

2008 July 27 JOSEPH A FORGIVING MAN.

Matthew 18:15-22

Last week we looked at Joseph a faithful man
In Treachery and Temptation,
Today we look at Joseph a faithful man in
Disappointment and Forgiveness.

A father took his little boy to a pet shop to pick out a puppy
for his birthday present. For half an hour he looked and studied,
hemmed and hawed His daddy asked: "Did you decide which one you want?"
"Yes," the little boy said, pointing to the one
which was enthusiastically wagging his tail.
"I want the one with the happy ending."

We all would like happy endings,
Instead we have all been hurt at times.
Someone we trusted failed us?
An employee or boss let us down,
Maybe it was a pastor, or a spouse,
Or a friend.
A French prince in the Middle Ages was asked if he was faithful to his wife.
He answered: "Yes ... frequently."

Maybe you have been disappointed by your children
You had so many dreams, and they are all scattered.
But most times we're a disappointment to ourselves.
We get sidetracked,
We didn't mean to get drunk,
We didn't mean to get pregnant.
We didn't mean the words we said.
We didn't mean to sin
But there it is,
We realize we are not as straight as a checker board,
Or as clean as our grandmother's kitchen.

Robert Louis Stevenson was a great writer who delighted and enriched our lives,
and yet he wrote for his epitaph? "Here lies one who meant well, who tried a little, and
failed much."

Joseph started out with so many dreams,
But he was sold by his brothers,
Disappointed by his masters wife,
The Dreamer who could unravel the dreams of others
Could not unravel his own.
But as a faithful man, Joseph...

I. JOSEPH OVERCAME DISAPPOINTMENT

If we are to live a successful Christian life,
Then we must learn to overcome our disappointments.

In last week's sermon we left Joseph fleeing from Potiphar's wife and her seduction.

She had forgotten her marriage vows, her sensibility,
 But Joseph had fled,
 She had ripped off his cloak,
 And now she wanted to rip off his honor.

¹⁶ She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. ¹⁷ Then she told him this story: "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. ¹⁸ But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." Genesis 39:16-18

This scorned woman wanted the death penalty for this ungrateful and unresponsive slave.

However, Potiphar knew of his wife's sexual fantasies with her slaves, and
 Didn't kill Joseph as the law would require, Instead
 He put him in the king's prison.

²⁰ Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. Genesis 39:20

the one born to dream, is now born off to prison.
 Having gained all the new privileges-- lost them
 Because of someone else behavior.
 What disappointment!

Joseph could have faded into the scenery,
 But instead he focused on the only thing that could not be taken away from him,
 his faith in God.

I know that many of you have had great disappointments in your lives,
 I, too am disappointed when someone has not kept their promises to God
 To live as a Christian.
 To be faithful to their spouse.
 To serve in the church with their prayers, presence, gifts and service,
 And we haven't always handled them very well.
 But Joseph reveals the secret to overcoming disappointment.
 That is to keep our focus on God.

In 1921 a Stanford psychologist began a lifetime study of 1,440 genius level children
 He discovered in their lifetime that exceptional intelligence doesn't guarantee
 achievement. The greatest achiever were those who remained focused on what they
 wanted to do in life.

A true sports fan is one who can leave the football game and when he gets home and is
 questioned by his wife can say: "What cheerleaders"?
 Focus, friends, that is the key

Well Joseph in the midnight of catching no fish.
 With dreams that have burst,
 Focuses on God,
 But the Scripture says:

²¹ the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.

You can bet there had been others imprisoned because of Potiphar's wife's behavior.
 But this was the first time one of them trusted God,

Five words made all the difference in the world.

the Lord was with him.

Five words repeated throughout Josephs faithful life.

Are those the words that would describe your life?

Can you keep such focus in the midst of your disappointments?

²² So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. ²³ The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did. Genesis 39:21-23

The warden not only makes Joseph the jailor
But the administrator of the whole jail,
while he goes on vacation.

After some time
The kings cup-bearer and baker were put in prison.
they had dreams.

⁶ When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. ⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?"

Joseph is a good jailor, he cares about his men.

⁸ "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams." Genesis 40:6-8

Joseph was able to interpret both dreams correctly.

And the baker was tried for treason and hung by the king.
And the cup bearer was released just as Joseph had interpreted.
And upon release he promised Joseph immediate help,

But like so many of our disappointments,
Our friends forget.
They don't invite,
They never call,
The ones we have helped, they never remember.

²³ The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him. Genesis 40:23

Joseph was abused by his brothers
Violated by his boss' wife
Forgotten by people who promises to remember him?
Disappointing life.

A young couple came home after a well deserved evening away from the children,
Met the babysitter and were pleased to find the kids in bed, fast asleep. As the babysitter was about to walk out the door, she said:, "By the way, I promised Tommy that if he would stay in his bed you would buy him a pony in the morning."
What a promise!

The cupbearer forgot.

Can you imagine the whirlwind of Joseph's disappointment.

Release eminent,

Broken promise.

Another disappointment

But

I. JOSEPH OVERCAME DISAPPOINTMENT BY REMAINING FOCUSED.

And completed life as a faithful man, because

II. JOSEPH CHOSE TO FORGIVE.

I don't know where you choose to do your deep thinking.

Joseph had a lot of time sitting in the dungeon

Thinking about his brothers.

About his father and mother,

About Potiphar wife,

About the Cupbearers forgetfulness.

And he came to grip with the fact that people are all fallible,

And if we live in this world we will be hurt

Because everyone is trying to either

feed their own needs,

defeat their own fear,

Hide their own faults.

Or just get ahead in life.

And they will step on others who get in their way.

Joseph discovered he had no control over that.

With all this time to think.

Joseph began to understand the dynamics of forgiveness.

That forgiveness is the willingness to see a situation or person from a higher or (Godly) perspective.

Understanding another's behavior doesn't excuse it,

But when we have experienced God's grace in our lives,

Then we begin to see our experience from a higher perspective,

And we move toward forgiveness of others in our lives.

But how can Joseph forgive his brothers who are a 1000 miles away,

When first of all he has to get pardoned for a capital offense

And get out of this prison.

It was insurmountable

But Joseph trusted God.

Two years later.

God sent Pharaoh the king of Egypt, a dream.

14 cows came out of the river,

Seven plump and seven thin.

The thin cows ate the fat cows.

A strange dream since cows are vegetarians.

Must be indigestion

And then he dreamed a second time,

Of 14 ears of corn
 The seven plump, and seven withered
 The seven withered ears ate the seven fat ears.
 Gotta lay off the garlic and jalapeños before bedtime.

I don't know what you're dreaming lately,
 But I don't dream about cows and corn.
 I have corny dreams, and sometime I'm cowed by my nightmares.
 But Pharaoh is very angry,
 Because his wise men and magicians cannot interpret the dream.

Then the Cup-bearer remembered Joseph.

¹⁴ So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon.

Genesis 41:14

Now isn't it interesting that

**The wicked seek the prophets of God in their time of need, of 9/11's
 But in their prosperity they abhor them, persecute and even kill them.**

Joseph shaves, bathes, and changes clothes.
 And interprets the dream.

When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh. Joseph was able to tell the king the message from God contained in his dreams. Genesis 41:14

God has shown you that there will be seven years of plenty

And seven years of drought.

So choose a wise man and get yourself ready for the famine

³⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. ⁴⁰ You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you." Genesis 41:39-40

This is amazing since Pharaoh was God to his people, but,
 He recognizes Joseph for a true prophet of the true God.
 Because the true prophet not only shows the evils to come,
 But also the remedies for the same.

Exodus 41:46 Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

30 years old now he began preparation for famine.
 storehouses were built, and corn and grain was stored.
 Just as Joseph trusted God in slavery and prison,
 He now trusts God in freedom and responsibility.

Pharaoh gave Joseph the daughter of a priest to marry,
 And he had two son, the first he named Manasseh,
 Which means: To forget.

"It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." Genesis 41:51

He named his second son Ephraim:

"It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering. Genesis 41:52

these two verses shows us that Joseph is free from the pain of the past.

And the suffering of the present.

That is what God wants to do for you.
Will you trust him, let go, and let God
Change your thinking,
And redirect your focus,
And put God back in his place of honor in your life, living and your giving?

For seven years Joseph stored grain.
Then the famine came.
And the Bible says it was world wide,
And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world. Genesis 41:56-57

Joseph couldn't leave to go to his brothers to make things right,
So God brought his brothers to him.
And his dream is fulfilled.
So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. Genesis 42:6

For over twenty years the brothers have kept the slave sale a secret.
They didn't just do deceit,
they maintained deceit with the family.
And with themselves.
And it blinded them
⁸ Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.
He tested them.
² Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected." Genesis 42:6-9
And thru a series of well placed events.
Of money and golden goblets hidden in their grain sacks
Joseph jerked them around in their fear,
He probed them to see how honest they were.
He searched for some strength of character,
to see if there was a change in their love for their father,
If there was a loyalty in their care for each other.
He made them promise to bring back their youngest brother
To test there integrity.
²⁰ But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do. Genesis 42:20
God used Joseph in this testing and probing
To set them free from the sin of the past.
Have you ever noticed how when we suffer,
Or deal with affliction
We take inventory of our lives, of our sins,
And we replay the faults and mistakes we have made.
We ask "is it something I have done to deserve this?"
It's God's way of helping us clean the slate,
And recover the joy.

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

²² Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood."

God does not forget our sins against one another
They are so serious,
That he will not rest until he has made you whole.
Maybe Simeon was resisting all this.

²⁴ He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes. Genesis 42:24

Tradition tells Simeon was the aggressive brother
He had instigated the murder of Joseph, and
suggested they kill him
and then lie to their father that the animals had killed him.
Simeon was the one who dipped the coat in the goats blood and
Then reported to the father.

God wanted Simeon set free not just from his physical hunger,
But from his spiritual famine.

So Simeon sits in the same dungeon Joseph was in to think out
His actions toward his family, his little brother, and his God,

Slide---- And two years later the brothers come back with Benjamin
Joseph only real brother from his mother Rachael
And he wept.
Finally the time has come for forgiveness.

**³ Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?"
"Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph,
the one you sold into Egypt! Genesis 45:3-4**

Joseph saved his brothers from the famine of hunger,
But God saved them from the famine of sin and deceit.

What is the condition of your soul?

Are you in a spiritual famine because of unforgiven sin?

Unrepentant behavior toward a brother or sister, a mom or dad?

We are often tempted to pretend "you never did it,"

Or to deny "It never really happened like that"

But we can't be free until we acknowledge our part.

Joseph made them own their sin,

And he also made them own God's plan of salvation in it

In Genesis 50:20 we read Joseph final word to his brothers

"As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, Genesis 45:5

As we close today,

Let us use this time God give us to seek his forgiveness,

Maybe there has been treachery in your family?

Maybe there has there been failure in temptation

Maybe there has been disappointment in your life, Or in the life of others?

Will you give it to God to forgive, and to heal you right now?

Will you let the blood of Christ wash you clean and
Restore your body and soul and grant you release
And joy once again.
That is the God we serve.
That is the God we praise.
Like Joseph, we can overcome disappointment
In ourselves and others through divine forgiveness.