

But God Meant it for Good

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Our scripture reading is Genesis chapter 50, the last chapter of the first book of the Bible. Genesis 50,

1 And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. 2 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. 3 And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days. 4 And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, 5 My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again. 6 And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear. 7 And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, 8 And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. 9 And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company. 10 And they came to the threshingfloor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days. 11 And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abelmizraim, which is beyond Jordan. 12 And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them: 13 For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a buryingplace of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre. 14 And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father. 15 And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we

did unto him. 16 And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, 17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. 18 And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. 19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? 20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. 21 Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them. 22 And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. 23 And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees. 24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. 26 So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

This is the holy word of God.

The text for the sermon is verse 20,

20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, Genesis 49 and the opening of Genesis 50 concludes with the death of Jacob, and now Genesis chapter 50 will answer the question, now what, and the primary concern of that question is not so much, well, now what will happen to the old patriarch's body, for just before Jacob died in Egypt, he commanded his sons to carry his body out of the land of Egypt into the Promised Land of Canaan so that he could be buried with his grandparents, Abraham and Sarah, and with his parents, Isaac and Rebekah and so chapter 50 tells us that his sons did that. Rather, the primary concern of that question, now what, is as it concerns the fear of the brothers; it's a weighty question in their hearts, "Now that Father Jacob is dead, now what will Joseph do unto us?" For you see, it had been 22 years earlier that these brothers sold their young 17-year-old brother Joseph into slavery in Egypt, and then many, many events occurred over many years, but later, these brothers themselves would go down into Egypt to escape the dreadful famine in Canaan and try to find food. and here they are now confronted again with their brother Joseph, only he's not that 17 year old shepherd boy any longer, he's now the ruler in Egypt second only to Pharaoh in the greatest nation of the earth. And so with fear and terror in their hearts and with their guilt-stricken consciences, they wonder, "Now that father Jacob is dead, what will this brother who has

more power over us today than we ever had over him, now what will he do to us? Will he requite us of all that evil and pay us back? Now what?" And Genesis 50 verse 20 is the answer of the text to that question, it's the beautiful testimony of faith from Joseph to his brothers, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good."

This is one of the most well-known passages of scripture, one of the most beautiful and moving passages of scripture. It's one of the most theologically rich statements in the whole Bible. It combines the the counsel of God, the providence of God, the covenant of God, and it shows the absolute sovereignty of this God over all things, even over the sin of men. And this verse forms part of the conclusion to the book, of course, is not the very last verse of the book but it forms part of the conclusion to the book of Genesis which, of course, begins with good, everything is good. God created all things good and then by the instigation of the devil man fell into sin and then sin just explodes through the whole creation and sin runs through the whole book of Genesis but that sin, that evil, even as it's found in covenant families, even as it's found among brethren, that evil will never get the last word because our God is good, and our God is sovereign, and for Jesus' sake, our God will work all of this evil for good, for the glory of his own name, for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, for the salvation of his covenant people.

"You had very evil intentions against me, brothers, and what you did to me, you meant that for evil, but I want you to know that God meant it for good, as it is this day, to save much people alive. But God meant it for good." Let's make that our theme this morning. We'll look, first of all, at the evil perpetrated; second, at the good accomplished; and third, at the confession made.

Evil, that's the word of the text; that's Joseph's word to describe everything that the brothers did unto him. Evil, "But as for you, ye meant it, ye thought it, for evil, evil against me." That evil to which Joseph refers is all of the murderous attempts of the brothers to destroy Joseph, and that history is found in Genesis chapter 37. There was living in the Holy Land of Canaan, the patriarch Jacob, and Jacob had 12 sons and one daughter with four women. It is not surprising that there would be trouble in that home because God never designed a home to have one man and four women. Father Jacob had a special favor for his son Joseph. He loved him above all of his children, so he gave to him that special coat of many colors and that filled the older 10 brothers with bitter resentment for Joseph so that Genesis 37 verse 4 says that his brethren hated him and they could not speak peaceably to him. And that hatred then only intensified when Joseph had these two dreams and he related them to the brothers and how they prophesied his future supremacy and how they would bow down before him. They hated him all the more. But not only did they hate him, Genesis 37 verse 11 says, and his brothers envied him. He had something they did not have and they were willing to do anything to rid him of what he had. Envious they were. Proverbs 27 verse 4 says that wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous but who is able to stand before envy?

And so all of that envy and hatred within, it came to expression in their murderous treachery and cruelty. One day the brothers were out in some distant field keeping watch over their flocks and they looked up and they saw their 17-year-old brother Joseph

coming unto them and they plotted against him and came up with this plan to destroy him. They were going to kill him and throw his body down into a deep pit and then just say that some wild beast had attacked him and killed him. But Reuben steps up and says, "No, no, no, no, let's not kill him. Let's just take him and throw him into a deep, dry well." So here comes Joseph. He is completely unconscious of all of their murderous intentions. For him it's the most ordinary of all days, and here he approaches and then they do something to him that neither he nor they would ever forget as long as they lived. They brutally assaulted him, ripping off his coat, and casting him all the way down into one of those deep, deep pits, and there he was now at the bottom of that pit, stunned. Stunned. Confused. Betrayed. And subject to the mercy of the elements and with no food and water, and they and their calloused hatred sat down at the brim of the pit and they started eating their lunches. And then they look up and here comes some Ishmaelite traders on their way down to Egypt and they decide to lift Joseph back out of that pit and they'll sell him to the Ishmaelite for 20 pieces of silver, which according to Leviticus 27 verse 5, that's the price for a male slave between the ages of 5 and 20. And that fits Joseph. He's 17. He's worth nothing more than a slave. So they sell him and he trudges his way off with his masters down to Egypt and the brothers watch him go, convinced they would never again see their brother Joseph.

Evil. "But as for you, ye thought evil against me," and that word evil emphasizes the experience of evil as misery, it was misery for Joseph. That evil that his brothers perpetrated against him, it was terrible. First of all, it was terrible because it was an evil that was intentionally perpetrated by human beings. There are many evils in life and all evil is experienced as misery. Even the words of Job and how he said to his wife, "Shall we receive good from the hand of the Lord and shall we not receive evil?" Evil. That was Job's word to describe all that he had experienced. Evil. That fire that came and destroyed his servants and his animals, that was an evil. That great wind that came and blew over the house of his children and left all of his children's sons and daughters dead, that was an evil. And those boils that covered him from the crown of his head down to the sole of his feet and caused him to writhe in pain, that was an evil. Fire and wind and boils, cancer, illnesses, diseases, those are evils. We experience them as evils. They're miserable. But there is no evil that can make you feel so miserable and can touch you so deep in your personhood as when another human being intentionally seeks to hurt you. Evil. Fire and water and wind are not malicious, and boils in cancer do not consciously attempt to destroy you, but humans can be malicious.

Joseph's brothers were malicious and they were intentionally hurting him and Joseph emphasizes that in the text with that verb he uses when he says, "But as for you, ye thought." That same verb is translated just a little bit later as "meant." "But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant," same word. You thought it, you devised it, you planned it, and in the original Hebrew, the root of that verb actually means to weave, to take a bunch of things together and weave them all together. That's what the brothers did. They had a plan that they carefully devised in their minds. They didn't accidentally hurt Joseph. They didn't all of a sudden in a fit of rage do something to him that was not premeditated. They designed this. They weaved this plan of cruelty. And what hurts, what leaves wounds that fire and wind and boils can never leave is when a human being

intentionally tries to hurt you. That's when you say, "Why? Why did you do this to me? How? How could you do this to me?"

Evil. Secondly, what made this evil so terrible is that it was not only perpetrated by human beings, it was perpetrated by Joseph's brothers. It's bad enough to have an Egyptian seductress try to lure you into fornication, Potiphar's wife. For us to have some enemy of the covenant outside of the church who seeks our destruction or some ungodly co-worker in the office who's plotting against us, that's one thing, but your own brother, your family? Proverbs 17 verse 17, "A friend loveth at all times and a brother is born for adversity." If there's one person in your life whom you ought to have confidence in them, that they'll never lay a finger upon you for evil, that they'll never devise any kind of hurt or mischief against you, that they're born for adversity and they will be there to defend you and love you and protect you no matter what, that's your brother. That's someone who lives in your house, someone of your own flesh and blood. But looking at his brothers, Joseph says, "But as for you, ye brothers, brothers, ye thought evil against me."

And third, what made this evil so terrible is that it was worked by the serpent, whether Joseph was fully conscious of it or not. Behind all of the malice of the brothers is the great malicious evildoer, the serpent who weaves all kinds of plans of destruction against God's covenant people. All evil began with him as he instigated the fall and all evil running through the old dispensation is his attempt to destroy the seed of the woman and any God-fearing representatives of God's covenant like this man Joseph. The serpent is evil and later he will weave together the most evil of all plans and bring together the Jews and the Gentiles together with Pontius Pilate to murder God's Son on the tree of the cross. Evil.

Evil. That's what Joseph calls his brother's behavior against him, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me," and they knew it. They knew exactly what he was talking about. It's been 22 years. He was 17. After all the history, he's exalted by Pharaoh at age 30. Add seven good years of plenty, he's 37. In the second year of the famine, now he meets his brothers. He's at least 39, which means it's been at least 22 years, and they know exactly what he's talking about. They don't plead ignorance. They don't put this confused look on their faces and say, "Well, what are you talking about? Reuben, Reuben, Simeon, what's he talking about? We don't remember any of this." That's a red flag. That's a great red flag of alarm when someone's confronted with some great evil they perpetrate against another human being and say, "I don't remember that. What are you talking about?" 22 years ago, they know exactly what Joseph is talking about. In fact, they're the ones who bring it up. Verse 15 "And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him." It's like it happened yesterday, all that evil.

And then they send a messenger to Joseph, verse 17, saying, "Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil." They know it. "We did evil unto thee." Evil. That's why they're terrified and these grown men in their forties and fifties, these 10 older brothers, they're falling down on their faces before Joseph. They're pleading for mercy. They're begging for pardon. Their consciences are smitten.

"We are thy servants. Thou art the master, great ruler in Egypt." And there they are crying out before him for pardon, "Don't repay us of all this evil." And Joseph stands there above them overcome with so much emotion. Verse 17 says he's weeping, and verse 19 he says, "Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you," verse 20, "ye thought evil against me but God, God meant it unto good." Standing behind all that evil, including the serpent, behind all that evil perpetrated by the brothers, all that evil as experienced by Joseph, it was so miserable for him, standing behind it all is God, God who intended and God who worked and God who accomplished good in all of this evil.

"But God meant it unto good." What is the good that was accomplished? Well, the text answers that question with its last clause so we read, "to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." That's the good, to save much people alive. It was about two years before these words were spoken that God had sent this devastating famine into the land of Egypt and all of the surrounding areas, and it threatened to destroy, to consume from the face of the earth all men and beasts. A terrible famine and that famine not only threatened to kill untold numbers of ungodly reprobate Egyptians, but the covenant family of Jacob, the peculiar people of the Lord. But even more importantly, that famine threatened to take the life of Judah. He's in the background in this history, but there's no one more important than Judah because the messianic seed and line is running through Judah. That messianic line that begins with Adam and it runs through Seth and through Noah and Shem and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David, all the way down to the Christ, that line, it runs through Judah and his son, Pharez, as born of Tamar. This famine, it threatens devastating consequences for the covenant and for the cross because if that messianic line is cut off in the death of Judah, there will be no Savior. There will be no salvation from sin. There will be no righteousness before God. All human beings will perish under the wrath of God. The whole covenant of God will crumble to pieces and the glory of God will be turned to shame if that messianic line is cut off.

How great are the consequences of this threat, of this famine, but God accomplished good. "As it is this day," says Joseph to his brethren, "right now, before your very eyes, good, God has accomplished good. You understand that years ago when I was in prison in Egypt, God delivered me out of that prison. God gave me wisdom to understand the dreams of Pharaoh, to understand there would be seven good years of plenty, followed by seven bad years of famine. And God gave me wisdom to make good decisions to start gathering all the bounties of the earth into storehouses so that when the famine strikes, there will be food here and for others all around us. God. And now don't you see the good that God has accomplished this day? You, my brothers, you are the covenant family, the people of God, the sons of the patriarch our father Jacob, and God has brought you down here to Egypt. He's given you food for the strengthening of your life that you might be preserved."

"To save much people alive," that's the good, but Joseph has no way of fully comprehending the very words he speaks. "To bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." That "much people," it refers to far more than Jacob's family. It refers to all of the elect Israelites through all of the old dispensation, all of the elect Jews

and Gentiles from all the nations of the earth throughout the whole of the new dispensation. It refers to you and me. You're in the text this morning. You're in that word "people." So am I. "To save much people alive." If God does not preserve that covenant family of Jacob with that son Judah in whom is the messianic seed, the messianic line is cut off and there is no Savior, there is no cross, there is no resurrection, there's no gospel for anyone.

Good. God has accomplished good this day to save much people, ultimately all of the elect, to save much people alive. Good. And how does God accomplish that good? It's through the evil that was perpetrated by the brothers. How in the world do you connect these two dots? Joseph, 17-year-old shepherd in the land of Canaan. Nobody knows him. Joseph, 39-year-old ruler in Egypt who rides in Pharaoh's second chariot, wears Pharaoh's ring, and is arguably the most powerful man in the world. Joseph, Joseph, how do you connect those dots? Who could ever see this happening that this man would become this man? It's that evil. It's that malice. It's that treachery. All the evil devised and carried out by the brothers perpetrated against Joseph. All the good of the covenant and the future cross and the salvation of much people, all that good, ultimately the glory of God, all that good has to be connected back to all that evil and now that brings us to a consideration of the two grand realities of God as taught in the text, and that's God's providence and God's counsel.

First, it's God's providence that explains the connection between the perpetration of that evil and the accomplishment of good. Providence. That great doctrine is taught in the text by the words "to bring to pass." "But God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Providence, that's God's power, his almighty power, his everywhere present power, whereby he upholds all things, he governs all things, he controls all things so that nothing happens by chance, but everything happens because God brings it to pass. That's providence. All the good, lifting Joseph out of that prison, making Joseph the ruler, giving Joseph wisdom, bringing the brothers down to find food in Canaan, the preservation of them, all that good, it was worked, it was brought to pass by God's providence. But also all that evil, all that evil was brought to pass by God's providence. God bears no responsibility for the sins designed and committed by the brothers. God did not manipulate them into sinning against their brother. God did not compel them in their will to sin against their brother. Each one had a heart and a mind and soul and strength, they had a will according to which they willingly perpetrated evil against their brothers. God bears no responsibility, no guilt may be laid at God's feet. Similarly in the future when the serpent perpetrates all that evil against the Son of God and he brings together the Jews and the Gentiles to crucify the Son of God, God bears no responsibility for the sin committed at the cross. Nevertheless, it is with his hand of providence that he brings this all to pass, that he controlled these brothers, even, says the wise man in Proverbs, turning their hearts whithersoever he will. And at the cross, turning the hearts of the Jews and the Gentiles and Pontius Pilate whithersoever he will in all that evil they perpetrated.

Now that's a great mystery. You may ascribe any guilt to God, but God is in full control over all that evil in his providence. That's a great mystery and we confess with the Belgic

Confession that it surpasses our understanding. We will not curiously inquire into it farther than our capacity will admit but by grace, we will believe what the scriptures very plainly teach, and we will humble ourselves before the majesty of God. By his providence he brought to pass all this evil. For what purpose? For good. For the good purpose, not to destroy Joseph or the covenant family, but "to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." He worked the evil for the good purpose of the salvation of much people.

Providence but, second, it's God's counsel that explains the connection between the evil perpetrated and the good accomplished and this is the most important teaching of the text for we read, "but God meant it unto good." Meant it. The text does not say God worked it unto good. That would be true, that would be glorious, we just explained that. God worked it unto good, that's providence. That's not what the text says. The text says he meant it. He intended it. He planned it. In his eternal counsel, he took many things and he carefully weaved them all together, planning good and planning evil. He planned it all and he planned this evil for good.

Joseph does not merely go to God's providence for comfort, he goes to God's counsel. We do not say enough about evil and about good if all we confess is providence. We don't say enough if all we do is stay in time and think of God's providence as it works out in time. When we teach the absolute sovereignty of God, we always have to go ultimately all the way back to God's eternal counsel, and we may never leave the impression that evil arises in the earth and then God in his absolute sovereignty, he rises up and he responds to that evil and he takes that evil and he turns it and he works it all for good. We have to go all the way back to God's counsel before time when God in his good pleasure not only planned all things that would ever come to pass, including especially the good, but God also planned all evil and he would use it for his good purposes.

Counsel, God's eternal counsel. Everything must be traced back to God's counsel. Not only the good, the exaltation of Joseph and the preservation of the family, but evil for before the mountains were brought forth, or ever God formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting, God planned every plan of the serpent. God planned every plan of these brothers and every form of evil they perpetrated against Joseph. He planned from eternity the plan of the seductress of Potiphar's house and her evil. He planned what the malicious Jews would do in weaving together their plan to destroy the Lord Jesus Christ, lay their hands upon him and murder him. God planned that in his counsel of Jesus, we read in Acts 2 verse 23, "him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken and with wicked hands have crucified and slain."

God's counsel, that's the rock of absolute sovereignty over which unbelief stumbles. If we're not for the grace of God this morning, all of us here would stumble over that rock of the absolute sovereignty of God and his eternal counsel. We're not in control. No one's in control. God is in control from eternity. We would stumble over that rock if it were not for grace. His eternal counsel. He executes his counsel even through rational moral creatures who have a will. They have their own will according to which they act but God is not simply over them, God is always before them in his sovereignty. And that doesn't

make the brothers any less guilty. That doesn't make their sin any less sinful. They committed the evil. God did not commit that evil. God planned it in his eternal counsel and understand he did not plan evil for evil's sake. He would be a horribly wicked God if he planned evil as an end in itself. He planned it for good.

Listen to Joseph, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it," all that evil, God meant it in his eternal good purpose, he meant it for what purpose? "Unto good." Ultimately, God intended all this evil to be worked together with all things for the glory of his own name, for the coming of the Messiah, for the fulfillment of his promises, for the salvation of his covenant family, his chosen people. Men, they have all their intentions, they intend evil. The Jews did at the cross. But God is sovereign. He overrules them with all their intentions. He has his intention, what he means, and he accomplishes it for good. Here in Egypt and later at the cross, his plan is accomplished for good.

So these words of the text then are Joseph's confession that he makes in which he answers the fears of his terrified brothers who are convicted that Joseph will now destroy them, requite all that evil, and Joseph makes this confession, "Brothers, fear not." And now verse 20, "But as for you ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good." This is a remarkable display of God's grace that Joseph confessed this, that the passage is full of God's grace. The whole content of the passage is God's grace, but it's another and even greater manifestation of God's grace that these words are not only true, but Joseph believes them and Joseph confesses them. Not every child of God who has evil perpetrated against them is able to make this confession. It's true, it's all true, but not everyone makes it because their faith is so weak. That's not a good thing. So we need grace and we need so much grace and God gave Joseph so much grace that he was able to believe and say, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."

It's grace then that makes Joseph in this confession compassionate, and that he has a forgiving spirit, so that he confesses, "ye thought evil against me, and now that our Father is dead, you don't have to cower at my feet, fearing that I'm going to repay you a hundredfold, I'm gonna strip you all naked, have you beaten, force you into hard labor for the rest of your lives here in Egypt, and hurl you into a dungeon. Brothers, you don't have to fear that, because I love you. Brothers, I love you. I'm so glad God has brought you to repentance for the great evil that you perpetrated against me. I don't hold this evil against you. Why? Why should I become angry with you and vindictive against you and seek revenge against you as you meant all this evil against me for evil? Why should I do that because God meant it unto good?" May God give you and me that same spirit which is the spirit of Jesus Christ as he was hanging on that cross. They just nailed him to the cross and he says, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

It's grace that makes Joseph in this confession humble. He's so humble. "You thought evil against me but now what? Will I vaunt myself up above the living God and charge him with sin, foolishly charge him for bringing all of this evil and trauma into my life 22 years ago? Will I, brothers, vaunt myself over against you? My dream's being fulfilled right now as you bow before me. Will I vaunt myself over you? Will I take my foot and put it on your neck and say, 'Vengeance is mine, now I will repay you and I'm going to

get each one of you good'? Brothers, brothers, I too am worthy of the everlasting destruction of God in hell. I too am a sinner saved by grace. And though you were so wrong and it was so wicked for you to do what you did against me, you hurt me so deeply, I know that God meant it for good and I rest in his will." May God give us the humility of Joseph, which is the humility of Jesus hanging on the cross with all that evil perpetrated against him when the very wrath of God was poured out against him for our sins, which he didn't commit. God's will was very, very painful for Jesus. But it's good. It's good. He humbled himself in submission to his heavenly Father.

It is grace that makes Joseph in this confession devoted to God's covenant people. By nature, Joseph would stand here and he would turn all of the attention to himself. He would make this all about him. "Brothers, you thought this evil against me so that I am now the victim of your treachery. My life is forever changed. No good thing will ever be carried out for me. None of this honor that I now possess in Egypt can cover the scars and the wounds and the suffering that I endured, especially in my heart. You've ruined me, brothers. Brothers, you've ruined me." He actually doesn't say anything about himself but by so much grace, he confesses, "ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, much people, to save much people alive." He doesn't say to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save me alive. Me. Of course it's true that what undergirds our faith in the day of great trouble is the truth that God works all things together for my good, for my salvation, for my glorification. That's the truth that we all bring to our beleaguered brother or sister. We say, "Brother, I can't even begin to fathom the great evil that has been perpetrated against you by your own family members. I don't understand it. But I know this and I pray to God you will know this, that God will work all of this evil for your own personal good. He's conforming you to the image of his dear Son." That's what we say. We say, "Sister, my heart goes out to you in everything you've endured that another human being could inflict this kind of evil against you. It defies my understanding. But I believe and I pray to God that you believe that God loves you and God is working all of this evil together for you in that though you sow in tears, one day you, Sister, are going to reap in so much joy." That's what we say. So mighty is God's grace in Jesus Christ working in Joseph that just like Christ on the cross, who looked away from himself and all he saw was God and all God's covenant people for whom he was dying, Joseph looks away from himself and all he sees are much people, to save much people alive. "You brothers are so scared right now because you have this faulty assumption, you think that in my heart it's all about me and what you did to me and all my hurt and all my suffering, and that now because it's all about me I'm going to put myself in the place of God and with a vindictive heart I'm going to seek revenge against you. But you have it all wrong. It's not all about me, it's all about my God and his covenant and his promises to a thousand generations, and his Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the salvation of all of his people. So you're terrified right now, you're terrified that I'm going to repay you, you don't have to be afraid because though you meant all this evil against me, I know that God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." This is a good thing for God's covenant and for his people. And I believe that by faith. To God be the glory.

So if anyone here knows anything of the pain and suffering of Joseph, horrible treachery, that 17-year-old young man, may God give you, for Jesus' sake, the same faith that he gave to Joseph so that all of us together can confess, "Though you meant it for evil and evil it was, I rest in God and I know God meant it for good." Amen.

Let us pray.

Father in heaven, take our hearts, our minds, our souls, all of our thoughts and lift them up into the highest heavens above all this sorrow, this death, the sin, the hurt, the evil in this world, in our lives. Carry us heavenward that we may rest in the Lord Jesus Christ in thy good will in him. And where our faith is weak, make it strong, O living God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.