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## *The Story: Overture* Luke 24:27

Everyone loves a good story. We can become so familiar with a story that even the opening line reminds of the entire story.

"A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away..." [Star Wars]

"All children, except one, grow up." [Peter Pan]

"There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it."  
[The Voyage of the Dawn Treader]

"The night Max wore his wolf suit and made mischief of one kind and another his mother called him 'WILD THING!' and Max said 'I'LL EAT YOU UP!' [Where the Wild Things Are]

"In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit." [The Hobbit]

"Call me Ishmael." [Moby Dick]

"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." [Pride and Prejudice]

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair." [A Tale of Two Cities]

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." [The Bible]

The Bible is a story unlike any of the others, for this is a story that we are in. It's also a story that gives us meaning and purpose in our life, that explains why things are the way they are. It's also one of the most challenging stories to read; it's not just one book, but 66 books written by 40 different authors written over 1500 years. Poetry, history, gospels, letters, law, prophecy, all sorts of different genres... They are not chronologically ordered. Pick up your Bibles and flip to table of contents. There are 5 books of Moses, History, Wisdom, and Major and Minor Prophets.

If this story is so important, then we want to do our best to understand it as a church. Why we chose to read The Story: it is chronological, abridged, but it is the whole story.

### **Creator**

And so the story begins! “In the beginning, God...” This is the story of God, the story of Jesus being the way that God is present with his people. And Jesus said in John 5:39 that all the scriptures—that is the whole story you’re holding—bears witness about him. And Luke 24:27 records Jesus telling his disciples everything that the Story says concerning who Jesus is. This is the Scarlet thread none of Scripture makes sense without Jesus in the middle of it.

So let’s trace a Scarlet Thread—the Scarlet Thread that is Jesus throughout all the Scriptures, Genesis to Revelation. So get out your bulletin because we are each going to create the timeline of history and trace the Thread of Jesus and see how Jesus is and has always been the way for God to be present with his people.

Turn to the very first page of the story. Genesis 1:1: *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.”* And creation began! We see the Father God... Creator; the Spirit of God... Creator; and the spoken Word of God (with a capital W), the Son, Jesus... Creator. Colossians 1:16 says that through the Son all things were created. The Word, Jesus, spoke and where there was nothing, there was now light and over 6 periods of time we would also get plants and animals, water, sky, planets, stars... and the Creator spoke over it all and said was good.

And so from the beginning, Jesus is Creator. That’s our first step in our timeline, and Elana is going to come up and draw an image of a tree for us to start our timeline of The Story. You draw a tree as well. The tree reminds us that Jesus is Creator.

And then this Trinitarian God enacted his plan to share his creation and his dominion over it with a unique creation—a creation made in his image, in his likeness, that he could dwell with and speak with and share his world with—he created man. Male and female, he created them. And they were very good. Father, Son and Holy Spirit made the way for God to present with his people and there they were—Adam and Eve—in a garden of creation with God.

God had given Adam, a rule to follow: don’t eat the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For man was not to experience creation and know everything apart from God—but with God and through his presence we were to know all things. But an enemy introduced a question that began to beat in the heart of man Does God love me? Can I trust trust him and trust that his command to not eat is a good one? And so they ate of the tree and sought knowledge apart from God. This is what we call

sin—the positioning of the heart that is opposed to God. And so in their sin, man was cast out of the garden and out of God’s presence.

But God was not satisfied to be apart from his people. And so while the story begins with this crisis of presence—God and man being separated—the rest of the story is God making a way through Jesus to be present with his people.

### **Priest & Redeemer**

As The Story continues, God finds one man to carry out his plan to be present to his people. That man was Abraham. God promises three things to Abraham: a people, a place, and presence. God begins to fulfil his promises and gives Abraham a son. That son has two sons, and one of those sons has many sons, and a nation is born. Many years later, God rescues that nation from slavery in Egypt through Moses, and leads them to the land he had promised Abraham.

Flip through Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. In that journey to the land God had promised, God begins to prepare the people for how they should live with him and be like him. The problem is that the people didn’t want to live with God, they were afraid of him. The lie of Adam still beat in their hearts.

So God picked out from the people of Israel men called priests who represented the people to God and God to the people. The priest was the one who helped people live by God’s law. When Jesus came, we see in Jesus the ultimate priest. [draw a lamb]

All of the ceremonies and laws of this part of The Story weren't just for their own sake, they also helped prepare the people of Israel for Jesus. When he came, they could recognize him because he fulfilled those ceremonies and laws. Jesus shows us who God is like and how to live with him.

Jesus is Redeemer. God spends years in the wilderness patiently teaching his people who he is like and how to live with him. The time comes for them to take the land which God had promised to their father Abraham. A time of great turmoil and conflict ensues. “Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.”

Flip through Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, and Ruth. God sends men and women called judges, they were redeemers. In them, we see a hint of Jesus as the redeemer who saves us from ourselves. [draw 2 swords] We’re excited to talk more about how this part of the story shows us how Jesus will be the redeemer.



### King

The people looked around at the rest of the globe and weren't satisfied with God leading the armies and calling all the shots. They wanted a figurehead, a king like all the other nations. So we get the stories of the Kings in the "first and seconds," if you will, of the Old Testament—First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings, First and Second Chronicles. There are a slew of kings, more bad than good. They divide God's people, get really rich, build God a temple in Jerusalem, win some wars and lose others. But in the midst of them all, we get glimpses that Jesus is King. So let's draw a CROWN and remember that Jesus is the way that God is present with his people, and one of those ways is through his role as King.

We get to glance at Jesus as king in the story of David and how he was "a man after God's own heart," says 1 Samuel 13:14. Jesus leads his people into battle and comes out victorious, like Saul so often did. Jesus is wise and discerns with great justice, like Solomon. So we will get ever so dim glimpses of the beautiful reign and rule of Jesus in a few of these kings. But most won't listen to God and will lead his people astray. Rather than drawing near to God, most kings will prevent God's people from being in his presence. But because ordinary kings wanted to build their own kingdom and amass their own wealth, rather than build God's kingdom and share His wealth... we have a large chunk of small books, called the prophets...

### Prophet

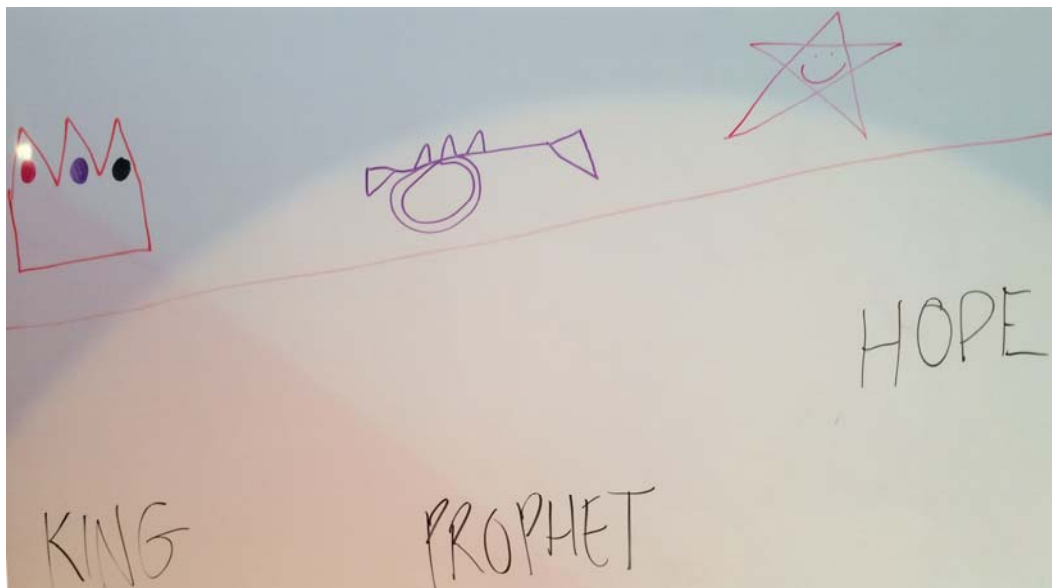
[Flip to the end of the OT]

These prophets were sent to remind the people of the agreement they had made with God way back when Moses led them, about how they would live in the land he had given them. The people did not want to live like God, to have his love and his justice, did not want to live with him. The prophets spoke hard truths on God's behalf. They spoke of how much God wished to be with them and woo them to himself. But they also spoke of what the consequences of rejecting God... a time of great sadness, but also of great hope. [draw a trumpet]

Jesus speaks to us hard truths: truths of God's love, but also of the death and sorrow that awaits us without God's presence.

## Hope

We go into a period where God is silent between the Old and New Testaments. But before we do, God lays out a plan of hope. And Jesus is the Hope that God sets before his people long before he is ever born. Books like Daniel, Nehemiah, and Ezra prepare us for the Hope of Jesus. So draw a STAR next in your timeline to remember that Jesus is hope.



## Man

And just as the world clock turns from BC to AD, and we turn the page to the New Testament, that star of hope appears in the sky and Jesus is born as a Man. God himself came as a Man to make a way to be present with his people. So Jesus is man is the next stop on our timeline. [Draw a stick figure next]

From that original moment of sin crisis in the garden, now after thousands of years of men proving over and over again that all men have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, we reach the climax of the story. So in God's perfect timing, he sent Jesus: his Son, the Creator, the fulfillment of the promised son born to Abraham, a Priest who could intercede for us, a Redeemer who would pay the price for us. A King to rule over us with justice, a Prophet who would guide our way back to God... the Hope of God speaking to us again and being with us. Jesus, the God/Man—fully God, fully Man—present with his people... finally.

Jesus the God/Man would grow up and say, "I am the Way. I am the Truth. I am the Life. And no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Jesus is the Way—the ONLY way—that God is present with his people.

We see, in Jesus, all that those who are made in God's image should be and should look like. Jesus healed, he sought justice, he opened eyes that are blind, he proclaimed liberty to captives. He the God/Man is friends with fisherman and tax collectors, with politicians and religious leaders. Do you want to know what God looks like? Look at Jesus, the God/Man.

After showing us how man was intended to live in God's unbroken presence and after making sure that he left a legacy of disciple-makers who would show people who God really is, then Jesus took on the mission of making the way for us to be present with God forever. And so he went to the cross to pay the penalty for the hardness of our hearts, for our sin, for the lie that we believed. And then he rose from the dead so that death would not be the end for us... but that our end would be the end of the God/Man. Our end will be resurrection just as Jesus' life on earth ended with resurrection. Jesus in his death and resurrection is the way for God to be present with his people forever.

### **Spirit & ReCreator**

Jesus is Spirit. Jesus came as a man, but a man can only be in one place at one time, so he sent his Spirit to live inside of us. This part of the story is about how the Spirit of Jesus enables his people to do amazing things. This is the part of the Story we are still in, and we've already been talking about it! [draw a dove]

We can still spy God on the move, through his Spirit. Jesus is Re-Creator. This is the end of the story, yet to come. (Flip to the last chapter of Revelation).

Jesus comes back, and he restores the creation and us to himself. Just as we were with God in the beginning, so we will be again. [draw another tree]

Jesus is the re-creator. He will make all things new. Jesus is the way that God is present with his people.



## **Why The Story?**

The symbols and this timeline are not one and done. They are the symbols of who Jesus is for you today. Each symbol represents how someone needs Jesus to be present with them today. So the story isn't just for us, it's for those whom we will need to tell the story. What symbol resonates with you? As I pray, redraw that symbol large... this is the way that Jesus is present with you.