

PRAYER

Jesus Messiah - All our hope is in You, All glory to You, Shine on us now Light of the World

Telling His Story

I would like to tell you a story...

It's a story about a young man who surrendered to the Lord at 19 years of age. Shortly after that transaction he began to discern God's call not only to live a lifestyle of worship but to help others do the same. Like Isaiah, he said, "Here I am Lord. Send me." He truly desired to hold God's people in his heart and help them rediscover the missing jewel of worship.

Having been trained as a classical vocalist, he realized he needed some other training, so soon after he was married he headed off to seminary with his new bride to prepare to serve the Lord. He started serving a church part-time even while he was still in seminary and began to delight in seeing people enter into worship.

During the years that followed seminary he served churches in the Heartland, the Deep South and the Appalachians. In each church, he had been bridled with the responsibility of bringing all the generations of the church together to pour out their hearts for the glory of the Lord. In each church, he faced opposition but served faithfully. In each church, he felt restrained and longed for the Spirit to break out and soak the church.

Then another opportunity came. One that looked very promising. There was church that had gone through some difficult times, resulting in a smaller group of people that seemed broken and humbled. They appeared hungry for God. Though many would have said it was less than an ideal situation, the now not so young man saw it as the perfect preparation for the kind of dependency he believed was crucial for true worship to occur in a congregation.

He felt God was leading. He believed God was impressing on him that this would be a new experience. The Lord would lead him to places he had never been in corporate worship. This promise was both exhilarating and frightening.

He arrived on the scene with a splash. The first Sunday was exciting. But some were afraid of what was happening to their church. Exercising some wisdom the man and the leadership decided to throttle back the wave machine. Just as things seemed to be settling down something unexpected happened.

God put the man on his back. As if pneumonia wasn't enough, there was pleurisy and an abscess in his lung that burst sending the infection into his entire right chest cavity. After one invasive procedure to remove the infection, there was a great deal of bleeding internally, forcing a second emergent procedure.

In the time of reflection provided by his recovery, he felt the Lord speaking several things. He knew the experience had changed him and that he would never be the same again. He knew that had implications on his personal life, as well as his role as the Pastor

of Worship at North Mar church. By now you have figured out that I am that man, but I want to spend the rest of our time together this morning helping you understand that this is not my story, but His, for it is about Him, more than me.

It's Not About Me

The Lord impressed this on me in those first few days in the hospital. This was important because I think I would have begun thinking that it was due to the attention I was garnering. But even before that first Sunday I missed back in March I knew better.

I really hated not being at church every Sunday, but especially the first one. It was the first Sunday I had missed due to sickness in twelve years of ministry. But my reasons for wanting to be there have more to do with the fact that I would love to have experienced what God did through His servant leaders who filled the gap created by my absence.

You see, my philosophy of ministry centers around **Ephesians 4:12** which explains the role of a pastor. It says they are **"for the training of the saints in the work of the ministry, to build up the body of Christ..."** There is more to that scripture, but let me illustrate at least this much. I only had a little hand in this but Pastor Nate leading the service, Bill Fleet leading the choir, Lindy Mink, Audrey and Doug Stern singing on the team [all for the first time], and Cindy Furl sharing a Life Change Story, are all examples of saints engaged in the work of the ministry in a way that built up the body of Christ. Those things are **not about me**. They are about the Lord we serve.

When Pastor Myron shared the glowing report of that service with me I wept. One might think it was because it going well even in my absence would leave aware of my dispensability, but I already knew that. One might think it was because I love the church and really hated missing such a special service, and though this is true there was another better reason for tears. Good worship at North-Mar is "not about me" or any one of us. **It's about Jesus.** And all involved in leadership that day made much of Him.

It's not about me. That's the phrase that was on my mind those first few days in the hospital as I am reflected what God was saying about the path he had laid out for me. And He was saying that personally as well as pastorally.

Our oldest son Samuel commented **"Mom, Satan really doesn't want Dad at this church does he?"** As Pastor Myron rephrased that comment later during a visit to our house asking if the Devil was going to have his way our seven year-old Isaac responded, **"No way, Devil, no way!"** Now this is coming from a couple of little boys who had experienced quite of bit of transition by then and whose dad who hardly ever gets sick was in the hospital. God was at work in this situation. It's not about me.

Don't misunderstand. I am careful not to make promises to my boys I cannot keep. i.e. "Dad will always be here for you", but rather I try to teach them that God is. Even in this difficulty He has been there all along. I am using this brokenness to show that God is always and ever there carrying us. He reminded me of that in **Isaiah 46:4b** on my second

day at Trumbull Memorial, "I have made you, and I will carry you; I will bear and save you." (HCSB) Even in these words I see it's not about me, it's about my God.

Laying there in my hospital bed considering my first surgical procedure I was reminded once again, it's not about me. It's not that I have no active role to play, but simply that God is ever doing something in and through us that is much bigger than us. I hope that whatever you are facing today, this story will help you face it in a way that will bring glory to the name of Jesus.

Though I was aware it was not about me I was overwhelmed at every reminder that someone is praying for me. In those days I was brought to tears as I have had others, either over the phone or in person, stop and pray for me. Thank you so much for all your concern and prayers for me and my family. Please keep praying as I continue to trust God for a full recovery. God is doing something new and we have only begun to see the very beginning of it.

Hand of God

I have seen the hand of God again and again as I have walked this path, and I now prepare to again run the race He has marked out for me. In big things and little things He has shown me a great economy of purposefulness in every movement. It has challenged me to consider if I am going through the motions or if God's all-consuming passion is living inside of me. This sickness has caused me to think about such things. Though I am still trying to process and discern all that God is saying to me through this, one thing is for certain, God is changing me. And I do not want to go back to living as I did before this experience. I would like your help to remind me of this change.

God Changed My Name

In the hospital they kept calling me **Timothy**. For those of you who did not know, that is my first name, Scott being my middle name. For some reason, as I grew up my parents decided to call me by my middle name rather than my first and I just went with that through the rest of my life. I think it is time for that to change.

There is tremendous **Biblical precedent** for this of course. God changing people's names to mark a significant spiritual marker in their lives. Saul became Paul, Abram – Abraham, Sarai – Sarah to name a few.

You remember Jacob's encounter with God by the Jabbok River where he wrestled with Him "until [He] blessed" Jacob. You will recall that God changed Jacob by first touching his hip (the hand of God) and then changing His name to Israel "because you have struggled with God". [Genesis 32:22-28] **Gen. 32:28 "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."** There was great purpose in this name change, Jacob meaning "he deceives", Israel meaning, "he struggles with God". It signaled a much more significant, deeper change. Jacob was never the same after that encounter.

Again, I want that to be true of me because of the way the Lord has met me in this life-altering episode. As I laid there in my hospital bed and the nurses kept calling me Timothy, it occurred to me that maybe it was time to start being known by that name. I have always understood Timothy to mean “servant of God” and have wanted on more than one occasion to be known by that name. I learned during some research several weeks ago that a more common meaning is “to honor God, to fear God”. When I read that, it confirmed the change to me, with the timing being now.

I then got to thinking of the meaning of my names together. Scott means “traveler” or “wanderer”. When I put this with Timothy, basically my name means that I honor God as I wander. That sounds like a lifestyle of worship to me, the very calling that God has placed on my life. Amazing!

All that to say, *I would like you to begin to call me by my first given name, Timothy.* I know it may seem strange at first, having to adjust from Pastor Scott to Pastor Timothy, but it will feel more natural over time to both you and me. I may not always answer at first since it will take some getting used to for me as well, but I feel strongly about this change. It will help me, and you, remember this significant trial that God has brought me through, and maybe even help to highlight the changes He is producing in me as I learn how to better honor and fear His matchless name. Thank you for your help in this.

And thank you church for all of your help through this time. Truly no words can express our heart of gratitude to each of you that provided care in some way. The prayers, love, help, meals, cards and service have been one way I have seen the hand of the God in this, but there is more.

In the past, when I thought about the hand of God, my thinking was dominated with the strength of His arm. There are many scriptures that come to mind about the **Arm of the Lord**.

[Exodus 6:6](#)

"Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the **LORD**, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched **arm** and with mighty acts of judgment.

[Numbers 11:23](#)

The **LORD** answered Moses, "Is the **LORD's arm** too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you."

[Deuteronomy 4:34](#)

Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched **arm**, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the **LORD** your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

[Deuteronomy 5:15](#)

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the **LORD** your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched **arm**. Therefore the **LORD** your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

[Deuteronomy 7:19](#)

You saw with your own eyes the great trials, the miraculous signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched **arm**, with which the **LORD** your God brought you out. The **LORD** your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear.

[Deuteronomy 11:2](#)

Remember today that your children were not the ones who saw and experienced the discipline of the **LORD** your God: his majesty, his mighty hand, his outstretched **arm**;

[Deuteronomy 26:8](#)

So the **LORD** brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched **arm**, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders.

[2 Kings 17:36](#)

But the **LORD**, who brought you up out of Egypt with mighty power and outstretched **arm**, is the one you must worship. To him you shall bow down and to him offer sacrifices.

[Psalm 98:1](#)

[*A psalm.*] Sing to the **LORD** a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy **arm** have worked salvation for him.

[Isaiah 30:32](#)

Every stroke the **LORD** lays on them with his punishing rod will be to the music of tambourines and harps, as he fights them in battle with the blows of his **arm**.

[Isaiah 40:10](#)

See, the Sovereign **LORD** comes with power, and his **arm** rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

[Isaiah 51:9](#)

Awake, awake! Clothe yourself with strength, O **arm** of the **LORD**; awake, as in days gone by, as in generations of old.

[Isaiah 52:10](#)

The **LORD** will lay bare his holy **arm** in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

[Isaiah 53:1](#)

Who has believed our message and to whom has the **arm** of the **LORD** been revealed?

[Jeremiah 32:17](#)

"Ah, Sovereign **LORD**, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched **arm**. Nothing is too hard for you.

[Ezekiel 20:33](#)

As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign **LORD**, I will rule over you with a mighty hand and an outstretched **arm** and with outpoured wrath.

I believe there were 22 references to the arm of the Lord. Of all of these, the one that first got me thinking was my recollection of ...

[Isaiah 59:1](#)

[*Sin, Confession and Redemption*] Surely the **arm** of the **LORD** is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.

It struck me as I reflected on this that the Scripture did not say arms. So I did a quick search for "arm" and "Lord" and discovered what I just read to you. All these references mention the "arm of the Lord" not the "arms" of the Lord.

So, if you will allow me a moment of sanctified imagining, if God is only using one arm to do all this mighty and powerful stuff, what is the other arm doing?...

[Isaiah 46:4](#)

Even to your old age and **gray hairs** I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.

As I mentioned before, it was my second day in the hospital that God spoke to me through these words. Though they are spoken as a comfort to Israel, they were a comfort to me. I knew the changeless One was speaking them directly to me. Over the course of the next few weeks I saw this other arm at work around me and in me, and I had a growing desire to replicate the character of it in my own life.

[God showed me His gentleness and is calling me deeper](#)

Instead of using His mighty, powerful arm, God choose to use His gentle arm in this set of circumstances. He could have healed my hurting back by annihilating the abscess before it burst if He wanted. He could have eradicated the infection in a moment if He desired. He could have barred the bleeding and prevented the second procedure if that was His will. Instead, He chose to show me another side of Himself. Because of this, it was better for me to go through all I did than to be spared.

I want to illustrate what God was showing about his gentle, fatherly care by holding our youngest son **Aiden** for a few moments. I have been relishing this again because there were several weeks when I was unable to lift or him. Isn't he cute. Can you imagine God says that about us?

Talk about this illustration while holding Aiden.

My love for this little guy is intense, and so my care of him intensive, though Sarah is truly much better at it than me. God's love for us is intense as well, and yet remarkably gentle.

This was most real to me as I reflect back on the night following my second procedure. I began to awaken while still in the recovery area. Suffice it to say that the epidural the anesthesiologist had used for pain management was not working. I think it missed the right spot. Those attending me began to ask me how my pain was, and I was kind as I told them in no uncertain terms that I was in agony. Then I would pray for them, out loud. "Lord Jesus, please give wisdom to this man as he tries to help me. Please Lord. Have mercy."

They eventually transferred me to ICU transitioned me over to morphine, but it took quite a while to catch up with the pain. It had a really good head start by then. I was able to see Sarah and a few others late that evening and somehow managed to sleep a few hours.

I awoke around 2:00 a.m. in pretty significant pain. I was getting a constant stream of morphine, but could also push a button for more even seven minutes. For the next three hours or so, I prayed “Lord, help me. JESUS, give me relief.” As I prayed I watched the minute hand on the clock in my room. I counted out even seven minutes and pushed that button again, praying all the while. God could have relieved the pain, and it would not take Him seven minutes, but He had other plans. He gently carried me and sustained me through the night.

After the Lord had answered and rescued me from that dark and difficult night I began to think about His gentleness and then began to examine myself. I thought first of my family and the fact that I was not always gentle with them. I considered my thought life, and I was not always gentle in my estimation of strangers and even friends. I considered my ministry, and realized my approach to leading was not always marked with gentleness.

I was praying and thinking of gentleness as I returned home and continued to recover. Sometimes I was gentle, other times not. At one point Sarah said that she liked me on morphine because I was really nice. That was funny at first, and then not so much later because I realized it was true.

As I started to feel better, I was not so nice. Though I would like to blame some of my irritability on the effects I was experiencing as I was coming off the narcotics, I knew differently. I began to see this as a character flaw that only the Holy Spirit could correct. I began to realize that I needed Jesus to rescue me from my lack of gentleness.

This confession is not easy. But it would have been even harder two months ago before I was in the hospital. In my physical weakness, I was able to see clearly a spiritual weakness that I had long overlooked. My physical weakness became a metaphor for my need. My body needed outside intervention to heal. My spirit needed the same.

In the days ahead, I want God’s help to tell this part of His story. As Paul said in,

[Philippians 4:5](#)

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

I need God to be near. In me, helping me. You see, I do not always do a good job of telling God’s story, whether I am doing it with my lips or with my life. I have a feeling that I am not the only one. I needed to be rescued from my lack of gentleness. Jesus is rescuing me from my old ways as He ushers in new life.

From what does He need to rescue you?