

Genesis 50:14-21

Gospel Lessons from Genesis

11/25/18

After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone up with him to bury his father. ¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." ¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: ¹⁷ 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.'" And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.'" Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. ²¹ So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

(Pastor prays)

The book of Genesis has opened my eyes and heart to see God in His goodness and grace, to trust Him in pain and thank Him for His provision. As two years of studying Genesis come to a close, I'm hoping that, here at the end, we can reflect together on some of these significant Gospel lessons we have found in this ancient book.

If you are fairly new to Hickory Grove, part of our philosophy is trusting in the power, authority and sufficiency of God's word. It's why we do the kind of preaching we do. I don't have to be inspiring, because the Bible is already inspired by God. My job is to open it up to God's people that we together might see the glory of His riches and grace found in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus.

Two young women asked me last week why I say "*the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever*" before I preach. Why do I say that each week?

I say that as a reminder so we know God and His grace through how He has revealed Himself to us in His word. These last two years I have loved spending this time with you

in God's word, and today I intend to once again stand on the Bible and proclaim, "Thus sayeth the Lord!"

Let's turn our attention one last time to Genesis and the glory of God's grace. In chapter 49, the end finally comes for the stalwart Jacob. And chapter 50:1 opens with our hero Joseph weeping over his recently departed father. Verse 3 tells us it takes 40 days to embalm him, and all of Egypt weeps for two and one-half months. Joseph gets permission to carry his father back to Canaan to bury him. He made this promise to his father. And in verses 7 and 9 we learn that all the dignitaries of Egypt go with Joseph, as if it were a state funeral, along with horses and chariots. The funeral became such a spectacle that, when they got to the field where they were going, the Canaanites who were living there took notice, and in verse 11 we see that they even renamed it the "Field of Mourning." Verse 14 tells us that once Jacob is buried, they all come home to a new normal. And especially for the brothers. What would life look like now that the patriarch was gone? Was Joseph doing like his uncle Esau, biding his time until his father was dead and then get payback? That's the tension here at the end.

How real is forgiveness and how far does grace really go? As we go through this final scene, I want you to see that...

God's Forgiveness in Christ is Pure and Final

To get there, let's step through and see the Gospel lessons to be learned here at the end.

Never Downplay Sin

To see this point, let's join the brothers in the days after their father's funeral to see them there in verses 15 - 17. Let's read it and allow me to make some comments:

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." ¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: ¹⁷ 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you." And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.'" Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

Let me call your attention to verse 17. Notice the message and especially the admission of the brothers in verse 17. There are three words to pay close attention to:

Transgression, Sin and Evil. This is important because this is the only time in the entire Old Testament that you have these three words piled together in one verse. It's like the brothers took the Old Testament dictionary and turned it upside down and emptied out every known word for the wrong they had done.

They have clearly come to grips with the depth of their offense, even admitting in verse 15 that they deserve punishment. The word evil occurs three times in verses 15, 17, and 20. And in verse 18, the brothers are pleading for their lives, begging to be slaves. They finally awakened to the all-out sinfulness of their sin.

I think this speaks to how American religion is cheating the Gospel of grace. Because you don't understand grace if you don't come to grips with your own sin. We are the brothers who have offended a holy God with our attitudes and ways and disregard and flippancy. We forget that in the holy court of God, we stand accused, tried and condemned. And Jesus, our elder brother, has stepped in and put His head in the hangman's noose that should have been around my neck.

Don't come to God because you want a better life or to be a better man. We come because we realize the terrible things we are and have done and the Hell that we deserve. And we see that Christ has stepped onto the gallows and accepted the punishment as our substitute. And if you see that, what Christ has done on the cross, and you believe that, you will be saved. Even our language of Salvation - saved, delivered, rescued - reminds us of the self-inflicted trouble we were in and the unbelievable salvation there is in Christ. When you cheapen sin, you weaken grace and you mock the Gospel. Never downplay Sin.

Leave Vengeance to God

Revenge is not sweet, revenge is a dog licking up anti-freeze. It's sweet but deadly. Let's go to the story for the lesson.

It's here in verses 17 - 19. Look again at Joseph's response. Am I in the place of God? Joseph understood human limitations; not only that, he directs their attention away from himself and says, "it's not me you have to deal with." Only God has the right to exact vengeance. Only God can ultimately and finally do something with evil. Isn't that what Paul meant in Romans 12:19 when he said *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the*

Lord.” Or even what he says in 1 Thessalonians 5:15, See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

Yesterday I was reading Revelation 13 - 14 about how those without Christ drink the wine of God's wrath poured full strength into the cup of his anger. About how they will be tormented with fire and the smoke of their torment will go on forever and ever. It sounds terrible. Look at it like this, if the person who offended you is a Christian, then he is God's child and God will discipline him and if the person is not a Christian then he will drink the full cup of God's wrath in Hell. Either way, the vengeance is God's. Never downplay your own sin. And leave vengeance to God.

See God's Providence in Painful Things

Here is the great central theme of the second half of Genesis and the defining theme in Joseph's life and I hope it will be in yours. Let's go to verse 20 and dissect it. *As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.* In the first part, Joseph recognized and declared that what the brothers did, from their intentions to their actions, was evil. It was painful, destructive and humiliating.

The second part of verse 20, is Joseph saying: God was doing something bigger that I didn't know and I couldn't see and what He was doing was good. It's the same truth found in the Gospel's description of Judas in Matthew 26:24. What happened at the cross was planned by God and predicted for saving people. And God used Judas's betrayal as part of the plan and yet Judas was fully responsible for his sin.

This reminds us that God has all the strings. And in Genesis 50:20, there is a two-word phrase that liberates us from worry and confusion. Let's go back to it. *As for you, you meant evil against me. And it was real evil, painful evil. “But God,” there it is. “But God.” “But God” is the Gospel. Draw a straight line from Genesis 50:20 over to Ephesians 2:1-5, And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—*

“But God” is the Gospel. You were lost, but God found you. You were filthy, but God cleansed you. You were abused, but God healed you. And that brings me to the final lesson.

Rejoice in Grace

In verse 21 as Joseph extends grace and security and forgiveness to his brothers. *So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.* He comforted them and spoke kindly to them and he did so even though they had been so evil.

We've said all along that Joseph has served as a sort of foreshadowing of Jesus Christ, pointing us forward to the grace found in Jesus. There are four phrases in verse 21 that I would like to look at.

Do not fear - that is the perfect love of Jesus that cast out fear.

Provide for you - that is a righteousness you can't earn and a debt you can't pay.

Comfort - The Lord is close to the broken hearted.

Kindness - The Lord's kindness brings us to repentance.

Grace. Christianity is grace. The Gospel is grace. Come to the cross of Jesus. Jesus died taking the judgment so that sinners might receive grace.

(Pastor prays)