

Learning to Trust in God's Plan: Lessons from the Life of Joseph  
"Trouble's Comin'"  
Genesis 37:12-36

- I. As we look at the life of Joseph, our hope is that we can learn some lessons from his experience.
  - a. The story of Joseph is the first of the great "novels" in the Bible.
    - i. It starts in Genesis chapter 37 and continues through the end of Genesis (chapter 50).
    - ii. It begins with Joseph as a teenager and concludes with Joseph's death at the age of 110.
    - iii. It's a wonderful story full of ups and downs – plot twists and turns.
  - b. But it's more than a story – Joseph's biography is included in the Bible for more than our entertainment.
    - i. It's there for a deeper reason.
    - ii. It's there because the Lord wants us to learn some lessons from what happened to Joseph.
    - iii. Some lessons that will help us in our journey as apprentices of Jesus.
- II. Last week, we looked at the first of those lessons: when God raises up a dream, He raises up a dreamer.
  - a. God's dream becomes our dream
    - i. And God lends us His power to complete the dream.
    - ii. Each of us has a dream – and you all dreamed some awesome dreams.
  - b. And we know that every dream is opposed.
    - i. And that opposition comes from the most likely places.
      1. From me – I sabotage myself.
      2. From friends and family.
        - a. That's where Joseph's opposition came from.
        - b. There's an irony in the fact that those closest to us are often the ones that have the hardest time seeing the dreams God gives us.
      3. Opposition comes from just about everywhere you might expect.
    - ii. Joseph's opposition came from within his own family – his brothers and his fathers.
      1. The brother's jealousy and hatred toward him pushed them to plot together to kill him.
      2. Even his father (Jacob) chastised him for sharing his dreams.
    - iii. And the opposition is fierce.
      1. These are God's dreams we're talking about here – God's dreams are big, momentous, and always worthwhile.
        - a. And a dream with big impact usually attracts big opposition.
        - b. And when we're talking about God's dreams – we're talking about Kingdom of God stuff.
      2. Kingdom of God dreams are opposed by the Ruler of this world – and he plays for keeps.
    - iv. Joseph's opposition was fierce – somebody was playing for keeps.
      1. First, his brothers threw him in a pit and were going to leave him there to die.
      2. When one brother got cold feet they didn't kill him – they sold him into slavery. {Get rid of him and make some money at the same time.}

- III. If the we can expect some pretty fierce opposition in our walk with Christ we better prepare for the struggle.
- a. Here's the thing – the struggle – it's coming.
    - i. Struggle in the pursuit of God is not optional.
    - ii. As I look at the Scriptures I don't see anywhere that God promises us a life free from struggle and opposition.
    - iii. In fact, I see God promising just the opposite.
      1. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had to go *into* the fiery furnace.
      2. Daniel had to go *into* the lion's den.
      3. The people of Israel had to go *into* slavery in Egypt.
    - iv. God's promise is not that you follow him and you avoid the struggle – God's promise is that He will be with us in the struggle.
      1. One like the “son of man” was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace.
      2. God sent his angel to protect Daniel by closing the mouths of the lions.
      3. God was with Israel and sent Moses to lead them out of slavery.
    - v. So even though struggles and trials are coming – you won't go through them alone.
      1. That's Gods promise.
      2. We are never alone.
  - b. So it's important that you know your strength.
    - i. Your strength is not in yourself.
      1. We try to do so much in our own strength.
      2. That was never God's plan.
      3. I don't know how people without God can get through this life.
        - a. You might be able to make it for a little while, but ...
        - b. A life time is a long time – and without God, I don't know how you can do it.
      4. You are not your strength.
    - ii. Your strength is not in your things.
      1. You can't add one day to you life by adding more things to it.
      2. He who dies with the most toys still dies.
    - iii. Your strength is in God.
      1. Look at the promises in the Psalms.
      2. Psalm 46: “God is my refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.”
      3. Psalm 91:15 – “They will call on me, and I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will deliver them and honor them.”
      4. Psalm 124: 8: “Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”
  - c. Your strength is in God ... so look for God.
    - i. It's not as though God's trying to stay hidden.
    - ii. God is showing you glimpses of his work in the middle of your everyday circumstances.
      1. We've just been trained not to look for them.
      2. We've go to learn to open our eyes to them again.
    - iii. Even when circumstances are bad, God is still trying to reveal himself to you.
      1. Even the struggles have a purpose in God's plan and the fulfillment of the dream.
      2. God is more concerned with your character than your comfort.
- IV. The truth is – there's something big going on!
- a. This is about God's dream!

- b. In the pursuit of that dream ...
    - i. Who are you putting your trust in?
      - 1. Friends will let you down; family will let you down.
      - 2. You can't even rely on yourself.
      - 3. But, you can rely on God.
        - a. Who are you putting before God?
        - b. What can you do to put God back in first place?
    - ii. How hard are you trying?
      - 1. The harder you try the less you rely on God's strength.
      - 2. And the sooner you end up burnt out.
        - a. Effort doesn't = success.
    - iii. Stop! And ask – where is God at work?
      - 1. Where do you see God right now?
- V. Trouble's Comin'
- a. Since we can't avoid it, best be ready for it.
  - b. Trouble's comin' – but God's here waiting.
  - c. Joseph ended up in a pit and sold to a traveling caravan, but God did not forsake him.
  - d. God will not forsake us, but will always be with us and help us through the most troubling times.