

Scripture Reading: Genesis 44:

“14 So Judah and his brothers came to Joseph’s house, and he was still there; and they fell before him on the ground. 15 And Joseph said to them, “What deed is this you have done? Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?” 16 Then Judah said, “What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; here we are, my lord’s slaves, both we and he also with whom the cup was found.” 17 But [Joseph] said, “Far be it from me that I should do so; the man in whose hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave. And as for you, go up in peace to your father.” 18 Then Judah came near to him and said: “O my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord’s hearing, and do not let your anger burn against your servant; for you are even like Pharaoh.”

'Judah as Benjamin’s Advocate’

We are working our way through the Book of Beginnings and we have come to the final section that tells us the story of Jacob, which is lengthy and runs from the beginning of chapter 37 until his death in the final chapter. And yes, Lord willing, we reach that final chapter before the year is out!

Now of course within this long account we have other characters whose stories are told... Joseph is prominent because he is the instrument that God chooses to use to bring Abraham’s family down to Egypt as he promised. And as Joseph ministers to his errant brothers, his younger brother Benjamin has taken center stage becoming the new Joseph to test the repentance or change of heart of the other brothers.

This has all climaxed in a lengthy telling of the second journey those brothers make to Egypt. Three chapters with many details & lessons. Last week I had to once again leave things up in the air with our story, but we were able to see that the brothers were going to pass the test. The steward offered to only enslave the one found with Joseph’s cup and let the rest go free: So when it was found in Benjamin’s sack, these brothers could have done just as they did with Joseph years ago:

- Left him in slavery and returned to their father with more sad news.

Unlike their actions years ago when they did all they could to get rid of the favored brother, they are now tearing their cloths and loading up their donkeys to return to a very dangerous place to try and defend this new favored brother before Joseph!

- It is important to remember that we saw how they left town with great joy: They had food and Benjamin and even Simeon!
- Truly they had no way of realizing the great trial that lay just ahead!

And now they are returning to that same town greatly troubled by all that has happened...

- And now they not able to imagine the joy that lay ahead for them and all of their families and of course their father Jacob.

Clearly, we have here in Jacob’s story that stretches over these many chapters a picture of death & resurrection which is always important in God’s story!

So with all of that in mind, let us dig into our text as we continue the story!

“14 So Judah and his brothers came to Joseph’s house, and he was still there; and they fell before him on the ground.

- Once again, we see those brothers prostrating themselves before Joseph & as one of the ancient church fathers noted, “They bow down to him whom they sold into slavery, lest they should bow down to him!”

God has fulfilled the promise given to Joseph in his early dreams and now we are moving toward a fulfillment of the greater promises to Abraham. God is going to use all of these events we have been studying to bring ALL of Jacob's family down to Egypt for about 400 years, including the line of promise.

- Pointing us clearly to that line of promise we now see Judah come forth as a strong advocate for Benjamin as Joseph proclaims his guilt!

15 "And Joseph said to them, "What deed is this you have done? Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?"

- At this point the only brother who truly knows that he is in fact innocent of the charge is Benjamin himself!

The others, including Judah, may have thought something nefarious had taken place, but the evidence clearly pointed to Benjamin's guilt and so Judah rightly says they have little defense:

16 "Then Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; here we are, my lord's slaves, both we and he also with whom the cup was found."

Now it is important to note here just what sin Judah is referring too when he says they have been found out! It was Joseph's steward who found the stolen cup, but it was God who knew what those brothers had done years before. Now they are sure that because they once sold their own brother into slavery, they would now become slaves! It is the type of temporal judgment someone might expect, but Joseph has a different test in mind for these brothers: Had they truly repented?

Thus, Joseph is going to give them one more opportunity to do to Benjamin what they did to himself some twenty years before... Leave Benjamin in chains and go home free from another favored son of their father.

17 "But [Joseph] said, "Far be it from me that I should do so; the man in whose hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave. And as for you, go up in peace to your father." 18 "Then Judah came near to him and said: "O my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's hearing, and do not let your anger burn against your servant; for you are even like Pharaoh."

- Now the writer leaves no doubt that Judah becomes the advocate for Benjamin as he draws near to the seat of power to make his appeal, just as Jesus does for us before His Father's throne!

Drawing near to the one who wields the very power of Pharaoh, Judah begins to lay out his case for mercy:

19 "My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?' 20 And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, who is young; his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.' 21 Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.'" 22 And we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.' 23 But you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.' 24 "So it was, when we went up to your servant my father, that we told him the words of my lord. 25 And our father said, 'Go back and buy us a little food.' 26 But we said, 'We cannot go down; if our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we may not see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' 27 Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons; 28 and the one went out from me, and I said, "Surely he is torn to pieces"; and I have not seen him since. 29 But if you take this one also from me, and calamity befalls him, you shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.' 30 "Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life, 31 it will happen, when he sees that the lad is not with us, that he will die. So your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave."

Judah has recounted the history of how they came to be in this situation, but we must remember that he does not know that he is speaking to Joseph, so he has given the background, which of course Joseph already knew very well, in order to make his appeal to the man he thought was a very powerful Egyptian!

- Obviously, it was difficult for them to convince their father to allow Benjamin to come, but it was Judah who made the final offer which he now wants Joseph to consider:

32 “For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.’”

Another one of those great reminders that we are to see Jesus here in the Old Testament... Judah offers to be surety for his brother just as Jesus offers to be our surety as we learn in the Book of Hebrews which we are using as the basis for our liturgy this morning:

Hebrews 7: ““The Lord has sworn And will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek,’” 22 by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.”

- That is the richness of our Savior that should come to mind as we see Judah make his case to Joseph:

32 “For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.’” 33 Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. 34 For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?’”

Now I could rush on into chapter 45 to finish our story that has taken several weeks to tell, but once again it is not given here to communicate mere facts or even events, but to help us see the richness of the story that God is telling with man and His creation.

Judah has offered himself as the surety for his brother Benjamin: He is willing to take the punishment due the brother upon himself just as the greater Judah, Jesus Who is called the Lion of the Tribe of Judah would one day do for us!

So, feel free to read on and enjoy again the story of this family reunion which we will consider at length in the coming weeks, but for this morning I want us to reflect on the love that our surety has for us and that love is expressed in no better place than in the high priestly prayer of Jesus offered as He prepared to be our surety on that cross in Jerusalem many years later... In many ways it could even be called the advocate’s prayer!

John 17: “17 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, 2 as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

Yes, the work of Jesus is going to make known the Father...

- Just as Joseph is about to be made known to his brothers as the one God had chosen to save them from their own sins and to save Jacob’s entire family!

4 “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. 6 “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. 8 For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.”

- Jesus has taught & trained His disciples despite their many shortcomings, just as Joseph has now done with his brothers who he is now able to reveal himself too as well!

9 “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. 10 And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.”

- Through Joseph God is remembering Abraham and the promises made to him long ago!
- Now Jesus is embracing the Church as His own and yes He remembers all the promises that have been made to us!
- To those of us who are still in this world...

11 “Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. 12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.”

Here this night, and certainly later in their ministry those disciples would surely have reflected back on the words that Jesus spoke to the skeptics who earlier asked Him if He was the promised Messiah: John 10: “25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. 26 But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. [like Judas the son of perdition that Jesus just mentioned in His prayer] 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. 30 I and My Father are one.”

- Jesus is going to go on and speak of this unity in His prayer, but we should never tire of hearing that Jesus loses NONE who are His!

And yes, Jesus knows that life here is not always easy, just as it was not always easy for Joseph!
And so He continues on in His prayer:

16 “They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.”

- As we often say and believe, we stand in the righteousness of Jesus and we can do so because Jesus was willing and able to stand in our place on that cross propitiating the wrath of God that was due to us!

And just as I encouraged you in previous weeks to remember how in Genesis we are studying OUR family history because we are the true sons and daughters of Abraham, Jesus now reminds us that He is not praying only for those eleven disciples!

20 “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.”

Again, this is something pictured so well in this story of Jacob because Joseph is about to make all the glory that is his to be the glory of Jacob's family:

- **Once again the family will be unified and together and of course used to carry on God's grand plan of redemption!**

And the conclusion of this great priestly prayer reminds us that this grand plan has been the plan from the very beginning!

24 "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. 26 And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

Here we have Jesus praying about what He had just taught those disciples and all of us about His work that was about to be completed:

John 14: "25 "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. 28 You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I. 29 "And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe. 30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. 31 But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here."

- **Jesus did rise from there and as we recently reflected upon in our Good Friday service, suffered and died for His sheep!**

But because He was raised in power, now the world may know He is their Savior as we go from here sharing the Good News with a needy world.

Communion Meditation: Psalm 92

**"It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;
2 To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning,
And Your faithfulness every night,
3 On an instrument of ten strings,
On the lute, And on the harp,
With harmonious sound.
4 For You, Lord, have made me glad through Your work;
I will triumph in the works of Your hands."**