

People who know me well, know that I like to tell stories. I suppose I just find a simple statement of information a tad boring. I would much rather set the scene, offer a bit of background, and tell with great detail and flourish the story of whatever event I am speaking of. I think a colorful, imaginative story is much more fun than simply getting straight to the point and straight to the end of it.

People who know me well, know that I can take a while to get to the point.

I have a reputation in my family for being a “long talker.” When I get started at the family gatherings, it is not uncommon for one or two to roll their eyes as they buckle down for one of Peder’s stories. It’s true. I tell long stories...and to be perfectly honest, I embrace it.

A story worth telling takes a while, and if we don’t take time for our stories, where might that leave us? You see, stories shape us. They make us who and what we are.

If your family is anything like mine, you know a repertoire of stories that get repeated time and time again. There are probably stories from your childhood (or stories of your children when they were younger) that you either tell or hear at what seems to be every other family gathering. There are no doubt stories from your family – from your past – that you know so well, you could tell them right now. They are in you. They are a part of you and a part of your life.

We all know stories that speak to where we come from. We know the stories of who we are. And the interesting thing about these stories, is that telling them and hearing them time after time has an effect on our present and on our future. Telling and hearing the stories of who we are, time and time again, contribute to the direction of our lives. Stories shape us, you see. They make us who we are...and what we will be.

Every religion has at its foundation a story or collection of stories. Many call such stories Scripture, and place upon them some amount of divine authority. If you know a bit about the Christian Church, you may know that it is a Church with many divisions. A reality of human beings wrestling with something as vast as religion is that many opinions, views, beliefs and attitudes emerge from the joint endeavor, and lead to many different understandings of how to read, interpret, and apply Scripture to life.

That said, while Christians (or people of any other faith, for that matter) certainly disagree with one another about how they ought to understand Scripture, there is most certainly agreement that the Scripture they share bears great significance for who they are as God’s people. Regardless of whether we think of Scripture as an inerrant, divine composition, or as a divinely inspired human reflection of the relationship between God and God’s people, it nonetheless bears significance, as it tells the stories of who we are and who we will be.

These stories of our faith are worth taking the time to tell and to hear. They are worth our time, because in a world full of stories devoid of God’s justice, we can so easily forget the stories that called us (or at least our ancestors) to faith. We have so many stories that speak of God’s love and mercy. In our Scripture, there are so many stories that speak to God’s way of justice and compassion. They are stories to remind us of the grace and forgiveness of God’s promise for all creation. Our stories of faith speak to the love from which we come, and they speak to the hope for which we long. They are the stories of our past, our present and our future. They are stories to shape us and to shape our lives.

Now, I am not big on telling people what they “should” do, but these stories are worth remembering. They are worth hearing and they are worth telling time and time again. So I encourage you to explore the stories of your faith – stories of

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your past – that they would become so much a part of you and your life that you cannot help but take the time to tell them.

Just as God's promise is for you, such stories are for you. May you take the time to claim them, to be shaped by them, and to proclaim them!

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Peder Johanson