a drink – or to permit a bystander to do so – to ease Jesus' passing.
 - a. Jeff told how his mother lost her ability to swallow when she was dying. Her body became dehydrated and her lips and mouth extremely dry, so he and his Dad dipped a sponge swab in cold water and encouraged her to bite down on it to wet her mouth. Have you ever been around someone dying who was extremely thirsty? Describe the experience.
 - b. Projecting yourself into Jesus' situation in the last moments of his life, how do you think he felt about the person who cared enough to give him the wine to ease his thirst? What emotions did Jesus likely feel toward that unnamed person?
4. Ray Boltz wrote a popular song called "Thank You" that describes people in heaven crossing paths with someone who helped them in unknown ways during their life. In the song, each person expresses what the help meant to them and thanks their helper with deep gratitude. Read the words of the song as printed on p. 3.
 - a. Think about someone in your life who has helped you in ways they probably don't realize. How did they help you? When you see them in heaven, what will you say?
 - b. Think about someone you've been able to help in simple, meaningful ways. How did you help them? Imagine crossing paths with them in heaven. What do you think they might say to you?
 - c. In Matthew 25:35, Jesus says that at the Last Judgment, he will thank complete strangers, saying things like, "I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, for inasmuch as you did it to the least of these my brothers or sisters, you did it unto me." What does this tell us about how Jesus feels about our simple acts of kindness toward others? Why do you think Jesus feels this way?

- d. In Matthew 10:42, Jesus said, “Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.” What form do you think that reward will take? What will “rewards” in heaven look like?
5. Jeff told a story about how, as a kid, he fell out of a top bunkbed and was about to crash headfirst into the hardwood floor when his older sister Melodie, in the bottom bunkbed, happened to reach out to get something from their little sister. Melodie’s arms broke Jeff’s fall, causing him to topple over on his side, instead of landing headfirst and breaking his neck. But for his sister reaching out in that moment, Jeff could have died at age 5, and none of the things that have happened in his life since would have happened. His story is a reminder of how the smallest acts can make a world of difference.
 - a. Have you ever experienced a pivotal moment like that – a moment where, if something hadn’t happened, your life could have been completely different?
 - b. Jeff said, “You are where you are for a reason. This week there’s bound to be someone who will need a simple act of kindness. Your response might make all the difference.” Do you believe that? Do you believe every situation we find ourselves in was “meant to be”? Why or why not?
6. Now let’s turn our focus to a second unnamed hero in our Bible story. Verse 26 tells us, “When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple who he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.”
 - a. If you were to die today, who’s someone you’d leave behind that you would worry about being taken care of? How would it feel to die not knowing who whether anyone would take care of them?
 - b. As Jesus was dying, how do you think he felt when the unnamed disciple agreed to care for Mary like his own mother?
 - c. Jeff also invited us to imagine the backstory that made all this necessary. The Scriptures indicate that Mary had at least two daughters and four sons besides Jesus (Mark 3:32 and 6:3). But there appears to have been tension between them and Jesus that ran so deep that Mary’s eventual faith in Jesus may have broken their relationship (Mark 3 and John 7). Whatever happened, apparently none of Mary’s kids were willing or able to take her in when Jesus died. Jeff said, “Think of it – not even the Holy Family was perfect. Even the Holy Family had big problems. Even the mother of Jesus knew the pain of a broken family.” Is there brokenness in your family? What form did it take? How does it make you feel to learn about Mary’s pain?
 - d. Jesus said, “I was a stranger and you took me in.” Matthew 25:35. There are a lot of isolated people in this world who need someone to take them in. You can bless Jesus, and reenact the cross, by being their quiet hero. Taking someone in doesn’t

just mean giving them a home. It may mean taking them into your circle of friendship, or listening to them talk, or opening your heart to help them out. Who's someone right now who needs you to take them in? What might that look like?

John 19:16-19, and 23-30

Then Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus; ¹⁷and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. ¹⁸There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. ¹⁹Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

²³When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. ²⁴So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfil what the scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots." ²⁵And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

²⁸ After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), "I am thirsty." ²⁹A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. ³⁰When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

"Thank You," by Ray Boltz

I dreamed I went to heaven
And you were there with me.
We walked upon the streets of gold
Beside the crystal sea.
We heard the angels singing,
Then someone called your name.
You turned and saw this young man
And he was smiling as he came.
And he said, "Friend you may not know me now"
And then he said, "But wait
You used to teach my Sunday School
When I was only eight.
And every week you would say a prayer
Before the class would start.
And one day when you said that prayer

I asked Jesus in my heart.
Thank you for giving to the Lord
I am a life that was changed
Thank you for giving to the Lord
I am so glad you gave”