

Scripture Reading: Genesis 47

“13 Now there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt & the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. 14 And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh’s house. 15 So when the money failed in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, “Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For the money has failed.” 16 Then Joseph said, “Give your livestock, and I will give you bread for your livestock, if the money is gone.” 17 So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herds, and for the donkeys. Thus he fed them with bread in exchange for all their livestock that year. 18 When that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, “We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. 19 Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, & we & our land will be servants of Pharaoh; give us seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate.” 20 Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh’s. 21 And as for the people, he moved them into the cities, from one end of the borders of Egypt to the other end. 22 Only the land of the priests he did not buy; for the priests had rations allotted to them by Pharaoh, and they ate their rations which Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their lands. 23 Then Joseph said to the people, “Indeed I have bought you and your land this day for Pharaoh. Look, here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land. 24 And it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh. Four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and for your food, for those of your households and as food for your little ones.” 25 So they said, “You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh’s servants.” 26 And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt to this day, that Pharaoh should have one-fifth, except for the land of the priests only, which did not become Pharaoh’s.”

“Joseph Saves Egypt”

As we conclude my summary of the civil actions by Joseph in the midst of a severe famine, it might be good to ask just what I mean by the sermon title! It is based of course on the response by the people of Egypt to those actions taken by Joseph which we just read:

“You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh’s servants.”

➤ **Did Joseph “save” Egypt from just starvation, or should this term have a broader meaning?**

When we look at the full context of what happens with Joseph’s rise to power and subsequent actions, I think it must be seen broadly in the same way that other groups of Gentiles were saved in the Old Testament. The clearest latter examples would be the repentance of Nineveh, the repentance of King Nebuchadnezzar and of course the impressive impact that Queen Ester and her uncle Mordecai had in Persia. As I mentioned some weeks ago it is important to remember that the Old Testament is a period of failure and remnants which changes to expansion and victories with the coming of Jesus.

So yes, all these periods of salvation that were brought to various Gentile empires were short lived: However, there were still lessons for us to learn because the Apostle Paul tells young Timothy that ALL Scriptures is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness!

As we considered last week, the story of Joseph is perhaps the easiest to relate to the work of our Lord Jesus and so this morning I want to focus on how the salvation of Egypt relates so well with our salvation!

I gave you a bit of homework and I hope it was a blessing to some of you and so I want to give just a quick summary of what you should have found in considering how the word 'hate' is used in the New Testament. As I ended last week I gave a pretty good hint as to where I would be going and it is where we will begin and end this morning: The story of Egypt can most certainly help us understand some of the last instructions that Jesus gave to His own disciples as Gentiles came wanting to see Jesus in John 12:

“24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. 25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.”

We see this reflected in the teaching of the Apostle Paul to the Church at Corinth:

1 Corinthians 6:19 “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body & in your spirit, which are God’s.”

And again in the next chapter:

1 Corinthians 7:22 “For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ’s slave. 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. 24 Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.”

- **Keep that theme of being bought in mind, but it was not only our own lives that we are to hate in this way:**

In Luke 14 we have Jesus speaking to the multitudes: **26 “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. 27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”**

- **Two chapters later Jesus teaches that you cannot love God and money because you will hate the one and love the other!**

Both of these important passages are to be understood in the light of the parable that Jesus told just before as they sat at dinner in a Pharisee’s home:

“A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, 17 and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, ‘Come, for all things are now ready.’ 18 But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’ 19 And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’ 20 Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ 21 So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’ 22 And the servant said, ‘Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.’ 23 Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.’”

- **I do not believe it is an accident that those excuses revolve around land, livestock and family, just as we saw in the salvation of Egypt!**

Now of course dying to self and hating mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters are some of those tough verses I said we would consider and I firmly believe that it is accounts like the one we are studying here in the Book of Beginnings that helps us understand them.

- **And they help us keep the proper balance that Scriptures commands because we know that we are also to love our brothers and honor our mother and father!**

Jesus said that the 5th Commandment was the first Commandment with promise and in 1 John 2: we read this at verse 8 “Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. 9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. 10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.”

I hope we can learn to see that the love or hate of these relationships, our possessions and our wealth revolve around what priorities that we have. This is why the other major use of the word ‘hate’ in the New Testament is where we see the world hating Jesus and us who are His disciples.

I won’t have the time to review those this morning but again it revolves around priorities, just as it did with those guests who passed on the banquet with their excuses! Or try to imagine what would have happened to the Egyptians if they had put a high priority on their money, livestock and land and refused to give them up?

- **Rather than salvation, they would have had certain death!**

Now of course that should remind us of the other major way that ‘hate’ is used when we see God’s hatred of sin, just as the master of the banquet rejected those who rejected him.

- **Now let me take us back to our account and look at how Joseph saved Egypt in this light.**

First we have to make sure we do not have the wrong picture of some of the players.

This Pharaoh should be related to other God fearing people that we find among the Gentiles, like Rahab or later Cornelius in the New Testament.

- **In each case when God brings revelation to them, they respond in faith!**

Cornelius gathered his family and listened to Peter, Rahab hid the spies and chose a new side, and here in our account Pharaoh not only followed the advice given after the dreams but made the messenger from God the chief ruler of his empire.

This Pharaoh stands in stark contrast with the later Pharaoh who knew not Joseph. Again, this does not mean that he did not know his Egyptian history, it meant that he wanted nothing to do with the God of Joseph or His people, other than to exploit them as slaves.

Where the Pharaoh in Joseph’s day was open to God’s leading and found salvation, the later Pharaoh hardened his heart against God and his prophet Moses and in the end found only death.

There is also a stark contrast with the priests or wise men who surrounded Pharaoh. They too, either on their own or because of the leadership of Pharaoh, trusted the counsel that was given and had respect for Joseph. The wise men and magicians around Pharaoh in the time of Moses, mocked & competed with God’s messenger.

The fact that Joseph marries a priest’s daughter and the children of that marriage join the other sons of Jacob as patriarchs of the Nation of Israel, numbered among the 12 tribes, is another strong sign that we were not dealing with pagan priests, but rather God-fearing priests, perhaps ones like Jethro who would later provide a godly wife for Moses.

- **So when we step back we have to decide what the right narrative should be for this important account.**

Some see Joseph as a spoiled and proud child who wanted to rule over his own family and when given the opportunity in Egypt gathered all the power that he could!

He confiscates a fifth and the food rather than trust the people and when the famine hits, has the audacity to demand that they buy back their own food with all of their money, their livestock land and even their own lives. Egypt is left with an all-powerful ruler who owns literally everything leaving all the citizens of Egypt as his serfs.

- **That is certainly one way to see things and sadly some go almost that far and many others pretty much ignore most of Joseph's actions perhaps fearing such conclusions!**

BUT, since we are told to see Jesus in all of the Scriptures, I think there is a much better narrative along the lines of the comments made in Psalm 105 that we reviewed last week. We also saw how it is much easier to see Joseph as a type of Christ, who comes as the favored son and is rejected by his own family and cast off to die among the Gentiles! What they intend for evil God uses for good and soon Joseph is seen as the ruler of all, second only to Pharaoh. So far so good, but then we come to those dreaded actions with regard to the famine and we are not quite sure how to see them...

- **Taking the food seems harsh, selling it back to them seem to lack compassion and setting up a feudal system of serfs seems rather authoritarian!**
- **Where is the freedom and liberty in that end?**

Well if we allow such man-centered and certainly modern thinking to prevail we will miss the most important lessons to be learned in this account!

- **While it is easy to see Jesus in the early events of Joseph's life we must not draw back when it come to seeing Jesus in these later events.**

In fact, if we are honest and know our Bibles, it is very hard NOT to see Jesus in all of this, and to see Him in some very important ways.

- **So, when those Egyptians declare that Joseph has saved them, just what do they mean?**

Joseph has saved them from certain death and established a long-term system of peace and prosperity!

At first that seems shocking, but consider just two important matters when it comes to even his civil actions: Both before and after the famine we see Joseph collecting basically a 20% tax on the wealth of Egypt.

- **What prominent nation on this earth today would not celebrate such a low tax rate?**

Those in third world nations could not even imagine being able to keep anything of substance, no less 80%!

- **Next, after the famine, we see a lot of things sold but it was all done voluntarily with free exchanges!**

There were not lines of credit or fiat money to help along the prosperity of Egypt and at the end of the devastating famine the sum total of debt for Egypt or its people was... ZERO!

- **Again, what prominent nation would not envy being in that position?**

But I suspect that you already sense where I am going with this narrative that has Joseph saving them from certain death and establishing a long-term system of peace and prosperity!

- **I certainly hope that we all believe that the greater Joseph has come and saved His people from their sins!**

As we saw on Ascension Sunday, Jesus has now established His Kingdom which will fill the whole earth as He reigns at His Father's side.

In the end Joseph required all their money, all their livestock, all their land and even their own lives!

- **What has Jesus required of us?**

That is right: EVERYTHING! Returning to that important passage in John 12, we see Jesus making a very clear statement by using an agricultural example: “24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.”

I can put a small packet of seeds in my pocket, but imagine what it could produce if they are corn seeds, or maybe even tomatoes! But, how much corn on the cob will we be able to enjoy if I refuse to plant any of these seeds, but want to “protect” them from harm?

➤ **Jesus immediately shows how this applies to all of us:**

25 “He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

To be saved by Joseph those Egyptians had to give up everything and if we want to keep our life for eternal life then we must hate it enough to give it over to Jesus, so it can die and be planted in a New Kingdom garden!

Again, Joseph took their money, their livestock, their land and their very lives and Jesus does the same with us. Perhaps another problem that we have as Americans who have in our history the inhuman slave trade and unbiblical chattel property slavery, is that we miss much of what the Bible teaches about being servants of Jesus! This could be another fruitful word study if you were blessed by the last one: Check out how the word servant is used in the New Testament. As you do so, remember that it is used almost exclusively in the sense of being bond or enslaved, much as these ‘saved’ Egyptians were now bond or enslaved to Pharaoh.

Ponder that as we consider the inspired words of Paul to the Philippians...

Philippians 3:7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.”

Or the very words of Jesus in the 9th chapter of Luke’s Gospel Account: 23 “Then [Jesus] said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. 25 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?”

So what is our application this week?

➤ **It is pretty simple, we must die and Jesus must live!**

Jesus wants everything: Our money, our families, our possessions, our government and yes, even our church. If there is anyplace where we have not surrendered to Jesus then we must cry out as those Egyptians did to Joseph, not once but twice: “Why should we die in your presence?”

They were seeking bread, and we too must seek the true Bread of Life. They were in a desperate spot and needed a savior and so they turned to Joseph!

➤ **We as children of Adam are in desperate need of a Savior and that Savior is Jesus!**

I will conclude where we began with those words again from Jesus in His final days as He answered the simple request from those inquiring Gentiles: ‘We would see Jesus...’

John 12:24 “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. 25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.”

Communion Meditation: John 4

“⁷ A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give Me a drink.’ ⁸ For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

⁹ Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, ‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?’ For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.’”

¹¹ The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? ¹² Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?’”

¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.’”

¹⁵ The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.’”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come here.’”

¹⁷ The woman answered and said, ‘I have no husband.’”