



## “Your Story”

**Idea:** God’s story can become your story.

**Intro:** Last Sunday afternoon millions of people all around the world watched one of the greatest comeback stories of all-time unfold as Tiger Woods’ putt on the 18<sup>th</sup> hole dropped in the cup at the Masters Tournament. In that moment Tiger secured his fifth green jacket, one behind the all-time leader Jack Nicklaus. What made his comeback historic was not that he came from behind to win on the final day of the tournament. It was historic because of all that has happened in Tiger’s life during the eleven year span between his fourth Master’s victory and his fifth.

Tiger was easily the best golfer on the PGA tour for years. He was on top of the golfing world. He had won countless tournaments, several majors, and was the highest paid golfer on tour. He had become a global household name. Then in 2008 things began to change. Physical injuries and poor personal choices began to plague the great golfer. Tiger has undergone knee surgery and several spinal surgeries. In fact just a couple years ago, no one thought he would be able to play golf at such a high level again. Tiger even questioned whether he would play at all. On top of the physical struggles, Tiger’s personal life was falling apart. Multiple sex scandals, substance abuse charges, and a high profile divorce flooded the headlines. The backlash from the public was swift and severe. In fact as recently as 2013, Woods was third on a Forbes list of “Most Disliked Athletes” with a 19% approval rating.

In the press conference following Sunday’s win, one reporter asked Tiger a rather direct question. “People have struggles in their lives, personal struggles, physical struggles, and you’ve overcome these things,” the reporter began carefully. “What message might you say to people who are struggling?” Woods thought for a moment. “Well, you never give up,” he said. “That’s a given. You always fight. Giving up’s never in the equation.”

America loves a comeback story. We love rooting for the underdog. And today, I believe it is safe to say that Tiger Woods is back.

As great as the comeback story of Tiger Woods is, there is a greater one. Long ago at a wedding in Cana of Galilee, a man named Jesus was asked by his mother to help the hosts who had run out of wine. In that moment He turned water into wine (John 2:1-11). Jesus launched a ministry that would last for three years. During those years, He would miraculously heal the sick, give sight to the blind, restore hearing to the deaf, feed the hungry, raise the dead, and give hope to the poor. Crowds followed Him wherever He went. They pressed in to hear His teachings and to touch just the edge of His robe. He preached the coming of the kingdom of God. The religious leaders of Israel became jealous and felt threatened by Jesus. They plotted to get rid of Him. They

falsely accused Jesus of blasphemy and had Him crucified by the Romans on a cross. The crowd who once hailed Him as their coming Messiah, now shouted “Crucify Him” (Mark 15:13). The Roman governor obliged their demand. Jesus was crucified on a cross between two thieves. The man who had never had a sinful thought, said a sinful word, or performed a sinful action was put to death as a criminal. Jesus suffered and died on Friday, April 7, AD 30. His blood was shed on the cross. His followers took His body down and laid it in a borrowed tomb. Saturday was the Sabbath and Passover for the Jews. Nothing could be done. So early on Sunday morning, April 9, AD 30, Mary Magdalene and some others came to the tomb to finish the burial ritual. To their amazement, they found that the stone covering the entrance to the tomb had been rolled away (Luke 20:1). They soon discovered Jesus had been resurrected from the dead. For forty days, Jesus stayed with His disciples. Hundreds of people witnessed His resurrected state (1 Cor 15:5-8). The man once lauded Messiah who had been falsely accused and condemned to death on a cross had made the ultimate comeback. He had risen from death to die no more.

**Inquiry:** Today is Easter. It is the annual celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Why? What was the purpose of the crucifixion and resurrection?

Let me first tell you what it was not. The purpose of the resurrection was not:

- To make you religious.
- To make you strive harder.

The purpose of the resurrection was:

- To give you new life.
- To make you holy.

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.* – John 10:10

The Bible tells us that like Adam in the Garden of Eden, we have all sinned and rebelled against God (Rom 3:23). Our sin has brought shame, separation, and brokenness into our life experiences. As a result of sin, every aspect of who you and I are is deprived (corrupt). The Bible also tells us that there is nothing we can do about our condition. If we’re going to be helped, it must come from outside ourselves. We need to be rescued. Jesus is our rescuer. His death on the cross paid the penalty for our sin. Every sin was laid on Him. God the Father poured out His wrath against sin on Jesus. As a result, we can now be forgiven and be free of sin because of what Jesus accomplished through His death and resurrection.

According to Jesus sin steals, kills, and destroys our lives. But He came to die your death and pay your penalty, so that He might give you new life and abundant life in Him. This is God’s story, and He wants it to become your story. We find a beautiful example of God’s story becoming a sinner’s story in John 8.

Read John 7:53-8:11.

There are two clear principles we glean from this story. First, we see that...

### **1. Everyone has a sinful past.**

As Jesus was setting in the temple court teaching the people, the Jewish religious leaders brought a woman before Him whom they had just caught in the act of adultery. They brought her before Jesus to entrap Him (vs. 6). This woman was clearly a sinner. God’s Law forbids extramarital relationships. The punishment was death (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:23-24).

Jesus' response to the question about the woman's sin was to uphold God's law. *"Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her"* (vs. 7). The woman was a sinner, and she sinned because that was her nature. Jesus' statement revealed something else, which the accusers had not expected. He exposed that they too were sinners (vs. 9). One by one, they dropped their stones and walked away.

You see every one of us have a sinful past. We are as the Bible says, *"dead in the trespasses and sins"* (Eph 2:1). The temptation of the serpent in the Garden was a lie. His goal was never to bring greater freedom and blessing to Adam and Eve. His goal was only to steal, kill, and destroy the life of God in them.

Sin had stolen any dignity that this woman might have had. She was an adulterer, and every one now knew it. She would forever be an outcast in society. It is very possible that the religious leaders captured her in the very act and paraded the woman naked and bare before Jesus. Shame cloaked her.

Sin had killed her life with God. The condemnation of sin is death (Gen 2:17; Rom 6:23). The sinfulness of man and the holiness of God are mutually exclusive. One cannot have fellowship with the other. You cannot hold onto sin and hold onto God at the same time. Sin separates you from God (1 Cor 6:9-10).

Sin had destroyed her reputation. As an adulterer no woman would ever trust her around her husband again. She would forever be known as someone who is unfaithful and untrustworthy. She had lost all credibility.

Today, you may not be an adulterer, but you do have a sinful past. The Bible says that *we have all sinned* (Rom 3:23). That sin has brought shame, separation, and brokenness into every facet of your life. You have a sinful past because you are a sinner. It is your nature. In your sin you are a shameful, broken mess who is separated from God.

But because of Easter, I have good news for you.

## **2. Everyone can have a forgiven future.**

After the woman's accusers all left her, Jesus stood up and with grace in His eyes said, *"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?...Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more"* (vs. 10-11).

Jesus did an amazing, gracious, and merciful thing here. He forgave a sinful woman of all her sin. Did the woman deserve to be forgiven? Do you deserve to be forgiven? No, she did not deserve it, and neither do you. She deserved to receive what God's holy standard demands...death. She had rebelled against her King.

The purpose of Jesus' coming, crucifixion, and resurrection was not to condemn sinners. Sin has already condemned all of us. Jesus came to save sinners from condemnation (John 3:17-18). He came to purchase our freedom. He came to pay the penalty for our sin. He came to make it possible to have a forgiven future.

How does that happen? How can you experience the forgiveness of your sin and be renewed to a right relationship with God? Look what the woman does in verse 11. To Jesus' question she says, *"No one, Lord."* In response to His gentleness and grace, she faithed into Jesus. There is a stark contrast between her response and that of the religious leaders. They referred to Jesus as a teacher, and they walked away when confronted with their sin (vs. 9). She referred to Him as Lord and stayed in His presence.

Confession, repentance, and surrender are all wrapped up in this short statement. She knew she was a sinner, and she knew that Jesus knew she was a sinner. She also understood that to call on Jesus meant that her life must change. Repentance had to be a reality in her life. Finally, she was fully aware that Jesus was not her genie whom she could call on when in a jam. No, Jesus was to be her Lord.

Like the woman, today when we confess our sinfulness...when we repent of that sin...when we surrender to the lordship of Jesus we can and will experience forgiveness of all sin and have a forgiven future.

**Conclusion:** The story of Jesus is the greatest comeback story of all time. The religious leaders thought they had removed a threat. Pilate thought he had silenced a revolt. And Satan thought he had killed God. They were all wrong. Men might have crucified Jesus, but He willingly put Himself on the cross. His body was placed in a tomb, but the grave could not hold Him. Three days later Jesus stood up. He conquered death, hell, and the grave; so that we might have life and life abundantly. Do you see how good Easter is?

Put yourself in the story. Satan drags you out before Jesus and says, "This man...this woman...this kid has sinned. The Law says he or she must be condemned to death." But Jesus says, "I know what it says. He deserves it. She deserves it. Death is deserved. But I have taken his/her place. And today, I don't condemn. I offer forgiveness and life."

This is God's story, and He wants it to be your story. Will you make it your comeback story?