Planned a few ways -Romans, but… , then planned something else… doesn’t fit with Lent, etc.

so back to the drawing board. and my thoughts keep going back to the stories that Jake and Victor -story telling

Story telling

* love stories
* I love reading stories to my kids…
* I love listening to stories (podcasts, audiobooks)
* I love when preachers are good story tellers (Saul)
* most of us immerse ourselves in stories regularly in books, tv, movies, phone calls

I would argue that storytelling is not just entertainment. It’s a fundamental part of being human.

* we all share stories (of family, of work, of our experiences)
* gives us information to help us understand ourselves, each other, our surroundings.
* more memorable than facts
	+ ex: grandpa say don’t eat the red berries…
* stories (father than facts) make an emotional connection to the info, we gain a deeper understanding of other people’s experiences.
* bring us into situations/places/experiences we haven’t experienced ourselves
* And they remind us we are not alone in this world

As a people, we have been sharing stories forever. Our histories, theologies, and traditions were all carried from generation to generation by story telling and story tellers.

* I get distracted by family books (mine or Bens) by reading family histories

I believe that each of us has a story to tell. And I believe that God longs for us to share those stories.  In fact, our scriptures encourage this act over and over again.

In our Scripture today, the Psalmist gives us an example of how we are called to share our stories.

 *My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all day long.*

 *… from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim of your wondrous deeds, so even to old age and gray hairs.*

Isn’t that what we all should be doing? Share our stories of how God has worked in our lives. Sometimes it may feel that we don’t have epic stories to share or dramatic events that would capture an audience.

But we aren’t asked to only share when we have grand stories, but like the Psalmist, we are called to praise God for all that God has done.

A story (or testimony) tells the truth about who God is and what God has done in our lives.

The bible is full of people telling their stories. Jesus himself, spoke in stories often.

Paul (I Cor) says, I don’t come with lofty words or wisdom, but I come with my story.

 -“My story of how the HS has worked in my life and how the power of God is demonstrated through it”

In church we tell our stories in a few ways.

* in the songs we sing collectively
* in our prayers we offer up for our loved ones
* in our bible studies, coffee times and small groups
* and our larger story thru process of baptism and membership

But usually, these stories are just small snippets of our lives

 and often they are just stories about us, and less about how God works in our lives (requires us to share our struggles, not just joys)

 b/c sharing about God requires a vulnerability and intimacy…

EX from outside the church: AA –a place that requires intimacy and vulnerability and rooted in story telling

* + there is an understanding that your stories are ongoing
	+ accountability is held through sharing your stories, (the struggles, the challenges, the mistakes, and the successes)
	+ members benefit both from telling their stories and hearing others
	+ I read: when asked why AA was so successful –“one thing that keeps members sober is that it is their responsibility to keep others sober.” and that is done thru telling stories.

I thought about how we function as a church. There is some accountability to each other, but we don’t take responsibility for each others faith. (That is something personal, private, and up to the individual)

 -But I wonder what it would be like if we were to take a greater responsibility for each others faith? If our gatherings we took time to confess and be honest, and discuss how we can walk more closely with God that week. What would our church feel like if we all were in the practice of regularly telling our stories? (more than just once upon entry) … When was the last time you shared a part of your story of G in your life?

For each of us our faith has continued to change and evolve. And our stories are worthy to be told.

(for some just the thought is making you stressed)

Should we not desire to share our encounters with God with excitement, with confidence?

It is hard/uncomfortable the first times, but becomes easier. You will see the ways others are moved by your vulnerability. You will have the opportunity to be known more honestly and cared for more deeply.

Jubilee Partners (2007, 2009): Every partner shared their story (3 times/year), and every volunteer shared their story too. …

 -It is b/c of this sharing that the group was so close/tight/ and made such an impact on my faith

But we don’t have places built in to our faith communities to practice this. (Maybe care groups?)

MY STORY:

* formed thru family and church
* grew up in RM with all cousins on both sides
	+ gatherings every week (not a stretch to live with in laws, and no wonder me & Heidi end up at mom’s every Sunday afternoon)
* Rest of calendar was church
	+ parents and extended family all involved in church
	+ family in SMC
	+ other family at Elim -where Opa was lay paster
	+ Can see this was instrumental in not only my life, since many of my cousins are still active in churches (where much of my gen has left the church)
* Extension of church was summer camp
	+ mostly as a staff (9 years, 15-23)
	+ given the opportunity to not only think about my faith but mold the faith of a group of kids that looked up to me (ADV weeks)
	+ And gave me a strong group of peers who were doing the same thing
	+ Its probably b/c of camp that I got connected to conference
		- a place to see each other
		- to feel the pulse of the wider body of church
		- a group that made me feel a little less alone
		- Its also what made me feel welcome me here, U are an extension of that body
* I’m leaving out huge swaths of my life (CMBC, trips, Jubilee, Social work) stories for another time.
* My story here at NS begins with the era of raising my family here.
	+ while I can’t give them the vast # of nearby cousin
	+ can’t given them the same experience of church as mine of 80&90’s
	+ hope I am passing on the value of family & value of church
		- U are my/our/their church
		- It is the same Spirit, same God that works in our lives
		- while demographics change, we can still express the same love, care and place of welcome as when our pews were fuller
		- I see you talk to my kids, ask, tease… to include them
		- I hope that your story will join their story, (as it has become part of my story as well)
* I encourage you to share your story, not just with them, but with each other.
* It is thru our stories that we share God’s movement in our lives.
* Thru telling our story that we review our own lives, who we are, and who God is
* Thru story telling we connect with each other, and feel less alone in our struggles and joys
* thru story telling we offer hope -Hope that come from knowing that Christ walks with us on our individual and collective journeys.
* I invite you to tell your story. To tell of “God’s righteous acts” in our lives.

Thank you, God for this amazing world,
that is both diverse and complex.
Thank you that the world is not all the same.
Thank you for its beauty and our place in it.

We thank you for our families,
which are also both diverse and complex
You know our relationships inside out,
you know that we have family we love,
and the family we need to do better to love.
Give us energy to love our families this week.
When we would count the ways we have been hurt or neglected,
teach us to remember that we too hurt and overlook others.
When we would keep track of hurtful words,
call to mind the thoughtless words we have spoken.
We need Jesus to show us the way,
giving us a love for our families
as deep as the need for love within ourselves.

Thank you for our faith community and congregation
that too is both diverse and complex.
Thank you for all who work so hard to make this place tick.
Thank you for those who teach, serve meals, donate money,

clean sidewalks, arrange flowers or chairs,
Thank you for those who pray, who work on committees,
handle our finances, practice music and hospitality,
share stories, clean up, visit the sick, play instruments
and attend our services.
Thank you for all the gifts you`ve given us, God
and the way they are used to build up this body of Christ.

Thank you for the role you play our congregation and our families.
We pray especially today for those we know who are sick….
Who’s hearts are heavy…
you know how peace was broken and how it can be healed.

We praise you for the ways you work in our lives…
We call on your amazing power to renew, to restore, to rejuvenate.

We pray all this in the name of Jesus our Saviour, Amen.