

Joseph and True Reconciliation- February 20, 2022

By Rev. Jenny

Joseph is one of those people of the Bible who really seem to catch our interest. He was the last, and favourite son, of Jacob. His father was very obvious with his favouritism, and this created many hard feelings with the other boys.

Anyone who has brothers or sisters knows that there are times when it is difficult having siblings. One feels mom or dad is favouring another. One has something the other wants. Or maybe one is just in a bad mood. Many things can cause friction.

But I don't know many family situations where a group of siblings got together and planned how to kill the favourite. But Joseph's brothers did just that.

It all began when Joseph, at age 17, was helping tend the sheep with his brothers. They did not seem to be doing a good job, according to Joseph, so he told his dad, rarely the best move. Joseph had already received a special coat from his father to show his father's special love for him so this act of telling on his brothers would just cause them to hate Joseph even more. The Bible tells us they "hated him and could not speak peaceably to him."

Not learning from this, Joseph has two dreams that they interpret as Joseph having dominion over them. This causes them to hate him even more. Even his father finds the idea objectionable.

One day, Joseph is sent to check on his brothers by his father. Seeing Joseph coming, the brothers plot to kill him but Reuben, one of the brothers, pleads with them to spare his life by throwing him in a pit. They agree and Reuben plans to rescue his brother. However, a caravan arrives, and the brothers see a way to make money. They sell Joseph and return home to tell their father that Joseph was killed by a wild animal. They even take Joseph's special coat and dip it in goat blood to add to their lie.

Meanwhile, Joseph is sold to the captain of the guard for the Pharaoh. Joseph proves himself to be a good worker and blessed by God. The captain notices and gives Joseph more responsibility until he is overseer of the house.

However, the wife also notices Joseph and desires him. He refuses her advances, so she eventually sets him up to be falsely charged with raping her. He is thrown in prison.

But again, it is shown that God was with Joseph and the chief jailer gives Joseph added responsibility.

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One of Joseph's God given gifts was to interpret dreams and he does this for two of the king's attendants who are in jail. Two years after Joseph is put in jail, the Pharaoh has a dream that none of his attendants can interpret. One of his attendants remembers Joseph and his ability to interpret dreams so tells the Pharaoh who then brings Joseph in to interpret his dream.

Joseph interprets the dream that there are seven good years coming, followed by seven lean years. Joseph advises the Pharaoh to store up food and administer it wisely.

Seeing the value and wisdom in Joseph's words, Pharaoh gives Joseph an Egyptian name, a wife and authority over all of Egypt. How far that young boy sold into slavery has come.

The famine hits the land after the seven good years, but Egypt is prepared. However, the land of Joseph's family is hit hard. His father sends the brothers to Egypt to try to find food, not knowing that Joseph was alive and definitely not aware of the power and authority of Joseph.

They find themselves bowing before Joseph begging for food, not realising of course who he was. Joseph does recognise them though. He accuses them of being spies and releases them to go bring their youngest brother back but they are to leave Simeon, one of the brothers, there as collateral.

They return with Benjamin, the youngest brother. After much back and forth, Joseph reveals himself to the brothers when they are alone. They weep and reconcile and soon bring their father and whole family to live near Joseph.

Quite the interesting story. Most children learn about Joseph in Sunday school and a hit play, Joseph and the Coat of Many Colours, has even been written based of his story.

So, what are we to learn from this tale? Selling a brother into slavery does occur even in our era but not commonly in Canada. I would hope none of us have experienced that. Many do experience human trafficking though and it is just as horrible now as in the time of Joseph.

But we do have times when our feelings get out of control, and we do things we regret. Too often we hear of families divided and members refusing to even speak to each other. Funerals often bring this to the surface, often too late to reconcile. Too many times I hear the regrets of words not said, amends not made.

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None of us is perfect. We all stumble. What makes the difference is how we recover. With God's help, nothing is beyond fixing. If God can work with a family who sells a loved one into slavery, God can work with us.

Joseph's story is similar to an even greater story where the man is betrayed by loved ones as well. He goes away but comes back into the people's lives again to also offer help. IN this case though, the person is able to help anyone who asks. Of course, I am talking about Jesus who is betrayed by Judas, one of his closest friends, is tortured and killed but returns to life, having conquered death itself.

Each of these people's lives teach us what true reconciliation looks like. "In our own spiritual journeys, we remember those times when we were too harsh, vengeful, unforgiving, or indifferent. In our relationships with our spouse or partner, our church community, and our neighbours and colleagues, if we reflect long enough, we can recall such hurtful encounters. Brought to our knees and humbled by our own egregious deeds, God comes inviting us to receive divine compassion in our brokenness...Divine love transcends and conquers all when we surrender"

My prayer for you today is that you find the peace that comes from true reconciliation in all areas of your life without being thrown in a pit like Joseph.