

Jeremiah 31:7-9

“Let God Write Your Story”

23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday af. Pentecost

October 28, 2018

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Vicar Otterman

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, Our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

*[Reader's Theatre]*

***[God Writes Israel's Story]***

Rejoice, for God is the author of your story! But there are many times when God's people are tempted to believe that they need to write their own story. That's exactly what Israel often tried to do.

They wanted to go back to Egypt when they were confronted with hunger in the wilderness.

They built a golden calf to worship when Moses took too long to come down from Mount Sinai.

They asked for a king like the other nations instead of relying on God as their king.

And they worshiped foreign idols when they thought those would serve them better than God.

But no matter how much Israel believed that they were the authors of their own story, they were wrong. When they tried to go against God's will, all of their plans failed. They were invaded, defeated, and thrown into exile.

After Israel's dreams of becoming a mighty nation were crushed by the Assyrian and Babylonian armies, they turned to God and cried out to him for help. They called out to him, because they couldn't write their own story. Only God could do that.

God's people called out to Him for help, and He heard them, and he pulled them into His story. In Jeremiah 31, the prophet prophesied about this moment when the remnant of Israel cried out for God to rescue them.

God responded to Israel's plea by assuring them that he would write their story.

God said, "**I will bring them** from the north country and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth."

God said, "with pleas for mercy **I will lead them back**"

God said, "**I will make them walk by brooks of water**, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble."

Israel was not going to save itself from exile. Israel could not save itself at all. God saved them, and He pulled His people into His story.

Even the exile was a part of God's story that he used to bring Israel back to faith in Him. Even at their darkest moment, when the people of Jerusalem were being led away to Babylon and the cloud of God's presence left the temple, God was still watching over his people. He was still taking care of them, so that He could pull them back into trusting Him with their story.

### ***[Jesus Writes Our Story]***

Every story needs a protagonist, a hero who is the very reason for writing the story. God's hero was His own Son, Jesus.

Jesus is the center of God's story. He is the person Israel waited and longed for. He is the person who will redeem God's people once and for all! And even in the darkest moment of Jesus' story, when he was hung on a cross to die and all appeared to be lost, God was still writing. He wrote Jesus into death. He wrote Jesus into the grave for three days. And on Easter morning He wrote Jesus raised from the dead.

Then God gave the pen over to Jesus and told Him to keep writing the story. Then Jesus wrote about baptism and the forgiveness of sins. He wrote that we can

become God's children, and that one day, when he returns, we too will be raised from the dead so that we can live eternally with Him.

***[Jesus Is Still Writing]***

You may have noticed that Jesus hasn't returned yet, and that we are still waiting for the resurrection of the dead. Sometimes, like Israel, we can start to wonder if God is still writing our story. Like the time when Israel thought Moses had died on Mount Sinai, we sometimes think we need to start writing our own stories again.

But God is still at work, and Jesus is still pulling us in. Even when times seem dark and grim, and even when the church stops acting like the church, and it starts trying to write its own story, Jesus is still writing. As Lutherans, we look back to Martin Luther, and we see how Jesus wrote the Gospel back into the church. We can see Jesus' hand in Luther's life and in the Reformation.

If we look, we can still see Jesus at work today, pulling people into his story. As Gary Thies told us two weeks ago, the Lutheran church in Ethiopia is baptizing 1000 people a day.

Jesus is still at work in the world, and he is still at work in your life as well. You're here, aren't you? The only reason you are here today is because God wants you here. He wants you here because He wants you to trust him with your life. He wants you to trust him to write your story.

Just like you heard from the reader's theatre a moment ago, when you let God be the author of your story, he writes you into his greater story of salvation. And because you are written into God's story, you can sing,

"I trust in your unfailing love;  
My heart rejoices in your salvation.  
I will sing the Lord's praise,  
For he has been good to me.

Amen.

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“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

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