

20251123 Hillingdon Park Baptist 9:30am

## **Joseph reveals himself to his brothers**

It would help you to have Genesis 40 - 45 open in front of you this morning as I will skim through the story

We join the story at a point where Joseph is Prime Minister of Egypt. Joseph has been faithful through a variety of trials. But more importantly, God had been at work. Ishmaelites had turned up to buy Joseph, which got Joseph to Egypt; a senior officer in Egypt's army had bought him and then dumped him in a prison for disgraced officials. None of those events seem very positive. Then God had planted dreams in the baker and cupbearer's head. Finally God gave Pharaoh a dream which only Joseph could interpret. Through all this Joseph is placed in Egypt with real power.

Read Genesis 40:44-52

Joseph recognises that God has brought him to this point and that dictates his mindset.

Read Genesis 40:53-55

Read Genesis 42:1-2

So by divine organisation, the famine drives Israel to send the sons to Egypt, twice. Joseph was living out his new life, married, with kids, wealthy and busy. It was all going well for him. He had every reason to ignore his brothers. But he chose to engage with them. You can dispute whether he began vengefully and changed or simply he was keen to know their mindset. But his whole conversation with them is challenging them.

Read Genesis 42:7-13

First, he wants to know the welfare of his father and brother. Remember, he has had no contact with his family for years. Then he wants to know whether they have changed. To test that he sets out an elaborate plan to get Benjamin to Egypt and then accuse him of a serious crime.

So he locks them up for three days and then releases all but Simeon on condition they bring Benjamin with them next time.

Their response is Read Genesis 42:21- 23

They return home with disturbing news.

Simeon is held hostage

Their money was returned.

They have to take Benjamin next time.

Jacob refuses to allow Benjamin out of his sight but the food runs out and the brothers return to Egypt with Benjamin. Simeon is released, they are treated well but Joseph has his cup planted on Benjamin and on the journey back:

Read Genesis 44:3-10

Will the others brothers leave Benjamin as they did Joseph or have they changed?

Read Genesis 44:11 – 13

They and particularly Judah return to Egypt and Judah offers himself as substitute for Benjamin.

Read Genesis 44:30 - 34

This is overwhelming good news for Joseph, so he reveals himself to his brothers. But listen to what he says to them.

Read Genesis 45:4 - 8

Joseph knows that all his life God has been organising for this moment. His response shows even greater perception. He forgives his brothers for all the hatred, slavery, imprisonment, he has endured because of their envy. Why? Because he recognises that God is at work and working for the good of his people. The key moments in this drama are Judah offering himself as substitute for

Benjamin and Joseph offering forgiveness freely because he saw repentance in his brothers. The Bible is not just a story book, it is a message from God telling us what is important in life.

Faithfulness in adversity, substitute for another and forgiveness for sin. These are the hallmarks of a follower of God because that is what God is like.

For us today, we look back at the Old Testament and see that it is full of references to Jesus because it picks out the characteristics of people who resemble God in their behaviour. Joseph could have abandoned his integrity in any of the challenges that faced him. Judah and the rest of the brothers could have abandoned first Simeon and second Benjamin but they chose to return to Egypt. In Benjamin's case, not because they could benefit but because that's what you do for family, even Benjamin. Joseph, in the midst of luxury, maintains his faith and recognizes he has a part to play in God's purposes, for the good of his family. So what about you? Where do you fit in the purposes of God? Going through tough times? Remember, God is working out a plan for your good. There's a much mis-quoted verse in Jeremiah 31:11 that says "*For I know the plans I have for you,*" declares the LORD, "*plans to*

*prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future".* But read the context and you realise that God's plan is for 70 years of captivity. So settle down in Babylon. For us we need to live out following Jesus where we are, however tough that is, knowing we are in his plan. When we live like that, knowing that we are forgiven, we are therefore ready to reflect the forgiveness we have received to others.

Jesus taught us to pray 'forgive us our sins as we forgive the sins of others.' And you have been forgiven, if you have turned from sin and trusted Jesus for salvation.

So forgiving is what we are meant to do.

It is not easy, it means letting go of the hurt and pain that has been caused. But it also means letting go of the anger and bitterness in your heart. It is not natural. It is a work of the Holy Spirit in our lives that does it. But we have to believe it is for our good. That God's plan is best for us.

Listen to **Corrie Ten Boom**. She was a watchmaker in Haarlem, Holland. When the Nazis invaded, the family took to hiding Jews and others and helping them escape. Eventually they were arrested and her father and sister died in captivity.

She wrote autobiographies in her later years and spoke in meetings across Europe.

The Hiding Place page 220 paragraph 3

*I was at a church service in Munich....*

To top of page 221

Forgiveness needs our willingness to obey Jesus and the Holy Spirit to empower us to do it.

It is not a one off event either. The memory of some hurts rise to the surface again and again and forgiveness has to be repeated. This happens to Joseph if you read on in

Genesis 50:15-21

In fact we could explore the reactions of everybody in this scene. Joseph at last able to see his brother and maybe his father – all the years of loneliness ended. Benjamin coming to terms with the fact that Joseph was alive, that the narrative he had believed most of his life was false, that his step brothers had deceived him. Judah and the rest of the brothers facing the man they had sold into slavery, all those years ago, that the man they feared most was kind and forgiving. This is an emotional climax of the highest order and God stands over it all providing the means of grace, the means of forgiveness,

keeping his promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.