



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

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Worship Every Sunday at 9:30 AM

The stories we tell, on Broadway or in Church

The first major production of a musical I ever saw was *Miss Saigon*. I was in high school and I knew nothing about the show. I had never been to a big theater in Chicago. The biggest theater I had ever been in was my high school auditorium.

I was blown away. Mesmerized by the dancing, the sets, the colors, lights and sounds, I couldn't believe what I was watching. I struggled to understand the words to the songs and follow the story, but still I was gripped. I understood the love story, the grief, the guilt, desperation, and the heartache of the characters. I bought a CD in the lobby and listened to it until I could sing along to every word.

That was the day I fell in love with Broadway. *Miss Saigon* will forever live in my heart as my first love. I had the joy of going again a couple of years ago with my Dad and I was able to enjoy it all over again. It's not my favorite musical though. My favorite is *Les Miserables*, the wonderful story of redemptive grace, coming of age, a struggle for liberty, and a moral question of justice.

I have seen *Les Mis* live nearly a dozen times. I've seen it performed by a Broadway touring company and by a youth theater, and various levels in between. Every time, I am moved by the story of Jean Valjean, Inspector Javert, Fantine, Cosette, and my favorite, the lovelorn Eponine. Whether it is seasoned professional actors with remarkable talent or young teenage performers singing their hearts out, the story endures. An earnest performance combined with a powerful story makes something magical.

The stories of Broadway are powerful stories that are worth telling over and over again. They capture us, teach us something about ourselves and our relationships. They hold up a mirror to our world, move us with empathy or compassion, or convict us of a social crime. The lessons and stories of Broadway show us the way the world is and help us imagine the way the world ought to be.

This too, is what Jesus did. He told stories.



Clearly, he did more than this, but what made the most impact on his world, the leaders listening to him, and his followers for generations, were the stories he told. He multiplied bread, walked on water, healed the sick, cast out demons, but it was the stories that inspired. It was the stories that stirred the anger of the leadership.

In the Gospel of Matthew he tells a story of a king dividing his sheep and goats. The sheep are the ones that will be rewarded. They are the ones who clothed the naked, fed the hungry, and visited the sick and imprisoned. Those cast aside were the ones that did not do these things. It is one of Jesus' more straight forward stories. There's not a lot of room to interpret. He spells it out clearly: "In the Kingdom of God we care for one another." The next thing we read is that the leadership wanted him dead.

The stories he told — and his actions that went with them — got him killed. Stories of radical forgiveness, plenty for all, a shared community based on love not status, an absurd love that goes beyond common sense; these were his stories. They moved people then and they move us today.

Stories can change us, shape us, move us to action, and inspire us to greatness. Stories that move us toward community, toward love, toward a relentless pursuit of a just world are worth telling. Whether on Broadway or in church sanctuaries, stories of love are worth telling. And so we tell them. We live them, and we share them.