

Joseph 08 - We Are Honest Men - Genesis 42 - 2017-06-11

Call to Worship: Psalm 22:25-26

Scripture Reading: John 2:13-22

Sermon: We Are Honest Men Genesis 42:1-38

Benediction: Psalm 22:27-28

INTRODUCTION

Genesis 41:57 So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands.

We learn later in this history that the events of chapter 42 took place in the first year of the great seven-year famine. Even that first year, the famine was severe. The crops that had been planted, as they were planted every year, did not yield a harvest, or only a very small one.

The people began to be in want. The poor certainly would have suffered first and hardest, but the famine was severe, so that even in the first year, even wealthy families like Jacob's began to be in want of food.

BODY with TEXT

Their father told them not to linger in indecision, but to go get what they needed from where it was known to be available. (1-2)

They went down to buy what they needed. (3)

-this shows that they did not understand the severity of their situation; they were working from what they could understand naturally, without the benefit of special revelation from God; they had experienced a year of famine; they thought buying one load of grain would see them through to the next year, when things would be back to normal; they did not understand that they were in a seven-year famine

-what they really needed was to take their whole family and go seek constant provision from the one who had it; but that could not be known naturally, so they did not understand that

When they went, they had to deal with the powerful man in charge there. (4-6)

Since they had to get what they wanted from that powerful man, they bowed down before him. They thought this would be a relatively simple transaction:

1. they would bow down before the man who was in charge;
2. they would pay what they were required to pay;
3. they would get the grain they needed and go back home.

But powerful man who had the grain did not sell it to them. Instead, he accused them of being his enemies, spying on him to be able to harm him. (9)

- the ruler accused them of wanting to see the *nakedness* of the land; that is, this man's land was clearly well favored with grain; but enemies would want to see the land *naked* before them, so they could do harm, taking what he had from him

- we know that in this instance, that was not their purpose; but we also know that such indeed was their character; and the man on the throne knew that was their character

 - they look for vulnerability in people; they delight in people's nakedness

 - they make themselves enemies of people with whom they should be peaceful

 - their neighbors, the men of Shechem, whom they tricked and murdered

 - their brother Joseph, whom they stripped of his coat and sold into slavery

 - their own father, whom they deprived of his beloved son, and whom they deceived into thinking his beloved son was dead

They objected that they were not his enemies (10-11)

- they just wanted to buy grain

- they were honest men

- they were not the kind of people who would be his enemies, but pretend not to be

The powerful man did not accept their description of themselves as honest men, but continued to say they were his enemies, and attempting to deceive him. (12)

In the very words they said to prove themselves honest men, they mentioned their own great crime (13) What can they say that doesn't scream their guilt?

We are 12 brothers (who have a history of conspiring to and committing crimes together)

Sons of one man (whom we have betrayed, bereaved, and deceived for years)

The youngest is with our father (because we got rid of his brother, and our father is now afraid to let the youngest go anywhere with us)

One is not (because we sold him into slavery)

The powerful man before whom they bowed down did not accept their characterization of themselves as honest men, and not his enemies (he knew them too well for that), but continued to accuse them of being deceitful enemies, unless they could prove their innocence and honesty. (14-16)

The man put them in custody for three days (17)

there they received some education

- they learned a little about what it is like to be treated as they had treated their brother

- they learned a little about what it is like to get what we deserve from a merciless judge

The man proposed how they could prove their innocence (18-20)

- if they could prove themselves honest men, they would live

- he would not kill them
- he would provide them what they needed
- if they truly were honest men, the test he proposed would present them with only little difficulty
- but the fact that they were men who had betrayed and sold away their own brother made the test difficult to pass; their father would not let their youngest brother go to Egypt with them; what they had done to their other brother made it impossible to prove their honesty in the way the man required of them

The treatment the brothers received from the man to whom they bowed down made them admit their own guilt (21-22)

- it became obvious to them that they were being punished for what they had done to their brother
- they understood that distress had come upon them because they caused the distress of their brother
- they understood that their cries for mercy had fallen on deaf ears because their ears were deaf to the cries of their own brother
- one among them reminded them that he had told them all not to sin, but they wouldn't listen, and so must give an accounting for the blood of their brother whom they had harmed

They did not know it, but the man dealing harshly with them understood them and had great compassion and brotherly affection toward them (23-24a)

One of the brothers was bound as representative of all of them (24b)

Even as he held one brother a prisoner, the man showed grace to the brothers and their families (25)

- he did not sell them grain, but gave it to them, filling every man's sack
- he also gave them more food, to sustain them on their way home

The brothers did not understand what the man had done for them (26-28)

- they saw evidence that the man with the grain had refused to have it bought from him, but instead made it a gift
- but they did not understand, and instead were afraid
- buying grain from the man they could understand, but having him give it to them without money, they could not understand
- they knew the thing was of God, but did not know what to make of it

APPLICATION

FIRST, You who are the disciples of Jesus Christ, let me point your attention to a couple of features of this history.

Near the beginning of this part of the history, we read this statement: “there is grain in Egypt.” In the older form of our English language, the word “corn” used to be used where we use the word “grain.” So the way English-speakers used to read that verse was, “there is corn in Egypt.” That phrase has prompted Christians to rejoicing for centuries. There is grain in Egypt. Jacob doesn’t know any better than to think that his relationship to that grain is that he has some money, and he can buy a small share of it. But what was his relationship to that grain, really? His son Joseph, who loved him, was the ruler of all Egypt, and had all that grain under his control, and had an unlimited supply of it for his family.

We who are the heirs of the spiritual promises made to Jacob hear in that little phrase, “there is grain in Egypt” a sweet foretelling of this truth:

John 1:1-4 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) The same was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (4) In him was life;

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 5:24-25 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. (25) Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.

John 6:35 And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

There is grain in Egypt, and we know the one who is Lord over all of it, our dear brother Joseph, who will dispense it to us without measure.

SECOND, we who have life in the Lord Jesus, our great Joseph, delight in the bags full of grain, with the money included in the sack! Oh, the riches of God’s grace toward us in Jesus Christ! When the Lord Jesus filled our sacks with grain, He didn’t take our good works as payment, did he? God gave it to us freely through our Lord Jesus. What good could our money do, anyway? It was the first year of a seven-year famine. Even if we could pay something, we could never

afford enough. But we didn't even have money of the right kind! We couldn't pay what we owed in money. What we owed could only be paid in the precious blood of our dear Lord Jesus Christ! What we needed could only be earned by Joseph's years in slavery and bondage, by the Lord Jesus' birth and life and death and burial and resurrection here on this earth. Jesus paid for all our grain for us, and when He had filled our sacks with life, with forgiveness, with righteousness, with joy, with hope, with love, He put our money back in the mouth of our sack.

THIRD But, now, there are those listening who are not the disciples of Jesus Christ. You are very much in the position of these brothers of Joseph, who went down to Egypt for grain, not knowing the Lord of Egypt was Joseph.

Sinner, you begin to know you lack what you need

- you want to have eternal life
 - a happy, fulfilled, peaceful life here on earth
 - a happy existence in heaven after you die
- but you aren't sure you can make that happen on your own
 - you find you have problems in your body
 - you hear talk of hell, and it is hard to deny the truth of it

You are told not to wonder what to do, or wait to do it, because what you need can be found

- in the church
- in the bible
- from the preacher

You go to church, or you read the bible

When you go to church, or when you read the bible, or when you hear the preacher, you find that you are dealing with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom God has set as Lord over everything.

- okay, that's fine
- you are perfectly willing to bow your head before him
- you will do what He requires of you
- you will pay whatever money He wants you to pay
- you will get eternal life from Him
- then you'll go back to where you were with your sack full of eternal life

If it's not really the church you have gone to, but something else that merely looks like it, such a transaction can be arranged. Some persons in the organization, whether the Pope in Rome or the local preacher or Sunday School teacher or camp pastor or conference speaker or revival evangelist or someone will tell you what God requires of you---God's free gift is here for you. All you have to do is

- make your decision
- come down front
- pray a prayer to ask Jesus into your heart

-get baptized

But if it's really God's church you've come to, really the bible you're reading, you will have to deal with the real Lord Jesus Christ. When you tell Him you want eternal life, He'll accuse you of being His enemy, of being among those who would delight in seeing Him naked, who would like to harm Him, to steal from Him.

-when He was here on earth, He was betrayed by one who made Him his enemy, even though he had been one of His closest friends; He was stripped of his garments; having been stripped, He was nailed to the cross; He was crucified

-we know that you, sinner, were not there personally; you did not do those things in your own person; but we also know that indeed that is your character; the Lord Jesus, who sits on the throne, knows that to be your character

-Acts 2:22-23 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know-- (23) Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

-did any of those Jews actually crucify Jesus? no, but the bible says to them, "Him. . . you have taken by lawless hand, have crucified, and put to death"

You object that you are not the enemies of Jesus Christ.

-you just want to do whatever He wants from you, so you can have eternal life

-you are just an honest person, just a basically good person, not perfect, not sinless, but certainly not so bad as to be an enemy of Jesus Christ, an enemy of His who pretends to be His friend

The Lord Jesus Christ does not accept your description of yourself as an honest person. He insists that you are His enemy, only pretending that you are not.

You try to object that you are not such an enemy, but telling something about yourself and your family. But everything you say reminds you of your crimes.

God, who created us, gave us to great commandments

1. you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength
2. you shall love your neighbor as yourself

Now what could you possibly say to protest your innocence before Jesus Christ that did not provide proof you have not loved like you are obliged to love? Just mention anything, and it will prove your guilt.

The Lord Jesus Christ does not accept your arguments that you are not His enemies, pretending to be His friends, because He knows you too well for that. He continues to accuse you of being His enemies, and deceitful about it, unless you can prove your righteousness.

He takes His law, and with it stops up your mouth.

You were right in the middle of saying, "I am an honest man," but he takes His law, shows you your guilt according to it, and shuts your protesting mouth with it.

He takes His law, and binds you with it, and puts you in prison.

You were just thinking of yourself as free, when his law confined you under sin. You realize you are like a lawbreaker who has been caught by the police and put in jail awaiting trial.

He leaves you in some sense free. In fact, although part of you is kept captive under the law's conviction of sin, another part of you is free to go about your business. The Lord Jesus even offers you opportunity to prove you are indeed an honest, a righteous man, and not His enemy. But the problem there is that any way you could do so would not show you an honest man, but instead would confirm your guilt before God.

He provides you also the gospel, the good news. If you will come to me for grain, not hiding your offenses, not protesting you are honest and innocent when you are indeed a terrible sinner, I will fill your sack with grain. And, in fact, I will put your money back in your sack.

Sinner, do not come to Jesus Christ to conduct some transaction with Him, where you trade prayers or songs or good works or money for eternal life. Come to Him confessing your sins, and recognizing your spiritual poverty, that you are destitute before God. He will fill you with His Holy Spirit; He will fill you with everlasting life, and that abundantly. Then, as we will see in the subsequent chapters, He will bring you to live with Him, in the kingdom He rules, where He will provide for you richly from all His treasures.

I feel the pangs already.
 sickness, even chronic, incurable
 injury
 death of others
 death of animals
If this gets worse, what will happen to me?

I'm told I must go to Jesus to get what I need.
I go and bow down before Him.
 I have no true reverence for Him in my heart.
 But I bow my head for prayer to Him.
 I sing the songs to Him that I am supposed to sing.
He does not then give me grain. Instead, He accuses me of being His enemy.
He gives me a taste of what it is like to be under His wrath.
He makes me think about my actions.
 Before, I had always excused myself.
 Now I cannot excuse myself. What I have done is sin. I can't deny it.
But He shows me that He is merciful.
 He gives me what I came here to get.
 But He will not let me buy it---He gives it to me.

JRY:

If a donkey carries 100 pounds, and a person needs one pound per day, then 66 people would go through 1000 pounds in 15 days. Much more careful rationing would yield more time, but still this is not that much grain for that many people. If you wanted that 1000 pounds to last a year, each person would get only 1/24 pound per day.

Calvin:

Whereas, therefore, scarcely any more illustrious representation of Divine Providence is to be found than this history furnishes; let pious readers carefully exercise themselves in meditation upon it, in order that they may acknowledge those things which, in appearance, are fortuitous, to be directed by the hand of God.

Genesis 42:1 When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?"

Calvin:

Men are said to look one upon another, when each is waiting for the other, and, for want of counsel, no one dares to attempt anything. Jacob, therefore, censures this inactivity of his sons, because none of them endeavors to provide for the present necessity.

Genesis 42:2 And he said, "Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die."

Trapp:

The fulness of Joseph's barns invites Jacob, first to send, and then to go thither himself for relief. Shall not the fulness that is in Christ {Joh_1:16} incite and entice us to come to him; as bees to a meadow full of flowers; as merchants to the Indies full of spices and other riches; as the Queen of Sheba to Solomon full of wisdom; as Jacob's sons to Egypt full of corn, in that extreme famine; that we may return full fraught with treasures of truth and grace? "It pleased God, that in him should all fulness dwell." {Col_1:19} And his fulness is not only repletive, but diffusive; a fulness of plenty and abundance, but of bounty also and redundancy.

Genesis 42:5 And the sons of Israel went to buy grain among those who journeyed, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

Trapp:

God could have fed them by a miracle, as he did Elijah by the ravens; and Israel in the wilderness, where he rained them down manna . . . But he worketh ordinarily by means, and will have them used, but not trusted to.

Genesis 42:6 Now Joseph was governor over the land; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the earth.

Trapp:

This those mockers little thought ever to have done to that dreamer. But the will of the Lord, that shall stand.

Gill:

thereby, though without their knowledge, fulfilled his dream of their sheaves making obeisance to his sheaf,

Genesis 42:7 Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them. Then he said to them, "Where do you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan to buy food."

Calvin:

But it may be inquired again, whether his dissimulation, which was joined with a falsehood, is not to be blamed; for we know how pleasing integrity is to God, and how strictly he prohibits his own people from deceit and falsehoods. Whether God governed his servant by some special movement, to depart without fault, from the common rule of action, I know not

I do not think that we ought to be very anxious to excuse Joseph, because it is probable that he suffered something from human infirmity, which God forgave him; for by Divine mercy alone could that dissimulation, which in itself was not without fault, escape condemnation.

Genesis 42:9 Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them, and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land!"

Calvin:

So the disciples remembered the words of the Lord after he had risen from the dead; because, by the sight of the fact predicted, their knowledge became more clear; whereas, before, nothing but transient sparks of it had shined in their hearts.

Genesis 42:11 We are all one man's sons; we are honest men; your servants are not spies."

JRY:

"honest men" !?

Genesis 42:21 They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us."

Lawson:

It would be good for us if we could entertain the same views of sin in the time of temptation that we are likely to have after it is committed, or at the time when trouble brings it home to our consciences.

They were unjustly put in prison, but they had with as little justice, and with less appearance of it, cast Joseph into a pit.

They had hated Joseph, as if he had been a spy on their conduct, when he carried their evil report to his fatehr for their good

We are naturally averse to suffering of every kind, and yet nothing is more necessary than suffering when we have sinned. It is necessary for us to know and feel the bitterness of sin, that we may confess and forsake it. And the sufferings which our flesh endures are often necessary and useful to bring our sins to our remembrance.

God by Joseph did them a kindness in giving them and experimental knowledge of the bitter sufferings of an oppressed man, when he pours out tears, but finds no comforter.

When we are warned by friends or ministers against any sin, and yet refuse to desist, we add rebellion to iniquity.

JRY:

The Jews wanted to destroy Him, but He said that if they tried, in three days He would rise again. The Jews did not understand what He said when He said it, but His disciples did later.

We have previously had a look at sin; now we are getting a look at the effects of sin on these men of guilty conscience.

Note that Jacob cannot do what he wants to do; he finds it is impossible. Therefore he does what he is loathe to do, out of necessity, praying that God would bless him, but resigning himself to God's providence in case of grief.

You, in Adam, would not accept the rule of God over you.

You, as a child, would not naturally accept God's rule over you by your parents, but had to have obedience enforced on you by the rod.

You, as an adult, would not do what God has commanded, would not give all glory to your very Creator who gave you life.

Israel would not, at first, have David to rule over them, but preferred a son of Saul, whom God had rejected as king.

Neither would the leaders of Israel have Jesus to rule over them.

Joseph's brothers rejected the God-given dream that Joseph would rule over them.

All of this rebellion against God and against His anointed deserves punishment. Yet God is merciful.

He did not destroy Adam, but clothed him.

God did not destroy Israel, but seven weeks later, preached to them forgiveness in the name of the very One whose rule they had so recently rejected.

And you, sinner, who have so often rejected the rule of Jesus Christ over you. Today the good news is preached to you---forgiveness from God in the name of Jesus Christ, rejected by His brothers, but raised up by God the Father to the highest place, from which He dispenses God's grace to unworthy rebels.

Genesis 43:26 And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth.

Gill:

now again fulfilling his dream, and more completely than before, for now all his eleven brethren were together, signified by the eleven stars in the dream, that made obeisance to him,

- I. The Severe Famine Threatened Death to Joseph's Brothers (42:2)
- II. Joseph's Brothers Came to Him and Bowed Down Before Him (42:6)
- III. Joseph Made His Brothers Feel What Their Guilt Deserved (42:14-17)
- IV. Joseph Made His Brothers Confess Their Guilt (42:21-22)
- V. Despite Their Guilt, Joseph Showed His Brothers Mercy
 - A. released them from prison
 - B. filled their sacks with grain, returning their money
 1. how does Israel get grain from Joseph? by purchasing it? no, they cannot purchase it from Him, because He gives it to them