

**Genesis 37: 1- 11; “Joseph’s Dreams & Israel’s Love”, Sermon # 97 in the series –
“Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 28th, 2019,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

We now have come to one of the greatest stories in all of Scripture; of what God did for Jacob and Joseph and their whole family in His grace and mercy. From the beginning to the end of this story God gives us indications that He purposed to do a great work of deliverance for their family, through very unusual and unlikely means. Actually, this is often God’s way of doing things for families who have believers in them, although we may not like what we see at first. We find sometimes that family members oppose our conversion or our interest in being godly and doing the right thing.

But God uses the unusual and unlikely means of opposition from family members, to the things which he has shown us in His Word, in order to ultimately give to those who are trusting in Him the greatest blessings by His grace. “Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.” “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37: 3 and 4) I hope that one of the reasons that you have come here this morning is because you want to learn more about God and His ways in your own life, so that you might be more useful to Him.

If this is the case, then let us ask ourselves this question this morning. How did God so order things in Joseph’s life, so that His purpose of grace would be fulfilled; so that Joseph would be raised up to have a good character and greatness in God’s sight? God did certain things, here in the time that Joseph was a teen-ager, that would most certainly lead him to become godly and great. But when we hear of them, I think that we might be inclined to disagree, and to say that this could not possibly be the way to godliness and greatness, either one.

So God providentially ordered some very significant things in Joseph’s life, in relation to his family, that set the stage for what He would do for him, and for them, in later years. There are 3 things revealed to us in our text.

1st – God caused Joseph to be singled out by his father’s love. (verses 1-4)

“Jacob,” it says in verse 1, “dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.” He was doing the will of God in this. He was following in the footsteps of his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham, living by faith in the land of promise and looking for that heavenly and spiritual inheritance which comes only from God and not from men. He was a peaceable man dwelling in tents. He was living by faith in the word of God to him. But there was someone else now, someone who had quietly stood by him and watched him in the trials of his faith. It was not Rachel, for she to his sorrow had died, but it was their oldest son.

Jacob had loved Rachel so very much and so it should be expected that he would love Joseph because he was her son. But Jacob marveled that God had given him a son who was interested in the spiritual things that he was interested in. Truly this was a great gift to Jacob, perhaps the greatest gift in relation to his family. Out of all of his sons Jacob knew that he had only one with whom he was like-minded in spiritual things. And that one was Joseph.

Joseph had seen the terrible lusts and passions of sin raging in Simeon and Levi when they took matters of justice into their own hands; when they killed Shechem and Hamor and all the males of the city after their sister Dinah had been violated. They had persuaded all of the rest of his sons except one to enter into this evil deed with them and to plunder the city afterwards. But Joseph was not persuaded. Joseph agreed with the sentiments that Jacob uttered on his death bed many years later, which are found in Genesis 49: 5-7.

“Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place.” “Let not my soul enter their counsel; let not my honor be united to their assembly; for in their anger they

slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung an ox.” “Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel!” Joseph saw the treachery of his brothers and would not go with them to this crime. In chapter 49, verse 26, when Jacob gives Joseph his blessing, he says to him – “The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.” “They shall be upon the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.” Jacob comforts himself with these words on his death bed, but he saw the reality of these things long years before, when Joseph was 17.

Then there was the matter of Reuben. Reuben was Jacob’s first-born son by Leah, the wife that was not loved as much as Rachel. Reuben would have inherited the blessings of the first born had he not committed an atrocious sin not long before the time of the story we are speaking about this morning. In Genesis 35: 21 it says, “Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.” “And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine; and Israel heard about it.”

How could Jacob give his blessing to one who had done such a thing? He could not trust him, and something had to be done. If you turn over to 1st Chronicles 5: 1, you will read what Jacob did. It says there – “Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel – he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father’s bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph’s.”

So, we see from this that Jacob could not pass on to Reuben the covenant blessings of the Messiah; to such an unstable, immoral man as Reuben was. In Genesis 49: 3 and 4, Jacob says on his death bed, “Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power.” “Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father’s bed; then you defiled it – He went up to my couch.” He was disqualified from the rights of the first-born and Joseph was appointed the first born in his place. Joseph is a type of Christ who was the “Lion of the tribe of Judah.” We will read about Judah’s immorality in our next chapter in the book of Genesis. And we will see that he was not worthy of the covenant blessings of the Messiah either.

But there was One who would conduct himself wisely and rightly in everything that he did. And He was from that tribe. He would valiantly do all those things which pleased his Father in heaven. His name is the Lord Jesus Christ; the One whom you should trust in, this very day, if you have not already done so. “The Father has loved the Son, and has given Him all things.” Jacob and Joseph are a type and a picture of this greater relationship. It is these incidences from the past, in which Joseph conducted himself wisely and in the interests of doing what was right, and thinking lovingly of what his father would have him to do, that endeared him so much to Jacob.

Rachel was gone, but he still had Joseph. And he could say of Joseph as Paul said of Timothy in Philippians 2: 19 and following, “But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.” “For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.” “For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.” “But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served me in the gospel.” This is how Joseph was thought of by Jacob; in just this same way. He was “the son of his old age.”

It was not so much that Jacob had Joseph when he was old, for Benjamin could much more appropriately be called by that name. Rather, it was that Joseph was such a great encouragement to Jacob in his old age by his sincerely looking out for the interests of his dear and godly father. This also partially explains the meaning of the “coat of many colors”. It was true that Jacob loved Joseph more than all his children, and because of this great love, he favored him with a beautifully woven garment, “a tunic of many colors” to show to everyone how much he really cared for this particular son. But could it not have also been true that this was

the garment by which he showed the rest of his sons the fact that he had appointed Joseph to the position of first-born, and that he had also appointed him their supervisor in all the work that his sons did?

James Montgomery Boice in his commentary says – “Most tunics were sleeveless and stopped at the knees; they were worn by working men.” “A long-sleeved, tailored garment was worn by one who did not have to work.” “So when Joseph appeared in this coat, his brothers recognized it as a sign of his father’s choice of Joseph to be a manager, one preeminent over them.” He also says – “This is also the explanation of the statement that Joseph brought Jacob “a bad report about the brothers”. (verse 2) “This has been construed as tattling, which we dislike.” “But Joseph was not so much a tale-bearer as a truth-teller.” “It was his responsibility to report to his aging father what was actually going on.”

This leads me at this point to ask the question to the children and young people here this morning, whether you look out for your father’s greatest interests if he is a godly man? Nothing is so great and so good a thing, personally to your earthly father, as to know that this will be your constant and fixed attitude. It is not only because you are submissive to his authority, and you do what he asks when he asks you to do it, but it is more that you are trying to please him by looking out to see how you can affirm and support and encourage the things that are dearest to his heart.

The things that are the dearest to the heart of a godly man are seeing his children wanting to do what is good and right and true, and their being loving helpers to their parents and others. They want to know Christ and to walk with Christ. In 3rd John, verse 4, the apostle John says, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.” Jacob loved Joseph more than all of his children because he was this way. But it was God who caused Joseph to be singled out by his father’s love. When you become a Christian it is because you have been singled out by the Father’s love, the 1st Person of the Divine Trinity, who loves you for Jesus’ sake, for the sake of His perfect obedience and His willingness to suffer on your behalf.

And so, if Joseph was going to be singled out by his father’s love, and distinguished for his good behavior, then it was also something which caused his brothers to hate him. “But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.” Let me apply this spiritually to you as Christians. When you become a Christian by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are going to be hated at times by those who do not know Christ. Part of that hatred is due to the idea that they have, that God loves you more than He loves them; that God is a God who shows partiality by choosing to save some and not saving others.

But you can let them know, that no one will be excluded from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. They will exclude themselves, by their own hatred of God’s way of salvation if they will not believe. God is not a God who shows partiality. The one who “fears God and works righteousness, is accepted by Him”. All men are unworthy of the love and the salvation of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, even such a good man as Joseph. And all of the goodness and righteousness that we see in Joseph was the result of the grace of Christ at work in Him. Come to Christ today and you will find such amazing grace.

2nd – It was God who gave Joseph great dreams which told him of His future greatness. (verses 5-8)

“Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more,” it says in verse 5. This seems to be something that was very unwise for Joseph to have done. Could he not see that his relating these dreams would be a very provoking thing to his brothers who already hated him? It seems like “casting his pearls before swine”. And Jesus says in Matthew 7: 6 – “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.” But let’s look at the dream and see if we can discern why these brothers hated Joseph so much. He said to them in a respectful

tone of voice – “Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: “There we were binding sheaves in the field.” “Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed to my sheaf.” “And his brothers said to him, ‘Shall you indeed reign over us?’” “Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?” “So they hated him more for his dreams and for his words.”

I believe personally that it was very unwise for Joseph to have revealed these dreams to his brethren. He could have related them to his father privately, and asked him to give him his thoughts about them. He should have been humbled to think that such a thing could actually come to pass, and therefore he could have kept the matter to himself, and prayed over it. We read of no such thing. I believe that Joseph was a young man who really wanted to do great things for God.

He was excited to know that there was a God, and that He had personally revealed Himself to him in these dreams. He thought that if God had given him such a wondrous dream that he should declare it. He saw it as a message which he should believe and proclaim to his family, because it was from God. God would make him great and he would be raised to such a position in the family that his brothers would bow to him. I think that he wanted to use the meaning of this dream to establish his desire; which was, that he would be given greater respect, in the minds of his brothers and his father.

He now believed that God had saved him for a great purpose, and that this purpose was to become such a ruler that his family would all bow down to him. He declared it to his brothers because he believed so much in the certainty of what God has shown him. Surely there was a great deal of naiveté in this. To be naïve is to be simple minded in the sense that you do not understand, that what you are doing, is affecting others in a way that is not good. Joseph did not have the authority of a – “Thus saith the Lord”, in this dream. It was not a revelatory dream in the sense of others being bound to receive it. It was not something that his brothers had to believe because it was something that God was speaking to them through him.

It was a prophetic dream. But the details of fulfillment; of how this dream would come to pass, these were not made known to him. His brothers, therefore, thought that he was presumptuous and proud. This is something that each of us here today should consider, and especially our young people; in terms of what you believe that God will do with your life. You may sense that God has given you great gifts and abilities. Your parents and other people may be very pleased with your godly character, and have great hopes for your future. As you pray, you may sense that God is calling you to do some great work.

Or that you are being called to some position of authority where others will benefit greatly from the things that you will do. And yet, I hope that you see from this text, that even such a great and godly young person as Joseph was, he still needed to understand the truth of Proverbs 15: 33 – “The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor comes humility.” And Proverbs 25: 27 which says – “It is not good to eat much honey; so to seek one’s own glory is not glory.” Joseph was looking for greater respect from his brothers. He was hoping that they would respect the fact God that had given him this dream.

Instead he found their hearts and their words rising against him in indignation. “Shall you indeed reign over us?” “Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?” “So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.” Is it wrong to share your dreams? No, it is not, but you must learn to share them in the right way. The right way is humility and the fear of the Lord. It is more important to cultivate the secret life of prayer, and waiting upon God, than in trying to impress yourself, or others, with your own greatness.

Proverbs chapter 2, verse 1 and following says, “My son, if you will receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the

fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” “For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly.”

Joseph was going to have to face some very difficult days ahead, while he proved the truth of these verses. But God, and the wisdom that He alone could give to him, would become even more precious to Joseph through it. Perhaps, each of us should consider the fact there are many people in this world who have a problem with authority, even as Joseph’s brothers did. They do not like the idea of anyone having authority over them in any sense. They want to be those in authority, but they do not like the authority of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They do not “want this man to rule over them”.

I think that Joseph’s brothers had a problem with submitting to their father’s authority. The matter of their killing Shechem and Hamor and the others proves that this was true of them. They were their own authority and certainly no young “dreamer”, as they later would call Joseph, was going to rule over them, or have dominion over them. But God would use their opposition to Joseph’s dreams to fulfill his dreams. He would indeed rule over them, but it would be much later, after they sold him as slave to those who were going down to Egypt. He would indeed rise and become everything that he dreamed that he would be. But many difficult years lay ahead.

3rd – In this text we see that God providentially withheld from others in the family the real interpretation of Joseph’s dreams for a long time. (verses 9-11)

We must ask ourselves: Why did God choose to reveal these dreams to Joseph at this time when he was young and naïve and most vulnerable to the temptation of pride and selfish ambition? I think that God ordained this, in order to lift up Joseph’s heart in the joy of what He would make him, by His grace. But it was also to show him his weakness and his sinfulness by nature. God providentially ordered these things because He knew that it would be the very means by which He bring Joseph down to Egypt, and thereby preserve their whole family alive, and even save them from their sins as well.

The way that God would accomplish this purpose, would be by His using the hatred of his brothers, to sell Joseph down to Egypt to be a slave. God knew the intent of their hearts was evil. He knew that in their hearts was murder. But God would prevent them from doing that, because He had a great purpose to fulfill. We are going to see, as we go through the story of Joseph, that he is in many ways a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. “He came to His own, and His own received Him not”, it says in John 1: 11. And in Isaiah 53: 3 it says – “He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” “And we hid, as it were our faces from Him; He was despised and we did not esteem Him”.

This was the same lesson that Joseph had to learn in being taught the lessons of what it would mean to be godly and what it would mean to be great. But he would learn them well, and his life would turn out to be one of the greatest types of Christ in all of the Old Testament Scriptures. You see, when the Lord Jesus came to this earth, from heaven, where He had always been in before, in eternity past with His Father, He came on a mission of mercy and compassion. But His mission was rejected by those who should have received it; even by His own people, the Jews.

The Lord Jesus was hated, He was despised, and He was rejected by his brethren. They hated him for all that He said that He was, and all that He said that He would become. And they did succeed in falsely accusing Him, and putting Him to death. But God raised Him from the dead, and God has crowned Him with glory and honor. He has crowned Him because He fulfilled God’s great purpose, that many sinners would be rescued from their lost and condemned state. Are you one of those for whom Christ died? If you will come to Him in faith and receive Him in all of His offices of Prophet, and Priest, and King, you shall be able to prove to yourself that He is your Savior and your Lord.

You will make your calling and election sure, and you shall come to know the forgiveness of your sins and be assured of your deliverance from sin's bondage. I hope that you will receive this truth; that it is sometimes God's way to bring great joy out of sorrow, and great usefulness out of disappointment, for those who love Him. It is His purpose to fulfill the dreams that He gives to us, in relation to His Word, as we trust in Him. We do not have revelatory prophetic dreams, as Joseph did in this story, but many believers do have dreams of what they would like to do for the Lord with their life.

And so, this learning experience of Joseph's applies to all believers who desire to be faithful and useful to their Lord. All believers have been chosen by God to learn His ways. Perhaps you are a young person surrounded by brothers and sisters who know the Lord. Perhaps you are the only one among your brothers and sisters who knows the Lord. Perhaps there is only one godly parent, or even no godly parent in your life. But whatever is your situation, the way that the Lord teaches a believer can be seen in the life of Joseph.

He taught Joseph godliness in the context of a family who did not understand his dreams. He was God's chosen man, in relation to his family; and not only to his family only, but also in relation to whole future history of the nation of Israel in his generation, and in the many generations that would follow. But his family did not understand this, and many in his family opposed him. As you think about the purpose of your own life in relation to God, you should understand that God would have you to think about how you can serve Him in this generation; how you can live to bring glory to Him, even if you are in hard circumstances, such as Joseph was.

Perhaps you tend to believe that nothing that you do has any impact for good on others in your family or in our society, but this story teaches us that this is simply not true. God has created each of us as responsible moral beings who, before Him, and before His law, we are all equally seen by Him as men created in His image; and as such, we shall be held accountable to Him for all of our actions. In the Day of Judgment, it will be "the small and the great" that shall together stand before the Lord.

But, though this is true, that God has created all men equal in these significant ways, it is also very evident from the story of Joseph, that here was a man who was raised up, from early on in his life, to be different from other men, and to fulfill a special purpose in the plan of God. In this sense God has not created all men equal. God is the One who causes one man to differ from another, by His grace and His purpose. And He is the only One who can give the grace, and order the circumstances in a person's life, so that a good character will be established in them. And then, in His time, He raises them up to usefulness in His sight. Men can be great and not be godly.

But God raised Joseph up, first to be godly, and then later to be great. This is one of the primary lessons which God would teach all of us from the life of Joseph. What a mighty work of God it is, when He raises up a person to greatness, because He has first worked in their life, that by His grace, they would become godly. The interpretation, the true interpretation of Joseph's dream, was withheld from Jacob and his sons for many years, in order that God's purposes could be fulfilled in every way with regard to both Joseph and them, his family. "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter." But it is your glory, dear Christian, to search it out. If you are perplexed about the way that God has led you in your Christian life; you don't understand the things that He has providentially ordered concerning you, or others in your family, remember to pray and to ask God for wisdom. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting." You may be saying – Lord, why are these things happening in my life? Well, when you pray, God will show you what you need to do to repent of your sins, and to learn His ways, and to walk in them.

You must learn to live by faith. And if you will learn to live by faith in your Joseph, the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who has fulfilled all of God's good purpose, you will eventually and come to be satisfied with the way that God has ordered things, concerning you, because you will see the wisdom of God ordering these things for your good, to build your faith in Him, and He can work them also for the good of those whom you love according to His purpose. Come to Jesus and you will find salvation. Come to Jesus, and He will interpret the dreams which you have for your life, in relation to God's good purposes, those purposes which greater than all of your personal dreams, hopes, and ambitions.