Week 1 - Batman - a hero, but not so super.

ILLUS - Video Clip 1

- Why are the showing a clip from Batman movie in church?
- Intro series. SH - modern day parables. Icons of culture. At times, we all need a hero.
- In coming weeks we'll see that Jesus is the true hero.

Batman. Campy 60's tv show, some from more recent movies. Most know his story. He's a billionaire with no super-powers. Just really skilled fighter and detective. Known for his association with "darkness." Lives underground and as a recluse. Few people know his secret.

Part of what makes every hero interesting is their origin. He's no different. Wealthy family, parents were killed. The anger forced him into the life he lives. Out of tragic pain, Batman is born.

Where we find commonality with Batman is that we both experience pain. Just like him, we all find ourselves knocked down.

"Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."
John 16:33 ESV

Pain is real. *Some of you are there today. Memory is still fresh. Sadness, hurt, or bitter disappointment. Loved one deployed. Been in love, love wasn't returned. Left alone by someone who promised they'd never leave. Have a child who's rejected you. Not career you dreamed of. Broken heart for someone who has passed on.*
Experiencing a breakdown in your relationship to God because of your broken heart.

Batman - "Why do we get knocked down? Learn to get back up."

BIBLE - Story help us understand how to get back up when pain knocks us down.
Story of Lazarus. Give details. **Now a man named Lazarus was sick...**

- Backdrop, Mary, Martha & Lazarus were best friends of Jesus.
- In Bethany, their home was where he hung out most.
- Lazarus becomes sick, they send for Jesus...knew he could heal people.
- Superhero moment. It's his best friend, the worst possible scenario...here is where He is going to let the cape fly and save the day.
- Strangely he waits 2 days.
- Arrives at a scene of heartbreak, grief, and mourning.

Have you approached Jesus like this before? Come to church...pray...serve...do the right things...you're waiting on Him to fly in & save the day. Instead He seems to keep us in the dark. Works like Batman. In our darkest moments, Jesus shines the brightest.

<u>Here are 3 things that Jesus says to us in the darkest moments of pain...</u>

33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. 35 Jesus wept.

One thing that God is whispering to us when we're hurting is…

"I am here."

Heroes don't hide from hurt.

- No matter how lost you feel, or intense the pain…he's in it with you.
- No matter what our situation is.
- If we caused it or life happened.
- He moves into it with us.

We naturally tend to think…

"But, If God were with me, then wouldn't it be better?"

- What God does is not "fix" the pain…he moves right in the middle of the pain.

Heroes don't always rescue us from tragedy but they are always present in the pain.

ILLUS – Taking Shelby to the ER. Falling in the bathtub. I didn't say, *"I'll go wait in the lobby. I'll be reading a magazine."* No, I was there, with her. I couldn't help her…but I could hurt with her. She laid there, with tears rolling down here face…hurting, I crawled up on the table and, because everyone around her was talking, I whispered in her ear, *"Daddy's right here. Daddy loves you. You're going to be ok. I'll never leave you. I'm right here."*

- She lives in a messed-up world, she's going to get hurt. I'd love to protect her…she's going to get her heart broken. No boy's good enough.
- Life is fast, the pain is real…listen for God's whisper… *"I am here."*
- All we can hold on to is the fact that God will never leave us…he's with us.

Presence comforts pain.

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"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." v.11

"There is Hope."

The scene is HOPELESS. Disciples. Sisters. Everyone.

Hopeless REACTS. Hope RESPONDS.

Mary & Martha show us the 2 most common reactions to pain: Attack & Retreat.

- Martha attacks...she can't sit still. v.21 - Goes to meet him. "If you'd been here, not happen."
- Mary retreats...isolation...stays home...alone. *"Loneliness is fuel on the fire of hopelessness."*

**But both went to Jesus.*

How do you deal? *Give permission to hurt.*

Jesus shows us that brokenness results in strength.

- By world's standards a broken person is less useful.
- In God's eyes a broken person is most powerful.

25 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again...<u>I am the resurrection and the life.</u> (I am everything you need.) The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

- He's not a healer who moonlights as a Savior.
- He's a Savior who offers healing to His followers.

<u>ILLUS</u> - Monica's Story. ***Watching live at 11:15.***

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<u>"I Can Use This."</u>

- He can use this to do something **<u>IN</u>** you instead of just something **<u>FOR</u>** you.

4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, <u>it</u> <u>is</u> <u>for</u> <u>God's</u> <u>glory</u> <u>so that God's Son may be glorified through it</u>."

Pain can be a prison or a platform.

- Prison - living by what we FEEL. Feeling of pain. Zero hope. Prison mindset.
- Platform - living by what we BELIEVE. God can bring "beauty from ashes."
- **Your struggles develop your strengths.**

<u>Romans 8:28 MSG</u>
Every detail of our lives is worked into something good. - God's bigger picture.

IMAGINE… (vision cast what "can be")

- What God can do with & through this phase of your life.
- Doesn't make the pain go away…but gives you hope.

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43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

- Lazarus will die again.
- Lazarus death shows that while we are on this earth...pain will always be real.
- Pain & sin & death are why Jesus came to this planet.
- He knew we needed a hero to rescue us from what we are powerless over.

MOST INTERESTING PART OF STORY: Jesus went back thru a dangerous place to get there. Read the situation before he went. The price he was willing to pay to help his hurting friends.

U -- Movie Clip 2

Sometimes Jesus fixes situations, every time Jesus fixes people.
Our situation can still be broken but we don't have to be.

Monica Ebersole’s Story….

A friend of mine and a member of our church family, Monica Ebersole, has experienced hopelessness that in many ways is hard to even comprehend. Monica and her sister, Diana, had always been close. They were major fixtures in each other's day to day life. Three years ago, her 28 year old pregnant sister, along with her husband and their two young children, were relocating to California to be near their family. As they traveled, they were in a tragic car accident than violently claimed all 5 of their lives. In an instant, Monica lost her sister, brother in law, 2 nephews she love and one who she didn’t get to meet. Of course this devastated their family. In that same year, her uncle had passed away as the result of a brain tumor. The following year, her mother and her aunt were diagnosed with cancer. Her mother has since been deemed cancer free, but her aunt lost her battle in March of this year.

Just a few months after her sisters tragic accident, Monica, her husband Tim, and their two children Titus and Ana, relocated to Augusta. They got a fresh start. They decided to try out Stevens Creek and attended their first service on a day where a guest speaker spoke about grief and healing after losing his wife to cancer. This inspired her to consider what God wanted to teach her through this process. Instead of sinking into the dark place that tragedy could have taken her, Monica opened her heart God. She described this as "a renewal" for herself.

As she began listening to the words of scripture and God's promptings, she came to a crossroads in her journey to hope. Instead of holding anger in her heart towards the driver whose negligence caused the accident that killed her sister and her family, she chose forgiveness. She says, “It was "so freeing" not to hold their death against him any longer.” She also began to form friendships through her church family that have been instrumental in her healing. One such friend is Margie Asselin, a small group leader who has become a great friend to Monica.

Throughout her life Monica had been characterized, in her own words, as "a worry wort, high strung and neurotic." She went to her sister for everything. She was full of anxiety and had no peace. Through tragedy and hopelessness, she has opened up her heart to Jesus. She says now she turns to the Lord in times of stress, she feels more connected to Him than ever before, and her life is filled with peace.