



The Sermon

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Genesis 43:1-15

October 30, 2022

"Blessed Providence"

TRANSCRIPT

So we have a lot to look at today as always, so I invite you to take your Bible and turn with me to the book of Genesis, Genesis chapter 43, and I want us to look - I want to read the first fifteen verses. I was assigned to do the entire chapter, but I just can't get through that much scripture without explaining it and applying it; and so we'll have time I believe for the first fifteen verses. I want to begin as always by reading the passage, setting it back before you. I'll pray, and then we'll work our way through this text and see what does it mean and what does it require of me.

So beginning in verse 1, this is God's inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word: "Now the famine was severe in the land. So it came about when they had finished eating the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, 'Go back, buy us a little food.' Judah spoke to him, however, saying, 'The man solemnly warned us, "You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you." If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. But if you do not send him, we will not go down; for the man said to us, "You will not see my face unless your brother is with you."'"

"Then Israel said, 'Why did you treat me so badly by telling the man whether you still had another brother?' But they said, 'The man questioned particularly about us and our relatives, saying, "Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?" So we answered his questions. Could we possibly know that he would say, "Bring your brother down"?'"

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"Judah said to his father Israel, 'Send the lad with me and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, we as well as you and our little ones. I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever. For if we had not delayed, surely by now we could have returned twice.'

"Then their father Israel said to them, 'If it must be so, then do this: take some of the best products of the land in your bags, and carry them down to the man as a present, a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. Take double the money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was a mistake. Take your brother also, and arise, return to the man; and may God Almighty grant you compassion in the sight of the man, so that he will release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.' So the men took this present, and they took double the money in their hand, and Benjamin; then they arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph." The drama of the life of Joseph just continues to unfold before our watching eyes. Let's go to the Lord in prayer

[Prayer] Father, Your Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, and we live in a dark and sinful generation, and we need the light of Scripture to be like a beacon, to be like a lighthouse on a jagged coastline to shine truth before our very eyes and before our feet so that we would know how to live in this fallen world. We ask now that You would take from this one passage multiple layers of truth and apply it to our lives no matter where we are. You have something to say very specifically to each and every one of us here today, for Your Word addresses every person on every continent and every generation at every time. Surely here today You have much to say to this congregation and to this flock. So open our ears, that we may hear. Open our eyes, that we may see. Shape us and mold us yet further into the image of Jesus Christ. We pray this in His name. Amen.
[End]

The title of this message is "Blessed Providence. Blessed Providence." I'm often asked this question: "What is the greatest book I've ever read?"

Whenever I'm on a college campus, a bible college campus, that question

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inevitably is asked me multiple times; and students will have out a pad of paper and a pen, they're ready to write down whatever book I say is the most impactful in my life. And the answer to such a question always depends upon, "Where were you in your life at the moment you read that book? What was going on in your life? What did you need to know? What was the next installment of truth at just that precise moment that was so strategic that it had advanced your Christian life to the next level, perhaps even several levels?"

And so having said that, there's one in particular, one book that God used in my life many years ago. It was a Puritan classic. Puritans were, as J. I. Packer said, the redwoods in the Christian forest. They were the mighty generation, several generations of creatures in England in the end of the 1500s, beginning the 1600s. One in particular, a man named Thomas Watson, who's the easiest Puritan to read for me. And he wrote a book called *A Body of Divinity*. He preached through the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and it was just a theological education unto itself.

For me at that time I was wrestling with the truth of the sovereignty of God. I came from a very Arminian background, and this was such a foreign truth to me. And as I was in, really, a death struggle, grappling with the truth of the supreme authority of God, specifically I had so much trouble with the doctrine of sovereign election, that God has chosen a people who will be saved from before the foundation of the world. And as I read this book, *A Body of Divinity*, it was almost like eating candy. It was so easy to take in and to digest; and God won my heart over. It wasn't that I became any smarter, it's that God the Holy Spirit just won my heart over to this glorious truth. And it was a game changer for me. It humbled me. It crushed me. It made me all the more grateful and worshipful.

And so having crossed that bridge I thought all was behind me. But I kept reading the book; and there was a chapter that, again, dropped me to my knees. The title of the chapter is "The Providence of God." And I had come to understand that God is sovereign in my salvation, that God chose me before time began to be His, gave me to His Son who came into this world and laid down His life for me. That was a huge pill for me to swallow. But there it is in the Bible; I can't deny, it's there. And my heart eventually just fell in love with how intentional God was toward me. But I had no idea after seeing that God is sovereign in my salvation that God is sovereign

over the circumstances of my life, that God is sovereign over the events of my life. I mean, this took me to a whole 'nother layer of wrestling with the truth of the Word of God. And yet there it is.

The truth of providence teaches that there's nothing random that occurs in the world. There are no accidents. There's no such thing as good luck or bad luck. There's no such thing as fate, but that a very personal God – you hear a thump sounding? Is that me? OK. So how do I stop my heart from beating? So what's going on here? OK, all right. This is going to drive me crazy, you crazy for the rest of this sermon. I don't know what's doing this. OK, is that any better?

So the doctrine of providence is that God is continually working at all times in and through all things to bring about His master plan, that God is causing, as Romans 8:28 says, all things, both good and bad, to work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to His purpose. And Ephesians 1:11 says that "God is working all things after the counsel of His will." This is a glorious truth to know that God has ordered our steps, that God has gone before us, and that God is taking all the various threads and weaving them together into a perfect tapestry of His master plan for my life, and that greatest good is to conform me into the image of His Son Jesus Christ.

There are two premier examples of providence in the Bible. The first is God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ, that His steps were ordered here upon the earth – yeah, and I may need some help with the nursery here – that God has ordered – where was I? – that God's Son, providence, that God has ordered all things in the life of His Son Jesus Christ, that He was on a divine time schedule; and in the midst of all that He faced with the Pharisees, with the unbelief of the world, with the Roman Empire, with the dead religion of Israel, nevertheless it was all being caused to work together for our greatest good to take Jesus to the cross. And He was the Lamb of God who was slain from before the foundation of the world.

The doctrine of providence just screams through the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ from His virgin birth to His ascension back to heaven. A blind man could see it. But the second greatest example of providence, the doctrine of providence, is found in the life of Joseph. And that is why from

chapter 37 through chapter 50 there is such a major emphasis, a major spotlight that is shined upon Joseph, so that you and I could see how the affairs of providence are being carried out and ordered by God, that God works through both good events and bad events, that God works through good choices and bad choices, that God works through good people and bad people, and He weaves it all together to bring about His perfect plan for our lives.

That's what we're to see with Joseph. There are many other things that we will see with Joseph, but that's the big picture. And the same is true for your life as well. There's nothing random going on in your life. It was foreordained by God that you would be here today. It was foreordained by God that you would hear this message. It was foreordained by God who would be sitting on your right and who would be sitting on your left, that God has complete control, not just to the big picture, but of all the minute details in your life.

There's another appearance in classic called *The Mystery of Providence* written by John Flavel; and just a reading of the table of contents would encourage your life. The time of your birth, ordained by God, who your parents would be, what your gender would be, what your intellect would be, what influences would be brought to bear upon your life, where you would be born on the globe, what would be your education, who would be your spouse, who your children would be. Nothing random about your life; all under the greater purposes of the sovereignty of God.

And if I did not believe in the doctrine of divine providence, I would be scared to get out of bed in the morning. I would be scared to get in a car and drive anywhere. I would be scared to venture out to do anything if I did not believe that God is orchestrating the events surrounding my life for a far greater good, and that God has already foreordained the day of my death, and that I will not live five milliseconds beyond the appointed time that God has already determined for my departure from this world, that all my days are written in His book when as yet there is not one of them. Proverbs says, "The casting of the lot, its every turning up is from the Lord." All the hairs of our head are numbered by the Lord. There's not a sparrow that falls apart from the Lord. It's all under the doctrine of the providence of God.

And so that comes through loud and clear in the life of Joseph. And so as we look at this, I hope it can be a great encouragement to you, that God is overseeing the affairs of your life, and that you're under very good management by the Lord. So let's walk through this passage. We'll only go through verse 15. I say that just to give you some sense of comfort.

And the first thing I want you to note in the first two verses is "the ravaging of Canaan, the ravaging of Canaan," because this was a very difficult time. Verse 1, "Now the famine was severe in the land." "The land" here refers to the land of Canaan. The whole land of Canaan there was a life-suffocating famine that was bringing people to the very brink of death itself. It says it was severe, this famine, this food shortage. And the word for "severe" here is the very same word in the Hebrew language that is translated elsewhere in the Old Testament, "for glory, the glory of God," which means weighty, heavy. God is weighty and heavy, He's not a lightweight. And this famine here was a crushing, weighty, heavy famine that was suffocating the lives of the people in Canaan as they were running out of food.

Verse 2, "So it came about when they had finished eating the grain they had brought up from Egypt," - as you recall, we saw last week that the sons had gone down to Egypt to purchase grain or corn, and they have brought it back to Canaan so that they can continue to survive in the midst of this dust bowl of a famine. And now they've gone through this portion of food, and they're left with nothing. And at the end of verse 2, their father said to them, "Go back and buy us a little food." Then he proposes that they make a return visit now back to Egypt to buy food.

And before we go any further, I just want to bring this to your attention, that even the Patriarchs were subject to difficulties of life that encapsulated the lives even of unbelievers. Just because you're a believer doesn't mean you don't go through the famine. Just because you're a believer doesn't mean there's automatically going to be bread on your table. Jacob was exposed to this famine just like anyone else. And the God who causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust is also the God who withholds food in a famine from the just and the unjust across the board.

And so it is today in our Christian lives. As we live here in Dallas, Texas, and our country goes through difficult times, and as our city goes through difficult times, we're not exempt from these problems. We suffer under the same trials that the rest of the world does at many times. I mean, the COVID that spread around our country, it hit us as believers just like it hit unbelievers. And the downturn in the economy, and the uprise in inflation, I mean that all affects us just like it does unbelievers. We don't get a free pass in life, we're not exempt.

And this really exposes the heresy of the prosperity gospel, the health, wealth and prosperity gospel, that if you have faith in God, then your problems will just go away. That's a cruel message, because they don't go away. In fact, if you become a Christian, you're going to have a new set of problems. It's called persecution. It's called cross-bearing. It's called self-denial. And so we see here that Jacob and his sons were subject to the very same famine as the pagan, heathen, idolatrous unbelievers.

The second thing I want you to note is "the response of Judah." Now that begins in verse 3. And in verse 3, "Judah spoke to him," – referring to Jacob – "however, saying." So Judah now steps into the leadership role. Judah now becomes a spokesman for the other sons and brothers, and he addresses his father on behalf of all of them, and he relays what was said to him by the Prime Minister of Egypt, which in reality was Joseph his brother, just didn't know it.

So he relays that conversation in verse 3, "The man," – we know who that is. I mean, Joseph was the man. He had control and authority over the entire Egyptian dynasty, and he ran all of the affairs of the nation and of state on behalf of Pharaoh. Yeah, he was the man – "solemnly warned us. When we were down there, he spoke very directly to us, and he solemnly warned us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you. If you come back for more food, you will not even have an audience with me. You will not even be able to enter the palace, unless you bring your younger brother Benjamin with you.'"

Now Joseph wants to see his youngest brother. Why? Well, they're blood brothers. They were born of the same mother. The other brothers were born from other mothers whom Jacob had married. But he wants to see his own

blood brother, "My youngest brother. So don't even show up down here in Egypt unless you bring him."

So in verse 4, Judah now explains to Jacob his father about this. He says, "If you send our brother Benjamin with us, we will go down and buy you food." And so he's pressuring his father to make the decision to do what his father has already said he will not do, which is to release Benjamin to go down with him. Benjamin is the youngest son. He doesn't want to lose another son. He's not old enough yet to be on this trip.

Verse 5, "But" - Judah continues to speak - "if you" - Jacob - "do not send him," - Benjamin - "we," - now all ten sons - "we will not go down." They give their father an ultimatum, and he explains why. "For the man" - who is Joseph the Prime Minister - "said to us, 'You will not see my face unless your brother is with you.'" And so in verse 5 he repeats the conversation that he just gave in verse 4, and the double reference is to underscore the seriousness of this. "You're going to have to let Benjamin go with us, or there's no point in us leaving town."

So Jacob responds in verse 6, "Then Israel said," - that's Jacob - "Why do you treat me so badly? I mean, why are you painting me into a corner like this? Why do you put me in a position to oppose what I've already said I will not do?"

Verse 7, they respond: "But they said," - and now so all ten brothers respond here - "but they said," - or at least nine of the brothers - "they said, 'The man' - again, that's Joseph the Prime Minister - 'questioned particularly about us, our relatives, saying, "Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?'" He kept pestering us with questions. He kept probing. It was like they were put on the witness stand and the spotlight was on them and they were having to answer these questions. And they're trying to explain to their father how this whole thing came up about Benjamin, "and don't come back unless you have Benjamin."

And so in verse 7, "So we answered his questions. We didn't bring this up, it's like we were on the witness stand and an attorney is leading the witness in a direction to secure a testimony from him under oath. So we answered

his questions. Could we possibly know" – end of verse 7 – "that he would say, 'Bring your brother down'? We had no idea where this questioning was going to lead us. So we had to tell him, 'Yes, we have a younger brother; yes, he is back at home with our father; and yes, our father is still alive.'" And of course, Joseph is wanting a happy reunion, for them all to come down into Egypt so that he can see them and reveal himself to them. But they don't know this.

So verse 8, "Judah said to his father Israel, 'Send the lad. It's the only option you have, Dad. Send the lad with me and we will arise and go. Just give me the word to take Benjamin and we can go down, and we will purchase more food,' – at the end of verse 8 – 'that we may live and not die, as well as you and our little ones. Dad, we have no choice. If you don't release Benjamin to go with us, we're all going to die. We're going to die, you're going to die, our children are going to die. And you're concerned about Benjamin dying down in Egypt? He's going to die in Canaan if you don't let us go. So Dad, it's our only option, it's our only choice.'"

So verse 9, Judah continues to speak: "I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. I will assume full responsibility for his safety; and if I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever." So in verse 10, "For if we had not delayed, surely by now we would have returned twice."

Now what Reuben is saying here is, "We have waited so long to respond to this. We saw it coming, we knew it was coming. We only had so much food. There was no way to secure food in our land; our supply is dwindling and dwindling. We had time to go back to Egypt for two trips. We could have gone down to Egypt, gotten food, come back. We could have gone back to Egypt, gotten food, come back. But we have procrastinated, we have put this on the back burner. We have been denial of this situation and this problem, and so it's really on us, because we have failed to act in this situation."

And it was in Jacob's procrastination that this problem went from bad to worse. The problem didn't go away. The food supply was dwindling and dwindling and dwindling; and the longer they put off making this decision, "What are we going to do?" the worst it was becoming.

I think there's a lesson for us to learn here. I don't know what all is pressing in your life right now, but there well may be some issues that need to be addressed right now, and the tendency is to put off making a decision, to put off taking steps that are necessary, thinking, "Well, the problem will just go away. If I just ignore it, if I just don't do anything, then maybe it'll just go away." But the fact of the matter is it doesn't go away, it just goes from bad to worse to awful. Procrastination is a horrible thing. We need to live our Christian lives with a sense of urgency, to do now what we know we need to do now.

Growing up I was horrible at this. My dad used to say to me, "Steven." And whenever he said my name with the N at the end, "Steven, Steven James," – first two martyrs in the New Testament by the way, kind of a foretaste of what was ahead for my life – "Steven, your middle name is procrastination." He said that to me once, he said that to me a hundred times, because I would wait until the night before to do my homework assignments, to write my term paper, to study for a final exam. I would wait to the last second, knowing that my mother would step in and do it for me.

But we see hear this problem is because of their procrastination, and they would not deal with what needed to be dealt with. And I don't know what there is in your life that needs to be addressed today, now, but it's only going to be worse tomorrow and the rest of the week, until you deal with it. I wonder what man here today needs to go to the doctor, and you just refuse to go see a doctor because you think it'll just go away. No, it's not going to go away.

Third, I want you to see "the reversal by Jacob." Beginning in verse 11, "Then the father Israel said to them, 'If it must be so.'" I mean, he has finally come to the place of accepting reality. He has now finally come to see that "there are only two options in front of us; and if I choose not to act, we're all going to die. I must choose this option here, it is the only path forward. Though I previously said I would not do it, now I must do it." And so he says, "If it must be so," realizing there's no other way to move forward in this and for our lives to be extended. "If it must be so, then do this."

And he says two things. Number one, "Take some of the best products of the land in your bags, and carry them down to the man as a present." I mean, even Proverbs says that your gift will set you before kings, that you should bring an expression of respect and honor as you would call upon a king like this. "So you need to bring a present to him, a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum, myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. So take some gifts with you."

And then, second, verse 12, "Take double the money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks." As you recall last week, we saw that they went down to Egypt on the first trip, and they bought grain and corn to take back to Canaan, and they gave a sum of money. Unknown to them, Joseph had said to the chief of staff, the house steward, "Put the money back into their bag. Make it easy on them."

So as they travel back they stop at a particular lodging place to eat, they open the bags to get some of the grain and corn out so they can eat, and lo and behold, they discover there's money: their money, the exact sum in their bag, and they panic, because people would assume if this was known, they would assume, number one, you stole the money; number two, you stole the grain without paying for it; or number three, you sold your brother Simeon who's now in prison. Any of those options do not look good. So the father says, "No, you take double the money down, because with one portion, you're going to buy more grain, and with the other portion, you're going to return the money so that you do not appear to be spies." So that's what's going on.

And then at the end of verse 12, he throws out, "Perhaps it was a mistake. Maybe they will think it was an error on their part. Maybe they will be looking for the money and cannot find it, and you show up with the money. It'll be obvious you're innocent, because you're returning it."

So verse 13, here's the third thing: "Take your brother," - he's referring to Benjamin - "take your brother also, and arise. Act right now; we can't procrastinate any longer. Now is the accepted time. Behold, today is the day. Arise, and return to the man," - Joseph; and then he pronounces this desire for blessing in verse 14, something of a benediction - "and may God

Almighty grant you compassion in the sight of the man, so that he will release to you your older brother" – that's Simeon – "and Benjamin."

This speaks to the faith that Jacob has that God is in control of this outcome, that if Benjamin and Simeon are to be released, it will only be because of the compassion of God. He understands that the outcome is in God's hands. He has a high view of God, and he understands that God is in control of the Prime Minister. And if the outcome is to be what we desire it to be, then God must do it.

There's three truths about God I want you to note in verse 14. Number one, that God is all-powerful. You see His name El Shaddai. E-l, El, means the Mighty One, the Powerful One. And Shaddai is taken from, we think Akkadian, which means mountain, that God is standing on this mountain, the all-powerful One towering over the affairs of human history, towering over the nations, towering over all of the prime ministers and kings and rulers and judges of this world, that God is high and lifted up. He is El Shaddai, that there is nothing impossible for God, that God can flip any situation around that He so desires, that God can overrule any situation according to His own desire.

So Jacob sees that God is all-powerful. Second, that He's all-loving. Please note that He is full of compassion. And the word "compassion" speaks of the bowels, the intestines, that from the depth of a person's being there would be lovingkindness and mercy, and that God is a God of tender mercies who uses His power benevolently, that He uses His power to bestow good things upon His people.

And third, that God is all-present, that this God who is, as it were, on top of a mountain looking down upon us as though we are little ants down here, that this God is very near and present to us, that He chooses to intervene into the affairs of our lives, and He is ready to step in and to work for our good in the midst of the most difficult situations. He's not just high and lifted up on this mountain – He is – but He is near to us. It's the doctrine of the transcendence of God and the imminence of God, that God is omnipresent. He's both in the heights of heaven, and He's down in the pit with us in the midst of our difficult trials and adversities. That's what Jacob understands, and that's what you and I need to understand and to remember.

And so by these words, Jacob realizes that the outcome lies with the Lord as they go down to Egypt. It would be easy for him just to be a worry wart and to have no peace. But no, he places the matter into the hands of God. I think of one verse that I must cite as a cross-reference right now. It's Proverbs 21:1, "The king's heart," - that would be like Joseph's heart, that would be like the prime minister's heart - "the king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He" - the LORD - "turns it" - the king's heart - "wherever He wishes." Let me give you the background on this verse.

Years ago I had the privilege to go to the Middle East and I spent a month at the University of Jerusalem and studying the land of Israel, and then I spent a month in Egypt. And I remember going down the Nile River from Cairo down to the Valley of the Kings where Moses was; and as I went down the Nile River in the midst of this arid region, the Nile River is the source of life for everything that grows nearby. And I saw farmers on the side of the river, farmers as they would open a little place to let the water come onto their land. And then the farmers had set up a network of almost like highways, it was like a maze to direct the water where it would need to go. There were little trenches, and they would put boards down and stop the flow of the water and make it turn in one of two directions. And then at other times they would lift up a board so that the water would continue to flow from the Nile through their maze of trenches, until the water would be directed to exactly where they wanted the water to be. And that's the background of this verse. "The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; and He" - the LORD - "turns it." God the true King turns the little human king's heart wherever He, God, wishes. And that's true not just for believing kings, that's true for unbelieving kings.

Ezra 1:1 talks about how the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus. He was an unbelieving, reprobate king, and God just stirred up his spirit to do what God wanted him to do. In Isaiah 44:28, God says, "It is I who says of Cyrus, He's My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire." So God's behind the scenes pulling the strings of unsaved kings to carry out His sovereign will.

I think about today, our country. We are led by reprobates. We are led by men and women who are enemies of God, who are godless, and who are fools; and yet it brings great comfort to me to know the God is sovereign
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over their hearts. God has raised them up because that's who we deserve to be our rulers. But God can turn that heart whichever way He wills.

We don't have to have a Christian in the White House for God to carry out His purposes. I would love to have a Christian in the White House; don't misunderstand me. Save your emails. But God never has to have the situation just right in order to work. God overturns situations according to His own pleasure.

So the last thing I want you to note, and we'll wrap this up, is in verse 15, "the return to Egypt." "So the men" - referring to the ten brothers, the ten sons of Jacob - "took" - note, three things - "this present," - that's number one; number two - "they took double the money," - in order to pay back what they had discovered in their in their sacks; and then, three - "and Benjamin. And then they arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph."

You know, I just realized I passed over the end of verse 14. I want you to see the end of verse 14. Let it not be said I ever skipped over a part of a verse.

At the end of verse 14, "As for me, if I am bereaved of my children," - that's one word in the Hebrew, and it just means childless - "if I am childless, which causes me great grief, I am bereaved." This is a statement of Jacob's willingness to accept whatever shall come from the hand of God. "I commit you to God," - at the beginning of verse 14 - "but however this turns out, I will accept it as God's will." This is like Esther saying in Esther 4:16, "If I perish, I perish."

It is a willingness to accept the sovereign will of God however it will play out; and God will be the one who will make the final decision about how this will work out with Benjamin. There needs to be that kind of faith in your walk with the Lord, that I yield to the discretion of the Lord, and I will accept whatever God chooses to bring about in my life. I humble myself beneath the mighty hand of God and I will accept from Him whatever is the discretion of His sovereign will.

So back to verse 15, "the return to Egypt." The three things that they are to take with them (a present, double the money, and Benjamin) as they go back down to Egypt. It's a journey of 250 miles, three-week journey on donkeys and camels, a very difficult and arduous journey. But they make this journey to go back down to Egypt.

Necessity has been laid upon them to do this, they had no other choice. This was not a matter between good, better, and best; these are all difficult options before them. "Option A: We do nothing. We stay here and we die of starvation. Option B: We take Benjamin with us, we go down to Egypt. We may lose Benjamin for all we know. We may be held as prisoners once we're down there. We may not make it out alive. Nevertheless, these are the only two options before us. We have to make a decision. And it's not the decision that we would choose to make if we could set out the options, these are the only two. So we will take Benjamin and we will go."

We, too, often have to make similar kinds of decisions. Really the easiest decisions are between good, better, and best. The hard decisions sometimes are between bad and worse.

Now we have an upcoming midterm election, and the choice between candidates is not always between good, better, and best. Sometimes the choice is between bad and worse. But we have to make a choice. It's not a good choice just to say, "I'm a Christian and I'm not going to vote." No, you've got to pull the lever for someone. And I think you know who you should vote for in most cases, because you're a believer, and you have a heightened sense of what's right and what's wrong, and you believe in life, and you believe in freedom. But sometimes those choices are very difficult, just like it was for them. But you have to go ahead and pull the lever for someone.

And sometimes I hear people say, "Well, I could never vote for that person." Well, you can't vote for that person either. So who are you going to vote for? Sometimes you just have to go ahead and make a decision between bad and worse.

Now let me tell you what's the no-brainer decision of them all. You need to believe in Jesus Christ. You need to repent of your sins. You need to deny yourself and take up a cross and become a follower of Jesus Christ. That is in many ways the easiest decision you'll ever make, and in many ways is the hardest decision you'll ever make; but it is the decision you must make; and no one else can make this decision for you. You have to be active, not passive. You have to step out of the crowd and step out of the world, and you have to turn your back on a life of sin to now pursue the Lord Jesus Christ as a follower of Christ.

And so if you have never believed in Jesus Christ, I am calling you right now on His behalf to come to Him. His arms are open; He will receive you. He says, "Him who comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." You just need to come to Christ, to throw yourself upon His mercy, to confess your sin to Him, to repent of your sin, and to embrace Him as your Lord and Savior, and He will take you, He will forgive you. He will clothe you with His perfect righteousness. He will move into your life. He will now be your provider, He will be your protector, He will be your partner. He will be your partner.

Every step of life's journey for the rest of your life you will have Christ in you and at your side, and He will lead you into green pastures, He will lead you besides still waters. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. One day at the appointed time when you die and you leave this planet, this world, if you will commit your life to Christ, He will take you straight to His Father's house in heaven.

And what's the other choice? The other choice is to ignore this. The other choice is to just rely on your own sincerity and your own goodness and your own morality. And that choice, I have to tell you, will take you down into the lake of fire in brimstone, into the place where the worm never dies, into that place of the weeping and the gnashing of teeth, into that place of torment, haunting memories, engulfed and inflamed body. I would say that should be a pretty easy choice.

There's only one, there's only one door that opens that will take you to God and take you to the Father, and that is for you to choose to believe in Jesus

Christ as your Lord and as your Savior. And if you've never done that, I would urge you to do so this very moment. My words are feeble, but the gospel is powerful, and there is being extended to you the greatest offer that could ever be extended to you, that if you would but come to Christ and believe in Him, it would save you now and forever. And apart from Christ, you have no hope, no hope to ever see the light of day in eternity, but only the darkness of hell. So may you choose wisely with where you commit your life.

[Prayer] Father, I pray that You will work in the hearts and the minds and the lives of everyone who is here today. Lead them to make right decisions and right choices. May it be a part of Your wonderful providence for them. As we're dismissed, would you just stand, and I'll read the benediction to you. This is my desire for you. The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine on you, and the Lord be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. May that be yours today. God bless you.