

Sunday, April 12, 2026 - From Our Story to God's Story - Brother Leo Soloki

Jesus doesn't just rescue us *from* something—He invites us *into* something. Our personal story, when surrendered to Him, becomes part of God's larger story of redemption and mission in the world.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."— John 14:6

For several weeks, we have been anchored in this life-giving declaration of Jesus. Today, we receive it not only as truth to believe, but as a calling to live and share.

The sermon opens with a personal story about standing under a literal spotlight—unprepared, nervous, and exposed. That moment serves as a picture of how easy it is to rely on ourselves, our preparation, or our personality when what's truly needed is something deeper and more secure.

In the same way, when it comes to faith:

- We fear being in the spotlight
- We worry about saying the wrong thing
- We hesitate to share our faith story

But God never asks us to perform—He asks us to bear witness.

Every believer has a story:

- How God met us
- How Jesus changed us
- How grace continues to shape us

When we keep the story centered on *ourselves*, it remains small. When we place it in God's story, it becomes powerful.

Your story is not about:

- Having the perfect words
- Knowing all the answers
- Being fearless or impressive

It is about:

- Pointing to Jesus as the Way
- Speaking truth with humility
- Trusting the Spirit to do the work

Jesus' words are both exclusive ("I am the way") and inclusive (open to all who come). This truth moves us:

- From gratitude → to obedience
- From belief → to mission
- From silence → to loving witness

God uses ordinary people, imperfect stories, and simple obedience to draw others to Himself.

FROM OUR STORY TO GOD'S STORY – LEO SOLOKI – 4-12-26

For the last three weeks, we've been camping out in John 14:6, where Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me." Today, as we extend this chapter one final time, we take this life-giving verse and receive it as a calling — a calling to share Jesus with the world.

Today Sermon is called From Our Story to God's Story

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

About seven years ago I was asked to be the Best Man at a Wedding for a friend I had known for over 25 years. I was really delighted when asked and at the time I had great plans to deliver an amazing speech. Unfortunately being the procrastinator, I was, I wrote the speech the week of, and didn't practice it nearly enough heading into the ceremony.

Then came the Wedding Day and I remember being so nervous. Though the wedding was for someone else I felt I was the one in Spotlight. I knew my speech wasn't ready for prime-time so I sought out opportunities to practice prior to the Wedding reception as they became available. In fact, I recall a little gap during the cocktail hour (prior to the wedding) where I snuck out near the restroom and practiced in the dark.

A little while later we were ushered into the reception ball where everything started to unravel. After taking our seats the MC said Leo are you ready to say a few words as "Best Man". I got up, slowly walked to the stage and got up in front of everyone. Then the house lights went down, and a huge spotlight beamed right at my face. At that point I knew I was in trouble. My notes which were written in pencil on a 8x11 sheets of paper were going to be useless. So, I opened my mouth and said a little joke, which I do remember, and it felt flat among the audience and garnered no response. The last thing I knew it was over and I walked back to my seat dejected in my performance. Like a dog whimpering back to his corner.

I will never forget that moment and for a long time afterwards I thought it was the worst moment of my life. I was even asked by my friend if I wanted to see a video of the Wedding, but I immediately said No. But today looking back it wasn't worst moment, but it was one of the best moment because soon after the wedding the Holy Spirit led me taking joining Toastmasters, working on my Speech Communication skills and opened speaking opportunities like today where I can share the WORD of GOD. In the moment what I perceived as bad, God was using it for good which is best illustrated in Romans 8:28

²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together^[a] for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them

The story I shared is just one of many examples of God working through my life. But today's message isn't about me — it's about all of us being vessels God can use. Throughout the entire Bible, we see God using ordinary people and uncomfortable circumstances to reveal His power, His character, and His redemptive plan. Scripture isn't a collection of flawless heroes — it's the story of a flawless God working through flawed humanity.

For example, look at Moses. He is a perfect picture of someone who felt completely unqualified. He resisted God's call, insisting he wasn't eloquent enough to stand before Pharaoh. Yet God didn't remove Moses' weakness — He worked through it. And through that same reluctant, insecure man, God delivered an entire nation from slavery.

Then there's the Samaritan woman. She carried shame, isolation, and a complicated past. Yet Jesus chose her to be the first evangelist to her entire community. One encounter with Jesus transformed her from an outcast into a messenger of hope.

And of course, Paul the Apostle. His transformation is one of the most dramatic in Scripture. He went from hunting Christians to becoming one of the most influential voices of the early church — boldly proclaiming the gospel he once tried to destroy.

And then... there's each of you.

God has used your life and your circumstances for His glory. He has taken moments that felt ordinary — or even painful — and turned them into places where His strength could shine through you. He has woven your victories and your

struggles into a testimony that speaks to others in ways you may not even realize. God has been shaping you, guiding you, and preparing you for purposes far greater than you can see right now.

“And if God is working all things together for good in our lives — shaping us, strengthening us, and deepening our faith — then He’s not only working in us, He’s preparing to work through us for a greater purpose: to share Jesus with the world, the very mission we know today as the Great Commission.”

And that truth leads us to something every believer feels deep inside.

As followers of Christ, most of us carry a deep desire to see our non-believing friends and family come to know Jesus. That longing isn’t random — it’s the heartbeat of God working inside us. When we want people to meet Christ, it’s because God first wanted to meet them, and He has placed that desire in us. And sometimes, God lets us be part of that beautiful process.

Several years ago, I had the privilege of being a conduit for God to help someone reconnect with Him. Because of painful circumstances and some very difficult experiences, my friend had drifted away from the Lord. Using the imagery of the Parable of the Sower, I would say her heart was still fertile soil — but life’s pressures and wounds had distracted her from seeking the love and compassion of God.

God didn’t ask me to fix her or save her. He simply used me to drop a little water on some dry patches of her soil — reminding her that God still loved her, that He had not abandoned her, and that she could lean on Him for comfort and strength. I shared what God was doing in my own life, and little by little, the Holy Spirit began to stir her heart again.

And I’m happy to say she is now on fire for the Lord. Her circumstances haven’t completely changed, but her heart has — she wholeheartedly loves Jesus again. That’s what God does. He lets us play a small part while He does the heavy lifting.

In the book *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, it says that when someone repents and turns to God, all of Heaven erupts into a magnificent cosmic celebration — a party with the person’s name on the banner. How incredible is it that God invites us to be part of something like that. Not a party with gifts that fade, but a celebration where someone receives the ultimate prize: a welcoming into the glorious Heavenly Kingdom.

So the next question becomes: How do we step into this calling with confidence? How can God use ordinary people like us to help lead someone into the greatest celebration Heaven has ever known?

Before we dive into the practical steps, we need to anchor ourselves in two essential truths.

1) We are not doing this alone.

This calling, this mission, this desire to reach people for Christ will never be accomplished by our strength alone. It is a partnership — a divine collaboration — with the Holy Spirit doing the heavy lifting.

God is the One who empowers us, guides us, opens doors, prepares hearts, and gives us the boldness we need. Our role is obedience; God’s role is transformation. Our role is to stay sensitive to the Holy Spirit and walk into the moments He has already prepared for us.

Ephesians 2:10 reminds us:

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

God prepares the opportunities.

We simply walk in them.

2) Everything we do must be done in love.

However God chooses to use us, it must flow from love — not pressure, not pride, not trying to “win” a spiritual argument. We share Christ because we genuinely desire people to experience the love, compassion, and forgiveness we have found in Him.

Love is the soil where the seeds of the gospel grow.

And this is exactly why Scripture gives us such a clear picture of how God brings people to faith. Romans 10:14–15 lays out the divine sequence:

“How can they call on Him if they have not believed?

And how can they believe if they have not heard?

And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?”

This passage shows us that God is the One who sends, God is the One who prepares, and God is the One who saves — but He graciously invites us into the process. We are the messengers He sends, and the Holy Spirit is the power behind every word we speak.

And here’s the beautiful part:

Even though God does the heavy lifting, He still chooses to involve us. Not because He needs us, but because He delights in working through His people. Throughout Scripture, God consistently partners with ordinary men and women to accomplish extraordinary purposes.

Now that we understand God is the One who empowers, prepares, and transforms, the next step becomes clear: we simply share His truth with His love. If God is doing the heavy lifting, then our part is to reflect His heart. That leads us into the next principle — sharing the Word with love.

Live a Life That Reflects Jesus

Living a life that reflects Jesus isn’t about being perfect — it’s about letting His character shine through us in the everyday moments of life. It means showing kindness and gentleness to everyone, even to those who may not treat us the same. It means staying calm when situations get tense, offering compassion and empathy to those who are hurting, and being willing to show up as a friend even when it’s inconvenient. When we live this way, people don’t just hear about Jesus — they see Him in us.

And the beautiful part is that reflecting Jesus often happens through simple, ordinary acts of love. Here at ALC, God gives us countless opportunities to display His heart: volunteering at events, giving someone a ride to or from church, greeting people at the door, or simply making someone feel welcomed the moment they walk into worship. These small acts of service become powerful reflections of Jesus — and people notice. Through them, others catch a glimpse of who He is and how deeply He cares.

2. Share Our Testimony

One of the strongest ways to witness for Christ is to share your testimony — the story of how you came to Him and how He has transformed your life. Your testimony matters because it’s personal, it’s real, and it’s something no one can argue with. It’s your lived experience of God’s grace, and God uses it in powerful ways.

Scripture encourages us in 1 Peter 3:15 to always be ready to explain the hope we have, and to do it with gentleness and respect. When we share our story, we’re not just talking about ourselves — we’re actually stepping into the Great Commission. Jesus said, “Go and make disciples,” and sometimes the very first step in someone becoming a disciple is simply hearing how God changed you.

And the beautiful thing is, we can share our testimony in so many natural, everyday moments — with family, with friends, or with people we meet through serving opportunities like Christmas Shoppe or James Storehouse. These interactions become sacred moments where we can be authentic about our journey — how Christ changed our outlook, our priorities, and our heart.

Some people come to Christ instantly after a powerful encounter, while others, like me, come through a long process. The journey may look different for each person, but the destination is the same — and that’s what matters. As we share our testimony, we’ll find that people connect with our struggles, our questions, and our story. And when they relate to us, their hearts begin to open to Jesus.

3. Share God's Word with Love

One of the most overlooked ways we live out the Great Commission is by simply spending time with people who don't know Christ. Before we ever open a Bible or quote a verse, we're called to build real relationships — to be gentle, kind, patient, and genuinely present. Paul modeled this beautifully in 1 Thessalonians 2:7–12. He didn't rush in with sermons; he first shared his life.

In verse 8 he says,

“We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too.”

That's the heart of relational evangelism. It's choosing to invest in people long before we expect spiritual results. It's listening, caring, showing up, and earning trust. Sometimes that looks like reaching out to someone who's far from God, someone who is hurting or struggling, or someone who simply needs a friend.

As we build these relationships with gentleness and love — just like Paul did — we create natural, safe spaces where conversations about Jesus can happen. And when those moments come, we're not speaking as strangers; we're speaking as friends. That's when the Great Commission stops being just a command and becomes a lifestyle — a way of living that reflects the heart of Jesus to the people around us. speaking as friends. That's how the Great Commission moves from command to a lifestyle.

4. Pray and Trust the Holy Spirit

And of course, last but definitely not least, pray and trust the Holy Spirit. Pray for believers to be strengthened by the Spirit. Pray for wisdom to articulate who God is. Pray that God will send people in your direction. Prayer is not just a support activity — it is one of the most powerful ways we participate in the Great Commission.

Before Jesus ever sent His disciples out, He told them to wait and pray until the Holy Spirit empowered them. Prayer aligns our hearts with God's mission, opens our eyes to opportunities, and prepares the hearts of the people we will encounter. When we pray for God to send people our way, we're asking Him to orchestrate divine appointments — moments only He can create.

As we step out in faith — praying, listening, obeying, and trusting the Holy Spirit — we begin to see that our story is never just our own. God weaves every moment, every conversation, every act of obedience into His greater redemptive story. And when we offer Him our lives, imperfect as they are, He uses them to draw others into the greatest celebration of all time.

Church, this is our calling. God has placed us here, in this moment, to shine His light and share His love. So let's be a people who reflect Jesus, who share our story, who love others deeply, and who pray boldly while trusting the Holy Spirit to do what only He can do.

When we live this way, God takes our ordinary moments and turns them into eternal impact. He uses our lives — imperfect as they are — to draw people to Himself.

So let's go and share Jesus with the world.

Heaven is ready to celebrate.