

October 1, 2023

Gamers: Lessons from Super Mario and Among Us (John 11:17-44)

Receive forgiveness and new life in Jesus.

Open – Why This Series? (5min)

- Greetings, online, connect card
- Notes (and in app) // PODCAST
- **Story – Gaming Lessons.** I played a lot of video games as a kid, and I still play as an adult. My mom would tell me, “Go outside, it is a beautiful day!” I love playing outside, but I also loved playing video games. Part of it was the accomplishment and sense of adventure. But I have an analytical mind – and I found myself learning lessons about life, relationships, work, and even faith.
 - o *I want to share some of those lessons with you.*
 - o *Plus it is fun, biblical, and relevant!*
- **Fun and Biblical.** The sermons are always on Scripture. Don’t skip if you aren’t into video games – the point is always on Jesus and into the Bible.
- **Relevant.** Video games make more than music and movie industries...combined. This is part of our world, and I want to show some ways my faith has been grown.

Prayer

Super Mario Bros: You Get Another Life (15min)

- ***History of Mario**
 - o 1983 video game called Mario Bros then 1985 game Super Mario Bros.
 - o Frequently cited as one of the greatest video games of all time – power ups, hidden items, secret levels, and more.
 - o Mario is considered to be the most famous video game character of all time, and he has appeared in over 200 games. The live-action Super Mario movie is considered one of the worst films ever, BUT the Super Mario Bros animated movie was the second highest grossing film of 2023, making over \$1 billion.
- ***Lesson – You get another life.**
 - o Previous games had been about “how far you can get.” I played a game called Pitfall on the Atari (like sideways Temple Run). When you died, you started over.
 - With Mario, there was progression through world. There were mini-bosses, a main boss, and an “end” to the game. It was less about score and more about completion.

“To transform religious and irreligious people into Fully Devoted Followers of Christ.”

- When you died, you got another life to try that stage again – but not start the whole game again. You could also find additional lives.
- This changed how gamers saw failure. This changed the adventure of the game.
 - Gamers could experiment and unlock secret areas.
 - Messing up wasn't total failure – you got another chance.

• John 11:17-44 (p.893)

(we read this story recently, but it's great to do it again)

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. ¹⁸ Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many of the people had come to console Martha and Mary in their loss. ²⁰ When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed in the house. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask."

²³ Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴ "Yes," Martha said, "he will rise when everyone else rises, at the last day."

²⁵ Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. ²⁶ Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?"

²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she told him. "I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God." ²⁸ Then she returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, "The Teacher is here and wants to see you." ²⁹ So Mary immediately went to him.

³⁰ Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. ³¹ When the people who were at the house consoling Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus's grave to weep. So they followed her there. ³² When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died."

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled. ³⁴ "Where have you put him?" he asked them.

They told him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Then Jesus wept. ³⁶ The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much he loved him!" ³⁷ But some said, "This man healed a blind man. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"

³⁸ Jesus was still angry as he arrived at the tomb, a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. ³⁹ "Roll the stone aside," Jesus told them.

But Martha, the dead man's sister, protested, "Lord, he has been dead for four days. The smell will be terrible."

⁴⁰ Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believe?" ⁴¹ So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. ⁴² You always hear me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so that they will believe you sent me." ⁴³ Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!"

- ***God gives you second chances.**
 - Jesus didn't expect Martha or Mary to be perfect – and He doesn't expect you to be either.
 - You have been forgiven – don't need to be perfect.
 - Years ago, one of my daughters was goofing around, and accidentally whacked her younger sister in the head. Tears started flowing – from both of them. The younger sister was crying from the pain. The older sister was crying from shame. She felt so bad about hurting her sister that she couldn't help the person she hurt.
 - *Shame is paralyzing.*
 - *Jesus forgives your guilt and offers to bear your shame – let Him. 2 Cor 5:19 – sins not counted against us.*
 - **Give your guilt and shame to Jesus.**

- ***Death has been defeated.**
 - Athanasius lived around AD 300 at a time when Christians were persecuted and killed for their faith. The Christians considered it a great honor to be martyred for the sake of Jesus. The more Christians they killed, the more people became Christians. Athanasius wrote that the faith of the martyrs proved that death itself has been defeated, which is a big part of the gospel...
 - **I Cor 15:57 – God gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.**
 - **Give your fears to Jesus.**
 - Don't deny them, acknowledge them, and surrender them to Jesus.
 - Fear causes our worst to come out.
 - *We saw the whole world act very badly due to their fear of death, or fear of control, or fear of others' opinions.*
 - **ONLY JESUS**
 - How did Lazarus get out of the grave? **THE VOICE OF CHRIST.**
 - Jesus is the Word of God – **ONLY** the voice of Jesus can give you eternal life.
 - You are not strong enough to defeat death. Money is not enough. The only way to overcome the fear of death is to give it to Jesus.

Among Us – Trust Is Earned (10-12min)

- ***Among Us history**
 - Published in 2018 and saw a huge rise during the pandemic. Based on the in person game Mafia, the game has 4-14 players that are put on a map. 1-3 of those players are the Imposters, and they travel around the rooms and can kill the Crewmates.
 - The Crewmates can win by completing tasks or by ejecting Imposters – which they do through calling meetings and voting.
 - But the Imposters also get to speak and have votes – so they can lie and manipulate the vote, leading to Crew getting ejected.

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- Hugely streamed game – YouTube videos watched 4 billion times, and 13 billion on TikTok. The game has over 100 million downloads, and in Nov 2020 had 500 million active monthly users.

- *Lesson – Trust is earned.

- Haven't played much Among Us, people love/hate it, but I have played Mafia...a lot.
- *Crazy how well some people can lie!*

- John 13:21-30

²¹ Now Jesus was deeply troubled, and he exclaimed, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me!"

²² The disciples looked at each other, wondering whom he could mean. ²³ The disciple Jesus loved was sitting next to Jesus at the table. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to him to ask, "Who's he talking about?" ²⁵ So that disciple leaned over to Jesus and asked, "Lord, who is it?"

²⁶ Jesus responded, "It is the one to whom I give the bread I dip in the bowl." And when he had dipped it, he gave it to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ When Judas had eaten the bread, Satan entered into him. Then Jesus told him, "Hurry and do what you're going to do." ²⁸ None of the others at the table knew what Jesus meant. ²⁹ Since Judas was their treasurer, some thought Jesus was telling him to go and pay for the food or to give some money to the poor. ³⁰ So Judas left at once, going out into the night.

- *Judas – dip bread (friendship), Judas had a choice, had been stealing money, refused to accept Jesus on His own terms, betrayed Jesus with a kiss of friendship.*

- *Trust has levels.

- In Among Us – you are assigned as Crewmate or Imposter.
- In real life, your actions and intentions reveal if you are part of the crew or an imposter.
 - Judas followed Jesus for the wrong reasons, especially as Jesus began teaching about the suffering that comes from following Him.
 - Can Jesus trust you to endure hardships for His name? Will you have His back?
- Jesus modeled levels of trust.
 - Jesus reached out to the crowds, then had 120+ disciples, then twelve, then an inner three. Shared more of Himself the closer people were to Him.
 - *Me sharing in my Life Group, vs sermons, vs with my mentors and close friends. I have coached pastors to follow the model of Jesus.*
- In college, I was getting close to a friend, and we were starting to share more about our lives – and even inner struggles. He had a girlfriend, and they were close. But things took a turn, and they broke up. In his hurt and anger, he started telling and posting some of what she had shared – including some of her struggles. Wow. I was pretty shocked. I didn't drop him as a friend, but I definitely limited how much I shared with him.

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- Observe intentions and actions.
 - Intentions without actions are empty.
 - Actions with bad intentions are corrupt.
 - Intentions with actions is integrity.

- ***Give the grace you've been given.**
 - I have heard people say, "I will trust you completely until you lose that trust, then I will never trust you again."
 - Rabbis debated this question. Some said one time. Some said three times.
 - Peter asked Jesus, how many times – up to seven times – being very generous. Jesus' answer – 70x7 (unlimited).
 - Seemed crazy – until Peter was forgiven for denying Jesus (John 21).
 - The real answer – forgive as much as God has forgiven you. Did God trust you once, then never again once you lost that trust? NO. He trusts you again.
 - Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Col 3:13
 - Forgive yourself. Forgive others. Work through the pain with God and let go of the grudge.
 - **Let people regain trust.**
 - Forgiveness is not the same as regaining trust.
 - Let people do that step by step (intentions and actions).

- ***Accept that you need forgiveness.**
 - I knew all about Jesus, but I had not surrendered my life to Him. That finally happened after I realized how much of a hypocrite I was – I acted differently around different people because I wanted so much to be special and accepted. I didn't find that from people – I found that in Jesus. I had to confess my insecurity and hypocrisy to find the freedom that can only come from Christ.
 - I had betrayed the trust of Jesus.
 - You have betrayed the trust of Jesus.
 - Don't deny it, admit it.
 - And FOLLOW your Savior in full devotion. Trust Him and obey Him.

Close – Bridge into Communion...(2min)

- All these lessons in Communion.
- New life through the sacrifice of Christ.
- Forgiveness for ourselves and others.
- A commitment to trust and obey our Savior.
- Unity as a Body of Christ – we will gather together and take this meal together.

Prayer

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Benediction – Eph 3:17 – Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.

- Prayer Team available