

Scripture Reading: Genesis 41:

“37 So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?” 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning & wise as you. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.” 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. 43 And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, “Bow the knee!” So he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Pharaoh also said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaph-nath-Pa-a-neah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Po-ti`-Pher-ah priest of On. So Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt. 46 Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.” 48 So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them. 49 Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for it was immeasurable. 50 And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Po-tif`-Phe-rah priest of On, bore to him. 51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: “For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.” 52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim: “For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

"The Blessings for Joseph"

We see in our text this morning how Joseph began to rule in Egypt, but before we look closely at the lessons to learn there, I want to pause a bit this morning and consider how God blesses Joseph as a man, as a husband and as a father in the midst of the new duties he must carry out. The information about the marriage and children of Joseph is parenthetical in the text and thus this sermon can be seen in the same way. I think it is a good thing for us to consider these blessings because we can often become so busy and/or frustrated with our duties that we can forget the blessings God brings into our own lives!

Joseph has given God full credit for what was revealed to him and Pharaoh now responds by saying that Joseph is obviously a man filled with the Spirit of God. It was certainly a blessing for Joseph to receive this position of power in Egypt, where he is made second only to Pharaoh himself, something we will ponder a bit in a moment. However, as bookends around the beginning of his work we see Joseph being married and blessed with children.

➤ It is those bookends that we will focus on this morning and yes even here we will see Jesus!

First, we see Pharaoh giving Joseph a new name which was not unusual in those days where we have seen God Himself give Abram and Jacob new names. It is worth noting I think, that as we considered before, Abram is left behind as Abraham’s old name, never to be used with reference to Abraham again.

Jacob’s new name Israel is used interchangeably with his given name & now once again, the new name for his son Joseph is used only here! It is similar to the renaming of Daniel and his three friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

They too were given new names from a distant King: Daniel like Joseph is always remembered by his given name and perhaps we should do the same with his friends, but all the songs and Sunday school materials use their Babylonian names.

In any case all of this should remind us about the importance of names: The King gives Joseph a new name that means one who reveals or one who makes things known which is in response to his making the meaning of those troubling dreams known to the King. We will also see Joseph naming his own sons in a moment.

- **And in addition to a new name, Pharaoh gives Joseph a wife!**

“And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Po-tif -Pher-ah priest of On.”

Now before anyone accuses Joseph of sinning by taking an Egyptian wife on the one hand or arguing that the command to marry in the faith is not as airtight as the Apostle Paul appears to make it, we should remember some history here. Up until this time the prohibition for God’s people had been against the women in the land of Canaan. This is why wives for both Isaac and Jacob were brought from Abraham’s former country and why Esau displeased his father when he took wives from Canaan. As we move on in Exodus we find Moses marrying another daughter of a priest who later proves to be a Godly man who brings godly advice to Moses. While Canaan was becoming a very wicked place, it appears that there were still godly influences in other places. Remember that even here in Egypt, the people of God were greatly blessed and prospered until there arose a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph and I am sure that has a much broader connotation than just knowing the man Joseph.

Next in our text we see Joseph beginning his work at the age of thirty: This was the age that later Levites could begin to serve as priests and...

- **Yes, it is the age at which Jesus began His earthly ministry!**

Joseph begins his work to gather the needed food, and then in verse 50 we see God continuing to bless his personal life:

50 “And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Po-tif -Phe-rah priest of On, bore to him. 51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: “For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.” 52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim:

“For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.””

- **Now this may seem like a bit of back and forth if we are just reading through this chapter, but is that not how life works for most of us?**

There are many aspects to our lives with work and play, church and family, personal & civic responsibilities.

- **We must always strive to have the right balance and to keep God at the center of all of them.**

Joseph in naming his children both reflects on the past and ponders the future... The brothers of Joseph were pretty sure at this point that he had been cast out of the future of Jacob’s family... And yet what they intended as a selfish evil act God has now blessed in the end giving Joseph the future as not just one tribe in Israel as the other brothers would have, but TWO!

Ephraim is fruitful becoming one of the tribes at the Exodus along with the first born Manasseh who is also found in the final listing of the Tribes in Revelation in addition to Joseph.

The Apostle Paul encourages us to leave behind the sins and struggles of the past and to run toward the mark and with Joseph this is clearly reflected in the naming of his children!

- **And of course the reason that we see such a focus on names in the Bible is because the Angel Gabriel would one day come into history announcing the most important name that was ever to be given:**
- **Jesus!**

And the Apostle Paul reminds us of the power and importance of that name in his Epistle to the Philippians:2:9 “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

We see in one of the letters to a faithful church in Revelation not only the importance of the name Jesus, but how their being given new names is quite important as well:

Revelation 3: “7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,

‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”: 8 “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. 12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. 13 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”’

This is why our parents bring their newborns to the Church so the minister can baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: They now have a new name as members of the Body of Christ! This is also why most parents often put a good deal of time and thought into how they name their new children looking for Biblical examples or family histories or other inspirations so the new name is meaningful!

- **We have seen many many ways in which we see Jesus in the life of Joseph, and will consider others in the weeks ahead.**

But this morning I would like to close with some thoughts about how the blessings that were given to Joseph relate to the blessings given to the Bride of Jesus, the Church! As with any good story, God’s grand story of Salvation can be seen in many different ways... Not unlike a fine cut diamond!

Last week we saw how Joseph being put in charge of all of Egypt under only Pharaoh was very similar to the language used by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15:

“22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. 27 For “He has put all things under His feet.” But when He says “all things are put under Him,” it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. 28 Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.”

But we must remember that in giving the Great Commission where Jesus says that all authority and power has been given to Him, He tells us, the Church, to go and make disciples of the nations!

Just as Joseph was to serve Pharaoh by ruling in his stead, so we are those whom Jesus sends forth as the armies of heaven or a royal priesthood.

- **The symbols of power we see here in the life of Joseph can be related to our being disciples of Jesus!**

Joseph was given the ring of Pharaoh which was the sign of his authority [remind them of Ben Hur]

When Joseph made a decree using that ring it was like saying, ‘thus says Pharaoh and when we present the truths found in the Bible we can boldly and confidently say, ‘thus says the Lord!’

Joseph was adorned as a royal figure with fine linens and a gold chain just as we are clothed in white robes... The righteousness of Jesus!

Revelation 19: “11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had[e] a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Joseph was sent forth with Pharaoh’s authority and arrayed in royal clothing and then was sent out in in Pharaoh’s 2nd Chariot to all the land of Egypt just as we are sent out as followers of Jesus.

Paul declares this in Romans 10: 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!”

So as we are commissioned this week let us remember that we are sent with authority and splendor proclaiming the importance of the Good News!

- **If we doubt that we are worthy of such a task, we should remember the imprisoned slave who was lifted up by God in Egypt!**
- **Yes, Jesus has set us free, but not so we can lounge around!**

The Apostle Paul calls on us to be living sacrifices, to finish the race as those who “are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

It does not matter if we are at home or an office, whether we are at work or play, in school or retired, we are to walk faithfully in the duties we are charged with! If you think that your portion of the battle field is not that important, remember that Joseph was sent to all of Egypt in order to carry out his very important task... I am sure many thought he was sort of crazy as he set aside all that food in every city when there was such an abundance... But Joseph knew what God had planned and thus he faithfully prepared himself and others... And that is the role that we also play as the Spirit of God advances the Kingdom of Jesus until it fills all the whole earth.

- **May we be faithful in doing our part this week: And all the days of our lives!**

Communion Meditation: John 20

“30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”