

Osaka International Church
Date: September 7th, 2008
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Series: Patriarchs
Title: Joseph, Ruler of Egypt
Scripture: Genesis 42-47
Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 5:18

I. Introduction

Good morning! Back in Genesis 4, we read that Lamech killed a man who had wounded him, and then said to his two wives, **(Genesis 4:24), “If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times.”** Because of his actions and words, Lamech has become a notorious example of fallen man choosing revenge over forgiveness.



But Jesus taught a very different path. **Matthew 18:21-22, “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”** Lamech wanted to multiply revenge, but Jesus came to multiply forgiveness.

Most of us have some kind of mental picture of an ideal family, a cheerful picture of parents, grandparents, and a bunch of brothers and sisters, all living in harmony. Sadly, most families are not like this. One reason is because many people have not learned the way of forgiveness.



In too many homes, instead of forgiveness, there is anger and resentment. And in some homes, long years of unforgiving attitudes have made it very difficult for people to even talk with one another. Family members are separated by physical and emotional walls, and when they do meet, there are harsh words or hard silences. This is the sad reality that many families live with, but it doesn't have to be that way.



Today we will continue our study of Joseph, and we will see that forgiveness and love have the power to restore family relationships. In Joseph's example, we can find new hope for the restoration of harmony and joy in our own families. Forgiveness is possible, even when bad things have happened. It isn't easy, but it is possible. Many of us come from broken homes, and many of our family situations are far from ideal. Some of you are even thinking that there is no hope for reconciliation in your own family. You think the problems are too big and, the wounds are too deep. But take a look at this photo and be encouraged. If these two can get along with each other, then there is hope for our families. Big problems can be solved. Deep wounds can be healed.



II. Joseph's Story (continued from last week)

Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. That must have left a very deep wound in Joseph's heart. But his brothers suffered also, they suffered from the guilt of their sin and from the pain of living a lie, because they had told their father that Joseph was killed by a wild animal.

Long years passed and Joseph became the ruler of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. The seven years of plenty that God had promised came and went, and the seven years of famine that God had warned about began.



But in Egypt, there was food, because Joseph had stored up vast seas of grain during the years of plenty. **Genesis 41:57, “And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world.”** The news that there was food in Egypt spread far and wide. And the people came to Joseph to buy grain, and I am sure that they also heard a testimony about the One True God who had given advance warning about the famine.

Here we see God’s missionary purpose being fulfilled in the life of Joseph. **1 Timothy 2:4** tells us that God wants, “... **all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.**” And, **Romans 10:17** says, “... **faith comes from hearing the message....**” The Lord brought Joseph on a long and difficult journey in order to prepare him to be a humble and faithful witness. And then, through the dreams of Pharaoh, the Lord told Joseph in advance what was to come. First, seven years of plenty gave Joseph time to store up vast amounts of grain. And then, seven years of famine brought the nations to Joseph, where they heard the message of truth, that there is a God who created the heavens and the earth and who holds all things in His hand. And, that this God had given advance warning about the famine so that the people might be saved. Surely, many must have believed and been saved. And they returned home carrying God’s provision of grain and God’s Word of truth.

Genesis 42:1-2, “When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" He continued, "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die."” So ten sons of Jacob went down to Egypt to buy grain for their family, only Benjamin, the youngest stayed behind.

Genesis 42:6-7 “Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked. "From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food.””

Joseph recognizes his brothers and he knows that at last his dream of the sheaves of wheat is being fulfilled. And soon after, his dream of the stars, sun, and moon will be fulfilled as well. About 22 years had passed since Joseph was sold into slavery, but Joseph had remained confident in God’s Word through it all. Sometimes things don’t happen as soon as we would like. But we can remain confident; the Word of God never fails.



Joseph recognizes his brothers, but they don’t recognize him. This sets the stage for a drama in which Joseph puts his brothers through a series of tests to see whether or not their hearts have changed over the years. And along with the tests, Joseph gives several words of testimony about God to his brothers. The way in which Joseph does this is fascinating, but for today, let’s skip forward to the scene of reconciliation.

III. Scripture Genesis 45:1-15 (NIV)

[1] Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. [2] And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

[3] Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

[4] Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! [5] And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. [6] For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. [7] But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

[8] "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. [9] Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. [10] You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me--you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. [11] I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

[12] "You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who

am speaking to you. [13] Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly."

[14] Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. [15] And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

IV. Teaching

When Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers, they were terrified. After their harsh treatment of him, they had every reason to be worried. Joseph could easily have taken revenge on those who had sold him into slavery. But what does Joseph say to them? **Genesis 45:5, "And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you."**

Joseph had suffered as a slave and he had suffered in jail. But Joseph sees all of this as part of a larger plan, God's plan; God's plan to save many lives. The years of abundance and the years of hardship had a common purpose in God's eyes; all of these things were used by the Lord to bring salvation. And the saving of lives in this time of famine points to a greater salvation, eternal salvation from sin and death.

Joseph is demonstrating something very important for us. Forgiveness and reconciliation are much easier when we see the things that have happened as part of a much bigger picture. Everything that had happened to Joseph was part of God's plan to bring salvation. Nothing happens without God either causing it or allowing it to happen. And even when God allows bad things to happen, He still uses them for good, bringing blessing and salvation out of disaster. When we understand this, then we learn to forgive our brothers and sisters and let go of anger and resentment, opening the way to reconciliation and peace in our families. Joseph understood this, and so he was no longer angry with his brothers at all.

This idea is so important that Joseph speaks of it several times. **Genesis 45:7-8, "But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt."**

Joseph's ministry of reconciliation to his family soon succeeded in bringing them all together in Egypt. Jacob was overjoyed to see that his son, Joseph, was alive and that the family was together again. Joseph made sure that the family was treated well in Egypt and they were given a good place to live and to work in caring for their flocks and herds. Pharaoh also welcomed these men who were the family of Joseph.



And God appeared again to Jacob. **Genesis 46:2-3, "And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, "Jacob! Jacob!" "Here I am," he replied. "I am God, the God of your father," he said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there."** Here the Lord speaks of another part of his plan. The multiplication of Israel's family into a mighty nation will take place in Egypt. And when the time is right, almost 400 years later, God will lead the people of Israel back to the Promised Land, under the leadership of Moses.

Genesis 45:15 said concerning Joseph, **"And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him."** **"Afterward his brothers talked with him."** This is a very simple thing, but it tells us that the relationship between the brothers was truly restored. Sitting down with family and talking is very simple, but it is also very important.

Joseph was sold into slavery. Joseph could have been angry and resentful; he even could have taken revenge on his brothers. But Joseph chose a better way, he chose the way of forgiveness, reconciliation, and love. In Joseph, we have a powerful and prophetic model for Christ's ministry of reconciliation and salvation.



V. Conclusion

Let's close for today with 2 Corinthians 5:17-20. These verses remind us of how Jesus gave His life on the cross in order to reconcile us to God. And they also remind us that the ministry of reconciliation has been entrusted to us. (2 Corinthians 5:17-20) **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! [18] All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: [19] that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. [20] We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.”**

When the sons of Israel were reconciled and brought together in Egypt, they had to accept that Joseph their brother was now ruler over them, and they needed to accept the gift of a place to live and provisions of food from his hand. This required them to humble themselves, just as was prophesied years before.

This also is an example for us, because when we come to Jesus, we also need to humble ourselves, accept Him as Lord of our lives, and receive the free gifts of forgiveness of sins and salvation from Him, gifts which have been provided through His death on the cross and resurrection. And then we receive a part and role in His ministry of reconciliation. And we seek reconciliation with our own brothers and sister, and neighbors and friends. And we urge them gently, **“Be reconciled to God.”**



VI. Let's Pray