

JOURNEY THROUGH GENESIS



50 DAYS OF

# *Eastertide*

A DAILY DEVOTIONAL

*by the pastors of First Presbyterian Church of Nashville*

WEEK 7

## DAY 43

SUNDAY, MAY 24

## READ

*Genesis 43*

## REFLECT

These final chapters in the Joseph story can at first glance appear harsh – Joseph accusing his brothers of being spies (though he knew very well they were just hungry), Joseph planting money in their bags and their fear of being accused of theft. Some might just chalk all of this up to a vengeful brother out to get even for the suffering he had endured. However, upon closer examination, one can see that these tests were not just a resentful brother toying with his newfound power, but a loving man seeking to draw his brothers closer to himself and to God by making apparent their sin and broken relationships. Some might say that we already see evidence of that transformation in the hearts of Jacob's sons as they plead with their father to return to Egypt for more grain. There is a solidarity here, a willingness to give themselves (and their children) up for one another that points to a change perhaps incited by Joseph's "severe mercy."

## RESPOND

Are there times in your life, or can you think of stories in the Biblical narrative, where tragedy, discipline, or uncertainty brought you closer to others and to God?

## PRAY

*Father, your ways are not our ways. Teach us to be more attentive to your movement in our midst that we might feel your love, know your grace and pass it on to one another. Amen.*

## DAY 44

MONDAY, MAY 25

## READ

*Genesis 44*

## REFLECT

It's finally happened. Those dreams God gave Joseph back in chapter 37 are coming true. His brothers are bowing before him and begging to be Joseph's slaves. They are even referring to their father as Joseph's servant. All it took was Joseph framing his little brother Benjamin. What could be going through Joseph's mind at this point in the journey? Why the deception? Why does Joseph have his cup planted in Benjamin's sack? Is he trying to get even? Perhaps Joseph is testing his brothers to see if they will abandon Benjamin as they abandoned him. What he discovers is that his big brothers are finally acting like family. Judah begs to take Benjamin's place as Joseph's slave. Remember the words of Jesus in the gospel of John, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." Joseph's brothers are willing to lay down their lives for Benjamin. Joseph has created a situation where his brothers can love and protect Benjamin, and that's exactly what they do. The covid-19 crisis could be doing the same thing for us. This Pandemic offers us a unique chance to love, support, and encourage one another.

## RESPOND

How has this season offered you opportunities to love others as Christ loves us? Who are the people that you are with now that you could love, support, and encourage? What would that look like?

## PRAY

*Loving God, we find ourselves in a place we never expected. Wake us up to the unique opportunity we have today to love others as you love us. Wake us up to the truth that you can bend all things toward your good. And wake us up to the ways you've called us to be a part of it. In the name of Christ Jesus our Lord, Amen.*

TUESDAY, MAY 26

## READ

Genesis 45

## REFLECT

God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. John 3:17 But when the fulness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children.

Galatians 4:4 Three times Joseph says to his brothers, “God sent me.” Verse 5: “. . . to preserve life.” Verse 7: “. . . to preserve for you a remnant.” Verse 8: “It was not you who sent me here, but God. . .” You’ve been reading this saga; you know how Joseph ended up in Egypt. You also know all he has suffered. How could he say, “God sent me here”? Such is faith in the providence of God. Despite injustice, despite suffering, despite human evil that causes injustice and suffering, the believer confesses, “It is God.” It is God, preserving life through his Son. It is God, redeeming his wayward but beloved children. It is God, always sending his children, as he sent his Son, into the world.

## PRAY

*Lord God, I do not presume to understand your ways; I simply believe. Help my unbelief! Overcome my doubt about your ways. Open my heart to your strange providence, clearly revealed in the death of your Son, and prefigured in the life of Joseph. Open our hearts to your summons to us, your children: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.” Send us into the world to preserve life, for this world and the next. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27

## READ

Genesis 46

## REFLECT

The events of Genesis 46 contain a blend of spiritual, emotional and practical dimensions of the journey of Jacob and his family to Egypt. The chapter opens with Jacob setting out on his journey to Egypt with the worship of God at the altar at Beersheba constructed by his father, Isaac. God speaks to Jacob in the night and repeats the promise made to his father to make of Jacob’s family a great nation. God reassures Jacob that He is with Him in His journey to Egypt and that this sojourn is part of God’s plan.

Reassured by God’s promises, Jacob completes his journey to Egypt. There Jacob knows the joy of being reunited with his beloved son, Joseph, whom he had believed to be dead for 22 years. The father and son embrace one another and weep for joy in a tender scene.

Joseph then supervises the very practical issues of his family’s settlement in Egypt. As aliens in Egypt, they may be viewed with suspicion by the Egyptians. Joseph advises his family to present themselves to the Pharaoh as shepherds raising livestock. Shepherds pose less of a threat to the Egyptians than those who raise produce and need Egyptian land.

God’s promises for the blessing of Jacob and his family unfold. The journey to the new land and the blessings of this new life begin with the worship of God and God’s promise of His continuing presence and guidance.

## RESPOND

What new journeys or chapters in your life are you contemplating? What new opportunities do you long for? Have you prayed for God’s guidance and sought His blessings? Pray and listen. What is God saying to you? How is God leading you? Is God saying “go” or “wait” or “proceed slowly”?

## PRAY

*Forgive us, Lord, when we begin our day without praying to You for Your guidance. Help us to see how you are leading us. May we dream Your dreams and embrace Your vision for our lives and our world. Teach us to pray, to listen and to hear. Grant us hearts that are willing to follow wherever You may lead us, trusting in Your steadfast love and faithfulness. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.*

## DAY 47

THURSDAY, MAY 28

## READ

Genesis 47

## REFLECT

## RESPOND

## PRAY

## DAY 48

FRIDAY, MAY 29

## READ

Genesis 48 1-22

## REFLECT

As a pastor of young adults, I can tell you, the concern of a parent of faith, for the faith of a child, is great. A significant amount of time has been spent by young adult pastor's listening to the desires of parents for their children. "I want them to come to church." "I want them to join a small group." "I want them to find a church near their college." It makes sense. When someone has experienced the kind of transformation in their life that only the gospel of Jesus Christ can offer, the most natural response, perhaps the most faithful, would be to desire the same experience for their children.

In this chapter in Genesis, Joseph brings his children before Jacob, to receive a blessing for his children. The scene is a grandfather who has walked in faith; blessing the children of his son, who has walked in faith. It is a beautiful scene that most grandparents, parents, and children, can understand on some level. Below is the blessing that Jacob speaks, rewritten. Consider using this blessing for a child of the faith.

The God before whom Abraham and Isaac walked,  
the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,  
the One who has redeemed me from all sin, bless my child;  
and in them may your name be perpetuated,  
and the name of Jesus Christ be praised,  
and let them grow your Kingdom here on earth.

## RESPOND

Who is a child of the faith that you would consider yourself a parent to? Who has been a parent of the faith to you? Who might you speak this blessing over? Has anyone ever spoken a blessing over you? If you were to write a blessing, for someone's faith who you care deeply, what might you say?

## PRAY

*God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, may you look upon us with favor. May you walk with us as you have walked with our ancestors. Lord of all generations, may we rest in your grace, and live as those who have been called by your Son, Jesus. May our children, the ones in whom we have been called to care for in this world, hear your voice, and follow. Amen.*

SATURDAY, MAY 30

## READ

Genesis 49

## REFLECT

This chapter is a poem that has been inserted into the narrative about Joseph. The poem describes what happens to the tribes of Israel after they return to the promised land. It gives us some historical information about the location and condition of the tribes. Its connection to the narrative is the extended description of Joseph. In his section the promises are being kept by the fruitful well-being of Joseph. God is variously referred to by the metaphors of shepherd and rock, and by the three titles, “Mighty One of Jacob,” “God Almighty” (El Shaddai), and “God of your father.” Verses 25-26 overflow with blessings. The word “blessing” used six times. God has kept his promises and has turned the riches of creation toward his chosen. Through Joseph’s difficult journey of being sold into slavery and unjustly thrown into prison, God has been his shepherd and rock. In Potiphar’s house he learned the language and how to manage an extensive household and properties. In Pharaoh’s prison he learned the political intrigues of the Egyptian court. In those difficult times God Almighty was preparing him for preserving his family and all the people.

## RESPOND

God is our shepherd and rock. When life does not unfold the way we planned it, God has not forsaken us. We have the promise that “I am with you always.” God is with us comforting, guiding, and teaching us. As we finish this journey through Genesis from creation to the establishment of Israel, let us remember that God is bending all to the good through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## PRAY

*Heavenly Father, blessed are you for your compassion surrounds us. Open our eyes that we might see your mighty acts that bless us each day. You are our rock. Guide us through the struggles and joys of life. Through Jesus Christ. Amen*

SUNDAY, MAY 31 - PENTECOST

## READ

Genesis 50

## REFLECT

Jacob has died, and the family has gathered to bury him and mourn his passing. After the burial, they return to Egypt and the first thing the brothers think is, “what if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?”(v.15). Isn’t it fascinating that even after all they’ve been through -- Joseph weeping, inviting them to live in Goshen, providing for them and their families, caring for them for all these years, they are still fearful that he might resent them. They question his forgiveness and grace. They approach Joseph with trepidation and seek his forgiveness once again. And here is where we get that beautiful line we can reorient ourselves to throughout the rest of the Biblical story, “Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones” (v.20-21). Not only does he forgive them, but Joseph can trace the way in which God used their sin to bring about his redemption and salvation for the entire nation of Israel.

## RESPOND

Do you ever find it difficult to trust the forgiveness of God? Are there times when you question God’s grace as Joseph’s brothers questioned his compassion? Ask God to open your heart to receive more of his grace that you might find true peace and rest in the redeeming love of Jesus.

## PRAY

*Lord, I continue to fall short. As I draw near to you and seek forgiveness and restoration, help me to truly receive your mercy that my relationship with you might be even more intimate and I might more readily see you working out your good purposes in my life. In the name of Christ, I pray. Amen.*