

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 42:**

**“21 Then [Joseph’s brothers] said to one another, “We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.” 22 And Reuben answered them, saying, “Did I not speak to you, saying, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us.” 23 But they did not know that Joseph understood them, for he spoke to them through an interpreter. 24 And [Joseph] turned himself away from them and wept. Then he returned to them again, and talked with them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes. 25 Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain, to restore every man’s money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for them. 26 So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there. 27 But as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the encampment, he saw his money; and there it was, in the mouth of his sack. 28 So he said to his brothers, “My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!” Then their hearts failed them and they were afraid, saying to one another, “What is this that God has done to us?””**

## **“What Has God Done to Us?”**

**My hope this morning had been to take us to the end of chapter 42 here in the Book of Beginnings, but in my preparation I was not able to get past this amazing response from the brothers of Joseph when they discovered their money in the sacks of grain:**

- **“What is this that God has done to us?”**

**To me it is nothing short of a powerful picture of the Grace of God!**

**Of course the brothers, who are just beginning to face the gravity of their sins, are still thinking of this as part of God’s judgment against them, but just as we see when the Gospel breaks forth in a Saint’s life... While they are yet sinners, God pours out His grace upon them.**

**This can be even more clear when we remember that we are to see Joseph as the Christ figure in our account and while he certainly wanted his brothers to repent, he is also ready and willing to pour out his bounty & love. Now some might say at this point, ‘wait a minute, how can Joseph be a picture of Jesus when he is deceiving his brothers by keeping his identity secret and now bestows a secret gift that might be seen as some sort of trick to get them in further trouble, which we will see next week is exactly what they think!**

**Well, I want to argue this morning that the very passage that we have often used to learn that we should see Jesus here in the Old Testament makes the case for seeing Joseph as a type of Christ even stronger!**

**It was Luke who tells us of the encounter that Jesus had with the disciples on the road to Emmaus on the day of His resurrection, but let us consider some of those details again this morning and actually keep this passage from Luke in mind all the way through to our time at the Table today!**

**Two disciples have left Jerusalem on that first Easter morning, and are speaking on the road about what happened to Jesus when we read in Luke 24:**

**15 “So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. 16 But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.**

- **Sound familiar?**
- **Is this just like what Joseph has done with his brothers?**

Obviously, Jesus was NOT bearing false witness against these men and thus the same case can be made for Joseph with his encounters with his brothers.

17 “And He said to them, “What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk & are sad?”

- Again, we have a parallel with Joseph because he also asked his brothers questions that he certainly knew the answer to.

18 “Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, “Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?” 19 And He said to them, “What things?”

- Once more we have to see that Jesus is not bearing false witness by asking them to repeat an account of the events that He Himself had just participated in.

Yes, Jesus did know what happened,

- AND all that it meant!

Which is why He needs to draw the disciples out so they can have a fuller understanding of the events that would change all of history! First, we see that they have the “facts” right:

“So they said to Him, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.”

- As they continue we see the problem that Jesus is going to address...

21 “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. 22 Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. 23 When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive.”

- They were looking for an earthly Messiah who would redeem Israel!

That bit of confusion actually caused them to ignore the reality of the resurrection that had been delivered to them by faithful witnesses!

- They missed the King of Kings who had conquered sin and death, but He was now walking with them to bring them along!

It is now Jesus who teaches them the important lesson we still use today when studying the Old Testament...

25 Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

This is a powerful example of why we must be so careful that we do not bring our preconceived or poorly conceived ideas to the texts of Scripture; rather than allowing the Scriptures to mold and impact all that we think and do! But that is a sermon for another day!

For this morning I hope we can see how Joseph is bringing his brothers along in much the same way Jesus did with these confused disciples!

And of course the parallel will continue in the coming weeks until Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, just as Jesus will soon do over a meal with these disciples!

- With all that in mind, let me quickly return to our text & what I believe is a grand example of God's Grace.

Last week we saw how Joseph's actions were intended to help these wicked brothers to see their sins and begin the much needed ministry of confession. We saw this at the beginning of our morning text where they say, "We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us."

Reuben then reiterates their guilt and then Joseph puts Simeon in prison and sends them back to their father with what they know is an impossible demand:

- Bring Benjamin to Egypt!

Then our story takes a strange turn as Joseph sends his brothers off with the grain as a gift!

25 "Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain, to restore every man's money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for them."

- Now of course our first hint that this is a gracious act on Joseph's part is the fact that he supplies provisions for the journey as well as the purchased grain.

Some have argued that Joseph has done this to further torment his brothers, but when we think about it, is not the reaction we see from his brothers much like the reaction we often see when God's grace is first experienced by us?

- These brothers are not deserving of mercy at this point because they have only begun to be sorry for their sins and are a long way from actual repentance!
- Like Isaiah they cry woe is me!
- And yet this is why God's Grace is often seen as scandalous!

Pastor Toby Sumpter spoke to this in one of his recent blogs where he said in part: "One of the greatest scandals of the gospel is the free grace of forgiveness. But we say this, and I do not think we often let it sink in. The scandal of free grace is God's love of sinners, God's love of His enemies, His love of the worst kinds of evil people. We like to hedge this. We say that God loves *repentant* sinners. He loves it when we turn from sin. When we feel the depths of our wretchedness. But that doesn't quite get at it. Who feels the depths of their wretchedness? Who really understands just how evil they are? "Who can understand his errors?" David asks. Nobody, I know. But even if it were possible, this would put a price tag on forgiveness. God forgives so long as you *understand* just how hard, how scandalous this is. God forgives so long as you shape up, so long as you get with the program of being good. But God's grace is completely free, completely careless, completely gratuitous — for the sake of Jesus."

- And this is why we see Jesus here in Genesis: Joseph is showing undeserved favor to his wicked brothers, just as Jesus does with us!

Joseph now sits as the ruler of Egypt and those ten brothers come before him as those guilty of kidnapping and attempted murder, to say nothing of violating the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment to honor their father. Joseph could have justly thrown them all into prison and sent for his father Jacob and brother Benjamin to bring them down to Egypt to be under his care. Joseph would have known that revealing the brother's treachery could have justified his actions in his father's eyes.

- Instead Joseph is being gracious just as God is with all of His people!

And while his brothers do not fully understand all that is taking place, they know that God's hand is upon them.

When they discover the money in that bag we are told, “Then their hearts failed them and they were afraid, saying to one another,

- “What is this that God has done to us?””

Just as we will sing in a moment, God is moving in their lives in a mysterious way and yes, each of us should be able to see such things in our lives as well if we have been given the gift of faith.

So our goal this morning is to be like those disciples that Jesus walked with on the road to Emmaus. We want the Spirit of God to open our eyes anew to the glories of God’s Grace in our lives and the lives of other... Declaring with those disciples, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, & while He opened the Scriptures to us?”

God’s Grace is a central theme in God’s grand story and it is a theme we should know very well...

It is not the simple prayer that we offer at a meal, nor the way a person carries themselves in public.

It is not just God being nice to us:

- It is as Pastor Sumpter and others have often said, scandalous.

The type of scandal pictured by Jesus in his parable about the owner hiring workers all day long and paying those who worked only the last hour the same as those who toiled all day.

- It is the scandal Jesus demonstrated in the parable of the Pharisee & publican!

God’s Grace is rich, it is free and it is given to totally undeserving people! That is the Gospel, the Good News and we need to understand it more and more to find comfort in our lives and to be able to properly share the Gospel with others.

- Depending on the translation used, the word grace is found about 150 times in the Bible and almost all of them refer to this type of scandalous grace from God.

As we would expect, there are about six times more in the NT than the OT.

However, it is important to point out that grace is not absent in the OT & when we consider accounts like the one before us this morning, there are many more. The most extensive teachings about God’s grace are found in two epistles from the Apostle Paul: Romans and Ephesians:

- I am not going to quote from either right now, but rather leave them as a bit of homework for you to consider in your private studies in the coming weeks or months, looking for ‘grace.’

What I do want to do this morning is give a quick survey of how we are to interact with God’s Grace which I trust will be an encouragement, and I bit of a challenge to us all.

Again, I think this is very important not only because it is taught heavily in those two major Epistles, but in addition we find that all of the New Testament Epistles have God’s Grace as part of the opening salutation and many include it in the benedictions given at the close.

- What I want to do here is remind us that there are many things for us to learn about God’s Grace!

The Apostle Paul reminds the Corinthians and all of us that we are to be thankful for God’s Grace: I Corinthians 4:13b “... we also believe and therefore speak, 14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. 15 For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

The Apostle Peter tells us in his final letter that we are to grow in Grace:

II Peter 3:17 “You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”

**In his first Epistle Peter commands us to minister Grace to one another.**

**I Peter 4:10 “8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” 9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. 10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”**

**The Apostle Paul in Colossians tells us we should know the song of Grace:**

**Colossians 3:15: “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.**

**The writer of Hebrews tells us to come boldly to the Throne of Grace!**

**Hebrews 4:16 “14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy & find grace to help in time of need.**

**Jude in his short Epistle warns us that we must not abuse God’s Grace**

**Jude 3: “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

**The writer of Hebrews reminds us of the great cost of God’s Grace**

**Hebrews 2:8: “But now we do not yet see all things put under him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. [something greatly expounded upon in the rest of that important Epistle]**

**And yes, the Apostle Paul shows us how the experience of God’s Grace is not always pleasant from our human perspective or experience...**

**II Corinthians 12:9: “7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”**

**When Joseph’s brothers first saw the evidence of Joseph’s gracious gift they wondered, “what is this that God has done to us?” I trust we can now see that the answer to that question should always be that God has poured out His Grace upon the lives of His people!**

**Or as the hymn writer put it so well in our hymn of response:**

**Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust Him for His Grace.**

**Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face!**

**Communion Meditation: Luke 24**

**“30 Now it came to pass, as [Jesus] sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. 32 And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?” 33 So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34 saying, “The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” 35 And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.”**