

## Judah's Repentance

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If I asked you who came after Jacob in the lineup of Jewish patriarchs, what would you say? After Abraham, Isaac and Jacob comes whom? You might say Joseph, Reuben, how about Judah?

I had an opportunity to take an Expository Preaching seminar last fall prior to the G3 Conference in Atlanta. The seminar was taught by several very strong and experienced pastors, and it reinforced many things that we hold true here at GCC. The sufficiency and inerrancy of scripture, the importance of verse-by-verse exposition of a text and that all scripture is meant to point us to Christ. It was aimed at lay leaders as well as young pastors and sought to give tools and a framework to ensure that we preach God's purpose and meaning for a passage and not twisting scripture to fit a point that we would like to make. That is why we here at GCC generally preach and teach verse by verse through various books of both the old and new testaments. The text that I want to focus on today is Genesis 44:16 and following. It is going to take a little while to get there as I have a lot of background to cover but I trust that you will appreciate these verses once we do get there. Please open for now to chapter 38 of Genesis, we will get there shortly

We commonly consider the last 14 chapters of Genesis to be about Joseph. He is at the forefront of most of these chapters and there are easily dozens of sermons that can be drawn from his life. I hope to show you this morning that there is an equally important story line of redemption and repentance underlying this narrative. I am going to give you an overview of these chapters and I encourage you to do additional study for yourselves. There is also a possibility (Lord willing) that we will take this study further in one of the Sunday morning adult studies. I encourage everyone here to get involved in one of these Sunday morning studies. Right now, Doug is leading one in the book of Ephesians, and I am working through Paul's letter to the Galatians with another group. They are an excellent place for fellowship and learning and I think that you will appreciate the learning.

Last week I recommended a book for the congregation, "Joseph and the Gospel of many colors" which deals with this same portion of scripture. The author, Voddie Baucham was one of the instructors in the seminar that I attended. He helped us to see that this story of Judah's repentance is woven into Joseph's story and is in some ways the more significant point of these chapters.

We are all familiar with the book of Genesis. It is the first book of the Bible and the book of beginnings. Genesis gives us the story of creation, the Fall where Adam and Eve's sin brought all of humanity under the curse of sin, the rampant wickedness that God punished with a worldwide flood and the start of a people who would be God's chosen people for redemption.

There are 3 themes that are seen again and again throughout Genesis. The land, the seed and the promise. This is worth some study on your own but briefly, the Land is seen in Creation where it was created from nothing, the land is in the Flood where it was destroyed and re-formed due to man's wickedness, the land is in the Abrahamic covenant where God promised that his people would have a promised land and the land is in Jacob's flight to Egypt where the chosen people were taken out of that earthly promised land to prepare them for God's work and for heaven.

The Seed shows up again and again as well. In creation, seeds are explicit - in Genesis 1:11 and 12 After the fall God made a promise that the offspring or seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. This of course is a promise that God fulfilled by sending His son Jesus to earth where He achieved victory over sin and death.

We then see seeds mentioned after the flood as the world is repopulated and finally seed or offspring depending on your translation is seen in God's promise to Abraham that his seed would be greater in number than the sand of the shore or the stars in the sky – and this promise was made when Abraham was 100 years old and childless. This also included in that promise that Abraham's seed would be a blessing for all the earth pointing forward again to Christ.

And the promise. The promise that the offspring of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent and bring redemption for man, the promise that Abraham's seed would be a blessing for all the earth. There is also the promise

that God would never again send a worldwide flood, the promise that God made to Hagar that he would make Ishmael into a large nation.

The Land, The Seed and The Promise – critical themes in Genesis. Read the book with those themes in mind. Look for how the ideas of Land, Seed and Promise are underlying the entire book. The bible is God's story, and it is clear here at the beginning that He had a plan right from the start for redeeming and restoring mankind and creation.

I want to spend the rest of our time here looking at Genesis chapters 37 to the end of the book. As I said before, this covers a lot of ground and there is no way to do it justice in 1 sermon, but what I want to show you here is that these chapters are not solely about Joseph. They also present to us a wonderful picture of redemption in the life of Judah. The overall flow of these chapters is to connect the land, the seed and the promise to Judah who in the end is next in line after Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Let me stop and let that sink in. The last 14 chapters of Genesis are as much about Judah taking his place in the lineage of Christ as they are about Joseph.

We are familiar with the Jewish Patriarchs; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Genesis 12- 37 follows these men and their lives. Then from Jacob's 12 sons it is Judah, not Simeon (the oldest) or Joseph (the favorite and most successful) who emerges as the seed through whom God will fulfill His promises. The narrative of Joseph's life is instructive, but there is a very important and critical narrative about God's grace in the life of Judah that we shouldn't miss. God's grace in Judah's life points us to Christ.

One of the things that was reinforced in the preaching class is that we need to be diligent and thoughtful when we read and study the bible. It is easy and natural to read superficially and find surface truths that we think we can apply in our lives without fully grasping the big picture and the overarching message of the text. There are many examples of churches, pastors and books that focus more on good morals, good works or God's blessings than on sin, repentance and salvation.

In his book *Soul Searching*, Christian Smith refers to this world view as "moralistic, therapeutic deism". Voddie Baucham summarized this worldview as having 5 tenets.

1. There is a God who created the world
2. God wants us to be good
3. The main goal of life is to be happy and feel good about oneself
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in our lives unless we need something
5. Good people go to heaven when they die

We probably all know plenty of people who have this worldview.

We all recognize the issues with this worldview but if we are honest, we sometimes fall into it ourselves. Let's face it we have a desire to be happy and feel good about ourselves, so we expect God to want the same, and we do sometimes leave God on the outside when things are going well. We will call Him when we need Him. We can call out this worldview as false, but we sometimes become practical moralistic, therapeutic deists when we focus inwardly on ourselves and not on the work of Christ in our lives...

In this worldview, the bible then becomes a source where we can draw out a moralistic message worthy of Aesop's fables, add a dose of blessings that we receive when God's providence shines on us and preach it under the banner of God. Moralistic, therapeutic, deism – you can find it all over Christian bookstores, you can find too many churches that lead with this kind of message. But that is not the message of the Bible. Scripture is not about morals and rules. It is not about our happiness or fulfillment; it is not about being good. It is about redemption through God's grace.

The story of Joseph has tremendous lessons in God's sovereignty, God's timing, God's provision in times of trouble and what is probably the best text in scripture for the meaning of true forgiveness – and I will touch on some of those, but it also has a key place in the story of redemption. Joseph's is also a compelling story, one apparently worthy of Broadway and Hollywood. It has villains, intrigue, suspense and if you don't continue into the book of Exodus a happy ending when the family is reunited and thrives in Egypt. Ross talked last week about how clearly Joseph understood God's sovereignty in his life and circumstances.

Don't misunderstand, these are all good areas for us to study and teach. We should talk about Jacob and his shortcomings as a father. We should talk about God's sovereignty in putting Joseph in Egypt and giving him the ability to interpret dreams and we certainly should teach on the importance of forgiveness, no matter what wrong has been done against us. But we also need to also draw out and show the life of Judah. His sin, his rebellion, his self-centered life and ultimately his repentance and the blessing that followed as he was chosen by God to be the next in line for the Seed that would redeem God's creation.

Let me quickly give you some of the history and facts about Jacob and his family. Of course, Jacob was the second born to Isaac and the brother of Esau. He coerced Esau into giving up his birthright and with the help of his mother Rebekah, tricked Isaac into giving him the blessing. He then had to flee his brother and married two daughters of Laban who competed for his love and attention eventually directly or indirectly through their nursemaids gave him 12 sons. Jacob also played favorites in the family and preferred the sons of Rachel.

The oldest son Reuben should have been the head of the family, but he had committed adultery with one of his father's concubines and disqualified himself.

Simeon and Levi would be next in line but they had gone on a murderous rampage to avenge their sister and had blood on their hands so they were also on the outside.

In truth, Judah was no better than his brothers.

#### READ Genesis 38

The previous chapter, Chapter 37, details Joseph's favored position in the family, his unpopular dreams and the plot of 10 brothers first to kill him but then at Judah's suggestion to sell him into slavery. I think that some might suggest that Judah's convincing the brothers to sell Joseph rather than kill him was some sort of an act of kindness. We might think "well at least he is still alive" but most commentators agree that slavery in ancient Egypt was in fact not better than death and that Judah more likely acted out of greed than compassion.

Here in chapter 38, right in the middle of Joseph's story, we see Judah piling sin upon sin. It should have been clear to Judah that marrying a Canaanite woman was forbidden. I am sure that he would have heard the stories of Jacob going back to Isaac's family homeland in order to take a wife from among the clan rather than a Canaanite. At the very least he would have known that association with the locals was a bad idea. But Judah who was probably between 16 and 20 years old, "as it happened" met a Adullamite named Hirah. From the text we can see that Hirah became a longtime friend of Judah. He was there when Judah met Shua and he was there more than 20 years later when Judah had been widowed. We don't hear much about Hirah but we can deduce from the text that he was not a good influence on Judah.

There is at least a 20-year period here where the 3 sons are born and grow to the point where the 2 older sons take wives. We don't know much about this time except that Joseph is languishing in Egypt and Judah's sons are wicked – to the point where Er is put to death by God. Even though Levirate marriage law – the practice of one son having a child to further the name of a deceased brother - had not been given by God yet – that comes after the Exodus – Judah instructs Onan to raise a son for Er. Again, there is a lot that can be said here. While this is a strange practice for us, it was not unusual in ancient days. Remember that one of the themes in the book of Genesis is the Seed and the need for a family line to continue. I know that the ladies will have a chance to dig into this further they study Ruth this September as Ruth was also given to Boaz in an act of Levirate marriage.

As we read, Onan refused to provide an heir through Tamar and God struck him dead as well.

Fast forward a few years and now Shelah is of age, but Judah does not send him to Tamar. This was a big deal. Tamar had no hope of marriage or care as a childless widow. She was depending on Judah to fulfill his promise, but he did not. A widow in these times had no hope of a future. No one to depend on, no provision, no protection. So Tamar took matters into her own hands.

Here again we see sin upon sin as both Tamar and Judah are breaking God's law. But at the same time we see God's sovereignty at work – despite their sin, Judah and Tamar are to be in the lineage of Jesus – they bear a son who

maintains the promise that God made. The gospel of Matthew starts with the genealogy of Jesus. The lineage of the Messiah from Abraham to Jesus' earthly father Joseph and right toward the front of the line in verse 3 is Judah the father of Perez by Tamar.

We might ask - why does God use sinful people? – and of course the answer is that is all there is. He has nothing else to work with, all people are sinful. But I think we also need to wonder why these sinful people. In the case of Tamar, she was not even Jewish. In the case of Judah, he had selfishly abandoned his family. Shouldn't God use the best and brightest among us? Wouldn't it have made more sense for God to use Joseph who had persevered in trials, led a nation and given glory to God. Or Benjamin who had not been implicated in selling Joseph to the Ishmaelites? Or what about Reuben as the oldest and logical heir?

The short answer is that God chooses – he chooses both who and how His will is to be accomplished. The God who created everything and upholds it by His right hand, the God who sustains and protects us in all things, the God who is holy and just and omniscient chooses – and we should trust that He chooses perfectly. He doesn't make mistakes. He is not taken by surprise. He already knows the end from the beginning, so we really need to trust Him.

Psalm 78 recounts the Exodus from Egypt and how the Lord guided, protected, and sustained the Jews through 40 years of wandering and eventually entry into the promised land.

Asaph wrote the Psalm and in verse 5

Then after recounting the history of the exodus, in verse 67

Nothing more than that. He rejected Joseph's line and chose Judah – period.

This doesn't make sense to us. It is not natural for God not to choose the obvious one. Everything in us thinks that Joseph should be the one. The prophet Isaiah gives us some insight here. In chapter 55:8-9, Isaiah shows us that we can't comprehend why God chooses as He does.

God did cut out Er and Onan for their wickedness – why not Judah and Tamar as well? Because He chose. Because of His mercy. Judah and Tamar did not deserve blessing, but God did bless them. You and I did not deserve blessing, but assuming that He has done a work in your heart to save you, he has shown mercy. In Ephesians 1:4-5 we learn of God's choice in the life of all believers.

God in His infinite wisdom chooses whom He will bless, and He is perfect and merciful in doing so. Ross preached on God's sovereignty last week. God is in control of all things, and He works all things for His glory and our good. He often does not do things the way that we expect or the way that we like or the most sensible way to us – but He is perfect and never wrong, so it is us that need to accept and glory in what God is doing.

This should drive us to our knees in thanks to Him who saved us. We who God has chosen should be the most thankful, humble and contrite people. The truth is God did not need to choose anyone, but He did.

Back to Genesis, chapter 39 and following take us back to Joseph and the roller coaster life that he had in Egypt. Again, there are great demonstrations here of God's sovereignty, kindness and provision – all of which are worthy of our study.

So, there is a great famine in the land. Egypt thrives because of Joseph's God directed plans while Jacob and his family fall on hard times. As we follow Judah through this narrative, we need to jump to chapter 42 where 10 of the brothers come in search of food. In this first appearance before Joseph, none of the brothers is willing to sacrifice at all for the others and they spend much of their time fretting about what to happen – they are all looking to save their own skin.

Joseph who may have been wondering why Benjamin had not come, takes Simeon as a hostage and sends the rest away with food but tells them to come back with Benjamin to prove that they are not spies. It is interesting that we see at the end of Chapter 42 and in Chapter 43, that the family does not immediately do as Joseph asked. They do not bring Benjamin back to have Simeon freed. In fact, they wait until all of the food is again gone before they even consider a return trip. They were content to have lost Simeon as well as Joseph in order to protect themselves. There is no talk of trying to rescue Simeon, no options put forth. I wonder if the famine had ended so that Jacob's family could feed themselves if they ever would have returned to Egypt or if they would have forgotten Simeon as well.

But the brothers finally do go back and this time they take Benjamin. Joseph is watching carefully for any change of heart in these brothers. After another test, where Joseph planted a silver goblet in Benjamin's sack, he gets his answer. Judah was probably nearing 50 years of age at this point. He was not a boy. He was a man with children and flocks and responsibility. He had a lifetime of sin weighing on him.

In Chapter 44:16, 33 and beyond- Judah finally steps up -

This is quite a change for Judah. It is a picture of true repentance. A 180 degree change in attitude and behavior. I want to spend a few minutes talking about 2 aspects of Judah's repentance. The first is that Judah was broken when he recognized that his sin was against God and the second is the humility that comes from that realization. Ross preached a message from the book of James a couple of weeks ago where he touched on both of these ideas in James 4:6-10 which you will see ties in well here. The ideas of brokenness and repentance are front and center.

In chapter 44 verse 16 Judah admitted to Joseph, who he knew only as a powerful pagan, that God had found out his sin and the sin of his brothers. There is no doubt that he would have been thinking about the sin that they had committed against Joseph and Jacob and likely also about his sin in marrying a Canaanite, raising 2 wicked sons and that he had committed against Tamar in abandoning her. He was thinking of those people – but he was also seeing that his sin was against a holy God. The God who had created him. The God who is perfect and righteous. Remember what Judah said after Tamar revealed the father of her child – surely, she is more righteous than me. Judah had his eyes opened to the fact that his sin did hurt other people – in some pretty significant ways – but that more importantly is had offended and separated him from God.

True repentance can only happen when we understand that our sin is against a Holy God. This is my primary point here this morning. Feeling badly about how things have turned out is not repentance. Being ashamed that my behavior has landed me in trouble is not repentance. Being sorry that I got caught is not repentance. Any pang of conscience that I felt is not repentance.

2 Corinthians 2:10

The truth is for most of us we don't feel badly enough, we are not ashamed enough, we are not sorry enough given that our sin is before a holy God. It is natural to feel badly about the *consequences* of our sin. Being sorry for the consequences is worldly sorrow. And worldly sorrow does not lead to salvation. It leads to death. As Paul wrote, Godly sorrow leads to repentance and leaves no regret. Salvation makes us right with God and no longer afraid for our future. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. We are assured of hope and a future.

Our sin does have consequences. When we sin, we hurt others. Judah's sin had landed Joseph in an Egyptian jail, separated him from his family and caused him to be in a very awkward relationship with Tamar. Sin ruins relationships, it wrecks finances, it creates hardship but those are all worldly results. But none of this comes close to the significance of the fact that we sin against God.

The good news is that God uses those hardships, He uses those circumstances to break us and lead us to repentance. The problem is that we don't like the process. We don't like being reminded of our sin and we don't like living with the results of our sin, so we look for an easy way out.

We have no room for discomfort today – we have no tolerance for “feeling badly”. The world has thousands of remedies for anything that puts us out of sorts. Take this drug, try this program, read this book, see this therapist – all aimed at removing the discomfort. All designed to make us “feel” better. There is little room for shame in our world today. Rather than be ashamed at our behavior, we often try to explain it away or make it OK.

Christians do this too. Pray this prayer, do this good work, Jesus loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life – all meant to provide a quick and painless path away from discomfort but fall short of true repentance.

Jay Adams in *Competent to Counsel* wrote that it is like the engine light is on in the car and we have learned to break the light. We know that there is a problem, but we don't fix or even acknowledge the real issue – we break the light.

We should be crushed under the weight of sin – not looking for a way to get out. We need to first recognize that it's not about me, it's not about my comfort – it is about God and giving Him glory that brings true repentance.

We turn very quickly to the moralistic, therapeutic deism that I mentioned earlier. We look for ways to make ourselves feel better. We look to take away the pain. But the world's solutions are temporary and ineffective.

David provided a wonderful picture of brokenness leading to repentance in Psalm 51. This is a familiar Psalm to us so I won't spend a lot of time with background but let me remind you that David wrote this Psalm about a year after he had sinned in taking Bathsheba and having Uriah killed. The baby that Bathsheba was carrying had died and David is lamenting his sin in the whole matter. Notice here that David recognizes that his sin is against God and God alone.

Psalm 51:3-4

David knows that he has sinned against a Holy God and that God is justified in any punishment that he determines. God is blameless in judging the wicked because He alone is holy and perfect.

David also shows that he is broken, crushed by what he has done. - Psalm 51:8

David says "let the bones that you have broken rejoice" – David doesn't ask God not to break his bones or even to mend his bones. He asks God to make the broken bones rejoice – in other words God please use this brokenness that you have caused in me to bring joy. Let this brokenness lead to repentance and life. Verse 17 makes it explicit

Elsewhere scripture tells us that God does not want our sacrifices of stuff – bulls, goats or wine – he wants our hearts and worship. The sacrifice that God wants is a broken spirit and a contrite heart.

I mentioned Ross's message from James – in chapter 4 verses 8 and 9 James writes "cleanse your hands you sinners and purify your hearts you double minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourself before the Lord and He will exalt you." You see it here as well. We are to weep and mourn over our sin. We are to humble ourselves before the Lord and then He will exalt you. And this is an on-going process. It is not once and done. Years after God has saved us, we should still look back and lament our sin before Him.

Think about it, our senses bring back memories. A certain smell or sight will bring things to mind. Certain places or events cause us to remember the same places and events from the past. That also means that we remember our sins. We remember the person that we used to be. When we remember that person we should weep over our sin. Yes, God has covered those sins and forgiven us but there is still scar tissue. There are still the consequences and damage left behind. There is also the reminder of our rebellion and sin.

If you are a believer, do you look back and weep over your sin? Do you look back and say Praise God for what He has done to remove me from that? We should

When we sin – we sin against the God who created the universe, against the God who will come and judge the world, the God who could have and should have killed me in my sleep for what I said, thought and spoke yesterday – but who instead made the ultimate sacrifice for me.

Scripture doesn't give us a lot of detail, but it is reasonable to think that Judah may have had thoughts over the years about how he had wronged Joseph. He may have lamented his friendship with Hiram that drew him away from the family. He may have felt a pang of remorse when he thought about Tamar in her father's house with no chance for a future. He may have felt badly for his father and probably countless other situations where he had come up short in his life. It is not until this point where he comes to realize that his sin is against God – and that God knows all that he can truly repent.

So, the first point that I want us to remember here today is that repentance comes out of brokenness. If we think of repentance as changing direction on the highway of life – then brokenness is the offramp. Brokenness is that first step in turning our lives around and heading in a new and God-glorifying way.

There are no short cuts – There is no easier method. We need to be crushed by our sin. We need to weep and mourn over how we have offended God – remember God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Pride is the thing that gets in the way of being truly broken before God.

If there are people in your life who are struggling, people who are experiencing earthly sorrow for whatever reason, recognize that it could well be God working in their lives to break them. It could be that the Lord is breaking down their pride. In these situations, please don't try and take away the pain or make things easier. Don't give them a shortcut to feeling better, turn them toward the Lord who can truly heal them. Point them to eternal peace rather than temporary relief from their pain. Speak the truth of the gospel to them.

My second point is that true repentance leads to humility. Reaching that point of brokenness where we know without a doubt that our sin is against a holy God and that we have no hope in ourselves will naturally lead to humility. Seeing what God has done for us while we were not only undeserving but hostile to Him will enable us to think less of ourselves. This is really a cyclical thing – brokenness fuels humility and humility is the foundation for brokenness. Let me say that again, brokenness fuels humility and humility is the foundation for brokenness

If we don't see our sin as being against God we can try to justify, we can attempt to rationalize, we can explain away all of our sin. We do this by shifting the blame.

“What has she done for me?”

“He didn't deserve for me to anything”

“I'm not as bad as – you fill in the blank”

“I've tried to make her happy, but she doesn't appreciate it”

If you think in any way that your sin is someone else's fault, you have not been broken, you are not humble. In the garden Adam said to God “this woman that you gave me” as he tried to deflect, and shift blame or his sin. We still do this today.

We all do this at times. We grumble about our jobs. We allow a root of bitterness against family members. We complain about the direction of the country, and we sin in our impatience or frustration. In those cases, we are truly taking a page out of Adam's book – if I blame my job for being impatient, I am really saying Lord it's not my fault – this job that you gave me ... or If I fail to cherish my wife because of something in her that bothers me, I am blaming God – it wasn't me, this woman that you gave me. You see how it works. But if I am humble, if I understand as Ross preached last week that God is sovereign and works all things for His glory and my good, I can't help but own my sin, repent and draw closer to God.

When confronted by sin do you look for other people or other circumstances to blame? Does pride keep you from accepting responsibility for your actions? Do you get angry and escalate the issue to try and prove yourself better? All of these reflect a lack of humility.

As long as we can compare ourselves to others, as long as we can measure our behavior on our own scales, we will come out OK. Let's be honest, if I set the rules and I determine what is success, then by definition I am going to win. We need to push aside all of the fleshly and worldly measures. We need to stifle our own defense mechanisms and consider our lives against God's perfect and holy standard.

Humility is the act of setting aside what I think that I need and putting someone's else's needs or desires ahead of my own. You see it here in Judah's insistence that he be taken prisoner instead of Benjamin. Judah is putting both Jacob and Benjamin's needs first. Judah who had previously suggested selling Joseph, who had rebelled against his father by going to start a family in Canaan, who had turned his back on his daughter in law and left her destitute, who didn't lift a hand when Simeon was first imprisoned – this Judah was now insisting that Joseph take him and put him in prison for something that he did not do.

We are selfish by nature. We want what we want and have trouble putting anyone else's needs before our own. On top of that our culture and society teach us that it is all about me. I deserve to win. I need to watch out for number one. Life's a competition and I can't show weakness. You fill in the blanks. Every bit of our flesh pulls us toward competition and self-preservation. We are so steeped in this that we actually get angry when things don't go as we plan.

It is pretty clear to me that the old Judah would have had no problem packing up and going back home. He may have made up a story for Jacob or he may have blamed Benjamin. But he didn't go. He offered himself as a substitute for the sake of his brother and father. He laid down his life, his freedom and desires for others. This is true humility, and it is born out of brokenness. We need to clearly see how bad we are – I need to remember how bad I was in order to fully appreciate how gracious God is in saving me.

Let me ask, do you have a problem with humility? Do you have trouble putting others, especially those God has put in your life like your spouse, children, parents or church friends, before yourself? Do you get angry at others who are not living up to your needs and expectations?

If you can't honestly say that you demonstrate humility in these relationships, I strongly encourage you to look back. Remember who you were. Remember your sin and the punishment that you deserved. Acting out of humility will be costly. It will be tiring at times.

Do you weep over your sin? Can you see where God crushed you and brought you to true repentance? Are you able to see how God's grace has changed you? If you can't answer yes, and if you struggle with humility, I implore you to fall on your face before the Lord and ask for his mercy. Call on the power of the spirit working in you for strength.

In a church this size it is reasonable to believe that some here might have been deceived. There may well be some here who took what appeared to be the easy path and never truly repented of their sin, never saw their sin for the rebellion that it is and never were broken before the Lord.

Scripture is clear. If you have been born again, if you have been made right with God then there will be a change of heart. There will be a change of attitude, there will be a change in behavior, and you will have peace in situations that used to drive you crazy. It's a natural outcome of brokenness and repentance. It is not something that you need to do – it is something that will just be because of who you have become. It may not happen immediately. Sanctification is a process where the spirit works in our hearts to conform us to Christ. But you should be able to see that process at work. You should be able to see situations where the Lord is at work.

Humility does not come naturally. There is no 7-step program to achieve it. It is a gift of the spirit when we are saved.

Humble yourself before the Lord – today – while you can. Because you will humble yourself before Him one day and it is best if that is now in repentance and not in judgment.

Joseph is certainly a hero in this story. He withstood years of persecution and hardship and stayed faithful to the Lord through it all. He forgave his brothers and reunited his family in a place where they could thrive and grow. We are right to look to Joseph as a model of holiness. Right up until the end of his life was confident of the fact that God was at work and would bring them back to the promised land. He made the brothers promise that they would bring his bones when the Lord brought them all home. So Joseph is at the center of this story, but Judah is the seed. As Jacob said before he died,

Jacob recognized that Judah was the seed that would carry the promise forward into the next generation. There are so many other important points that I wish I had time to develop. The bible is God's story of redemption. The history of God's work in the lives of sinful men and women for His glory. I trust that drawing out this particular story of Judah's repentance is an encouragement to you. Judah was willing to offer himself as a substitute for Benjamin which points us to the greater Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Jesus, who offered Himself as THE sacrifice for sinners of all times. Christ is the hero of this story. Christ is the ultimate promised seed who leads us to the land of the new Jerusalem. We need to be struck by God's goodness and Christ's sacrifice in redemption.



