

## Me and My So Called Life...

### Galatians 1: 11-24

<sup>11</sup>For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; <sup>12</sup>for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>13</sup>You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. <sup>14</sup>I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. <sup>15</sup>But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup>to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, <sup>17</sup>nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus. <sup>18</sup>Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; <sup>19</sup>but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup>In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! <sup>21</sup>Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, <sup>22</sup>and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; <sup>23</sup>they only heard it said, "The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy." <sup>24</sup>And they glorified God because of me.

Music to prepare for Prayer—Tauren Wells—*God's Not Done With You*

Pastoral Prayer—Bailee Musson

God of Life, today we thank you for the opportunity we have to remember we do not know each other very well. Remind us that when we see others, we do not know the journey they have been on or the difficulties they have experienced. When we see them, we do not know if they are celebrating great joy or dealing with difficult grief. Help us to look past what we can see on the outside of others to see what is on the inside. Invite us to get to know one another so we can more completely love one another.

Remind us that Jesus came to us very different from us. He came to us as God humbled to be human and he came to teach us to see one another who we really are. Invite us this morning to look beyond the things we think we know to discover what we can know and guide us into what we should know so we can live together in peace.

Help us to hear the words of Paul and remember that old ways are not always the best ways and that change is sometimes necessary so your Kingdom can come. Help us to know that sometimes we do get things wrong. Sometimes we see Jesus and we want to reject Him because he isn't the Jesus we think we are looking for! Use us instead to let others see Him for who he can be and for who he really is!

As we do your work here, let us also look at the work that others do. We know how hard we work to serve you and we know how tired we get sometimes. Remind us that there are others doing your work as well and let us always give you praise for the work they are doing. Glorify your work in all we do and in all that others also do to serve you. Let us praise you for their work as well as our own and let us always remember that all of it is your work.

Remind us that while we work here in this place there others in other places doing your work as well. Some others find themselves in strange places today defending the work you have called all of us to do, protecting our rights, our freedoms, our liberties. So often we take their work for granted because they are far away and we cannot see them. Keep them safe and let them do your work and will. Return them safely to us and let us gather around them, giving you all the

praise and honor and glory. Let us rejoice at their safe return and remember your protection of them always.

Remind us too that there are others in our world who do not believe the same things we do. Remind us that even though there are some who would speak an angry word or lift a hand or weapon to harm us, they too are still your creatures and you love them. Today Lord, we pray for our enemies. Keep them safe and share your amazing love with them as you do with us.

Then, one day, on a day you alone know, pass by us all, friend and foe alike and call us all to you. Lead us to a place that you alone have chosen and there, teach us to lay down our weapons and join together our arms. Arm in arm, lead us to the top of your Holy Mountain and there let us sit at your feet as you teach us from your very mouth how to beat our swords into plough shares and our spears into pruning hooks. Today, Lord, teach us your peace! A peace that passes all understanding, a peace where nothing is mission and nothing is broken. Teach us Shalom.

This is our prayer. Open our eyes that we can see you in one another and so that we can see Jesus in everyone. This we pray through the power of Your Holy Spirit and in Jesus' name. Amen!

#### Offering/Doxology—Lucas

L. Will the ushers please come forward—two of you should step forward to take the plates. Lucas brings the plates down from the Alter and prays:

Hey, God! Thanks for everything you give us. You give us way more than we can ever use so we sometimes use what we have for stuff we don't really need. That one is kind of between you and each of us as individuals—whatever. Anyway, help us all to use some of what we have by giving it to you so you can help others who don't have as much and could really use some more just to get by. Use these gifts for what you choose so that your will can be done. Thanks again! Through the power of Your Holy Spirit and in Jesus' name. Amen

While the ushers take the offering, Lucas stands and waits. **A song should be playing while offering is being taken.**

**After offering is taken, ushers wait at the back until Lucas motions them forward by asking everyone to stand.**

**All stand and sing doxology. Lucas takes the plates and returns them to the Altar.**

#### Gospel Lesson—Aidan

##### Luke 7: 11-17

<sup>11</sup>Soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. <sup>12</sup>As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. <sup>13</sup>When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." <sup>14</sup>Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" <sup>15</sup>The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. <sup>16</sup>Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us!" and "God has looked favorably on his people!" <sup>17</sup>This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country

Message: Baylee Musson

*Jesus and My So Called Life*

*Good Morning...* So, I was walking through the common areas of the high school just before school was out and as I walked I was looking around. Unusual for me, cause I am almost always looking down at my phone. You know...everything that happens in the life of a teenager happens on the phone. We get our news, make our plans, look up stuff for tests and even meet people on our phones. Our phones are our lives!

When Pastor Jack takes them from us for mission work, those are the longest 4 hours of the day for me. When we come back for lunch, I try to be the first one in the room where he is so I can be first to get my phone back. All of us are pretty much the same way.

Work...work just passes the time till I can get back on the phone. Sleep...I'll bet I get several hours less sleep a week just so I can be on my phone. Before I came into the sanctuary this morning, I was on my phone. When I get finished here and Lucas finally finishes the blessing...Please Lucas, Make it short. When he finally finishes and we have the group auction, I will race to my phone. To other stuff on my phone and I would probably be doing that right now if I wasn't using my phone to read this sermon to you!

I can't wait to see what you all are posting on your phones about me and this incredible message you are hearing today. Take lots of pictures! Those look really nice on my facebook (which I only use to talk to old people). They also look good when I re-send them on Instagram. Ya'all should really start to use twitter cause that is where all the good stuff really happens.

Anyway, I was walking and looking around and I saw a couple of people I had not seen in awhile. See that girl over there? (Point to one of our youth sitting off to the side of the sanctuary by herself...**we will need a volunteer for this**) I heard on twitter that that girl is the favorite to be head cheerleader next year. All the girls like her and she is really cute! The teachers like her too! She has the inside track to being really popular. Every girl in our school is just a little bit jealous.

See that guy over there? (**Another volunteer needed**) That guy has a great chance to get into any college he wants. That's right! That guy has a brain that just won't quit. He is smart and funny and the girls just won't quit talking about him. At least, that is what keeps coming through on my twitter feed.

My so called life is filled with contact with people I've never met, never even heard of before, but it is also filled with people I do know giving their opinions on events and activities that I maybe had not even considered. I never have to worry about being alone or about having something to do. I can speak to people about things they know nothing about and I can get spoken to about things I do not even know. Truth is only relative to the moment I am in.

It is kind of like Paul when he is talking to the Galatians today. He is reflecting. There was no harm in it. He was remembering how he had persecuted people who he did not even know. He heard they were believing in something new and he wanted to protect the old. How many of us do that! Nobody likes change!

Paul didn't see any harm in what he was doing. He had heard that people he cared about and respected were being belittled and berated by this upstart rabbi called Jesus. He had heard that this Jesus was doing all kinds of great things and that Paul's friends were worried that he would

change things. Paul believed his teachers and the things they said about Jesus and he did not want to see his friends get hurt.

Instead, Paul started to find ways to hurt the enemies of his friends. He started rumors about them and he even tracked them down and had them harmed! Paul never spoke face to face with any of them. He never had a one on one conversation. He simply took the word of others for what they believed and he responded.

Paul had a wonderful opportunity to see those whom he was persecuting...those whom he hated because others told him he should hate them and yet, he chose the easy way out of his situation. The ones Paul listened to were friends who professed to know what was best and Paul chose to believe them instead of searching for himself.

Do you see the girl sitting over there? The one who we were talking about earlier?

**Look at her again!**

Look at how glum she looks. She is supposed to be head cheerleader next year. She is one of the most popular girls in school. Kids love her, faculty respects her but she is sitting there looking like she is close to tears! Why is she so down? Why is she so sorrowful?

Do you see that boy sitting over there? The one we were talking about earlier?

**Look at him again!**

Look how glum he looks. He is one of the most respected students in school. He has his whole future ahead of him. He is supposed to have his choice of schools and careers! Why do you suppose he looks so dejected and down? Why is he so sorrowful? Do you see him?

Here's the thing and it is the thing I want you to hear today! I spend a lot of time on my phone, talking, listening, yes...sometimes gossiping about things I don't know and about things I don't even know I don't know. These conversations amuse me and they keep me entertained. All my friends do the same thing. We don't see any harm in it because we have learned it from others!

We use our phones to communicate and to get information in the same way our parents used to gather in the common areas of the school and point fingers and talk about people they knew nothing about. We use our phones to send pictures and spread the news in the same way our grandparents sat on their front porches spreading news.

Guess what...some of that news we spread is news we have only heard. Some of that news is news we have no knowledge of. Some of that news is the news we have never fact checked. Some of the news is news we got from a friend who is cool and we want to spread that news because we believe sharing it will make us seem more cool.

Some of the news our parents spread was news that was not fact checked either! Some of the finger pointing that went on in school was gossip too! Some of the stuff that was spread about the kids they were pointing at was not true and some of it had no knowledge of another person's situation or circumstance! It was fun and the ones who were doing it saw no harm in it!

When my grandparents or great grandparents used to pick up the phone...yes, they had them too! When they picked up the phone, they listened in on party line conversations because that was a way they could get information they would otherwise have no knowledge of. Sometimes, they spread that information even though they did not have the whole story! It was just harmless conversation that made them feel important!

As Paul speaks to the Galatians today, he reminds them that he participated in those same kinds of conversations. He spread news and pointed fingers and passed on information from the cool kids because he wanted to be thought of as one of the cool kids. He had access to information about others and he used it. He saw no harm in it.

Remember that girl...the one sitting over there. I saw on twitter that she is pregnant. She has been seen with her best friend's boyfriend and lots of people are talking about her. I heard she is thinking about dropping cheerleading. She has no friends and she looks glum because she doesn't know why these things are happening to her! She is a friend of mine and I know none of what is being said is true. I know she is a believer in Jesus and that the boy who is dating her best friend is her cousin. They have been attending a youth group and are planning an event to help the hungry in our town.

The gossip that is being spread is much more interesting to others than the truth I know and it is spreading faster than the things that are real. We live in a world where lies and gossip get half way around the world before truth even has a chance to get out of bed and get it's socks on. We think there is no harm but the reality is that we don't know what the harm is and we do not know how to head off the lies. We learned from our parents who learned from their parents who learned from their parents.

Even from the time of David who sent Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba into battle so he would be killed, gossip and inuendo have plagued our so called lives. Stories about people's desires and passions are much more interesting than searching out the real stories of peoples lives and actually talking to them about the things that are going on.

It is far easier to spread gossip than to really see people. Paul proved that as he persecuted people for things they believed and we have simply perpetuated Paul's strategy into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Now we can do it faster and we can make it seem much more true because we can attach photos or get it out there in one hundred forty characters so it seems like a bumper sticker, but we do the same things because that is what we have learned to do and when I say we, I mean all of us. We do it and we might regret it but we do it.

Why? Because in my so called life...in your so called life we choose to take the easy way out. We choose to follow the crowd. Pastor Jack told me about a song from his generation...and I know that goes back a ways but it seems to fit here. The words to the song are, "I follow the in crowd! I go where the in crowd goes!" We want to be thought of by our friends and families as those who are in the know. We want to be part of the cool kids, part of the "in crowd."

David never saw Uriah as a person. Paul never saw the people of "The Way" as people. Both saw these people as tools to get what they wanted.

See the boy sitting over there. He looks glum because he just found out his father is sick. He is worried about what will happen to his family and how they will cope with the illness. He has the whole world ahead of him. He has a future at any college he chooses but he knows that future may be changed because he may have to make a choice to stay in town and work to take care of his family.

No one knows the reason he looks so glum. There is a lot of speculation on twitter and his mom has not felt comfortable sharing what is going on on facebook. No one knows the truth and so they walk by him as if he is not there. It is like he is dead to them because they don't want him to bring them down with whatever real problems he might have.

Today, we are confronted by a situation we know we cannot comprehend. Jesus raises a man from the dead because he is moved to compassion for the young man's mother. We know we have no power to raise a person from the dead. We know that when God calls us to do the things Jesus does, God is talking about those things we have the power to do. We know we can love one another. We know we can care for our neighbor. We know we can honor our father and our mother but we know we cannot raise a person from the dead...or can we?

Over the years, I have watched Pastor Jack change water to purple water. It was supposed to be wine but I tasted it and I know. I have watched him tear up sheets of paper and then try to make us think he could put all those pieces back together, but he's just not that good. Still, his message could be understood in a different way. His message could be understood as a metaphor.

Can we think of Jesus' message today as a metaphor? We can't raise a person from the physical dead but perhaps we can raise a person from the cyber dead, the gossip dead, the feeling of death brought on by desperation in a difficult circumstance. Perhaps we can do some of what Jesus did today in Nain and perhaps we can do it in our own so called lives.

Look, all of us know Wanda. She is sitting right over there. She spends countless hours each week along with many other people getting ready for the meals we serve on Thursdays. She works hard and at the end of Thursdays she is tired. We know that about her, but what else do we know? Could we send her a text or get on facebook and say a thank you or even use the phone in a way we don't use it very often to call her and tell her how much we appreciate all she does?

We don't all know J.D. over there. Many of us may not know that J.D. has made crosses for several to wear either around their necks or on their lapel. We may not know but we can easily appreciate that work. What we do not know is what else is going on in J.D.'s life. Maybe we could spend a few minutes with him and let him come to life for us!

We all know Albert and Phil and all the work they do for us around the church. How many know the service they give to the community on other boards and in other sometimes physical activities? Maybe we could take the time to visit with them and find out if there is anything their other groups need that we might help with! Maybe we can breathe new life into the hard work they do by letting them know how much we appreciate them. Maybe we could bring them back to life by knowing they were seen.

There are many here in our congregation, many of our friends who are suffering because their families are hurting. Some are suffering from sickness or illness or struggling with financial issues. Some are having problems with relationships or other issues we know nothing about.

Jesus brings the young man back to life this morning not to demonstrate his power over life and death. All of us who know Him know of his awesome power as God. No...Jesus brings the young man back to life this morning because he sees...**Actually Sees...**the mother and is moved to compassion for her.

How many people come into our lives that we fail to see. In "My So Called Life" I know people pass me by and I do not recognize them. They are not part of my circle or crowd. I am not aware of them and in a small way, they are dead to me. As I listen to Jesus, perhaps I have a way to bring a few of them to life. Perhaps I have a way to listen or comfort or just care about what is going on in their life.



Every day, facebook is filled with friends asking for prayer or speaking of difficulties they are having. Perhaps as I access my social media in my so called life, I can be more like Jesus. Perhaps I can see the difficulty of the situation and take just a moment to lift up a silent prayer. Perhaps I can take a moment to see the suffering of the person and offer a simple tweet of comfort.

The message Jesus shares with us today in Luke's gospel is not so much about his power as God as it is about his compassion as a person. He sees...actually sees the person and steps forward to share a word of comfort. We all have the ability to do that. We all have the capacity to recognize others and recognize their significance and worth in our lives and in our world.

The people of Jesus' day were filled with fear at his action. They saw the might and power of his act. They recognized it as life giving. The concept was so foreign that it frightened them. Perhaps it frightens us just a little too. It is not what we are used to. It is not what we have been taught either. In our so called lives, it is out of character for us to see others because we are so busy seeing ourselves.

What I am suggesting is a new dimension to our lives. It is a new act of learning that will be difficult. Paul took years...years of his "so called life" to learn, not from humans but from God about what it is to actually see others. He struggled with study and time in prayer. He struggled with others who had actually seen Jesus raise people from the dead. He worked hard at becoming part of "The Way" instead of being part of the problem.

Today, in my so called life, I am asking you all to join me in setting aside your fears and in using your phones for a different purpose. What we have before us in this amazing information age is an opportunity of unknown proportion. **(At this time go over and whisper to each volunteer and ask them to stand and give them a brief hug then have them go and sit with the rest of the congregation)** We live in a world that allows us, with just the touch of a button, to offer comfort and concern for our brothers and sisters.

Do not be afraid to see the sorrow in other people's lives. Do not be afraid to share a text or tweet of comfort. Do not be afraid to pause and pray for a person asking for prayer on facebook and do not be afraid to actually stand and talk to a person about what is really going on in their life. You have the power to raise a person from the dead!

Not physically, but emotionally!

You have the power to share life and love and hope with another! You have the power to engage even on your phone with others and offer hope.

These acts may seem strange to you at first, but like with Paul, practice will make you better. Practice will make me better. Practice will make us all better. Today, you can choose to continue your "so called life" or you can choose to Get a life! How will you choose?

Will you be blinded as Saul was by pride and arrogance and lack of truth or will you allow your eyes to be open to others around you as Paul was. The choice is yours! Hit me up! Amen!