

Rev. Janet R. Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
15th Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, September 6, 2026
Scripture: Genesis 37: 1-36
Sermon: But God...Meant it for Good

Today our scripture lesson is about Joseph who is about 17 years old. Joseph is the favored; the favorite son of Jacob. Out of 12 sons and one daughter, this Joseph is his favorite one. Probably because Joseph is the offspring, the oldest son of Rachel. Now, Jacob had two wives, you will recall Leah and Rachel. Leah is the one he got cheated into, but Rachel is the one Jacob really loved. He was willing to work 14 years for his father-in-law in order to win Rachel's hand.

So Rachel had only two sons, the older one is Joseph and so it would not come as a surprise that Joseph is the favored son of Jacob. That was made very blatantly obvious when Jacob gave Joseph this coat or robe of many colors. Now, you can imagine just how painful, how difficult and how angry it must have been for the brothers. The rest of the 11 brothers must be so jealous and upset that, "Our father would only favor Joseph, and not treat us the same." They were all upset at Joseph.

It did not help matters when Joseph had a dream and told his brothers about the dream. In a dream, he is claiming that he will be the pre-eminent one. Because he told them, "I dreamt that the 11 sheaves, representing all of you, will bow before my sheaf."

It would be unthinkable that they would have to bow to their younger brother. But this is what Joseph is saying he dreamt about. Now, that did not stop, because he had another dream and he also chose to tell the brothers about the dream.

I do not know why he chose to tell the brothers about the dream. If I was Joseph, I would probably keep quiet. Joseph told them, "There will be the sun and the moon, and the 11 stars that will bow before my star."

One day Jacob, Joseph's father, told him to go check on his older brothers and when the brothers saw Joseph coming, they were not excited,

but they were thinking that this might just be the opportunity to get rid of him. Nice brothers.

They decided to kill their brother Joseph, cold-blooded murder and then throw him into a pit, and go back and tell their father a lie that Joseph had been devoured by a fierce animal.

That was the original plan! But Reuben, the oldest brother, stood up and said, "No, no, no, no, let's not do that! Let's not kill our brother, but let's just throw him into a pit." He hoped that later on, he would come back and lift him out of the pit and save him. Now, we are not told why Reuben would want to do this, maybe Reuben being the oldest one felt responsible for his brother.

Nevertheless, the brothers listened to Reuben and said, "Alright, we will not kill Joseph, but we'll throw him into a pit. There is no water, no food, he would just die there anyway." So they stripped Joseph of that multi-colored coat and put blood on it.

They were going to tell their father Joseph was attacked by an animal. So they threw him into the pit, and then they sat down and had a meal. How evil! It doesn't bother them the least bit that this is what they did to their brother.

Then a caravan of Ishmaelite traders passed by. They saw these traders and Judah immediately had a plan. Judah said, "Hey, let's kill two birds with one stone! We can get rid of our brother by selling him to these traders, they will bring him far, far away and then we will get some money." So a deal was struck with these Ishmaelites, they sold their brother for 20 shekels of silver. And so, he was sold and traders eventually would bring him to Egypt, and he would be then sold to Potiphar, an officer in Pharaoh's kingdom, a captain of the guard. Remember his brothers take the robe, that multi-colored robe, dip it in that blood of animals, and bring it back to Jacob and deceive Jacob that their brother had been killed by a fierce animal.

Joseph is alive, but Israel does not know it. How would Joseph respond? How would you respond?

Taken from his father. Betrayed by his brothers. No one he could trust was there to help him and now he was a slave.

But Joseph had something that had not been taken away. Joseph had the promise of God. Joseph was in a very difficult position, but God...turned something that was evil and meant it for good. Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the

captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.

In Genesis 39: 2-6 it says: “The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned; the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph’s care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.”

Joseph was far from home, but not alone. God was with him, and God blessed him. And God blessed Potiphar. Joseph becomes the top worker in the house of Potiphar.

Potiphar’s wife wanted Joseph but Joseph didn’t want to lose the trust of Potiphar and walked away from the situation. Joseph refuses her. He says, I will remain true to your husband, Potiphar, even if you won’t.

Even though Joseph had been betrayed and treated poorly, he chose to do the right thing. Joseph chose to do the more difficult thing. Potiphar became angry with Joseph. His wife lies to her husband about Joseph and Potiphar believes his wife.

Joseph goes from the PIT to the PRISON. Joseph was now in chains, in prison. Again, he had done nothing wrong. He had been faithful to Potiphar, but one lie caused him to be arrested.

Joseph is once again betrayed and left to die. How would Joseph respond? How would you respond to reoccurring disappointment?

Joseph had gone from the **PIT** to the **PRISON**, but God was still with Him, and blessed him. God is with us in tough times. God intends for us to rise in tough times. Joseph became Head of Potiphar’s house then Joseph became in charge of the prison.

God intends for us to RISE in our life, even in tough situations. Joseph was in very difficult situations in his life, but God...used it for Good. God used Joseph and Joseph listened carefully to God’s leading.

Earlier in this scripture we mentioned a spiritual gifting that Joseph had. Do you remember it? Joseph the Dreamer. Once again Joseph uses his gift. In prison there were two prisoners, the Cupbearer and the Baker. These 2 were servants to the pharaoh but had done something to make him so mad that he put them in prison.

Joseph hears the dreams of the two men in prison and interprets them. The news was good for the cupbearer. In 3 days he would be restored to his job as cupbearer to the Pharaoh.

The news was not good for the baker. In 3 days he would be executed by the Pharaoh. Joseph told the cupbearer this...

(Genesis 40:14) "But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison." Remember me... Mention me... Everything occurred like Joseph predicted. The Baker was executed, and the cupbearer restored. (Genesis 40:23) The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

Joseph was forgotten and 2 years went by where he remained in prison. In Genesis 39 Pharaoh has 2 dreams he can't understand. His magicians, wisemen, and advisors have no idea what the dream means... If only there were someone who could interpret dreams. Finally, the cupbearer remembers Joseph and speaks up and tells Pharaoh about a prisoner who had interpreted 2 dreams, and Pharaoh sends for Joseph to come interpret the dreams. The dreams of Pharaoh were very important, and God gave Joseph the interpretation instantly.

Joseph said there will be 7 years of abundance followed by 7 years of famine. During the 7 years of abundance Egypt should store up food to have food on hand during the 7 years of famine.

Genesis 41 says, "The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my PALACE, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."

What an amazing story of Joseph's life. Joseph had been in the **pit**. Joseph had been in the **prison**. Now Joseph was exalted by God to the **Palace**.

God is still with each of us when we are in the pit.. the prison... and the palace.

God was always with Joseph, and now he was 2nd in command over all of Egypt. Pharaoh was greatly blessed because of the leadership and gifting of Joseph.

Joseph's story shows us that God is still working even when we can't see Him.

We ought to try to be like Joseph. Use our gifts for the Lord. Remain true and faithful to God. Trust that God is always with you and God will equip you to do what he calls you to do.

Many of us can see ourselves in Joseph. We all, at some point, experience a dark place that seems impossible to overcome. We can all know fear, pain, and heartbreak. But God...no matter how frightened we are, no matter how angry we are, no matter how alone we feel, we are surrounded by God's love and presence. We don't have to fight our PIT or PRISON alone.

Psalm 57:1 tells us,

"Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, until the destroying storms pass by."

Romans 8:28 reminds us: *"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."*

As we think about the story of Joseph here in Genesis 37, I believe we will see more deeply just what it means to say, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."

Believe that for your own life as well!

Come to the Lord's Table today knowing that God is working in your life and is with you always.