

20251123 Hillingdon Park Baptist 11am

Joseph reveals himself to his brothers

“I’m not speaking to you!”

“That’s my toy, not yours, you stole it”

“It’s not fair!”

Say Sorry Sorry!

How often do you argue with your brothers and sisters?

Joseph had 11 brothers so he had plenty to fall out with!

Read Genesis 41:53 – 42:4

So Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher set out to go to Egypt to get food.

Just imagine how Benjamin felt. He was left out of the fun!

Then when the brothers returned they told how they had been accused of spying, locked up for three days, and Simeon was still in prison while they were allowed to come home as long as they returned with Benjamin. Scary!

That food didn't last and they returned to Egypt with Benjamin. Benjamin must have been scared but strangely this time the boss-man of Egypt seemed all pleasant, releasing Simeon and offering them lunch. Still they were all relieved to get away and head for home with new supplies. Then out of nowhere soldiers arrived accusing them of stealing Joseph's favourite cup. A search was carried out and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. If you were Benjamin you might have cried. No good protesting you didn't know how it got there, you were caught red handed. But all the brothers stood by him and they all went back to Egypt. That was a little encouragement to Benjamin but he still felt awful.

Then the boss-man in Egypt says Benjamin was to be his slave and the others were free to go home. Benjamin had never been away from home before, now he was going to spend the rest of his life a slave in a foreign country. He didn't even know the language!

What was amazing was that Judah spoke up for him and offered himself as a substitute.

Let's listen in on Judah speaking through an interpreter:

I pledged my life to my father for the boy. I told him that if I did not bring the boy back to him, I would bear the blame all my life.³³ And now, sir, I will stay here as your slave in place of the boy; let him go back with his brothers.³⁴ How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I cannot bear to see this disaster come upon my father."

At which point the boss man orders everybody out of the room except the brothers. And he is crying.

Then he speaks to them in their own language.

"I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?"

Benjamin had no idea what was going on, least of all what this man meant. Joseph had been killed by an animal years ago, now he is standing in front of them, Prime Minister of Egypt! None of it made sense.

Then Joseph explains his story, quite different from the one Benjamin thought he knew. God had sent Joseph ahead of them to save them from starvation! It took a lot of talking to understand what had happened but the important point that Joseph made was that God had made Joseph Prime Minister of Egypt just so that he could provide a safe place in a famine for his special family.

And then Joseph hugged Benjamin. The brother that he thought was dead was very much alive. What is more Joseph had forgiven his brothers for selling him as a slave. He sent them back to Canaan to fetch Jacob and the family to live in Egypt. The Bible says

He sent his brothers off and as they left, he said to them, "Don't quarrel on the way."

The 11 brothers were quite likely to fall out especially as they had a lot of explaining to do to Jacob and the rest of the family about Joseph.

But what mattered most was that they were forgiven by Joseph. The bad feelings they had lived with for years about what they did to Joseph and the lies they made up to cover up their behaviour were released. They were free from the guilt they had carried for all those years.

Three things in this story reflect the character of God in this story.

First, God had a plan for the salvation of his people.

Second, Judah offers himself in place of his brother Benjamin. God's plan for humanity and for you was to send Jesus to stand in our place to save us. Jesus was our substitute on the cross, taking our place for our sins.

Thirdly, God is a forgiving God. If you turn from the sin you have committed and ask for his forgiveness, he will forgive as Jesus took the punishment for your sin.

Finally Joseph is an example for us. Jesus taught us to pray "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us".

Followers of Jesus forgive their brothers and sisters and friends because they have been forgiven.

To finish the story: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher and Benjamin went and fetched Jacob and that is how Israel ended up in Egypt.