

Message Notes January 17th, 2021
The Bible in One Year Week 3: The Forgiving Prince (Joseph's Story)
(Genesis 41:50-52, 50:15-21; Proverbs 2:1-8; Romans 8:28, 35, 37-39)

- **The Gospel in Genesis**

- What's your favorite Bible verse? Do you have one? Who knows, maybe after reading through the Bible this year you'll have a new one!
 - The most common answer I hear is Philippians 4:13, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*" So many people love that verse! Athletes love that verse—did you ever notice that? It's a powerful statement. Although, I think too often people put the emphasis on the part that says, "*I can do all things,*" when the real point is, "*through Christ.*" Without *through Christ*, "I can do all things" is empty. But I digress.
 - The second most common favorite verse I hear is Romans 8:28, "*...all things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.*" That's another powerful promise; it's easy to see why it's a popular verse.
- Personally, I love the rest of Romans 8 even more. Verses 37-39 go on to say, "*...I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"
 - What greater hope could you ask for? It's like the hymn we sang today, "*What more can he say than to you he hath said?*" ("How Firm a Foundation").
- I like the New Living Translation which says, "*nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" The love of God *that is revealed in Christ*: the love of God was always there; it's who He is. It was there with Adam and Eve, it was there with Noah, it was there with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, with Joseph—the Israelites knew all about the *steadfast love of God*. But I doubt they could imagine just how great that love truly is; not until the revelation of Jesus could we see just how infinite the magnitude of that love is. And when we catch a glimpse of that infinite love in Christ, we realize that there is nothing we could face in this life that can ever separate us from His love.
- Because of God's unending love, we have an unquenchable hope. Hide that word in your heart, let that truth sink down deep into your soul...*and you can face anything*. Just like Philippians 4:13 says. Just like Joseph.
- You see, before Paul wrote Romans 8:28 in the New Testament, there was Genesis 50:20 in the Old Testament, where Joseph says to his brothers, "*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good...*" What men intended for evil, God intended for good.
 - **What Romans 8:28 tells us in a direct statement, Genesis shows us through a story.** That's one of the amazing things about the Bible: **even though these events were recorded over thousands of years, the same themes come up again and again, because it's about the same God leading us to Redemption.**
 - All of this foreshadows the person and the work of Jesus Christ, where the theme builds like a masterpiece-symphony into its powerful fulfillment.
 - Even though there are parts of the Bible that challenge us, astonish us, sometimes even disturb us, the whole Story of Scripture is Good News. The Gospel isn't just the part about Jesus' life—the Gospel is woven throughout the entire Bible. You can find it from Genesis to Revelation.
- **The Gospel in Joseph's Story**
 - In this week's daily readings we work through Joseph's story, then next week we'll start to look at Job. To see how powerful this message of Genesis is, let's dig deeper into Joseph's story. And by the end, I think you'll see that this is Good News that points us to Jesus.
 - Genesis ends with Joseph's story coming full-circle in this astonishing moment with his treacherous brothers, who had betrayed him and sold him into slavery in Egypt. Joseph is now like a prince in command over all of Egypt and his brothers come to him after the death of their

- father, Jacob, seeking forgiveness: “Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives,’” (Gen. 50:20-21). This is amazing in so many ways. It’s so rich.
- You can trace the story back through the generations before Joseph to see how the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob led to *this* moment—how their weaknesses and mistakes created fertile ground for the brokenness of Israel’s family.
 - Abraham and his family had been given the special blessing of God to *be a blessing* to all people—to be part of God’s plan to redeem a fallen world. But the promise of God’s blessing comes with the test of faith: **to live in the blessing of God, we have to be willing to walk with God and wait on God**.
 - And that’s the challenge, that’s the test. It’s hard to wait. It’s hard to keep trusting when the road gets rough. **The temptation is always there to take control, to grasp for the blessing on our own terms**. But when we do that, we inevitably bring harm to ourselves and others.
 - Like Adam and Eve in the Garden. Like Abraham and Sarah with Hagar and Ishmael. Like Jacob with Esau’s birthright. Instead of trusting and waiting, they tried to force it. And watch how that unfolded and ultimately impacted the life of Joseph and his brothers.
 - Let’s recap. Remember, Jacob, Joseph’s father, forcefully stole the firstborn blessing from his brother, Esau, by tricking their dad, Isaac. Jacob then had to flee for his life and he went to his grandfather Abraham’s home country, the same place his mother Rebekah came from. There, he fell in love with Rachel.
 - But in an ironic twist of fate, after working for seven years *he was tricked* into marrying Rachel’s older sister, Leah, instead. He worked another seven years and finally married Rachel as well. (You can read all about this in Genesis 26-35.)
 - The story of Jacob’s life unfolds with more drama: he loves Rachel, but Leah is the only one able to bear children. Rachel becomes jealous of her older sister and so she gives Jacob her servant to marry and bear children (like Sarah with Hagar and Abraham). Then Leah, not to be outdone, gives Jacob *her* servant to marry as well, and *more* kids come. Finally, Rachel is able to conceive and the youngest children, Joseph and Benjamin, are born in Jacob’s old age.
 - Jacob is a troubled and broken man: even though he already had the blessing of God, he has fought and tricked his way through life to get what he wants. He’s estranged from his family of origin—his own brother wants to murder him! He eventually fought with his father-in-law, too.
 - Now, picture this family scene: he has *thirteen kids* (12 sons and one daughter) to *four different wives*, but he only really loves *one* of those wives. What do you think his kids are going to be like? How are they going to treat each other, knowing—because kids *always know*—that their father’s love only really belongs to one woman and it’s not *their mom*, and his favor only *really* rests on one of their siblings, who happens to be *the youngest, Joseph*.
 - Joseph is seventeen years old when their father gives him this great, beautiful robe that represents his favor and privilege. Then this snotty teenager starts telling his older half-brothers about his dreams of ruling over them. *What do you think will happen in this chosen family?*
 - Even though Jacob had a dramatic turning point in his life where he finally became humbled and reconciled with his family, all of his and his fathers’ choices of the past come to a boiling point with his twelve sons.
 - Joseph, the favored son, ends up being thrown into a pit and sold into slavery *by his own brothers*—they lied and said he was killed by a wild animal; I guess you could say they *tricked* their father, Jacob. (Are you seeing all the irony?) Everything seems to have fallen apart. *What would become of God’s plan of redemption through this covenant family?*
 - But you see, it’s in the pits, it’s in the breakdowns, the darkness and the deep valleys where God does some of His most wonderful works.
 - God is *with* Joseph in Egypt. He goes from being thrown in a pit, to being in charge of the household of an important Egyptian, to being falsely accused and thrown in Pharaoh’s dungeon—to *becoming the second-in-command of all Egypt!* Through it all, he doesn’t forget the God of his fathers, and the God of his father’s doesn’t forget him.

- Everything hangs in the balance at this incredible moment when, *22 years after* he was sold off to Egypt, all Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to get food during the great famine. Joseph recognizes them, but they don't recognize him. What was he going to do? If he took vengeance into his own hand—if he *grasped* for what he thought he deserved—this whole family would be done for. Instead, after generations of family drama, the story ends in the most unlikely way: *forgiveness*. “Am I in the place of God?” he says. “What you intended for evil, God intended for good.”
- Against all odds, after all the fumbling mistakes and sins of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's family, this traumatized son of a dysfunctional family *breaks the cycle* and submits to God's mercy.
 - And then they see how all the promises God had spoken to their parents *still held true*: in all their failures, God was still weaving together a tapestry of redemption, for “the saving of many lives.”
 - That's how it is when you walk with God, that's how it is when you live in the promise and the blessing of God: no matter how badly others hurt you or how badly you screw up, the God of redemption is always out for your *good*.
 - Nowhere is this demonstrated more powerfully than the Cross of Christ—in fact, all these stories are just echoes and foreshadows of what would happen on that Hill of Calvary. “*What was intended for evil, God intended for good.*”
- **This Gospel in Our Story**
 - This Gospel shines through the story of Genesis and the Story of Joseph. This Gospel becomes fully revealed in the life of Christ. And this Gospel, if we let it, will shine through our own stories.
 - What does Romans 8:28 say again? “...*we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose...*” We would love for it to say *all things work good for those who love God*, but it says *in all things God works for the good of those who love him*.
 - We'd love for God's blessing to mean that *only good things happen to us*. But Genesis makes it clear that from the moment humanity left the Garden, we would face battles along with the blessings. Even as we carry God's gracious blessing, we walk through a cursed world—because of humanity's own sin.
 - **Paul didn't say in Romans 8 that we would never face trouble. He said that *none of these things could ever separate us from the love of Christ*.** And if that's true, then one day, all of these troubles will be far behind us; all that has been lost can be restored.
 - But until then, *we walk with God and we wait on God*. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God of Sarah, Rebekah, and...all of Jacob's wives. The God of Hagar and Ishmael. The God of Joseph. The God and Father of our resurrected King Jesus. Walk and wait.
 - Is your life hard? Are you deeply disappointed with the way things have gone? Have you been traumatized by the sinful choices of others? Are you carrying the heavy burden of shame and the consequences of your own mistakes?
 - This *Gospel* is for you! This *God* is for you! And as Corrie Ten Boom famously said, “***There is no pit so deep that the love of God is not deeper still.***” Choose Him *this day!* Walk with Him and wait upon Him *this day!* And *some day*—even if it takes a long time—you'll be able to say, “What was intended for evil, God intended for good.” Amen.