

Lessons from the Life of Joseph
“Holding on to Your Dream”
Genesis 37:1-11

- I. Today we are beginning a series of sermons called; “Learning to Trust in God’s Plan: Lessons from the Life of Joseph.”
 - a. Today we’re focusing on “holding on to your dream.”
 - b. Which might lead you to conclude that we’d be talking about Joseph dreams from today’s Scripture passage
 - i. You would be correct – we are.
 - ii. But perhaps not in the way you might suspect.
- II. Let’s look at the story together.
 - a. Joseph has a couple of dreams.
 - i. In one his sheaf of grain rose and stood up, but his brothers sheaves gathered around his and bowed down.
 - ii. In the other the sun, moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to Joseph.
 - b. A couple things to know about Joseph.
 - i. He has 11 brothers – so they rightly saw themselves in the “11”s of the dream.
 - ii. His father loved Joseph more than any of his other 11 sons.
 - iii. Do you begin to see why telling his brothers about his dreams might have been a bad career move?
 - c. But before we’re too quick to blame “spoiled little Joseph” for all the trouble that follows, here’s something to remember:
 - i. No where does the story say that Joseph was bragging.
 - ii. No where does it say that he was prideful.
 - iii. No where does it say anything other than – Joseph told his brothers about a dream.
 - iv. BUT, it does say two important things about the brothers.
 1. His brothers were jealous of Joseph.
 2. And they hated him.
 - d. God’s a great planner and God is already getting things lined up for something that will happen five hundred years later.
 - i. He knows the story – that Moses will lead a people out of Egypt to a Promised Land flowing with milk and honey.
 - ii. He knows the story – but before Moses can lead the people out of Egypt, God has to get them in there.
 - e. Which leads us to a first thought for this morning.
- III. When God raises up a dream, He raises up a dreamer.
 - a. Wherever there is a dream, God has someone in mind to be the dreamer.
 - b. Throughout the Bible, there is always someone that God puts a finger on to be the dreamer for that dream.
 - i. The dream was to rescue the Israelites from slavery in Egypt – the dreamer was Moses.
 - ii. The dream was to oppose the wickedness of an evil king and queen – the dreamer was Elijah.
 - iii. The dream was to lead God’s people into the Promised Land – the dreamer was Joshua.
 - iv. The dream was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem – the dreamer was Nehemiah.
 - c. The same is true throughout human history.
 - i. The dream was equality for all – the dreamer was Thomas Jefferson.

- ii. The dream was the Bible in hands of every person – the dreamer was John Wycliffe.
 - iii. The dream was blacks and whites and people of all colors living together in harmony with one another – the dreamer was MLK, Jr.
 - d. Whenever God raises up a dream, He raises up a dreamer.
- IV. But it's also true that every dream is opposed.
- a. The Enemy is about to let God's dream or God's dreamer worked without interfering.
 - i. For Moses, it was Pharaoh.
 - ii. For Elijah, it was Jezebel.
 - iii. For Joshua it was the Canaanites.
 - iv. For Thomas Jefferson it was the King.
 - v. For John Wycliffe it was a corrupt and faithless Church.
 - vi. For Dr. King, it was Jim Crow.
 - b. The opposition isn't a surprise, in fact he's known to us.
 - i. 1 Peter 5:8 says, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."
 - ii. He'll use whatever he can to waylay God's long-planned dreams from becoming a reality.
 - c. But the good news is – the dream (and the dream-giver) are more powerful than the opposition.
 - i. James 4:7 says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
 - ii. And in 1 John 4:4 – "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."
 - d. So let's amend our opening statement: When God raises up a dream, he raises up a dreamer and gives the dreamer power.
 - i. This is a God of transforming power – no opposition can stand up to that.
- V. Something about dreams – The clearer the dream the better.
- a. Joseph's dreams were pretty clear.
 - i. God had a plan that involved his being raised up.
 - ii. God had a plan for Joseph that would result in a position of some authority over his brothers.
 - b. That seems pretty clear – what's not clear is the timeline.
 - i. What would happen between now and the fulfillment of the dream?
 - ii. What would be required of Joseph during those years?
 - iii. There are a lot of unknowns.
 - c. So when Joseph is at the bottom, when he is looking at an uncertain future, when he is sure he is so far down he can't even see up from here – what does he have to cling to?
 - i. The dream.
 - ii. And the clearer that dream is – the better.
 - d. Clear dreams – are easier to follow.
 - i. If the dream is clear, the next steps will be a bit clearer.
 - ii. If the dream is vague, then the next steps will be just as vague.
 - iii. To say, "My dream is to spend my life helping people" is not as easy to follow as "My dream is to be a nurse."
 - e. Clear dreams – are easier to hold on to.
 - i. If the dream is clear, it's harder to loose sight of it.
 - ii. Especially in the middle of opposition and struggle – it's easy to loose sight of your objective.
 - iii. But if the dream is clear, even the darkest night won't totally obscure it.

- iv. If the dream is “capture Jericho,” that’s much clearer than “go to the Promised Land.”
 - f. Clear dreams – are easier to share.
 - i. There are very few dreams that can be accomplished alone – most dreams require more than one dreamer.
 - ii. How can the original dreamer get others to dream the dream – by sharing it.
 - iii. Unfortunately, we aren’t into sharing the dream. We’d rather take care of things ourselves than ask for help.
 - iv. But we need other dreamers and if the dream is clear it will be easier to share.
 - v. “I want to build this thing that will pour stuff out of the back and then the thing will go up and into this other thing” just isn’t as clear as “I want to build a spaceship that will land on the moon.”
- VI. Let me ask you – what are your dreams?
 - a. Do you even remember them?
 - i. We all had them – some of us caught them when we were younger.
 - ii. Some of us got glimpses of them as we grew older.
 - b. What ever happened to those dreams?
 - i. Are they still lurking out there – are they the cause of some of the regret and sadness you feel?
 - ii. I’m not talking about the childish dreams of fame, fortune and pleasure –
 - iii. I’m talking about those God-given dreams that seemed at once glorious and impossible – unless Jesus somehow got involved.
 - c. Find a clean spot on your bulletin somewhere or close your eyes and sit quietly for a minute.
 - i. Can you write those dreams down? Can you bring them to mind?
 - ii. What dream has God planted in your heart that Jesus wants you to recall?
 - 1. It doesn’t have to be a dream of “missionary” or “pastor.”
 - 2. It might, but it doesn’t have to be.
 - a. A lot of people are listening to that dream later.
 - b. They’ve been hearing it all their lives!
 - 3. It just needs to be the dream that God has given to you for you to fulfill.
 - a. Another way to think about it is – Has God given you a glimpse of what He has shaped you for?
 - b. Have you discovered how God wants you to live out your purpose?
 - iii. Do those dreams still move you? Do you have a good grip on them? Are they clear this morning?
 - 1. Do you still get worked up when you think about the dream that God has given you?
 - 2. Do you have a clear picture?
 - 3. Are you struggling to find your dream?
 - a. Don’t worry God’s got lots of dreams.
 - b. Yours is out there for the asking.
 - 4. What can you do to make your dreams a reality?
- VII. About that 3x5 card. People have dreams. Families have dreams. Churches have dreams.
 - a. Help me out – What dreams do you see for this church?
 - i. What dreams are you dreaming?
 - ii. For next year – for 5, 10, 20 years from now.
 - b. Take a few moments and dream a little dream and write something on that 3x5 card.
 - i. You don’t have to put your name on it – just dream a bit.

- ii. It doesn't matter if you're new to this community – God may have given you a dream that you need to share.
 - iii. Dreams are big, small, and every size in between – would you be willing to share those dreams?
 - c. Here's why this is important: our church is approaching its 20th anniversary in a year or so.
 - i. Now is the time to dream about the future God wants for this church.
 - ii. Now is the time to become the church we will be 20 years from now.
 - d. The construction will be done pretty soon, but the work of our church isn't even close to completion.
 - i. We need to keep dreaming dreams – God will keep raising up dreams and dreamers.
 - ii. And the clearer we can be about those dreams the better.
- VIII. Our first lesson from the life of Joseph.
 - a. God has a dream and has found a dreamer – You.
 - b. The dream is crucial to God's plan, but don't forget ...
 - c. The dreamer is also absolutely essential to God's plan.
 - d. And holding on to that dream is the first step to understanding God's plan.
 - e. So dream a little dream .

Joel 2:28-29

“I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”