

## Scripture Reading: Genesis 41:

**“9 Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: “I remember my faults this day. 10 When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, both me and the chief baker, 11 we each had a dream in one night, he and I. Each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream. 12 Now there was a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his own dream. 13 And it came to pass, just as he interpreted for us, so it happened. He restored me to my office, and he hanged him.” 14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it.” 16 So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.” 17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: “Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river. 18 Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. 19 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt. 20 And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows. 21 When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke. 22 Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good. 23 Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. 24 And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads. So I told this to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.” 25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do:”**

# **“Joseph Sees the Future”**

**This morning we continue our journey through the Book of Beginnings... And I am reminded that it has been a long journey as I bring sermon #100!**

**We will consider the dreams of Pharaoh and how God revealed the future to him.**

- **As I have pointed out several times, these dreams are coming in twos, with two given to Joseph in Canaan, two in prison and now two dreams given to the King.**

**And my messages seem to be coming in twos as well... We took two weeks to consider the two lessons about the importance of our vocations and how God blesses us in them, along with our understanding of how God moves history where He wants it to go even if it is inconvenient or seems hurtful to us!**

- **We moved on last week, with a call for great Christian dreamers based on what God has revealed about the future of His Kingdom!**
- **And this morning that will be reinforced here with the dreams of Pharaoh.**

**Last week the focus was on the general flow of history shown to Daniel in his interpretation of a later dream also given to a king...**

**This morning we will have a narrower focus on the results that God works in history as He brings people together!**

- **With the state of our nation and sadly much of the Church today, I thought it would be a timely subject!**
- **Once again, the Scriptures will challenge us to be the great dreamers who work toward the goals that God assures us we will see one day!**

God has given the King strong dreams to warn him about danger in the future and the interpretations from Joseph will encourage him to take the needed actions to protect his people. As he uses Joseph to do so, it will also become a blessing to Joseph's family, as the chosen family & this pagan nation are brought together in a united salvation...

- A unity that would have been hard for either of them to imagine.

It was a necessary unity to protect God's people and a unity that was foretold to Abraham long ago when God revealed that his descendants would spend some 400 years in Egypt.

- If we have eyes to see we will observe how God is giving us a foretaste of the mighty work that Jesus would accomplish with His coming to save His people from their sins, bringing joy to the world!

So with that in mind, let us dig into our text and learn a bit about those dreams that I am sure all the children, and the rest of us find pretty fascinating! Joseph waited two more long years in jail for the Cupbearer to the King to remember him as he had requested.

- All in God's good timing: The King has been given two dreams and when all the wise men of Egypt fail to provide any answers, the King's cupbearer finally remembers the man who can help!

Thus we read in verse 14: "Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it." 16 So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

- Just as we see with Daniel years later, Joseph is quick to point away from himself & to God as the one Who can give the needed understanding!
- This is a lesson for all ministers, teachers and parents to remember well... We must always be pointing those under our care back to the Scriptures, which focus on Jesus!

Not only has God given two dreams to the King for emphasis, but now the King will recount them again so that we have them described not once, but twice and then an interpretation from Joseph!

- Truly God wants us to understand the importance of these dreams!

17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river. 18 Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. 19 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt. 20 And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows. 21 When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke."

Here God has used not just a dream but a pretty wild fantasy to reveal the future to Pharaoh:

*[discuss those cows!]* God has often used such things, like the talking trees we have in Judges or even some of the parables of Jesus. Fantasy can be a powerful way to communicate truth, but it can also be a powerful way to lead someone astray...

If a child is given a steady diet of good literature from someone like C.S. Lewis they will develop character and courage...

- If they have a steady diet of something like Disney, they will likely learn to be selfish and self-centered.
- When it comes to what we expose our children too, and ourselves as well, we should choose wisely!

But here in our account, God is not only using fantasy, but doubles down for emphasis as the King continues... 22 “Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good.”

*[Hear we should picture something like our modern corn stalks]*

23 “Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them.

24 And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads. So I told this to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.”

- The consumption of the good cows or corn by the others would be tough to explain!

But God is revealing His plans and so he has provided the King with a man who can explain the dreams...

25 “Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do: 26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads are seven years; the dreams are one. 27 And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. 28 This is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. 29 Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; 30 but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. 31 So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it will be very severe. 32 And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.”

- God has given Pharaoh two dreams to stress the truth they reveal & when we return to our study of Genesis we will see the actions taken by Pharaoh and Joseph based on this knowledge.

We doubled up on our lessons about importance of our vocations and how God loves to bless us through them and how God takes history where He wants it to go, because they were important!

They were important and we saw that taking them seriously brought very practical results in our lives.

- And thus, I think it is important to double up on our lesson regarding the future from last week where I encouraged you all to be great Christian dreamers!
- I think we can easily do that when we see the parallel, as we always should, between the work Joseph is about to do and the work of Jesus.

Last week we considered the King’s dream that Daniel interpreted seeing how it clearly revealed that the Kingdom of Jesus would fill the whole earth and how Joseph saving Egypt was a small foretaste of that reality.

- Joseph is sent as a Savior who delivers Egypt from impending death just as Jesus comes as the Savior of the world!

Now we have more dreams from a King that show us another aspect of that Glorious Kingdom that Jesus is building through His Spirit and His Bride the Church...Joseph will be the chosen one to bring Egypt through the tough seven years that lie ahead, but it will not only save Egypt but Jacob’s family as well...

- God had shown Joseph in dreams how he would rule over his family, including Jacob who is called Israel.

Now because of the King’s dreams he will become the ruler over Egypt! And the great famine revealed in these dreams will bring these two peoples together, and both will be under the leadership of Joseph!

- Again, this is a small foretaste of the work of Jesus, whose coming changed the world!

As God gives these dreams to Pharaoh, his nation is separated from the Hebrews and as we shall see later they did not trust each other.

When later dreams about the Kingdom of Jesus are given to Peter, we know that there was a great division between the Jews and the Gentiles. Just as it would have been very difficult for Pharaoh or Joseph or even Jacob to imagine uniting their peoples, so it was for Peter & the other disciples to see the coming unity in the Body of Christ! Something we still struggle to see in the Church today!

- However, in both cases God reveals where He is taking history through some fanciful dreams.

With Pharaoh, God used cows and corn and with Peter He used unclean animals lowered in a sheet from heaven. We should remember from our study of Acts, how, before the Gospel has gone to the Gentiles, we found Peter at home getting hungry and falling into a trance. Perhaps because the coming change was even more dramatic than what is happening with Pharaoh and the Hebrews, Peter is given his dream not twice but three times.

- The Spirit then sends Peter to the house of Cornelius where the first Gentiles are saved and this causes quite a stir among the Jewish Christians!

They are upset that Peter went to those who were uncircumcised [Gentiles] and ATE with them! Then Peter gives this inspired explanation of what happened:

Acts 11: “5 “I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me. 6 When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. 7 And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ 8 But I said, ‘Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.’ 9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’ 10 Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven.” 11 At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. 12 Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. 13 And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, ‘Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, 14 who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.’ 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. 16 Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ 17 If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?”

- I said earlier that today the Scriptures will challenge us once more to be the great dreamers who work toward the goals that God assures us we will see one day!

Last week the promise we focused on was the growth of the Kingdom of Jesus to fill the whole earth, which IF believed gives much greater meaning to our everyday actions that we are commissioned to do each week!

- Now we have a promise that it will be a united Kingdom!

Just as Joseph came to Egypt from God’s chosen people to become the man who would save not only Egypt, but the chosen family as well... Jesus came from God’s chosen people to save the world and even though they rejected their Messiah, just as Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, God works it all together for good for the salvation of both Jew & Gentile.

- This was difficult for the early Christians to understand just as church unity is difficult for us today!

This point is driven home powerfully by the Apostle Paul right after the glorious verses that we reformers love to quote regarding the Gospel:

**Ephesians 2: “8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”**

**The Apostle reminds them that they were Gentiles who had no hope but now ‘have been brought near by the blood of Christ’ and then tells them:**

**14 “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. 19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”**

➤ **Later the Apostle stresses that this unity is not just between Jew & Gentiles but all those in the Church:**

**Ephesians 4: “4 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. ... 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”**

**All of this is what the Apostle Paul is referring to when he calls us ministers of reconciliation and when we are daunted by the task that we see before us in the world and in the Church it should drive us to our knees asking for a greater trust in the Spirit of God as we trust Him to teach us what part we are to play.**

- **We are to confront sin in the world and call them to repentance knowing that one day all the nations of the earth, as divided and rebellious they might seem today, will at last bow the knee to King Jesus!**
- **We are to stand for truth in the Body of Christ & to oppose false teaching knowing that one day the Church, as divided & weak as we might think it is today, will one day grow up into the perfect man Christ Jesus!**

**These lessons from Genesis are teaching us how to better understand how God uses His servants to take history where He wants it to go: Our calling is to learn them and see how they practically change the way we live our lives believing these great promises!**

- **May we avoid being those who say ‘not so Lord,’...**
- **But rather be those who always say, ‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!’**

### **Communion Meditation: Ephesians 5**

**“25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”**