

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

FEB 28 - MAR 4, 2022

EPIPHANY

JESUS REVEALED

SERMON SERIES

Jan 9 - Feb 27

MONDAY

Genesis 37:1-4

The Danger of Favoritism

Genesis 37 returns us to the story of wandering Jacob and his family, now settled in Canaan, the resting place of Abraham and Isaac. For a review of Jacob's earlier life, the saga of his four wives and first ten sons, read Genesis 29 – 35.

As the story of Jacob resumes, we see clear signs of trouble in his family. Seventeen-year-old Joseph, one of the two sons born to Rachel, has become the clear favorite. Does this seem surprising? Perhaps not when we recall the story of Jacob's marriage(s). Jacob seems to have ignored an opportunity to learn from seeing the jealousies and animosities stirred by his obvious favoritism of Rachel.

Here we see family history repeating itself. A dangerous pattern is amplified. Jacob isn't subtle in showing his preference for Joseph, and Joseph doesn't help matters by his own actions. The lavishly ornate cloak signals that Jacob has chosen Joseph rather than his eldest son, Reuben, as the family's future patriarch—a choice bound to stir animosity. Matters weren't made any better when Joseph gave their father a "bad report" about his brothers. No wonder they were at odds with him!

The Scriptures clearly warn us to avoid playing favorites. Note, however, the distinction between *having favorites* and *showing favoritism*. We all have favorites—aunts, uncles, cousins, or perhaps a brother or sister, the one(s) we most enjoy or admire. Nevertheless, God cautions us against treating one person as having greater value than others.

Jesus calls us to love as He loves, to recognize the equal dignity and worth of every person, as each of us is made in His image. James writes, “*My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must no show favoritism.... If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers*” (James 2:1, 8-9 NIV).

Strong words, but for a good reason, as we see in the unfolding story of Joseph and his brothers.

QUESTIONS

Have you ever experienced favoritism in your family? at school? at work? Were you ever the favored one? the unfavored one? What feelings were stirred up when you experienced favoritism? If you think you “play favorites,” ask the Lord to help you change your attitude and behavior toward that person.

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO CHURCH (ECO Church Plant)

Pray for Pastor Len to be strengthened and encouraged as he continues to guide the church through COVID. Pray for his wife and family that they would also be encouraged and protected during this season.

TUESDAY

Genesis 37:5-10

The Gift of Dreams

The significance of dreams varies somewhat from culture to culture. In the Middle East, dreams carry great weight, and God is using dreams, there and elsewhere, to draw people to Himself. Both the Old and New Testaments illustrate that our God can and does convey important messages via dreams.

Most of the 21 dreams recorded in the Bible (10 in Genesis alone) convey life-altering, even life-saving warnings or specific guidance that could not be communicated in another way—or in a more effective way. Abimelech's dream protected Sarah, Abimelech, and Abraham from awful consequences when Abraham's fear got the best of him, and he lied.

Jacob's memorable dream ("Jacob's Ladder") also came at a crucial time, as he fled fearfully from the land that God promised to his grandfather. This dream brought assurance not only that his life would be spared, but also that God's covenant with Abraham would be fulfilled through him and that he would one day be able to return.

The timing and significance of young Joseph's dreams may seem puzzling at first. Why a dream about sheaves of grain? He and his family were herders. Why would his parents, as well as his brothers,

be bowing down to him? He would have no “kingly” role or authority, certainly not while his father still lived. Stranger still, because Joseph lacked the maturity and wisdom to keep these dreams to himself, they served to put his life in grave danger, at least initially.

But God (two of the most wonderful words in the English language!) had good reasons. We’ll see that this clearly pampered son somehow survived the trauma and abuse he suffered, not only at the hands of his own brothers but also as a lowly slave being hauled off to a strange land and an unknown, fearsome future. All we know is that when Joseph arrived in Egypt, he was a different young man from the one we met earlier. It may be that God used those dreams in some way to keep Joseph’s hope alive.

QUESTIONS

Can you recall a time when God communicated an important message to you through a vivid dream? How did He use this dream in your life? Through Scripture, God has many more ways today to speak to His children, and we have more opportunities to hear Him. However, don’t rule out that He may speak through a dream. If He does, it will always align with Scripture.

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO CHURCH (ECO Church Plant)

Pray that God would bring to Missio the right worship director. They have been searching since last May. Please ask that the Lord would send someone who has a heart for worshipping the Lord and helping others encounter the Lord through worship.

WEDNESDAY

Genesis 37:4, 8, 18–28

The Danger of Bitterness

Throughout Genesis 37, and especially from verse 4 on, we see the dreadful consequences of unresolved hurt and anger. The trouble likely started long before this incident of Joseph’s “telling on” his brothers, but we all know how it feels to be told on. Not endearing.

Adding insult to injury, Jacob literally “broadcasted” to the world that he favored Joseph by making him an elaborately ornamented coat, which Joseph likely wore proudly. Worse yet, whether due to immaturity, arrogance, or insensitivity, Joseph added fuel to his brothers’ smoldering resentment by blithely describing his vivid dreams. In each dream he saw his brothers bowing down to him; and in the second, their parents also bowed.

Jacob, apparently still blind to their rising animosity—and forgetful of past violence (Genesis 34:24–31), sent Joseph to check up on the brothers. The text says, forebodingly, that Joseph headed to Shechem, the scene of the brothers’ barbarity. Then, as he traveled on toward Dothan, the brothers spotted him, rather easily in his unique coat, and their jealous anger rose to full boil.

Both Old and New Testament Scriptures warn against the danger of allowing bitterness to take root in our heart. In Leviticus 19:17-18 we read: “*You shall not hate your brother in your heart ... You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge....*” Galatians 5:19-21 says living in “hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage ... and envy” will cost us our inheritance in God’s kingdom.

In this story we see what can happen when evil overtakes us. Murder is the brothers’ immediate impulse. Nothing speaks more vividly of their hard-hearted ruthlessness than the scene of them sitting down to a meal after stripping Joseph and tossing him into a dry cistern to die.

How thankful we can be that the story does not end there! God shows His power to “*overcome evil with good,*” as Romans 12:21 says. Let’s never forget that the Lord calls us—and enables us—to do likewise in the strength of His Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONS

Have you ever experienced a soul wound, an act of unfairness or injustice prompting deep pain? How do you feel today when recalling it? Does pain or resentment still grip you, or have you been able to “overcome” by releasing it to the Lord? If you need help, seek it from a wise friend, an elder, or Pastor Tim. If you have been able to release it, praise God!

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO CHURCH (ECO Church Plant)

Pray for Mark, a newly baptized believer, to grow deep in Christ and to live into his gift of evangelism. Pray for boldness and strong Christian friends to surround him in this important period of growing.

THURSDAY

Genesis 37:19–28

God's Protective Care

When the circumstances looked utterly bleak for Joseph, God was at work. This chapter reminds us that even in the darkest times, when all hope seems lost, evil has not won. Nothing can alter God's good plan or separate us from His love.

For a moment, we feel relieved that Reuben has stepped up. We expect the oldest brother to take the lead in dissuading the younger ones from doing wrong. But is that really what he did? His powers of persuasion went only as far as suggesting a less bloody means of murder. Some commentators (e.g., Matthew Henry) suggest that rather than showing mercy, Reuben saw a way to regain his father's good graces after having violated Bilhah (Genesis 35:22).

When Reuben apparently wandered off for a moment, Judah, the opportunist, proposed a way to benefit still further from eliminating Joseph, the object of their jealous animosity. He showed them a real “win-win-win” possibility—a way also to profit *and* to deflect suspicion. Thus, Joseph was “rescued,” only to be sold as a slave to foreigners, earning each brother a mere two shekels each.

Even through this evil scheming, God's plan was being carried out. Not until years later did the magnitude of divine mercy and grace become evident. What Joseph's brothers learned right away, however,

was that their actions had the opposite effect to what they had envisioned. They ended up even more relationally distant from their father, whose overwhelming grief created an even greater chasm than his favoritism had.

As we learn a few chapters later, God took what was meant for evil and used it for good—a good of immense, life-saving, history-shaping proportions. On a personal level, God used this whole experience, as difficult as it must have been, to transform the character of each person involved. He used it to prepare Joseph for his mission and to grow his brothers for theirs.

QUESTIONS

Can you see an example in your own life where God has fulfilled the promise of Romans 8:28 (“... *in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose*”)? How did He work for your good through something that seemed anything but good? Does this experience help you trust in God’s good plans and purposes for your life—even when you cannot see how anything good could possibly come from what you’re going through?

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO CHURCH (ECO Church Plant)

Pray for Missio members to be bold in sharing their faith and to see students and others come to faith in Christ. Pray for opportunities for the church to engage in the local community and local campuses.

FRIDAY

Genesis 38

An Unlikely Choice

Do you ever wonder why certain stories made it into God's Holy Word? Genesis 38—which interrupts the dramatic, suspenseful, and ultimately heroic story of Joseph—would certainly seem an example. In addition to being interruptive, it's definitely one deserving an "R" or "MA" rating.

Only God knows the full answer to our wondering, but He kindly provides some significant hints and clues. When we see them, we realize how important such stories can be for revealing "the wideness of God's mercy" and the reach of His grace.

Whether driven by guilt or remorse, Judah left his brothers and grieving father to settle in Adullam, Canaan. There he married, raised three sons, and anticipated grandchildren. Sadly, the wickedness and death of his two older sons crushed any dream of offspring from them. Rather than seek an heir through his third son, Shelah (per Jewish custom), he dispatched his daughter-in-law, Tamar, to her father's home, presumably as a widow until Shelah could father a child.

When Tamar saw that Judah had no intention of delivering on his promise, she plotted to ensnare him and possibly bear his child, the only hope she saw for her future. After Judah's wife died, Tamar saw opportunity to spring her clever trap. It worked: she became pregnant with twins.

Outraged over Tamar's apparent immorality, Judah ordered her to be burned to death. As she was being seized, she was able to identify the babies' father—Judah himself! At this pivotal moment, Judah, stunned, openly and humbly took responsibility, acknowledging his sin. His response had huge ramifications.

First, Judah was changed. Soon we see him putting his life on the line (Genesis 43) for the sake of his father and younger brother. Most significantly, he took his place in the lineage of King David and, ultimately, in that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, Judah's three older brothers, all disqualified themselves, but Judah did not.

Our God seems to choose the least likely characters, often deeply flawed individuals, to fulfill His wondrous plan and purpose. His choices give each of us, whatever our past, infinite hope!

QUESTIONS

Have you met someone who feels “too far gone” to be forgiven and granted an opportunity for meaningful service in Christ's family? How do the stories of Abraham and his sons and grandchildren add to your confidence that God has an important role for you to play in service to Him?

PRAYERS FOR MISSIO CHURCH (ECO Church Plant)

Pray for the leaders as they seek to clearly define the pathway to discipleship and invite the congregation to join in. We are looking for more individuals to join our team and we pray that the Lord would add to our leadership team those who are passionate for His people and His kingdom.



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