

Trusting in God's Plan: Lessons from the Life of Joseph
Seeing God's Plan Fulfilled
Genesis 50:15-21
2 May 2007

- I. We've seen God's plan unfolding in Joseph's life through the images of a dream.
 - a. Following that dream has been a long and winding path.
 - i. One that doesn't always put Joseph in places and situations that he expects.
 - ii. In fact, the only constant in his life seems to be the unexpected.
 - b. From favored son to a cistern and a slaver's caravan.
 - i. From second in command to the captain of Pharaoh's guard to a cell in Pharaoh's prison.
 - ii. From there to second in command (second only to Pharaoh) of all of Egypt.
 - c. All along the way Joseph has been holding onto the original dream that God placed upon his life.
 - i. A dream that seemed at times to be far from completion.
 - ii. A dream that seemed at times to be obscured by the circumstances and trials of Joseph's life.
 - d. Nevertheless, Joseph persevered and is now seeing the dream fulfilled.
- II. Here are the lessons we've gleaned so far from the life of Joseph.
 - a. We know that when God raises up a dream, He raises up a dreamer.
 - i. We know that every dream is opposed, so trials and struggles shouldn't surprise us.
 - ii. In fact, we should be prepared (ready!) for them when they come.
 - iii. And be ready to act when God gives an opportunity to further the dream.
 - b. Today, we come to the end of Joseph's life and some final thoughts on what God is teaching Joseph – and us.
 - i. After revealing himself to his brothers, Joseph's entire extended family moves from Canaan to Egypt.
 - ii. In chapter 50, Joseph's father Jacob has died.
 - 1. Now that dad is dead, the brothers start to worry.
 - 2. What if Joseph has only been nice to them while his father was around?
 - a. What if, now that Jacob was dead, he turns on them?
 - b. What can they do?
 - 3. The brothers concoct a scheme (what a surprise) to deceive Joseph.
 - a. The fabricate Jacob's last words.
 - b. They tell Joseph, "Dad said you have to still be nice to us and forgive us."
 - 4. Joseph sees right through their charade and says something that should stand out to us.
 - a. "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good."
 - b. God does not waste a hurt.
- III. One thing is obvious; God's plan and our plan don't always look the same.
 - a. It's hard for me to believe that Joseph knew about all the twists and turns that his life would take.
 - i. I'm sure he didn't anticipate slavery and prison.
 - ii. I'm sure he didn't anticipate being 2nd in command to Pharaoh.
 - b. In spite of the fact that there was much Joseph couldn't anticipate; He always remained true to God's dream.
 - c. As we worship here today, I think it's good to be reminded that God's plan and our plan don't always look the same.
 - i. I think it's safe to say that our plan for the path that lead to this sanctuary was a bit different than God's path.
 - ii. There were a few bumps, detours and dead ends along the way.
 - iii. There were some struggles and set-backs that we didn't plan for.
 - d. But the dream, the promise of God, God's plan was never lost.
 - i. And now, when we look back over difficult times ...
 - ii. I believe we can see God's plan at work – even at the darkest moments.

- e. And even though God's plan and our plan haven't always looked the same – we know which one we need to follow and which we need to set aside.
- IV. We also know that God makes good come from evil.
- a. We see it in the life of Joseph.
 - i. A cistern and a life of slavery are transformed into great responsibility in Potiphar's house.
 - ii. Prison is becomes a prelude to the Pharaoh's palace and tremendous power and responsibility.
 - b. We see it in our own lives, too.
 - i. We know that God specializes in transformation.
 - 1. Jesus was transformed by the power of the resurrection.
 - 2. Paul was transformed by his encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road.
 - ii. And we know the power of God to transform our lives.
 - 1. We know "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me."
 - 2. We are not what we should be, but thank God we are not what we were.
 - iii. In the same way, God transforms trials and circumstances.
 - 1. What from our perspective looks like a tremendous defeat becomes a thrilling victory.
 - 2. What to us is a struggle that drags us down to the bottom of ourselves, becomes the means for God to make us more like Christ.
- V. What is our role in the final unveiling of God's plan?
- a. I can assure you God intends for more us than to be along for the ride.
 - b. He has plans and dreams for us that we are only just discovering.
 - c. So what do we need as God's plan is revealed to us?
- VI. First, Faithfulness is required.
- a. The only way we will see the final completion of God's plan is to see it through to its end.
 - i. Joseph saw the completion of God's dream because he didn't let anything distract him from it.
 - 1. Not his circumstances, not his family's dysfunction, not his own abilities.
 - 2. He understood that the dream was more important.
 - ii. In the same way, our faithfulness shows that we understand our place in the scheme of God's plan.
 - 1. This is Kingdom work and kingdom business.
 - 2. It's the most important thing we do – it's what we were created to do.
 - b. There's something to be said for faithfulness.
 - i. A long, steady obedience in the same direction.
 - ii. Sticking it out has tremendous value.
 - iii. "90% of life is showing up."
 - c. Faithfulness requires that we never give up.
 - i. Discouragement is not part of God's plan.
 - ii. When we show God that we are able to remain faithful in small ways, we show him that we can be faithful in other, larger ways.
 - iii. Faithful
- VII. Secondly, the dream requires Humility.
- a. The most important aspect of the dream is not the dreamer.
 - i. It's important that we keep some perspective.
 - ii. "It's not about me." – What a simple, yet powerful lesson.
 - b. Joseph never made himself the focus of people's attention.
 - i. He was always pointing other people's vision toward God.
 - 1. It started with his brothers and father – with less than stellar results.
 - 2. With Potiphar, Potiphar's wife, his brothers, Pharaoh, and everyone else he encountered trying to build him up.
 - 3. Joseph constantly and consistently pointed their attention back to God.
 - ii. It was never about Joseph, it was always about God.
- VIII. Finally, the dream requires forgiveness.

- a. Here's the sticker. Because the dream never reaches its final stages without forgiveness.
 - i. It is Joseph's willingness to forgive that makes it possible for the dream to be fulfilled.
 - ii. I believe that unforgiveness is enough to kill a dream – even a Godly dream.
- b. I've struggled with this idea of forgiveness.
 - i. As I looked at the Bible, I see forgiveness consistently as a response to repentance.
 - 1. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins." – 1 John 1:9.
 - 2. One follows logically after the other.
 - ii. Without repentance there is no forgiveness.
 - 1. If someone wrongs you and doesn't ask you for forgiveness.
 - 2. Then you aren't required (or expected) to forgive.
 - iii. I've taught that, I've preached it, and I've lived it over the years.
 - 1. And I've discovered something.
 - 2. All I was really doing was looking for a way to hold on to my anger and my hurt.
 - 3. It was a cleverly disguised way of being unforgiving and making it OK.
- c. Here's what I've learned (am still learning).
 - i. God forgives us as a response to our repentance.
 - 1. The Bible speaks clearly on that in 1 John and other places.
 - 2. When ask God for cleansing from our sin (when we repent), God forgives – completely and without reservation.
 - ii. But we forgive as a response to God's forgiveness.
 - 1. Our forgiveness of others doesn't flow from their repentance.
 - 2. It flows from God's acceptance of our repentance.
- d. Unforgiveness will kill a dream.
 - i. Forgiveness allows God's dreams to flourish.

IX. What's left for you to do?

- a. Are you about to give up on God's dream?
 - i. Have you been worn down by the trials and struggles in your life?
 - ii. Have you reached the end of your rope?
 - iii. Don't give up! Stick it out.
 - iv. Keep dreaming the dream.
- b. Are you in the way of God's dream?
 - i. Is it all about you? Are you the center of your own attention?
 - ii. Do you need to humble yourself before God and allow him to do a work in your heart?
 - iii. Can you point others toward Christ instead of yourself?
- c. Is their unforgiveness in your life hampering God's dream?
 - i. Examine your heart – where are you harboring a spirit of unforgiveness?
 - ii. Who is it that you need to forgive?
 - iii. What's keeping you from offering that forgiveness?

X. What others intend for evil – God intends for good.

- a. Regardless of what your situation and your circumstances seem to say to you.
 - i. Like Joseph, appearances can be deceiving – God is still at work.
 - ii. And at the end of the day the God's dream is still bearing fruit.
- b. Our humility, our faithfulness, our ability to forgive.
 - i. All of these play a role.
 - ii. They shape how we respond to God's dream – God's continual work in our lives.
- c. They affect our ability to see God's dream fulfilled.