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Unexpected Twist BY JOEL SUTTON

Everyone loves a good story.

The popularity of The Chronicles of Narnia, Beauty and the Beast, and The Lord of the Rings illustrates the affection most of us have for engaging tales of romance, intrigue, and the omnipresent theme of good versus evil. Children (and adults) do not say, "Tell me some facts." Instead you will hear them say, "Tell me a good story."

When you read through the gospels, you find Jesus telling good stories. His stories are filled with engaging characters who grab our attention - shrewd stewards gone bad, harsh judges who care nothing for poor widows, prodigal sons who eat out of pig troughs, landowners who hire workers no matter the hour and friends who rudely knock on the door at midnight. Jesus was the master storyteller.

What I find so fascinating about Jesus' stories is they all seem to have a unique, unexpected twist. Jesus' stories capture the attention of everyone, from the religiously sophisticated who spent time in synagogues to the run-of-the-mill person on the street. They not only grab a person's attention, but they teach deep spiritual truths and calls the listener to a personal commitment.

This summer, on Sunday mornings,

we are going to take a look at some of Jesus' greatest stories in our sermon series: "Unexpected Twist: A Look at Jesus' Parables". Why? Let me suggest four reasons:

First, Jesus' parables are among the best known and most influential stories in the world. Even if people know nothing about Jesus, they either know about his stories or have been impacted by them through expressions like, "the prodigal" or "good Samaritan". So this summer could be a great time to invite someone you have been praying for and investing in to church. They might be interested to hear more about one of Jesus' stories.

Second, the parables illuminate both the nature of the kingdom and how different people respond to its coming. Quite often Jesus says, "The kingdom of God is like ..." and then illustrates it with a story. These days, with a war in Ukraine, with political divisions in our own country, with massacres in schools, churches and shopping centers, we need to be reminded of what God's rule and reign look like. Parables are spell-binding windows into the reality of God's "shalom" kingdom.

Third, Jesus' stories tend to be uniquely fascinating, even a bit disturbing. They deal with many of the big issues and questions of life: who God is, the

surprising nature of grace, the awful power of money, and the coming judgment. These stories throw us for a loop because they have a tendency to upend how we often approach certain issues and questions.

For example, we're taught by our culture to hoard wealth, yet Jesus' stories encourage us to give it away. We often have unconscious biases about who God likes and who he doesn't, but some of the parables reverse our view of who's in and who's out in God's economy. Sometimes we're told that if we just say a prayer, we're saved, but some of Jesus' stories, such as the Parables of the Talents and the Sheep and Goats in Matthew 25, stress that saving faith always results in visible fruit. Ouch!

Lastly, the parables call for a response. Will we engage God with the persistence of the man who bothered his friend for help in the middle of the night? Will we claim to receive the awesome forgiveness of God but refuse to give it to those who have hurt us? Will we get caught up in the willy-nilly busyness of contemporary life or will we prioritize our lives to focus on the pearl of great price?

This summer come and enjoy not only some good stories, but life-changing ones.

Vacation Bible Camp

Psalm 89:2 **Joshua 1:9** **Psalm 147:5** **Romans 8:38**

"Your unfailing love will last forever." (Psalm 89:2)
"For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)
"How great is our Lord! His power is absolute!" (Psalm 147:5)
"And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love." (Romans 8:38)

Camper Crews will explore four verses **Celebrating God's Greatness!** Using Bible memory games, Leaders will show how memorizing God's word can be fun! Can't make it to VBC? You're invited to "join" us by learning these key Bible verses too!



Details: June 20 - 23, 2022 @ 6 - 8 p.m. Pre-Register @ www.firstfreechurch.org/vbc

Would you like to receive the newsletter via email?
Contact the office at info@firstfreechurch.org

**OUR MISSION:
TO HELP
INDIVIDUALS
BECOME
CHRIST-CENTERED
& CHRIST-SENT
TOGETHER**

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LIVING ON MISSION

"When I got the call with the pathology results, it felt like life as I knew it had come to an end. I remember sitting in a consultation meeting, being handed a full binder called "My Cancer Journey" and feeling like I was watching someone else's life play out.

About halfway through, I fell into a pretty dark depression; what helped me most was filling my life with Christ-centered input. I listened to music, podcasts, and read the Bible and other books. All these helped me to put my trust in God to get me through, not my own strength. One of the verses that brought me encouragement throughout was Matthew 6:34 "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will

worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

As I've now been out of treatments for two years—that need to trust God in every aspect of my life has not ended. Matthew 6:34 continues to be an encouragement to trust God in the right-now and trust Him to provide and care for my future."



Emm Pensa

"Shortly after our daughter Lydia's third birthday in the Fall of 2019, we began to notice some minor swelling around her right cheek and nostril.

We now know the Holy Spirit was at work prompting us to take Lydia in.

A couple of hours after being at the hospital, I called David with the news, "its a tumor, they are admitting us." The tumor was discovered just weeks after it had begun growing in her body and it had not had the chance to spread anywhere else.

Two days after being admitted we had a confirmed cancer diagnosis and the following day, a more specific diagnosis of Ewings Sarcoma. Those early days were the most difficult days of our journey. Looking back on them we now see God's faithfulness and constant care.

David is a middle school math teacher in a public school. His first day back to his classroom, a parent sent David an email that read "Just wanted to let you know that there was a huge group of parents in front of school this morning lifting your family and Lydia up in prayer." God worked through these parents and students to give David the support he needed to teach the rest of the year.

God has already given us a glimpse of how he might use this story for his glory and to change another life for Him."



Gabriella & David Hauge

"Over the last year God has been doing many things in my life. I would say the biggest thing he's been doing, is showing me how to be more patient.

I've been talking to other people around church, who've walked many different paths of life. Listening to their stories, I could tell how wise they have become from their mistakes and their walk with Christ. It encouraged me to keep going.

I don't know what God has in store for

me, but I do feel like the more I stay steadfast and convicted for my future; I'll be living on mission for Christ."



Tony Longfield

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

Congratulations to this year's graduating seniors!

Christina Boyum, Lucille Carter, Reece Passons, and Grace Solorzano

Congratulations to these graduating students!

Anne Marie Akinpelu: *Minnesota State University*
Erika Garcia: *Normandale Junior College, Nursing*
Lily Dutton: *College of Charleston, SC*
Andrew Holliday: *Hennepin Technical College*
Christian Vatsaas: *University of Minnesota, Duluth*

Birthdays

Char Boyles and Lorraine Kalb celebrated their 90th birthdays in May. In June, Betty Carlson will celebrate her 95th birthday and Evelyn Peterson her 101st birthday. Congratulations to all of you!

Our condolences to the family of Morris Brown who passed away on May 25th.

VELOCITY SUMMER

Velocity Bike Ride (High School + Middle School)

Meet @ Church
June 15th 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Velocity Hangout (High School + Middle School)

Locations - Stiles
July 6th 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Velocity Hangout (High School + Middle School)

Location - Kobielush
August 10th 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Velocity Hangout

High School @ Pensa
Middle School @ Ogrens
August 24th 6:30-8:30 p.m.



Being on Mission

2021-2022 | Every number has a story