

**The Rock: 07-19-2020**

**Long-term faithfulness:**

**The journey of Joseph**

**First reading:** Romans 8:29-39

**Title:** The providence of God

**Scripture:** Genesis 50:15-21

**Theme:**

The providential hand of God, not only leads us, but provides for us, protects us and restores us.

**Introduction:**

As we come to the final chapter not only of Genesis but of the life of Joseph, I wondered and prayed about just how to wrap this up.

A life time of pain, joy, excitement, tension, trials, reunions. In essence a life. Then the beautiful reunion of a father and a son.

After so many years apart, Moses records for us what has to be the cliff note version of what happened that day.

"Then Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father in

Goshen. He presented himself to him and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while. Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive."

**-Genesis 46:29-30 ESV**

I am not entirely certain that after almost 30 years it was a casual weeping and hugging. To have restored back to you, a child you thought was lost, a parent you thought you would never see again, seems like an event that was full of emotions, of all kinds.

**The Story:**

Learning last week of the intentions of God to have Joseph in Egypt to save people, and that happening through human circumstance, by the hands of his own brothers.

Struggling with that question of why bad things happen to good people. Realizing that divine appointing and blessing happens because God sees the whole picture.

Our lives are our own, that has to be true. If it isn't love itself could not be love, but rather forced compliance to the rules.

We are active agents in the purposes and plans of God, responsible for our own part, but operating under the providential hand and care of God.

Making prayer the absolute necessity of every believer, along with a daily reading of the Bible. Why? Because it is His word, and that is how we get to know Him and His will, and our role in that.

Discover God, discover ourselves, and discover our purpose.

Joseph understood this, and because of that, his entire perspective was framed out correctly. This allowed for grace and for forgiveness.

It brought about reconciliation and restoration of a family as they all are saved by his obedience to God's call on his life.

Pharaoh himself is also blessed. Over the years Joseph has served him faithfully, and now a family of shepherds has joined his second in command.

They are given the best portion of land in a place called Goshen, and he is blessed because they will now tend to his flock:

"Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What is your occupation?" And they said to

Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, as our fathers were." They said to Pharaoh, "We have come to sojourn in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants' flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. And now, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen." Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is before you. Settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land. Let them settle in the land of Goshen, and if you know any able men among them, put them in charge of my livestock."

**-Genesis 47:3-6 ESV**

Common grace. An unsaved person blessed by God because of the giftedness and obedience of His people.

Jacob himself actually blesses Pharaoh, an interesting thing to be sure, but he and his son enjoy another seventeen years together before Jacob passes"

"Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied greatly. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years."

**-Genesis 47:27-28 ESV**

He is brought home to be buried, a man full and restored, all because his family was once again whole.

But the brothers, even after all that has happened, Joseph not only blessing them, but setting them up for success, it seems that either they couldn't forgive themselves, or they didn't think Joseph's forgiveness was the real deal.

But it was. You see, genuine forgiveness is complete, it's final. But we sometimes hold onto things, don't we? They did. It's the hard part of being human.

Working out that finality of forgiveness. That God takes our sins away in such a way -that even He doesn't recall them:

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him."

**-Psalm 103:8-13 ESV**

Selective amnesia? Forgetful God? No, He simply chooses to forget our sin -Why? Verse 14:

"For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust."

**-Psalm 103:14 ESV**

The weight we carry, the burden we bear. God desires to take that away when he restores us. He has restored this family, and Joseph in every way lived out the grace and forgiveness of God, when it has come to his brothers.

But just like us, we don't understand that genuine love remembers no wrong:

"It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful..."

**-1 Corinthians 13:5 ESV**

The NIV translates that verse as: "It is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."

So, to really grasp this grace thing, takes a lifetime of re-wiring how we think. That leads us then to behaving in a right way, and doing so because our hearts are transformed, not just our behavior. Our very selves are conformed to the likeness of Jesus.

Sadly, these boys are quite there yet. So they hatch another scheme -Hey listen, Dad was a bit concerned about what you would do to us after he was gone so he told us to tell you:

“Say to Joseph, “Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.” And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him.”

**-Genesis 50:17 ESV**

Joseph cries when they tell him this, and the commentators pretty much agree that he knows they are telling him another lie. But that's not the only reason.

I think it is very safe to say that he is grieved that they are still afraid (it's been 17 years now, remember. 46 years in Egypt total for Joseph) and thinking that his forgiveness was just some external act, and not from the heart.

They are still struggling with what they did, even though Joseph had moved on.

I made a big mistake once many years ago, during my first tour of duty here at The Rock, and it really made Pastor angry. Rightly so! Sadly, that too is a gift I have, making people angry.

I knew I was wrong, and knew what I had to do. I went into his office and told him exactly that. I was wrong and was sorry. I asked for his forgiveness.

He told me I was forgiven and that the matter was closed. He moved on at that moment as if it never had happened. Grace, forgiveness. I struggled for a while with myself and my foolishness, but PR moved on as though it had never happened.

And in what I think are some of the most profound verses in all the Bible, Joseph frames out for his brothers what the genuine, Godly, and faith-filled response looks like:

"...Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them."

**-Genesis 50:19-21 ESV**

There are a few things I want us to see in Joseph's response. He sets the example:

**1-God is the only one who fixes wrongs. He forgives, punishes, and restores.**



Paul re-affirms this in his letter to Rome:

"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

**-Romans 12:19-21 ESV**

This is no vengeance thing. This is Paul helping us to know how we are to frame our attitude, our actions, and responses with a Godly focus.

It is God alone who handles these things, and our attitude must be tempered with His nature.

**2-Even though you sent me here in anger, God's hand of providence was all over the event.**

Again, Paul so beautifully explains this in part of our opening reading. That unbelievable chapter in Romans:

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

**-Romans 8:28 ESV**

It is almost as though Paul is pulling forward this Joseph story for the church in Rome. To remind them that God's story for His people Israel, is their story. Jesus is not a new story, a plan B -No, HE is THE STORY.

God, in this verse in the Greek, is the subject, not us, so the better way to read this is that "God works all things together, for those who love Him..."

All things work together because of Him, because of His sovereign care and providential hand on our lives. Without Him, we are a divine mess.

**3- Never go with the eye for an eye deal.  
That way of Karma.**

This is why they were afraid. They felt they were going to get what they deserved because of what they did. But Joseph didn't give them what they deserved, rather he gave them what they didn't deserve, BUT needed.

Grace, forgiveness. This is Jesus:

"But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from

one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them."

**-Luke 6:27-31 ESV**

It's the Jesus way.

**Application:**

Attitude is everything. How we think, act, and respond. The Cross-centered life, if lived out correctly, actually frees us from all the sin and weight which so easily entangles our hearts.

Think this through with me. If we cling to our guilt, anger, fear, shame -we become frozen in place. Focusing on the things which the faith-driven life is to avoid.

We believe that God did for us, In Jesus, what we could never do for ourselves. He took away all of our sin. So, why do we still cling to it, wrestle with it, and create stories and excuses to justify it?

Holding onto it in a way which stifles your growth as a child of God.

That great hymn by Horatio Spafford speaks to me here. Some of you know the

story behind it. He had lost three daughters in a shipwreck and he wrote, *It is well* as a result.

*"When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; what ever my lot, thou hast taught me to KNOW (not say), it is well, it is well, with my soul."*

If and when we position ourselves, or better yet, allow God to position us before Him in this posture, grace, forgiveness, and faith in Him becomes much easier, more natural in fact to receive.

Again, back to Paul and Romans 8, including verse 28 again:

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those

whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

**-Romans 8:26-29 ESV**

What a way to end this series. God is working on our behalf! Just as He was and did for Joseph and his family. God's Sovereignty.

I can almost hear Joseph (in all reverence and respect) if it were possible, saying just what Paul says here. But saying it to his very concerned and frightened brothers. So, with this I close:

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

**-Romans 8:30-39 ESV**

In the goodness of God, we are kept, we are restored, reconciled, protected and reunited brothers and sisters.