# “Let Me Tell You A Story, Part 1”

## *Psalm 71:15-18; 1 John 1:1-4; Revelation 12:10-11*

***Everybody likes a good story! As human beings, we resonate with stories as much as we do music. It’s part of what makes us who we are—the ability to tell stories, the desire we have to be captivated by stories.***

***We read books, watch television programs, and go to the theater because we want a good story. They touch us emotionally, mentally, spiritually. They challenge us to become more than we are; they inspire us to hope; they remind us of our mistakes.***

***We read stories to small children before bedtime about purple crayons, green eggs and ham, or the moon. When families gather for the holidays they share stories of people and times that have contributed to the family. We tell tales around campfires, in college dorms, in the break room at work, and on airplanes. But there is one place where we rarely tell our stories: at church***

Most Christians—at least those of the non-charismatic tribes—have lost the desire or ability to tell their faith stories. We know a little about the people we worship with: we know which sports teams they like, where they work, which restaurants they frequent, and who their family members are. But we don’t know their faith journeys very well…

This morning we’re going to look at the importance of sharing our testimonies about God’s faithfulness and goodness, and we’ll see what the Bible says about telling our faith stories. Next Sunday we’re going to spend some time talking about *how* we can share about God’s work in our lives.

If we can talk to one another about ball games and cars and recipes and community events, we need to be able to talk about our Lord and his mighty works. So let’s begin with Psalm 71:15-18…

Attributed to King David near the end of his life, this psalm is a reflection on God’s faithfulness. David had relied on God throughout his life, and now in his senior years--as enemies and trials continued to plague him--he looked back at all God had done for him, and testified to it: *15I will tell everyone about your righteousness. All day long I will proclaim your saving power, though I am not skilled with words. 16I will praise your mighty deeds, O Sovereign Lord. I will tell everyone that you alone are just. 17O God, you have taught me from my earliest childhood, and I constantly tell others about the wonderful things you do. 18Now that I am old and gray, do not abandon me, O God. Let me proclaim your power to this new generation, your mighty miracles to all who come after me.*

Now to begin with, David declared that he was going to tell people--he would proclaim the goodness of God. We have a God who has done—and is doing—wonderful, amazing, powerful, even miraculous things among us. And we are to proclaim that with delight, to give honor to God.

***One of the things I love about this church is that when I ask for joys to be shared before the prayer time, we often have several things mentioned. When opportunities like this are offered in some churches, there are hardly any joys celebrated. Most everything mentioned is a concern. When we have our district pastor’s meetings, nearly everything*** ***that is spoken is a prayer need. Hardly any are the joys of*** ***who God is and what he has done. This just goes to show that we are reluctant to declare God’s goodness among other believers, where it should be the easiest place to do so!***

Perhaps we don’twant to be seen as bragging or flaunting our spirituality?Perhaps we’re afraid people will think we are trying to drawattention to ourselves? These can be legitimate concerns whendealing with our broken human pride. We routinely want totake credit for the good things that happen to us or around us.

But David reminds us that we can speak of God’s faithfulness andprovision—and indeed, we must!—by simply letting othersknow that our dependence is not upon our strength or will,but is firmly grounded in the Lord.

As I said a few moments ago, this psalm was likely composedwhen David was well advanced in years. His head was heavyfrom wearing the crown for so long. He had withstoodassaults from foreign enemies and assaults from his own son. Undoubtedly, his body was weak and failing, as happens to allof us as we age. But notice what he says in verse 18: *Let me proclaim your power to this new generation, your mighty miracles to all who come after me.*

One of the main reasons we need to reclaim the ability to share ourfaith stories is because younger generations do not know whatGod has done for our older generations! We have not had manyopportunities to hear the joys and struggles the Lord hasbrought our elders through.

Older folks: if you do not share your testimonies to younger generations, how will they learn to trust in God? If you do notspeak of what the Lord has done for you, who will? It is partof your biblical responsibility as maturing Christians to declarethe works of the Lord to every new generation.We’ll talk more about how you can do that next week…

Now let’s turn to the first letter of John, chapter 1, verses 1-4: *We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning,whom we have* *heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. 2This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. 3We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.*

Notice how John described the intimate relationship he had with Jesus. He saw Jesus and touched him. The glory of Christ was revealed to John and the other disciples. And as a result, they *testify* and *proclaim* the eternal life found in Jesus Christ. Our testimonies must always include the acknowledgement of the debt we owe to Jesus for his sacrificial death on our behalf. We cannot shy away from saying that we are who we are—that we do what we do—because of who he is and what he has done.

***Do you remember the first time you fell in love—really in love? All you could do was talk about that other*** ***person. More than likely your family and friends got tired of*** ***hearing about how wonderful he or she was! But yet you kept*** ***right on saying those things…***

This is how it should be in our relationship with Christ. If we have truly fallen in love with him and desire to please him, we should be passionate about talking about him. If we have experienced intimacy and love with the Creator of the universe, how can we keep silent? We should want to testify and proclaim about this most excellent relationship.

Also note that John says *…we proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.* Part of sharing our stories is so that our fellowship—our connection to one another in the Body of Christ—may be strengthened, encouraged, and empowered. When we do this, we share in the same fellowship—the same unity—that is known in the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Our testimonies connect us to one another, to the church universal, to the church of ages past, and to the holy Trinity. This fellowship is a spiritual union of the believer to God, of the branches to the vine, of the Body to the Head. When we neglect to tell our stories to each other, we lose an important element of spiritual fellowship.

Let’s turn now to the final book of the Bible, Revelation. In chapter 12 we find a cataclysmic, symbolic war between the angels ofGod and the enormous red dragon representing Satan. The Evil One is defeated and cast down, and great rejoicing breaks out. Look at verses 10-11: *10Then I heard a loud voice* *shouting across the heavens, “It has come at last--salvation and power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers and sistershas been thrown down to earth—the one who accuses them before our God day and night. 11And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die.*

Many in the church at that time had undergone severe persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire—symbolized by the red dragon. Many had given their lives as martyrs for their faith in Jesus Christ. Now they would be vindicated as the Great Accuser, Satan, was defeated. And pay attention to *how* his defeat came about. Verse 11: *And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony.*

First and foremost, Satan and the power of evil is disarmed and crushed by the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus has completely and ultimately destroyed sin, death, and Hell. So while Satan may win the occasional battle, he has ultimately lost the war. In addition to the power of the blood of Christ, Satan is defeated by *the testimony* of faithful believers. Do you hear that? The testimonies of the people of God—in unity with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ--have power to overcome the plans of Satan!

As we open our mouths to declare the victories of God in our lives, we turn the tables on Satan. When we share about God, we are less likely to be distracted by gossip or judgment or pride or greed—things which Satan uses to deceive and destroy us. A Christ-centered testimony has great power to build up, encourage, unify, bless, and praise—all things which Satan does not want us to do.

Giving a testimony is not something that is only for the Freewill Baptists or the Church of God or some other denomination. It is a biblical responsibility and privilege for all God’s people. As we have seen this morning, telling our faith stories is necessary for older believers to help younger believers mature in the faith. Our faith stories are important so that we may give glory and praise for all Jesus has done in our lives. Our testimonies provide an important spiritual link of fellowship. And they are crucial in overcoming the sinister attacks of Satan.

***In the months to come, we’re going to set aside times in worship for us to share our testimonies with one another. I will not call on you on the spur-of-the-moment, for as we shall see next week, a good testimony takes time to prepare. So don’t panic that you will be called upon to stand up and share without warning. I plan to approach people individually and ask them if they would be willing to share on a particular day.*** We all love a good story. And God has given every single one of usa beautiful, moving, wonderful story to share.

For our time ofresponse this morning, I would ask you to think aboutyour story—what God has done in your life. Then spend some time telling him how glorious and worthy he is. Worship him inthis time as you reflect on all his goodness to you. Amen.