

Devotion: August 13, 2020

Genesis 45:1-15

45 Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, ‘Send everyone away from me.’ So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ²And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. ³Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?’ But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Come closer to me.’ And they came closer. He said, ‘I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvest. ⁷God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, “Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.” ¹²And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. ¹³You must tell my father how greatly I am honored in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.’ ¹⁴Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

Romans 8:28, *“In all things, God is at work for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose.”* -----It is not things that work out; it is God who works things out.

As I was researching for this week’s sermon and lamenting the fact that it’s only August, and that it’s still 2020, and that it’s been a rotten year for a lot of people, I read Genesis chapter 50 verse 20. *“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.”*

How is that possible? Can you wrap your head around an idea like that? Someone hurts you, and God used that hurt for good? Paul says in Romans 8:31, *“If God is for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ that is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord? Shall trouble or hardship, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through the Christ who loves us.”*

In our text Joseph discovered that no child of God should ever stay in a pit. The story of Joseph illustrates a person is forever finding the grace of God to get out of the pit, to redeem the moment, and to claim the time. God himself found Joseph there and provided a way of escape.

From the internet:

Once upon a time a man fell in a pit and he couldn't get out.

Buddha came and said—Your pit is only a state of mind.

A Hindu showed up and said—Your pit is for purging you and making you more perfect.

Confucius said—If you would have listened to me, you wouldn't have been in the pit in the first place.

A Reporter said—Could I have the exclusive story on your pit?

An IRS agent said—Have you paid your taxes on your pit?

A Realist said—That's a pit.

An Idealist said—The world shouldn't have pits.

An Optimist said—Things could be worse.

A Pessimist said—Things will be worse.

Meanwhile, Jesus came, reached down into the depths of the pit, and lifted him out.

Lewis Smedes writes in one of his books, *“When I flopped into nothingness, I fell into the hands of God. I was held and would not be dropped. I was supported and would not sink. I was held together and would not fall apart. I was accepted and could not be rejected. I was loved and would not be despised. I was in hell and God was there for me.” God is for us. That in itself is redemptive.*”

Joseph, and us, find something else. We find that God sees us where we are and lifts us up to where we ought to be. God has the nerve to take the worst thing that evil people have done to us and begin to weave and shape and fashion it so that even the evil becomes a redemptive act of God. God dares to say, on't ever let a trouble go to waste. Use it, redeem it, shape it, fashion it. While he never causes our troubles, neither is he helpless in the middle of trouble.

“In all things God is at work for good for those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.” So be it. Amen.

Loving God, like Joseph, we don't always understand why things happen the way they do; why our plans and dreams fail and we find ourselves facing challenge after challenge, and disappointment after disappointment. Yet, like Joseph, we also believe that you are at work in our lives, and that you have a larger plan and purpose for each one of us. Give us faith to trust in you no matter what challenges we face. Give us courage to place our dreams and ambitions in your hands, and then follow where you lead without hesitation, confident that your loving presence goes with us. Amen.