

Genesis 37:12-36

¹² And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

¹³ And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I.

¹⁴ And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

¹⁵ And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou?

¹⁶ And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks.

¹⁷ And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

¹⁸ And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.

¹⁹ And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.

²⁰ Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

²¹ And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him.

²² And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

²³ And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him;

²⁴ And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

²⁵ And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

²⁶ And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

²⁷ Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.

²⁸ Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

²⁹ And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.

³⁰ And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?

³¹ And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;

³² And they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.

³³ And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

³⁴ And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

³⁵ And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

³⁶ And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

2 Peter 2:19

¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

Romans 6:16

¹⁶ Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Joseph is sold into Egypt

Last week in Sunday School we started a series of lessons about Joseph, a tool in God's hands. We also talked about five important lines of thought brought out in the life of Joseph:

- (1) God watches over an individual who trusts Him.
- (2) God's promises and predictions are always perfectly fulfilled.
- (3) Joseph is a type of Christ.
- (4) The lives of the brothers show the plan of salvation.
- (5) God works out His purposes.

Let us see how the lines of thought mentioned in Lesson 1 are developing. In this lesson, we see only evil come to Joseph. We have to wait and see how God turns it for good.

Genesis 37:12-17: ¹² And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. ¹³ And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. ¹⁴ And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. ¹⁵ And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? ¹⁶ And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. ¹⁷ And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

When Jacob sent Joseph to learn the welfare of his brothers, who were pasturing the flock far from home, Joseph willingly went.

Joseph was conscientious and dependable, or his father would not have entrusted him with this important errand. He sought his brothers in Shechem and Dothan. Here is a type of Christ's journey to us from our Father. Because of Joseph's position with the father, his brothers were envious.

Despite the envy of his brothers, Joseph remained steadfast in his duty, embodying the virtues of loyalty and obedience. His journey was not without hardship, mirroring our own spiritual journeys in life. Yet, like Christ, he was guided by a higher purpose. His story serves as a reminder that even in the face of adversity, we are called to walk in faithfulness and integrity. This is the essence of Joseph's legacy - a testament to the power of faith and the strength of divine purpose.

Genesis 37:18-20: ¹⁸ And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. ¹⁹ And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. ²⁰ Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

The spirit of the brothers was entirely different from the spirit of Joseph. The hatred in their hearts was active. It had grown until they desired to kill Joseph, even before he came near. They would kill him and then lie about it, laying the blame on some evil beast. Joseph's dreams were the chief target for bitterness—Behold this dreamer cometh . . . we shall see what will become of his dreams. Leaning to their own understanding, they planned to kill the dreamer and thus be rid of the dreams.

Yet, in stark contrast to his brothers' malevolent intentions, Joseph's spirit remained unbroken. His dreams, a divine gift, were

not merely figments of his imagination, but prophetic visions of a future ordained by God. Despite the animosity he faced, Joseph held steadfast in his faith, embodying the essence of resilience and forgiveness. His dreams were not his own, but a manifestation of God's plan. The brothers, blinded by their jealousy, failed to see that their actions were merely threads in the grand tapestry of God's divine providence. Killing the dreamer could never extinguish the dreams, for they were not of Joseph, but of God Himself.

Genesis 37:21-24: ²¹ And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. ²² And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again. ²³ And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colors that was on him; ²⁴ And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

A spark of kindness in Reuben's heart held him back from the extreme actions of the others. Let us not kill him. . . . but cast him into this pit. Reuben secretly planned to rescue Joseph and return him to their father. God has always had a person in every age and through every circumstance whom He could use to tip the scale of justice.

In this case, it was Reuben who started Joseph in the direction God wanted him to go. In years past, many people whom God intended to use were cast low before going on for God. Impossible circumstances that they had no control over enabled them to carry out God's will. Try to imagine the fierceness and anger with which the brothers stripped the hated coat of many colors from Joseph

and cast him, without his coat, into an empty pit. There, he would have died a slow death. Did anything similar happen to Christ?

Indeed, the parallels between Joseph and Christ are striking. Just as Joseph was cast into a pit and sold into slavery, Christ was betrayed, arrested, and crucified. Both were innocent, yet they suffered greatly. However, their suffering was not in vain. Joseph's trials prepared him to save his family during a famine, and Christ's death and resurrection brought salvation to all of humanity. In both cases, God used what seemed like a tragedy for a greater purpose. This is a powerful reminder that even in our darkest moments, God is at work, using our trials for His glory and our good.

Genesis 37:25-28: ²⁵ And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. ²⁶ And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? ²⁷ Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. ²⁸ Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

The brothers sat down to eat bread. At that moment, a scene met their eyes: camels and merchantmen were traveling to Egypt with their goods. When people plan to do evil, it seems someone will always come along to help them carry out their plans. An idea formed in Judah's mind. They could turn this matter into financial gain and, at the same time, lessen their guilt. Yet, guilt is not this easily wiped away, as we will learn.

Let not our hand be upon him. Too late, Judah remembered, He is our brother and our flesh. So they lifted Joseph out of the pit and sold him for twenty pieces of silver. The merchants took him away to Egypt, and the brothers must have thought they were free of Joseph and his dreams forever.

We may think we would not have done such a terrible thing! No doubt, in the beginning, Joseph's brothers did not think so either. Sin is a dangerous wilderness. It grows, and if it is in our hearts, we do not know what we may do. Sin binds and controls our every action. The brothers allowed envy and jealousy to abide in their hearts. That grew into hatred, which grew into murder (1 John 3:15).

Indeed, the brothers' actions were a stark reminder of the destructive power of sin. As they watched Joseph being led away, a sense of relief might have washed over them. But deep down, they must have known that their actions were far from righteous. The silver pieces they received were a poor substitute for their brother's presence and love. They had allowed their hearts to be consumed by envy and hatred, leading them down a path of regret and sorrow. The story of Joseph and his brothers serves as a sobering reminder to us all: unchecked sin in our hearts can lead us to commit unthinkable acts. It is a call to constant vigilance and prayer, to keep our hearts pure and our actions aligned with God's will.

Genesis 37:29-32: ²⁹ And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. ³⁰ And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? ³¹ And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; ³² And they sent the

coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.

Reuben's grief at finding Joseph gone seems genuine. He rent his clothes—a usual manner of showing sorrow. The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? Yes, where? Is this not still the question today? Yet, he kept his brothers' guilty secret. They all covered it with a lie. One sin leads to another. Trying to appear innocent, they brought Joseph's bloody coat to their father.

Indeed, the narrative of Reuben and his brothers is a poignant reminder of the destructive power of deceit. The brothers, in their attempt to conceal their guilt, spun a web of lies that only served to deepen their transgression. Their actions echo the timeless truth that dishonesty, once allowed to take root, can quickly grow and overshadow our lives. The brothers' decision to present Joseph's blood-stained coat to their father was not just an act of deception, but also a desperate attempt to escape the consequences of their actions. Yet, as we see in their story, such attempts often lead to more pain and regret. This serves as a stark warning to us today about the dangers of dishonesty and the importance of living in truth.

Genesis 37:33-36:³³ And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. ³⁴ And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵ And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. ³⁶ And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

And he knew it—Jacob knew it was Joseph's coat, and he believed what his sons intended for him to believe—Joseph was rent in pieces. The grief of Jacob was intense. All his sons and all his daughters tried to comfort him but failed. Sin brings a grief that man cannot comfort. All Jacob wanted was Joseph—whom he believed he would never see again. He did not know that Joseph was in Egypt and was the property of Potiphar, Pharaoh's captain of the guard.

Jacob's heart was heavy, filled with a sorrow that words could not express. His spirit was crushed under the weight of his loss. He yearned for Joseph, his beloved son, now seemingly lost to him forever. Yet, in the midst of his despair, Jacob was unaware of the divine plan unfolding. Unbeknownst to him, Joseph was not only alive but was being prepared for a purpose far greater than any of them could imagine. The pain of the present was but a stepping stone to a future of redemption and restoration. The story of Joseph was far from over; in fact, it was just beginning. God was at work, even in the midst of the heartache. And so, Jacob wept, not knowing that the dawn of a new day was on the horizon.

2 Peter 2:19: ¹⁹While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

Sin binds in many ways. Here, the hated object (Joseph) was now bound more firmly upon the brothers than before. They sinned to rid themselves of Joseph, yet he now loomed larger than ever in their lives. Before, he was a nearby irritant. Now he was a painful guilt within their consciences. Not until they repented, many years later, would that guilt be removed. In the meantime, it brought

much suffering. Sin always brings suffering. Sin always brings bondage. Sin always brings death (Romans 6:16).

Indeed, sin has a way of entangling us in its deceptive web. The brothers, in their attempt to escape the perceived threat of Joseph, only ensnared themselves further in the chains of guilt and regret. Their actions, meant to liberate them from Joseph's presence, instead shackled them to a haunting memory that echoed in their minds.

The shadow of their sin grew larger with each passing day, a constant reminder of the brother they had wronged. It was a burden they carried, a wound that festered, until they found the courage to confront it and seek forgiveness. This is the nature of sin—it promises freedom but delivers bondage. It lures us with the illusion of relief, only to leave us in a state of remorse and regret (Romans 6:23). But there is hope, for repentance paves the way to redemption and healing. It is through acknowledging our sins, seeking forgiveness, and turning away from our wrongdoings that we can find true liberation.

Genesis 37:12-36 tells the story of Joseph, the favored son of Jacob, who is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. This passage is a turning point in the narrative of Genesis, setting the stage for the events that will eventually lead to the Israelites' descent into Egypt.

Joseph's brothers were tending their father's flocks near Shechem, a place with a history of conflict for their family. Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers, demonstrating his trust in Joseph. However, this act unknowingly set the stage for the tragic events to follow.

When his brothers saw Joseph approaching, they plotted to kill him, showing the depth of their resentment. Reuben, the eldest, suggested throwing Joseph into a pit instead, secretly planning to rescue him later. This shows that even in the midst of hostility, there can be voices of reason and mercy.

As Joseph's brothers sat down to eat, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites heading to Egypt. Judah then proposed to sell Joseph to these traders instead of leaving him to die. This decision was driven by greed but it also spared Joseph's life and set God's plan in motion.

Upon returning to the pit and finding Joseph gone, Reuben was distressed. The brothers then decided to deceive their father by dipping Joseph's coat in goat's blood and presenting it to Jacob, who assumed that a wild animal had killed his beloved son. The brothers' deception caused immense grief to their father.

Meanwhile, Joseph was sold in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. This marked the beginning of Joseph's journey in Egypt, which would be filled with trials but would ultimately lead to his rise to power.

The story of Joseph serves as a reminder that even in the face of betrayal and hardship, God's plans are at work. It encourages us to remain faithful and trust in God's providence, even when we cannot see the bigger picture. It's a powerful lesson about faith, forgiveness, and God's sovereign plan.

Closing

In closing, Genesis 37:12-36 teaches us about the sovereignty of God's plan, even in the midst of adversity. Joseph's story is a testament to the fact that God can use even the most dire

circumstances for good. Despite the betrayal by his brothers, Joseph was led down a path that not only saved his own life but also the lives of his family and an entire nation. This passage encourages us to trust in God's plan, even when we can't see the full picture, and to understand that our trials may be setting the stage for God's greater purpose. Let us remember this lesson in our own lives, trusting in God's providence and seeking His guidance in all we do.

Thought for today: If you are looking for trouble, offer some good advice.