

Scripture Reading: Genesis 39:19- 40:22

“19 So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, “Your servant did to me after this manner,” that his anger was aroused. 20 Then Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison. 21 But Jehovah was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. 23 The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph’s authority, because Jehovah was with him; and whatever he did, Jehovah made it prosper. 40:1 It came to pass after these things that the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. 2 And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker. 3 So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph was confined. 4 And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while.”

“Of Bakers & Cupbearers”

So as we continue on in the account of Joseph we must again be careful not to get too far ahead of ourselves because we know the story so well... Last week we ended with Joseph in prison because of false charges, and this week we will see him betrayed and left in that prison...

- **But we all know that this was not the end of the story!**

BUT as we did last week we must try and set that aside for today...

- **So we can focus on two very important lessons we should learn from this portion of the account!**

In fact, they are going to be the very same lessons we learned last week: Once again as we move through our text from the Book of Beginnings this morning...

- **I first want us to clearly see the importance of our vocations and how God delights to bless our efforts in them.**
- **And secondly, I want us to clearly see that God takes history where He wants it to go, even when it is inconvenient or painful for us!**

We also considered how even though at first glance these might seem a bit contradictory, they are not:

- **Rather, they are important lessons to learn so we can be more content & joyful in our Christian walk.**

So I guess you could think, wow, Pastor did you take the week off? You are just giving the same sermon again... I assure you that I did not, and just as we will see three sets of double dreams in these accounts, repetition can often be a good thing & is often used in the Scriptures and elsewhere in life...

How many times do we have to show a toddler how to tie those shoes? *[if we even do such a thing any more!]*

How many lessons are learned in school the first time they are heard?

How many times do we see clearly repeated instructions or principles in the Book of Proverbs?

Or how many verses in Psalm 119 tell us about the goodness of the statutes, laws & commandments of our God? *[I am told it is 173 out of 176]*

Or moving on into the New Testament, how many times did Jesus tell his disciples about his coming death at Jerusalem or why does the Apostle Paul say, again I say rejoice when he just told them to rejoice?

- So yes, repetition can be an important tool for learning & when we see something repeated in the Scriptures we should take special notice!
- And that is what I hope we will do here this morning!

So we see again the importance of our work & how God cares for Joseph in the text that I read, and we will see the 2nd lesson as we move on in chapter 40. Last week we saw Joseph sold into slavery and yet God was with him as he served his master Potiphar. Now Joseph is cast into prison and again we read at verse 21: “But Jehovah was with Joseph and showed him mercy, & He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”

The fact that the Lord was with Joseph is repeated in verse 23 where we are also told “and whatever he did, Jehovah made it prosper.”

Lord here in these verses is capitalized in most of your Bibles because it is the covenant name of God and not just the generic Lord. The name He told Moses to use, I AM that I AM or the great I AM. Yahweh is a transliteration of that name and Jehovah is the English name, given to us by William Tyndale which is what I used when reading the capitalized LORD out loud. In the New Testament we refer to God in a personal way as being our Father! In other words, God the Father is looking after Joseph and causing him to prosper, even in this Egyptian prison!

- This of course points clearly at the first lesson from last week where we learned the importance of our vocations and how God delights to bless our efforts

Brothers and sisters, we are to take very seriously the tasks that God has given us to do in our lives...

- And yes that means the very tasks we have set before us this coming week!

We do not wait for better circumstances to serve God and we certainly are not to sit around having a pity party about where we find ourselves at the current time!

- I am pretty sure that none of you have been sold into slavery and because you are all here this morning I can safely assume that none of you must return to prison!

So would anyone care to make the case that their current vocation is tougher than what Joseph had to face here? Now you could say that Joseph had the knowledge of those dreams God had given him and knew one day he would be ruling over others...

- That is what kept him going!

Do you seriously want to argue that he was better off than we are with the fullness of God’s revelation serving the King of Kings Who has forgiven our sins on the cross and gives us new life in His resurrection???

- Our vocations are important and that is what we should focus on!

When we do, God will prosper the work of our hands just as He did for Joseph in prison and as a slave.

And children just because I use a BIG word like vocation that you may not understand, it does not mean this does not apply to you...

- A vocation is our job or calling, and do you know what your vocation is this week?

That’s right, to be a faithful child!

- That means obeying your parents... Right away, all the way & with a smile on your face!

You older young men and women who are still at home, have far more responsibilities but you must also honor your parents. Yes, this means that you must trust them and listen to them, rather than sitting around thinking about how much better things are going to be when you are out from under their control!

We spoke about adult vocations and their importance last week, but I want to challenge husbands and wives to encourage one another in this area... Men, if you have not done so, try to find a day where you can wash all the dishes... Especially if there are still children in the home. After you have done so, it will be much easier to rise up and call your bride blessed when you see her faithfully carrying out those duties day after day after day, with the very same dishes!

And ladies you need to remember that as your husbands go out into the world to carry on their duties, they face daunting temptations and pressures! When you do this, you will be more willing to give them a bit of comfort, peace and space when they return home even though you are very ready to enjoy their company!

BUT the important point and lesson is that when we are faithful in the little things, doing all things to the glory of God...

- **Then God will cause us to prosper and we will have a contentment that the world simply cannot provide.**

And of course that leads us again into our second important lesson where we find that God's prospering us does not always look like we think it should.

- **Yes, God takes history where He wants it to go even when it is inconvenient or painful for us!**

God working all things together for our good, does NOT mean He gives us only "good" things!

Last week we saw Joseph prosper as a mere slave in the household of Potiphar only to be falsely accused by his wife and cast into prison.

- **Now we see Joseph prospering once again as a mere prisoner, but there is a sad betrayal in his future!**

Joseph moves into management once again in this prison and then we are introduced to two new prisoners... Two of the King's top men somehow offend the King and in his anger he has cast them into prison... Now we will see these two men dreaming certain dreams, both on the very same night.

Dreams that will lead to the betrayal that I mentioned but also dreams that will in the end lead to the fulfilment of the dreams given to Joseph earlier. So yes, God does work out all things for the good of His people, individually and collectively, but just not always as we might expect Him to do it.

So let us pick up the text in verse five of Chapter 40:

5 "Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man's dream in one night and each man's dream with its own interpretation."

Now, if you want more on the subject of dreams in the Bible, you are going to have to wait until next week when it will be the focus of my message, but for today we want to see that again we have two dreams given on the same night. Just as our lessons for today are largely a repeat of what we learned last week: God gave two dreams to Joseph about his eventual rule, He now gives two dreams for him to interpret and finally Pharaoh will have two dreams again to confirm the certainty of what was to come in the future.

However, the first thing we see here this morning is a confirmation of the good work Joseph was doing in the prison: He was truly caring for those under his influence even here...

Just as a loving spouse can read the mood of their husband or wife; or a good friend knows when something is wrong, Joseph sees they are troubled because he cares for them, not out of a cold duty to watch over the others: The attitude we see here with Joseph is the difference between taking out the trash because mom yelled at you to do so, and taking it out because you noticed it was full & did the right thing without being asked!

6 “And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad.

7 So he asked Pharaoh’s officers who were with him in the custody of his lord’s house, saying, “Why do you look so sad today?” 8 And they said to him, “We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it.”

- Obviously, these were not typical dreams that are often not even remembered well, but ones greatly troubling those who had them.

“So Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please.””

- As we later see with Daniel, Joseph is willing to seek the proper interpretation from the One Who gave the dream!

It is the butler, or cup bearer to the King who first offers to tell his dream and it should not surprise us that it involves a vine and wine: Each man’s dream was closely related to their chosen vocation which helped to make such a strong impression on them...

9 “Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, “Behold, in my dream a vine was before me, 10 and in the vine were three branches; it was as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. 11 Then Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand.”

The vine has three branches...

The three branches have buds, then blossoms and then clusters.

The cup of Pharaoh is held by the cup bearer, filled by the cupbearer and given by the cupbearer.

A lot of threes there, but as Michael also reminded us numbers are just numbers. ☺

- Or we could see this as a confirmation that the dream is given by our Triune God!

And of course we will see that three is a central part of both dreams...

12 “And Joseph said to him, “This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days. 13 Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler.”

From a human perspective Joseph could have possibly seen this dream as picturing the restoration of the cupbearer to his rightful position, but only God could have revealed that the threes were pointing to three days rather than three hours, months or years. Then knowing that this man would soon have the King’s ear, Joseph makes a personal request regarding his unjust situation...

14 “But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. 15 For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon.”

Even though Joseph continued to serve His God faithfully in the midst of very trying circumstances, he was not unaware or unmoved by the injustices he had suffered... His brothers were wrong to sell him into slavery and his first master was wrong to believe the false witness of his wife and cast him into prison. As we again move on to that second lesson about how God moves history, this is an important reminder that we do not have to make light of difficult circumstances!

If we have suffered a serious illness, or lost a loved one, are living with the results of a broken relationship or as the Cone family just experienced had a tree fall on our house...

- We can know that God is still in control while being honest about how these circumstances affect us!

Joseph did not rejoice in the fact that God had placed him in prison, but rather knew that it was part of God's purposes and that one day it would be different...

- And thus he could appeal for help in changing his surroundings!

But, before we consider his next betrayal, we have one more dream and again it relates to the vocation of the dreamer...

16 "When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, "I also was in my dream, and there were three white baskets on my head. 17 In the uppermost basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head."

- Now we have three baskets, and we have bread along with wine in these dreams which we will come back to at the Table this morning.

18 "So Joseph answered and said, "This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets are three days. 19 Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you."

- Well sometimes the truth hurts and it is certainly the case with his man!

Joseph does not sugar-coat what is about to happen and neither should we when there is the need to confront individuals or the broader community with the consequences of sin. Joseph told the Baker the truth and Lord willing he turned to God pleading for His mercy before the day of his execution as the one thief on the cross did on Calvary!

- Joseph said only God could give the interpretations & we see Joseph faithfully giving those interpretations!

20 "Now it came to pass on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

21 Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.

22 But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them."

- Just as the dreams had predicted the baker is hung and the cupbearer is restored to his position of influence to serve the King just as Nehemiah did before King Artaxerxes.

Because we know the story well, we should understand that his place there and these dreams will one day lead to Joseph being brought out of prison and elevated to the position he had seen in those dreams that God gave him many years before...

However, as we did last week, I must again ask you to not skip ahead, but rather see only the current betrayal so we can again ponder the second lesson:

23 "Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him."

- Joseph would spend another two years in this prison and yet he would not start having pity-parties or wonder if God is still in control.

No, just as he continued his faithful service after his brothers sold him into slavery, and after he was falsely accused and cast into prison, he would continue to serve His God where he was at that time... In this prison! He knew well & learned well the lesson we must learn & remember today:

- God takes history where He wants it to go even when it is inconvenient or painful for us!

As we saw last week God did not tempt Joseph past what he was able to bear, but with these trials had left him with a Godly confidence that the dreams he had been given would come true.

So we are to serve God faithfully and fully wherever we might find ourselves in this life:

- **This is what we are commissioned and sent forth to do each and every week at the end of our service!**

As we do, we know that God will prosper the work of our hands and use our labors to extend His Kingdom whether we are changing that next diaper or closing a multi-billion dollar business deal.

- **BOTH must be done to the glory of God as we walk in the power of His Spirit guided by the Wisdom of His Word!**

And we must not be surprised when our circumstances in life take twists and turns that seem unexpected and even painful, knowing that God is on the Throne taking history, ours and the world's , exactly where He wants them to go!

Now I could wrap this up with another admonition to actually believe what Paul teaches when he says to be anxious for nothing, but instead I want to back up a bit in that Book of Philippians, known as one of the prison Epistles because it was likely written during one of Paul's imprisonments!

- **Consider this as his encouragement to know and believe the two lessons we have focused on in these two sermons and perhaps spend a bit of time this week reading and meditating on this important Epistle:**

Philippians 2: "12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. 14 Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

17 Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18 For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me."

Communion Meditation: Luke 22

"14 When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him...

19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

Bread & Wine foretold by our baker and cupbearer!