

Series Slide

I first saw the movie "The Never Ending Story" when I was about 8 years old. Its one of those classic 80s fantasy genre movies.

A few years ago, I read the book.

Here's how it goes..

A kid named Bastian, who loves books, is getting bullied by some of his schoolmates. Everyday, they literally throw him in a dumpster.

One day, when the bullies are chasing him, he hides out in an old bookstore...and he finds this old book he's never heard of.

So Bastian skips class, and spends the day reading the book called "The NeverEnding Story" in the school attic.

That book is about a magical land called Fantasia.

Per typical 80s fantasy movies, its full of strange creatures...trolls, Talking Rocks, gnomes, and...Falkor the Luckdragon...which sort of looked like a flying shag bathroom rug with an animatronic dog face.

The plot is complicated in the book that Bastian reads...but basically, Fantasia is on the verge of disappearing because this malevolent force called "The Nothing" is slowly causing it disintegrate.

Fantasia's ruler, the child Empress, is sick and dying, and its believed that if the people of Fantasia can find a cure for her...that it would stop the NOTHING from destroying their world.

So they call for a Hero to go on a quest. Another kid. This child warrior is named Atreyu. His job is to fight off all of the NOTHING's evil minions, locate the cure for the Empress...and save Fantasia from the power of the NOTHING.

Just before the movie ends...Atreyu is dead...Fantasia has been destroyed into just fragments of floating rocks in space...and all that remains is the Empress in her palace.

...that's where it gets really strange. But its also the best part.

See, all along Bastian has been reading this book "The NeverEnding Story" thinking that he was just reading a story. One that he was just a passive observer in. One that didn't require his participation.

He thought the NeverEnding story was just an ordinary book...that starts with "Once Upon a Time" and ends with "THE END". You read it...and close it up...and move on.

But it turns out, with this book...that when he gets to the end...he realizes its not the end.

In fact, the Empress in the story begins to talk to him from the pages of the book.

He's reading a sentence that's addressed to him. And it turns out, that all along the way to fix Fantasia was not really about Atreyu doing something. It was Atreyu who was just bringing Bastian's attention to Fantasia.

In order to save Fantasia, Bastian had to be a willing and believing participant in the story. He had to have faith that this wasn't just an ordinary book. He had to give the Empress a name.

So...as Fantasia is on the verge of extinction, falling apart, the Empress pleads with Bastian to give her a name...and finally- he realizes he has to act. so he runs to the window of the school attic...and screams "MOONCHILD!"...which is weird...but for whatever reason, that's the name that saves Fantasia.

Immediately, Bastian is transferred himself into the story, flying on the back of Falkor the dragon...and he's looking out over a completely remade Fantasia. He sees Atreyu, alive again riding his horse in an open field. All the characters who had been ripped apart by the Nothing, were now alive again and flourishing.

Soaring through the air, Bastian says, "Its more beautiful than I ever dreamed! Its like the NOTHING NEVER WAS!"

Or to put it like it the author does in the book,

"Nothing is lost. Everything is transformed."

Then, Bastian is suddenly flying on Falkors back, not over Fantasia, but over his home city. And he and Falkor chase the bullies into a back alley where the bullies jump into a dumpster to hide.

All wrongs have been righted. Justice is served. Beauty is observed.

Nothing is lost...Everything is transformed.

Title Side- "The Never-Ending Transcendent Story: How the Gospel Transforms Us"- Mark 4:1-20

I told you last week- as we started this journey to understand why Transcendent Purpose is so important to live the GOOD LIFE- I told you that understanding the story you are in...and being sure your life is coherent with that is extremely important.

To find deep residing joy in life you have to be living for a story bigger than you.

I don't know if you ever noticed, but Jesus often addressed people using stories.

Like...A LOT.

He didn't walk up to people and say, "God's love is unconditional". Instead, he said, "There was a woman looking for a coin. There was a shepherd who had 100 sheep. There was a man with 2 sons. There was a guy who found a buried treasure. Once upon a time, a man got beat up and left for dead..."

And listen...don't you want to hear that more?

Don't you long to hear stories more than you do propositional statements.

In today's text in the Gospel of Mark- we're going to find Jesus in storytelling mode.

...and if you look close enough...

...you'll find him telling...not just his disciples...but you ...that Nothing is Lost. Everything is Transformed...and that if you stick with the story long enough... you'll find a way into it.

Mark 4:1-20

Again he began to teach by the sea, and a very large crowd gathered around him. So he got into a boat on the sea and sat down, while the whole crowd was by the sea on the shore.

2 He taught them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them, 3 "Listen! Consider the sower who went out to sow. 4 As he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground where it didn't have much soil, and it grew up quickly, since the soil wasn't deep. 6 When the sun came up, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it didn't produce fruit. 8 Still other seed fell on good ground and it grew up, producing fruit that increased thirty, sixty, and a hundred times." 9 Then he said, "Let anyone who has ears to hear listen."

10 When he was alone, those around him with the Twelve asked him about the parables. 11 He answered them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to those outside, everything comes in parables 12 so that

they may indeed look,

and yet not perceive;

they may indeed listen,

and yet not understand;

otherwise, they might turn back

and be forgiven."

13 Then he said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand all of the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 Some are like the word sown on the path. When they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word sown in them. 16 And others are like seed sown on rocky ground. When they hear the word, immediately they receive it with joy. 17 But they have no root; they are short-lived. When distress or persecution comes because of the word, they immediately fall away. 18 Others are like seed sown among thorns; these are the ones who hear the word, 19 but the worries of this age, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20 And those like seed sown on good ground hear the word, welcome it, and produce fruit thirty, sixty, and a hundred times what was sown."

Transition: Today, I want you show you that the Nothing is real. And that you, like Bastian...are being called into a story to fight it.

- When Jesus tells this story about this sower of seeds...he's giving you a way in to a NeverEnding story where Nothing is lost. And Everything is Transformed.

1) The gospel story is power.

- Jesus isn't telling this story about seeds from out of nowhere.
- In fact, this is what biblical scholars call a Markan sandwich.
- It's a literary technique that Mark likes to use where he divides up a story, like 2 pieces of bread...and he puts another story in the middle of it that explains it.
- So, lets look at the meat on this sandwich.
- **V 10-11**
- Jesus gets away from the crowd, alone with his disciples,
- That's important. Mark is all about distinguishing between insiders and outsiders. The disciples and the crowd. Those in the house and those outside the house.
- So, this is a talk for insiders. Not for the fickle crowd.
- Additionally, Jesus says, "I'm giving you secret of the kingdom of God and these parables are a way that those who are inside get the secret...even though you don't understand it yet..."

- So, Mark is showing us in these verses that Jesus is delivering a secret about the Kingdom of God to those on the inside.
- Those who are following him.
- **V 13**
- Finally, Jesus tells them that this parable in particular is the one they need to understand if they are going to understand any other parable.
- In other words...this is the key that unlocks the meaning of all the other parables. This is the story that helps them understand all the other stories he will tell.
- And this story is about seeds.
- Actually, the whole Bible is about seeds...which is exactly why Jesus tells this story.
- Let me show you.
- **Gen 1:28a (end at fill the earth) & Gen 1:29**
- The story begins with God creating man and woman in a garden. Their job is to be fruitful and multiply. In other words, they are to give birth. To cultivate human seed.
- ...and they are supposed to cultivate plants and trees that are full of seeds.
- **Gen 3:16a (end at children) & 3:17b-18 (start at "cursed")**
- Well, instead of believing God...they turned against him.
- They believed the story that a serpent told them about God.
- ...and their jobs, related to seeds were cursed.
- Giving birth would be painful, and making plants grow would be filled with adversity...thorns thistles and sweat would have to go into making seeds grow into plants.
- **Gen 3:15**
- But, God tells this little story. This heroic little story... about a seed... that will crush the head of the serpent.
- That word "offspring" means SEED.

- The SEED of the woman will Strike or crush the SEED of the serpent.
- It's a classic good verses evil story.
- So, the answer to the curse on our seed, is a good SEED that will defeat the evil SEED.
- Fast forward a few centuries...and we get to this guy named Abraham.
- **Gen 15:5**
- Abraham has a problem.
- He is supposed to have children...his wife is supposed to give birth, and God has promised him that his SEED, or offspring, will bless the whole world...
- But his wife can't get pregnant.
- So he goes to God and tries to bargain.
- But God, makes him this promise...tells him this story...that his SEED will be more numerous than all stars in the sky.
- That is where the Hebrew people come from. Abraham's seed.
- Ok, fast forward lots more years to the prophet Isaiah.
- Isaiah is warning the Hebrew people that because of their sin and worshipping other gods, that Babylon is going to come into their land and take over. And carry them off into exile.
- So take a look at what Isaiah says.
- **Isaiah 6:13**
- Isaiah has this vision of God sitting in the temple. And God gives him a mission to go out and preach a story. To tell the Hebrew people to repent and follow God again.
- But God says, "Nobody is going to listen to you. Most of Israel is going to be destroyed."
- And he gives this image...he tells this story about a forest that is burned to the ground... and all that's left is this stump.
- With a little green leaf sticking out of it.
- And God says, "That stump will be the HOLY SEED"
- That dead looking stump will spring up to be the offspring I promised you.

- Isaiah will go on in **Chapter 32**. To talk more about this Seed.
- And in chapter 35 he tells the story of what happens when the seed takes root...this rich forest that had been burned down and turned to a desert...is now coming back to life.

Isaiah 35:1 & 3-4

**The wilderness and the dry land will be glad;
the desert will rejoice and blossom like a wildflower.**

**3 Strengthen the weak hands,
steady the shaking knees!**

4 Say to the cowardly:

"Be strong; do not fear!

Here is your God; vengeance is coming.

- A destitute wasteland, now producing flowers and vegetation again.
- Everything that looked dead, living again.
- **Nothing is lost. Everything is transformed.**
- And- look- because of this hope- those who fear can have real courage. Those who are weak can be strengthened. Because God will bring justice. He will make all things right.
- That's the gospel. The good news.
- **Isaiah 40:7-8**
- He talks about the WORD OF GOD. And the breath of God. How grass and flowers fade and die. But the word of God lasts forever.
- It's a throwback to Genesis. Where the Word of God created everything...and the breath of God gave life to humans.
- Then he talks about taking the word of God, the good news to people. And how important it is that they hear...exactly what they weren't doing at the first of the book of Isaiah.
- And there is all this talk about a sowing seeds and the word of God.
- **Isaiah 55:10-11**
- Finally, toward the end of Isaiah, we get this picture of a land that is being rained on by God. And its flourishing again. And there is Seed for the Sower...and there is food to eat...
- And God relates it to his word...
- ...in other words...God is saying, IT is MY WORD that will go out like seed and bring up this return of flourishing.

- My word will bring back the garden that was lost by sin.
- Look for the seed. Look for my word. Listen for GOOD NEWS.

Mini transition- Ok...that's the big story from the OT. The super shortened cliff notes version.

- But can you see, that when Jesus tells this story about seeds and a sower...that he's not just using an illustration for an agrarian culture...
- ...he is tapping into this bigger story of hope and promise that the Jews are living under.
- **Mark 4:12**
- That's why he quotes from Isaiah 6.
- He is saying "The key to understanding all my little stories...is realizing that they are all about this big story... of rescue."
- When Jesus quotes from Isaiah 6 here...he is not just wanting you to think about that little part of Isaiah. But all of what Isaiah says.
- About the power of God's word.
- About its power to create.
- About its power to bring life out of death. To make a burned up forest turn into the Garden of Eden.
- **Mark 4:14**
- He is wanting you to see Good News. That in this seed that's scattered...which he tells us is the word of God...that there is the power to bring flourishing and life out of death.

Now...let me show you a couple of places in the NT that keep this theme going.

- **James 1:18**
- Talks about the church being "BORN OF" the word of God that we would be a kind of fruit.
- This is all birth, seed and word language.
- **1 Peter 1:23-25**

- Peter says we are BORN AGAIN ...not of perishable seed...like the flowers that fade... but of imperishable seed through the living and abiding Word of God.
- Then he quotes...ISAIAH 40.

So what is all this saying?

Romans 1:16

- The gospel...the word of God...the good news of the Kingdom of God...is power.
- It doesn't just HAVE power.
- It is power.
- It is the power to undo everything that kills us.
- It is the power to re-create us.
- It has the power to stop the Nothing. And transform everything ... into a kingdom, that will last forever.

Mark 4:8

- And if you look closely you'll actually see the power here.
- See, a good crop yield would yield about 6 times what was sown.
- But this seed, this Good News...this WORD OF GOD...has the power to yield a hundred times.
- Its supernatural.

Back to 1)

- Jesus is telling his disciples, "When I give you the word of God, I am giving the power to change the world. I am giving you the one thing you the one thing the world needs more than anything. Now, that doesn't mean that everybody is going to receive it...but it does mean I want you to go out and spread it everywhere."
- See Jesus is making sure his disciples understand that they are living in a bigger story. That what he is doing is not just about the here and now...but its an ancient story that stretches into the future. That what they are doing with this gospel seed he is giving them is going to affect eternity.
- Its like the end of the NeverEnding story.
- When the princess calls out to Bastian. "You have to give me a name."

- Jesus is inviting his disciples into this story.
- Come, participate.
- Come, sow seed.
- Come, take the message to the world that Nothing is Lost. And Everything is Transformed.

Transition: So now the question is...if this word of God...this good news... this gospel is so powerful... exactly how does that power get released?

2) Gospel power is only released when its heard deeply.

- In the NeverEnding story, one of my favorite parts is right at the end...when the world of Fantasia comes into Bastian's world.
- His city. Where he is daily beat up by bullies.
- And he flies on Falkor's back and chases down the bullies.
- Here's why I love it.
- Because its one thing for Bastian to get caught up in this story, to see himself in Fantasia...
- ...its another thing entirely for Fantasia to affect his day-to-day life.
- To come into his problems. His difficulties. His relationships.
- You know, that's exactly the picture the Bible gives us about the way the gospel transforms us.
- Its not just a story of the sweet by and by...
- Its not just a "go to heaven when you die" sort of story...
- No...it comes into this world. Right now. And it brings flourishing and life...into this LIFE.
- The power of the gospel affects life NOW.
- But only if you're listening.
- Here's what I mean.
- **V 3**
- Notice, Jesus starts this whole story with the command to "Listen!"
- IN fact, the word hear or listen is used about 8 times in these 20 verses.
- IN the story there are 3 types of ground that don't allow the seed to release its life re-creating power.

- **V 4-7**
- And in every case the problem is depth.
- How far did the seed go in.
- The first seeds fell on a path. Hard ground.
- So the seed just sat on top of the ground.
- It didn't go in the soil AT ALL.
- The second seed fell on rocky ground, so it didn't go in DEEP ENOUGH.
- The third seed goes in deep, but it doesn't go in deeper than all the weeds and thorns.
- See, the problem each time is the seed doesn't go deep enough.
- **V 20**
- But the last seed, the one that produces flourishing and rebirth...the one that brings a harvest... it goes in deep.
- HOW?
- This seed, this WORD, goes into people who HEAR it and ACCEPT it.
- You know what that means?
- It means that this gospel story starts to define the way you live.
- It means that you begin to live like you believe its true.
- It means that you so take it in...and meditate on it...think about it... talk about it...turn it over in your heart and head a thousand times...
- ...and then the story begins to shape you.
- See, stories shape us.
- For example.
- Every time I watch a scary movie (which is not often)...you know what I do when I go up to bed.
- Well, first, I flick on all the downstairs lights and double check the door locks.
- But then, when I turn the last light off downstairs...I always run up the stairs sort of high-stepping.
- See, that little story has shaped me.
- Its not a true story...but even the 2 hours I spent watching that movie has shaped my actions.

- If I would have watched an episode of house hunters that night...I would have not gone to bed like that.
- ...because this good news...that God loves you.
- That he is forgiving your sin.
- That he is inviting you to know him...to be on the inside...
- That story is supposed to shape the way you live.
- Its power resides in how much time you spend thinking about it. Meditating on it. Reading it. Talking about it.

NEW QUESTION: What is the story you spend time meditating on?

One told by social media? One told by an influence? A story told by a political party? A popular person? A story told by your parents about how you needed to be an achiever? A story told by psychiatrist about how you are just a diagnosis and and you will always be that?

Those stories will shape you. You will give yourself to an idea that doesn't transcend the world. It will actually strip you of purpose.

Let me show you from Scripture how the gospel confronts this.

- **Gal 2:11a (end at face) & 14**
- In the letter to the Galatians, Paul confronts Peter...because he is favoring Jews over Gentiles...
- And he says, that this racism is not in step with the gospel.
- In other words, Peter at that moment is living under a different story.
- He's not living under the gospel story, that says all people are created in God's image...and that this EVERYTHING IS TRANSFORMED sort of re-birth is not JUST for Abraham's seed, but for the WHOLE WORLD...
- See. Paul goes to Peter and he doesn't throw random morality at him "Don't be a racist because that's bad!"
- Instead, he sows the seed of the gospel again.
- He says, you aren't better than the Gentiles. You had to have your sins forgiven...and so do those Gentiles.
- Come on, Peter. Live in this gospel story. Don't let the story that Jews are better than Gentiles tell you how to live...let the gospel sink in deep. Think it over. Look what Jesus has done for you...and now...love like that.

Back to 2)

- Can you imagine if that last scene in the never ending story... Bastian soaring the sky on the back of a luckdragon...and he swoops down into the streets of his city...and he sees the bullies who have constantly been beating him up..
- ...but strangely, instead of chasing them down in a back alley into a dumpster...
-he pulls back on Falkor's ears and says, "NO! Run. Those are the bullies! They're gonna get me again."
- See, it doesn't make sense! If you are riding on the back of a dragon...you don't have to fear 5th grade bullies!
- But this is exactly what some us do with the gospel SEED EVERY SINGLE DAY.
- We "hear" it. But we're not LISTENING TO IT.
- And Jesus gives us two ways we do that.
- **V 16-17**
- See, some folks hear the gospel...and it immediately SOUNDS like good news to them.
- But then suffering and difficulty come into your life...and you just throw away the word you received.
- You lose a job. You get cancer. Your marriage gets difficult or a spouse leaves you. You get put in a position where you have to persevere and wait.
- And all of sudden you start living in this story of entitlement. What you deserve. That if God really loved you...he wouldn't take you through this. And so, you leave the word implanted in you...and you go find a different story to live under.
- One that lets you be about you.
- But see, the gospel doesn't say that difficulty won't come your way. In fact, Jesus promises his followers that suffering will come our way.
- Christianity is entirely based around a God who descended and humbled himself, and died on a cross.

- See, if you live in that story, a God that knows your pain...and promises not to leave you in the middle of it...it produces a hope to get through it.
- You ride the dragon right through cancer.remember the seed is going to bloom. Its going to produce fruit. Even if you die...one day, you will resurrect...and chase that cancer right into a dumpster.
- Remember, you may not have money, but one day...the seed of the stump will produce a whole forest of plenty...
- ...and like Isaiah 55 says..."Come buy bread and water with no money" Everything you need is given to you by a Father that loves you.
- Yes. Your family may be falling apart...yes, you may have lost a loved one...but live in the story that is telling you Nothing is Lost. Everything is transformed....and watch it transform who you are RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE of that suffering.
- **V 18-19**
- Then...there are those who hear the gospel...receive it...but only at the depth they receive anything in life.
- So...its not that you are rejecting the word...you just don't really pay attention to it anymore than you pay attention to your job. Or your family. Or your fantasy football roster. Or your video games. Or your TV shows. Or your spot as PTA president. Or your house. Or your laundry. Or school. Or BUSY BUSY BUSY BUSY BUSY.

No purpose above the noise. No higher love above all the other loves of your life. Everything is just all jumbled up in your life.

and what Jesus says here is You start to fall for the lies of wealth. Do you know what the deceitfulness of wealth is?

If I have money, I can buy my security. My safety. I can be protected from calamity and evil. I can move to a different neighborhood where evil can't get me. I can put my kids in a school where evil can't reach them. I can make sure that no matter what comes my way- I'll always have enough to overcome tragedy.

And- the deceitfulness of wealth says that not only can you buy safety and salvation- you can also buy beauty. All the toys- the cars, the vacations, the clothes, the make up, the phone, the house- you can surround yourself with the best of everything... and not only will you feel beautiful...other people will respect and take notice.

Sure- you wouldn't say that outloud- but if I looked at your calendar- and at your bank statement- what story would God find you living under?

The deceitfulness of wealth and the desire for other things will CHOKER out the good seed of the gospel...and completely alter your priorities.

- That's what so many of you who are so busy are doing.
- You are BUSY BUSY BUSY...making the money...creating the life you want...
- And Jesus is telling- if you have ears to hear today- **"You are living in a story where EVERYTHING IS LOST and NOTHING is transformed."**
- The WORD of God is a part of your life...but its not a story you live in.
- So...you just sort of show up to a preaching event at church a couple times of month...and that checks the Xian box for you.
- ...but a different story is telling you how to treat your neighbor.
- Thorns have taken over the place where a garden is supposed to grow.
- Your story says, "Look for people who have something to offer you, and be kind to them. Treat people with respect who are in your tax bracket...others are beneath you. Watch out for people of a different political persuasion than you. Look out for folks who might ruin your reputation."
- But see that's not the gospel story. The gospel story is that God descended. Even Jesus while he was on earth was relating to people who were not respected in his society.
- But see, if the gospel doesn't go in deep. If you don't continually keep it in front of you...you will start to live other stories.

- And you'll have this incredible power. THIS DRAGON that wants to be released into your world of fear and anxiety, and pride and lust...
- ...but you just keep it caged up.
- You put the seed on a shelf...and let it gather dust.
- While you keep trying to get a rock to bloom.
-

Back to 2)

- Listen, That's why I'm constantly telling you to read the Bible.
- To be in a gospel community.
- And by community, I don't mean "find a group of people that like to do the same things you do. Or that you like to play board games with or hang out with."
- By community, I mean people that are living the gospel story. That when you start to live in some other story, will be like Paul was to Peter...and confront you to your face.
- But not with a "you shouldn't be doing that" sort of plea.
- No, people, who will, like Jesus, tell you a story.
- That will sow the gospel into your life and say, "Wait a second, why aren't you riding a gospel dragon into this fear or lust or pride or selfishness or fight with your spouse or anxiety about parenting or decision about where to work?"
- And then they'll point you one more time to the gospel story...in hopes that you hear it, turn back and start believing again.

Transition: I want to end with this: I want you to see the power of the seed. I want you to see the gospel. See,

3) The gospel's power starts with weakness...and ends in eternal strength.

- Seeds are interesting.
- The smallest little speck...turns into a huge tree.
- A tiny acorn...into a mighty oak tree.
- And then...that oak tree has MORE ACORNS...and all of those fall off into the ground...and they grow up...and all of a sudden...a tiny little seed has turned into a great forest.
- Be Fruitful and Multiply.

- Bastian, the bullied kid with no friends and no power, becomes the kid who rides on the back of a dragon...with all of Fantasia as his family
- Be fruitful and multiply.
- Its interesting, in Fantasia...all the heroes are children.
- Offspring.
- Seed.
- **Matt 18:2-4**
- And when Jesus comes...he welcomes the little children...when everyone thinks they are unimportant.
- He talks about being BORN AGAIN. Born of the Spirit.
- He talks of us as children of God.
- God as our Father.
- He says "The kingdom of God is made up of CHILDREN."
- Which are a lot like seed.
- They start small. As small as a mustard seed.
- And they grow up and become strong.
- But they never enter the world strong.
- They aren't BORN mature.
- We are born WEAK.
- You know, when a lot of us think about following Jesus...we want to zapped. We want to be grown adults immediately. We want power. We want the spotlight. We want to "use our gifts". We want to lead...not serve
- But the kingdom of God belongs to children. To servants. To the weak.
- Remember the gospel story all the way back to Genesis 3- is that the serpent's head will be crushed through the OFFSPRING of a woman. The world is saved through a seed.
- Its no wonder Jesus put on flesh. God born into a manger.
- Not to be heard from for thirty years.

- Planted in the world...unnoticed.
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- **John 1:14**
- John calls Jesus THE WORD. He says that the Word of God created the world- All things were created through Jesus Christ...and now in weakness- that word comes into his creation...to re-create what was broken by us. The Holy Seed from the stump.
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- But as Isaiah prophesied- he grew up and was scorned and crucified. Mocked. His weakness was exposed. His blood ran into the earth. ..But by his wounds we are healed. His blood was the seed that brings us life.

Because he died in our place....you now have a chance to hear the gospel and be saved.

- And three days later...from that acorn...from that STUMP...A great tree grew up and split the gravestone in two.
- And out of that tree a million acorns are growing. Planting...falling... and as they carry with them the good story...
- ...they are multiplying. Bringing up a forest. Are you one of them?
- **John 12:24-25**
- **Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.**
- See, for all those who are living in the gospel story...our lives become seed too. Like Jesus died to bring us life...we lose our lives... we give ourselves away to love other people. And in so doing...we plant a gospel seed...and we trust God to send rain from heaven and bring up a crop.

I have an invitation for 3 groups of people today. (pop up on screen one at a time)

1- I'm ready to be saved/baptized.

2- I commit to be good soil.

3- I want to pray for the gospel to take root in _____

1- Those ready to receive the Word. You've never received Jesus, or gotten serious with walking with him, and it's time. Jesus said that if you hear and receive the parable- you can turn back from the way you are going and be forgiven.

Have you heard? Will you say this morning, "I'm ready to receive Jesus and ready for him to change my life. Not just a religious emotion, but real life-change."

You come and take the hand of one of our prayer counselors and let us pray with you?

We have a baptism Sunday on October 18th. Will you follow Jesus in believer's baptism. Baptism is an outward act that depicts an inward reality. That you have died with Christ and have been risen to this new life in him.

That Nothing is Lost. And Everything is Transformed. Will you come and speak with a prayer counselor today...and you can unlock your phone- and sign up by tapping the seat back in front of you.

2- Families (or individuals) who realize that you have not been good soil—you've let the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches crowd out God's word in your family's life. You haven't rejected God's word, but you have neglected it. And today, you want that to change. I want to ask you to take the incredibly bold, and humble, step of drawing the line in the sand and saying, "Today that changes."

You don't have to walk forward to make that decision but it will help solidify it and we'll pray with you.

I challenge you to grab your spouse and do that.

For some of you, this will go down in your family as a profound moment where your whole family changed.

3- Finally, you have someone to pray for—someone that you have put the Word in and you want to see the word bring forth fruit 30- fold, 60-fold, or 100-fold, why not come up and boldly ask for that. I believe this a promise God wants us to claim and it's time for you to declare that boldly. You come. I'll pray, then you come.

