

Scripture Reading: Genesis 47

“5 Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, “Your father and your brothers have come to you. 6 The land of Egypt is before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know any competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock.” 7 Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. 8 Pharaoh said to Jacob, “How old are you?” 9 And Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.” 10 So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh. 11 And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. 12 Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household with bread, according to the number in their families.”

“Jacob Blesses Pharaoh”

Next week we will return to more political discussions about the actions that Joseph takes as the leader of Egypt in a time of crisis,

- **But for this morning we want to finish the journey of Jacob his father to Egypt with all his family.**

We have one more important lesson to learn that relates to our family history here and our lives today as we serve in the Bride of Christ, the Church carrying out the Great Commission. Thus far we have learned that as we journey with Christ we are to hear the words of Joseph to his brothers as they prepared for their journey:

“Do not be troubled along the way.”

- **We saw that far too often we allow our own sins and weaknesses to trouble us and keep us from serving God with joy & confidence.**

Next we learned that God is our comforter as we saw Jehovah tell Jacob to not be fearful about the journey that lay just ahead. Yes, we are to be anxious for nothing as we serve God, whether it is trusting him for our marriages and children, our Church life or even the grand plans that the Holy Spirit has for history as we saw in our consideration of the Great Commission!

We must always remember that God’s Kingdom advances just one step at a time and whether it if the next diaper that needs to be changed or a Presidential directive we are to do so in faith trusting God for the results. And this is why we saw the repeated references to Jacob and his family receiving the best of the land of Egypt! God has grand plans for this world and His people which were laid out in the early chapters of Genesis and seen coming to completion in the final chapters of Revelation.

As we learned over and over again in the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit knows where history is going and He will make sure it gets there just as God had planned from eternity past.

And now we see one more important detail for us to note in this important journey that Jacob is taking with his entire family...

- **We see a reference not once, but twice to Jacob blessing Pharaoh.**

Now at first glance this might seem a bit backward, with a leader of a small family of shepherds offering a blessing to the leader of a mighty nation.

- **It was Jacob who had to come begging for food and it was Egypt who at this point had all the food!**

It should remind us that all is often not as it seems as we observe God's story unfolding...

- Like the example we considered in my last message where those lowly Chinese Christians raised quietly in underground churches were hired in communist factories because of their work ethic!

Or as we celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation we could remember a lowly monk named Martin Luther standing up to the power of the Roman Church in his day!

I am sure we can think of many other examples and perhaps even some in our own lives, but we want to consider the text before us and see why it was appropriate and even necessary for Jacob to bless Pharaoh! In verse seven we see the first reference to this blessing...

7 "Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh."

Now we could certainly understand Jacob thanking Pharaoh...

- He had just offered and given them the best in the land of Egypt.
- He had elevated Jacob's son Joseph to the highest position in the land!
- They had food in a time of great famine!

So yes, Jacob had much to be thankful for but he also knew the role that his chosen family was to play in history. Jacob knew this important role from what his father and grandfather would have taught him:

- That this journey would be a very long journey for his family and from a human standpoint it would not end well... They would be slaves in Egypt and mistreated!

But Jacob also knew that Egypt had a role to play in God's story and that in the end they would be judged for their wicked actions and that God's people would return to the Promised Land as a great multitude! God had promised Abraham that through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed...

However, we know from history, and even the history of God's own people, that God's blessings are often forgotten or even rejected.

- This is why we see those chilling words at the beginning of the Book of Exodus, there arose a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph.

Here we see Jacob blessing Pharaoh with God's blessing and in the next few weeks we will see his son Joseph give this Pharaoh incredible power and control over all of Egypt...

- But sadly they would one day turn their backs on the God Who so richly blessed them.
- Just as the Nation of Israel would as well even after God judged Egypt and gave them the Land of Promise.

Now I mentioned that we have two references to this blessing and in between there is an interesting discussion about Jacob's history...

8 "Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How old are you?" 9 And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

We have seen in Jacob's final days in Canaan and now again here in Egypt that he seems to be a man ready to die.

First out of grief because he feared losing his second favorite son, and now because he has been reunited with Joseph and his life seems fulfilled.

Jacob looks back on his many trials and tribulations, but also remembers that his years, even at 130, paled in comparison with many of those in his family history. Now Jacob may have simply been thinking about his own father and grandfather who lived to be 180 and 175 respectively.

- Obviously, Jacob did not think he would live that long, though in reality he would live for another 17 years here in Egypt before his death.

But we must also remember that life spans were greatly decreasing in this period of time... We know that prior to the flood it was not uncommon for men to live for hundreds of years with some approaching the one thousand year mark. Methuselah lived to be 969 and even Noah died at 950 years of age. Jacob's father Isaac may well have met on at least known of Shem who was on the Ark with his father Noah.

- Shem died at the ripe old age of 600 when Isaac was about fifty years old, and Jacob was born about ten years later.

Certainly Jacob would have been familiar with their family history and the ages that these older men attained.

- And as we often mention, we must remember that this is our family history as well!

And then in verse ten the focus returns to our subject at hand this morning:

10 "So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh."

Now blessing or blessed is another word that we could spend a life-time studying...

- And we will, if we spend our time in the study and meditation on God's Word because there it is found almost 500 times!

The most basic definition is "to confer or invoke divine favor upon; to ask God to look favorably on."

Yes, Pharaoh was a very powerful and influential man, who certainly held the power of physical death over those who crossed him, but now here before him stands a man with the ability to confer a greater blessing!

- A man whose presence should have caused great fear knowing that he represented the one true God Who could not only kill the body but cast body and soul into hell.

Now the question we must ask is how or why Jacob had such authority and how it relates to us today...

- His authority and calling was given to him by God through his father and grandfather which we studied in our journey through the Book of Beginnings.

In Genesis 12 we saw God telling his grandfather Abraham, "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

We saw the same promise given to Abraham in Genesis 22: "18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Egypt was certainly one of the families or nations of the earth and we see this promise repeated to Jacob's father Isaac in Genesis 26: "3 Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. 4 And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed..."

And most importantly, with what we studied two weeks ago regarding the Great Commission, we know that these promises relate to us today as well:

This is what the Apostle Paul clearly points out to one of the most troubled of the New Testament churches writing to the Saints at Galatia:

Galatians 3: “7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham... 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. 15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. 16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ.”

The Gospel, or the Good News is not a New Testament invention: The Gospel was preached to Abraham when God told him he would be a blessing to all the nations of the earth!

Last month at the RCC family camp Pastor Garry Vanderveen stressed a very simple definition of the Gospel, telling them that it was the good news that the Father is making all things new in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit! So yes, that good news was preached to Abraham when God told him that through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed and it was the same good news proclaimed by the angels on the night that Jesus was born:

- **Peace on Earth and Good will toward men!**

It was the good news that Simeon saw proclaiming that God would bring light to the Gentiles and what Jesus explained to skeptical Nicodemus when He declared that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son!

- **Now I hope you realize that this proclamation is not anything we can declare in our own power and authority!**

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob could bring such blessings because of the Seed, as of one and not many, that would come from their line of Promise and that Seed of course is the Lord Jesus Christ!

- **Jacob could bless Pharaoh as God’s ambassador if you will and we proclaim God’s blessing to a needy world when we proclaim the Good News.**

I will not have the time for a thorough review this morning, but if you consider what Jesus is teaching in the beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon of the Mount or what the Apostle Paul declares in the opening verses of the Epistle to the Ephesians, it is very clear that we today are blessed in Christ!

- **Jesus was the Son in Whom God was well pleased & we are now in Him!**

Our union with Christ is at the center of the Good News as clearly taught by the Apostle Paul, where in Romans six he declares, “11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Here again you could have a productive word or phrase study because you will find “in Christ” almost a hundred times in the New Testament! And ironically, the Apostle Paul stresses it most clearly in the midst of his dire warnings to those at Galatia: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Again this is good news, but not some New Testament invention because it was what David proclaimed in Psalm 32: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.

10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; But he who trusts in Jehovah, mercy shall surround him. 11 Be glad in Jehovah and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all you upright in heart!”

Now I can assure you that there were no more Saints back then who were “upright in their hearts” in their own strength or works, then we have in the Church today.

- Just as we do, they stood righteous, or upright in heart, before God because of the work of Jesus!

Yes, the coming of Jesus has changed everything, and brothers and sisters that includes us! Listen again to the Apostle Paul as he also explains to the Saints at Corinth, another very troubled Church, just what it means to be in Christ...

II Corinthians 5: “17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

- Yes we are to be ambassadors for Jesus taking His blessing to the world just as Jacob did in our text to Pharaoh.

Our opportunity for such ministry could be great or small but it is always important! Whether it is young parents giving their new child God’s blessing as they bring them for baptism or someone like Jacob standing before a prince or king, or president or senator in our nation, with the opportunity to share the Good News!

- Any and all of this is the work of reconciliation that God has given us to do in Christ.

Can people reject such blessings?

- Yes, they certainly can, or as was the case with Egypt, later walk away from the Lord!

Can even we who are the elect forget the blessings that we have in Christ? Yes, even we can often forget that it is not about us but about Jesus: We are a new creation but can often live as if nothing had changed. I think it is very significant in the life of Jacob, that as often as we read of blessings even here in the Book of Genesis, and there are about 70 appearances, that when Jacob becomes anxious and discouraged, that we go almost eight chapters with no mention of blessings... From the time of Joseph sale into slavery until Jacob stands before Pharaoh giving him God’s blessing! As Pastor Alexander challenged us last week, we are to walk in the ways of the Lord in ALL areas of our lives and not look only inward... When we fail to be mission oriented then we will fail to enjoy the abundant life that Jesus offers us!

- God has certainly blessed us in Christ and now we are to share those blessings with the world around us!

And then the final two verses of our text this morning move us on to the discuss of how Joseph ruled in Egypt which we will take up next week, but with all of his responsibilities we see him caring for his father and family!

11 “And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. 12 Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household with bread, according to the number in their families.”

Communion Meditation: I Corinthians 10 [the Apostle’s discussion of the Table begins back in chapter 10!]

“15 I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.”