

Scripture Reading: Amos 6

“Woe to you who are at ease in Zion, And trust in Mount Samaria, Notable persons in the chief nation, To whom the house of Israel comes! 2 Go over to Calneh and see; And from there go to Hamath the great; Then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory? 3 Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, Who cause the seat of violence to come near; 4 Who lie on beds of ivory, Stretch out on your couches, Eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall; 5 Who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, And invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; 6 Who drink wine from bowls, And anoint yourselves with the best ointments, But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. 7 Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives, And those who recline at banquets shall be removed. 8 The Lord God has sworn by Himself, Jehovah God of hosts says: “I abhor the pride of Jacob, And hate his palaces; Therefore I will deliver up the city And all that is in it.”

"Joseph Sold Into Slavery"

Last Lord's Day we were introduced to the work of young Joseph and his dreams. We saw the hatred of his brothers, and just as sin did with Cain we will see their sin of hatred turn into sinful actions today.

We are going to cover a large portion of this chapter in Genesis this morning so our reading presented a summary that came in the Book of Amos as God was preparing to pour out His judgment later on the Nation of Israel.

- **Just as Stephen would later do in his challenge to the religious leaders of his day, they were warned to not ignore what was done to Joseph!**

As we move on and learn the lessons that God has for us today, it is important to remember that we are being given the history of Jacob, as God continues to unfold His story of redemption!

So with that in mind let us dig into our text for this morning:

Genesis 37: “12 Then [Joseph's] brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. 13 And Israel said to Joseph, “Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.” So he said to him, “Here I am.” 14 Then he said to him, “Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me.” So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, & he went to Shechem.”

- **Neither father nor son could know at this point what a long and sorrowful goodbye this parting actually was!**

Now this confirms what we spoke briefly about last week with regard to the the role young Joseph was playing: He was not a mere shepherd, because if he were he would have gone with them. Rather it appears that he is used by his father to manage the work of others, including his brothers. And of course we continue to see rich images here about our loving Father who sent His Own Son Jesus to seek and save those who were lost, as we can read in the opening of John's Gospel account:

John 1:10 “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

- **This is clearly what we will see with the brothers of Joseph who do NOT receive him well.**

And then we also see as we do with the shepherd who goes looking for the lost sheep, Joseph goes to great lengths to find the brothers who were not where they were supposed to be...

- And yes, don't we always get into great trouble, when we are someplace we are not supposed to be?

15 "Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, "What are you seeking?" 16 So he said, "I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding their flocks." 17 And the man said, "They have departed from here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan."

- Now if you remember, we were told three times last week that Joseph's brothers hated him...
- We are about to see the wicked fruit of that hatred.

18 "Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. 19 Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming!"

We see here a classic example of what the New Testament teaches about a root of bitterness...

Ephesians 4:30 "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."

Paul tells us to give up bitterness, wrath and anger all of which these brothers harbored against their brother. They clamored and were speaking evil against him. They were certainly not being tenderhearted or loving and even if Joseph was wrong in his attitude, they were unwilling to forgive.

But we must remember that is not Joseph here, nor those in our lives that we are unwilling to forgive, that are in danger but the brothers, or any of us, who are allowing a root of bitterness to grow in their hearts. Thus a similar warning by the writer of Hebrews focuses only on the bitterness:

Hebrews 12:14 "14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;"

The writer of Hebrews warns us about the root of bitterness because sin is never isolated... It affects others as well as the person committing the sin... Here we obviously see Joseph as the victim, but his father and even his own brothers extended family will suffer as well.

Next we see a very clear lesson regarding the vanity of sin...

"20 Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"

- They are so opposed to what God has revealed to Joseph in his dreams that they are ready and willing to kill and lie to stop it from coming to pass.!
- Of course we know the end of the story, and the truth is that these very actions they plan to take will actually bring the reality of the dreams to pass...
- Just as God intended!

But first we see an interesting reaction from the eldest brother who was not with the group when they first saw Joseph approaching...

"21 But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him."

22 And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him"—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father."

Reuben tries to divert the wicked action of his brothers with the intention of then returning for Joseph and delivering him back to his father.

- **It is seen by many as an act of penance by this son who had violated his father's wife, perhaps hoping to be restored to his rightful place!**

In any case it is used by God to save the life of Joseph and to carry on the plan that would take Jacob and his entire family to Egypt and fulfill what had been seen in the dreams and what was first promised to Abraham.

“23 So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him. 24 Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it.”

- **Yes, we should think of Jesus stripped of his cloths and cast into a grave!**

From the perspective of these wicked brothers, not knowing the real plan that Reuben had, they latched on to his more reasonable proposal which in their minds would make them appear more righteous... Their hands would not shed the blood of their brother...

- **They would just hide him in a pit and let nature take its course!**

A pit in the wilderness where no one would know what they had done.

- **Yes there is an application here, a very convicting one, when we consider how we often try to hide our sin!**

So children if the brothers had just left Joseph in that pit and returned home, would anyone have known where Joseph was? That's right God always knows and yet we often act as if He does not...

- **Who do we think we are fooling when we try to sin in secret?**

We see the King warning his son right away about those who try to hide sin: Proverbs 1: “10 My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent. 11 If they say, “Come with us, Let us lie in wait to shed blood [like these brothers]; Let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause...”

- **They, and we often think things can be done without God seeing all, but it never turns out well for those who ignore God's presence...**

“18 But they lie in wait for their own blood, They lurk secretly for their own lives. 19 So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; It takes away the life of its owners.”

Again, these brothers thought that their secret actions would do away with what was bothering them, but in the end it simply brought it to pass and they would then humbly bow before Joseph... The very thought of which drove them to these wicked actions! So they cast Joseph in a secret pit, fully intending to leave him to die a very slow and painful death and then we have this:

25 “And they sat down to eat a meal.”

Just as we will gather in a few moments around this Table to remember and celebrate the work of Jesus, in a convoluted and very sinful way these brothers now sit and celebrate the work they have done to stop the dreams of their brother by condemning him to a painful death!

- **But God has other plans for Joseph, and these brothers, so the verse continues...**

“Then they lifted their eyes and looked, & there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt.”

So Joseph was delivered from the wicked plans of his brothers, just as in the Greater story we see Jesus delivered from the hands of wicked men by His Resurrection!

It is interesting that the Spirit makes mention of the spices, balm, and myrrh that would fill the air as Joseph was carried in chains to his place of ultimate victory, just as Jesus was surrounded by spices in the tomb before Easter morning!

- **And of course Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah so it is very appropriate that it is Judah who here delivers Joseph from a sure death in that pit!**

“26 So Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? 27 Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.” And his brothers listened. 28 Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.”

Now of course Judah is used to accomplish God’s purposes but not out of pure motives... Sure he was willing to trade murder for selling his brother into slavery, but both were grievous sins in the eyes of God!

- **And yes, selling their brother should bring to mind the greater story again when one of the disciples of Jesus was willing to sell the Son of God for thirty pieces of silver!**

Well, not only had God moved things where He wanted them to go with the arrival of these merchants, but the plans of Reuben are also frustrated. It appears that he had once again gone off, planning to return after the other brothers had left so he could lift Joseph from that pit and return him to his father hoping to win his favor once again, but alas things have changed:

“29 Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph was not in the pit; and he tore his clothes.” 30 And he returned to his brothers and said, “The lad is no more; and I, where shall I go?”

Reuben is very upset and perhaps this is why the brothers now conspire to come up with a cover story for their sin which again should remind us of how we often react when we think our secret sins might be discovered:

- **We don’t really care about the pain we might cause others so long as our sin is not discovered!**

“31 So they took Joseph’s tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. 32 Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, “We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son’s tunic or not?””

Again trying to stay as far away from their sin as possible, it appears that they send the coat on to Jacob with some servants to deliver the bad news so that they are not even there to comfort their father in this time of great distress. And of course, just as they planned, Jacob draws the worse possible conclusion which we see in verse 33

“And he recognized it and said, “It is my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.” 34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days.”

And then we see the height of arrogance from these wicked brothers who had cleverly hidden their sin: *A sin not unlike what Jacob did to his father!*

35 “And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, “For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning.” Thus his father wept for him.”

- **And so once again we are taken back to the greater story of redemption...**

Here Joseph is being delivered to Egypt to prepare the way for Jacob and his family, but they are left in mourning and great sorrow!

Just as on that first Good Friday as Jesus died for the sins of His people and went to prepare the way for them, they were left to weep at the foot of the cross, to bury His Body and even be depressed days later as we saw with the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

In the end, Jacob will once again experience great joy when years later he meets his favored son in Egypt.

- **Just as the women and disciples would have great joy on Easter Morning as they meet the Risen Jesus!**

And so we should take great comfort in the final verse which begins the journey to Egypt:

“36 Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard.”

It is interesting that this entire account is told from the perspective of others and not Joseph... His father sends him to his brothers. A stranger helps him find them. The brothers plot and scheme to kill or sell him. The merchants carry him to Egypt and sell him to Potiphar.

- **All was under God’s careful control and certainly not Joseph’s!**

We are not told how Joseph reacted to the hatred of his brothers. We are not told what he thought when they first planned to kill him and then to simply leave him in the pit. What were his thoughts as he could likely hear them celebrating over a meal near that pit? And of course what a mixture of emotions he must have had as he was VERY relieved to know he would not die of starvation in that pit, but was now being sold into slavery.

Here we can only speculate but as I mentioned last week I am sure that Joseph did draw on the comfort that God had given him in those dreams.

- **The brothers were sure they were thwarting what God had planned but Joseph could have taken comfort in knowing that God would keep His promise.**

Joseph would not have known how God would get him out of that pit, but he would have been sure He would... And His God did.

Joseph would not have known how his becoming a slave in Egypt would one-day lead to his brothers bowing before him, but he would have been sure they would and His God arranged for them to do so, which is the rest of the story!

A story we will continue to study in the coming weeks and months, which I trust will continue to be very convicting and very comforting! We should be grieved for the affliction of Joseph, but as we shall celebrate at the Table this morning, we also know that God “will bring back the captives of My people Israel.”

- **Yes, Jesus, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the son of Jacob did come in the fullness of time to save His people from their sins!**

Communion Meditation: Amos 9

“11 “On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down,

And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old;

12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,”

Says Jehovah who does this thing.

13 “Behold, the days are coming,” says Jehovah, “When the plowman shall overtake the reaper,

And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; The mountains shall drip with sweet wine,

And all the hills shall flow with it.

14 I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them;

They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.

15 I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them,” Says Jehovah your God.”