

Joseph

Good Morning

Some words from Psalm 145:8-11,....

'The Lord is gracious and merciful,....slow to anger and abounding in love....

The Lord is good to all,....and His compassion is over all that He has made....

All your works shall give thanks to you,....

O Lord,....and all your faithful shall bless you....

They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom,....and tell of your power....

This week's Hero from the Bible is Joseph, the guy with the fancy coat....

I chose Joseph because Alison and I have just been reading about him in Genesis....

It struck me how forgiving he was....You may ask yourself,....'why have you only just thought that?....

But it is one of those things that you read repeatedly,....and the penny drops....

After all that happened to him,....after all that he went through,....he still recognised the God was in control....Right from the outset,....Joseph was the 'chosen one'....

The manager of Tottenham Hotspurs Football Club,....Jose Mourinho,....calls himself 'the special one' because he believes he is....Yes he is a very good manager, and has been successful in the past,...but he has confidence in his own ability,....something all great leaders have....

So, on the face of it,Joseph looks like he came from a good family background

He was the favourite of all his Dads son's,being born to his Dads favourite wife

He was favourite because of a direct result of God answering his Mum's prayer

But, when we look deeper into the family background,...they weren't what you might call a conventional family...

We can see they had some exceptionally large skeletons in the cupboard....

Let us start with Joseph's Dad,....who's name was Jacob meaning 'deceiver', had cheated his older brother out of his inheritance,....then had to runaway from his angry brother to find himself a wife....

Jacob found Rachel,. Joseph's mum, and fell head over heels in love with her....

Rachel's Dad Laban,....made a promise of marriage to Jacob but deceived him,....into marrying his older less attractive daughter,....Leah instead of Rachel

By the time Joseph came along,....Jacob had ten other sons by Leah....

Keeping up so far??

Two of Joseph's older brothers,....Simeon and Levi,....committed mass murder,....while his eldest brother had sex with one of his father's wives....

When Joseph was 12 ish,....his Mum Rachel died,....and that is how he became Dads favourite son....

This is where the fancy coat comes in....His Dad made the coat for his favourite son to indicate that he was indeed special,....and that he didn't have to work....

This angered the other brothers and they plotted to kill Joseph....

If this were a modern day family,....social services would be working overtime.

They certainly would not be able to work for the church,....they are too much of a risk....

But if you are willing;....and allow God to take control,....it does not matter how or where you start from,....or the journey,....it's the finish that counts....

The dreams Joseph had,....and shared with his brothers that angered them so much,.... were God given....

Gen.37:5-7,9 – Joseph had a dream,....and when he told his brothers,....they hated him all the more....

He said to them,...."listen to this dream I had:....we were binding sheaves of corn out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose up and stood upright,while your sheave gathered round mine and bowed down to it...."

Then he had another dream,....and he told it to his brothers...."Listen," he said,...."I had another dream and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me...."

If you know and love the Lord,....ask Him to reveal His dream for your life....

Joseph didn't wake up one morning and think 'I need a dream for my life....'
This was God initiated....

In the musical *'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dream Coat,'*....the theme song has the words *'any dream will do,'*....

Well,....that is not strictly true,....any dream won't do....

We need a God dream,....a God vision,....not a dream because we ate too much cheese the night before....

We all dream,....we dream all the time,....some dreams are remembered ,....but most are forgotten,....but we need God to initiate His dream for our life....

In 1 Corinthians 2:9-10,....Paul quotes Isaiah:....'**No eye has seen no ear has heard and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him – but God has revealed it to us by His Holy Spirit....**

So, what was the purpose of these dreams,....what did they mean,....how was it all going to work?....It was part of Joseph's training....

If you pray 'Lord give me Your dream for my life,....be prepared to do some training....

Moses was wondering in the desert for 40 years,....Joseph had 13 years training,....the disciples were fast tracked with only 3 years training....

Just pray that your training doesn't mean you have to go through slavery and prison to be used by God....

Joseph was probably about 17 years old when he was sold into slavery....

As you might expect,....because of the way his father brought him up,....and his new coat,....Joseph thought of himself a cut above the rest....

He had an attitude of prideful superiority.....That is why his training took as long as it did....

His brothers didn't kill him,....as we know,....they sold him to traders,....the traders sold him to the Egyptians,....and he ended up in the care of Potiphar,one of the officers to Pharaoh....

From there he worked himself up through the ranks of the household until he was trusted to run the entire house for Potiphar....Potiphar trusted Joseph....

At the start of being in Egypt,....Joseph worked hard....as he worked hard,more responsibility was given to him,....the more responsibility,....the harder he worked....

Until;....Potiphar's wife,....well,....we all know what happened there don't we?

She tried to entice him into her bed and he ran from her rather than be tempted.....

Something very commendable for a young man of his age to do....

So we know Joseph trusted God,....he is a forgiving guy,....and now,....loyal to his employer....

Loyalty these days is a hard trait to find in many people....

With big companies that advertise on T.V. say,....'If you are a new customer you can save X amount of pounds....

But if you are an existing customer of some years standing,....you don't get refunds for being loyal,....you get price increases on your bill....

Unfortunately for Joseph,....for his loyalty,....he was thrown into prison....

Have you ever been in a situation where you have worked hard,....only for someone else to rip your work to shreds?....

How did it make you feel?

For me,....I would have been very angry and frustrated at the injustice that had been delivered to me....

But you can't fight the system,....can you?

Well,...no,...not on your own you can't....**But with God all things are possible,**
...Matt 19:26....

God has a greater purpose for our lives,...to glorify Him and to help others
...He is not interested in exalting us just so we can feel better about ourselves.

The apostle Paul said in Eph 2:10,...'**It is God Himself who made us what we are and given us new lives from Christ Jesus;...and long ages ago He planned that we should spend these lives in helping others'**....

Although it may seem that God has abandoned Joseph,...He (God) is still working in his (Joseph's) circumstances....

Joseph didn't throw his dummy out of the pram,...(well he may have done, ...but not for long)....He worked the situation he was in in to his favour,...he continued to trust God....

I'm a big fan of the original Star Wars movies....in a scene from The Empire Strikes Back,...headstrong young Jedi knight,...Luke Skywalker,...has started his training to be a Jedi Knight....

As he is half way through his training,...he finds out that his friends,...Han Solo and Princess Leia need to be rescued from the evil Empire....

He wants to cut his training short,...but his mentors,...Obi Wan Kenobi and Yoda try and persuade him to complete his training....That is the most important thing to do....

So,...in good Hollywood fashion,...Luke Skywalker cuts his training short and flies off to rescue his friends....

Because it is a Hollywood film,...everything turns out ok,...because that is just a film,...and in films you can do what you want....

Real life is totally different isn't it??

Joseph had to complete God's training programme so that He could trust Joseph to do the job he had for him....

And that is the same for us....Whatever the difficulties we are facing,...it maybe part of the training programme that God has you on....Do not misunderstand me, not everything disastrous that happens to us is God's

training programme,....but it is for us all to ask God what dream He has for us....

R.T Kendall in his book *God Meant It For Good*,....identifies 'total forgiveness' as a primary lesson from the life of Joseph....

Charles Swidoll,....in his book, *Joseph, A Man of Integrity and forgiveness*, .writes:

Here is one of God's 'greats',....a life lived,....high above the all-too common reactions of rage,....resentment and revenge....

Here is one who deliberately chose to overlook unfair offences,....to overcome enormous obstacles,.... And model a virtue that is fast becoming lost in our hostile age – forgiveness'....

Dave Smith,....Senior Pastor of KingsGate Community Church in Peterborough, in his book,....*Living The Dream, Lessons From the Life of Joseph*, writes: **'The significance of passing the forgiveness test is huge....If we want to live the dream,....it is essential that we live free from offence.....**

Nothing will block us from realising our dream more effectively than unforgiveness,....bitterness and resentment....

Joseph learnt this principle,....and was able to move on with God's plan rather than his own,....and God blessed him!

So,....how do we take the example of Joseph,....and apply it to our own lives??

You may ask yourself the question - Surely times are different now,....the rules don't apply in the same way,....do they? Why should we stick to the rules,no one else does!

We have either said those things or have heard people say them....

But at what point did Joseph say 'why should I stick to the rules?....He didn't!

He tried to do the best he could in all circumstances....He took his lead from God....

Again,....I have heard people say,....God doesn't talk to me in that way!....God talks to all of us in the same way as He always has,....through His Word,through our Circumstances,....and through His People....

God's Word was just as relevant in Joseph's time as it is for us today,....only difference is,....we have the full story,....the complete collection at our disposal.

What are your circumstances saying to you at the moment?....If you are not sure,....ask the Lord to help....

It doesn't matter how much or how little we know God,....the exciting thing is He knows us completely....

In the circumstances Joseph was in,....he had dreams,....but also,....God revealed the interpretation to him as well,....the interpretation went on to save thousands of lives in and around Egypt....

Joseph is one of God's people,....and God use him to interpret Pharaoh's dreams,....that lead to the thousands of people surviving the famine....

Just as God used Jonah,....Nehemiah,....Joseph,....what about you,....me,....US?

Is it possible there might be some unforgiveness that you need to repent of?

For me,....YES there is,....and that is what God has been working on,....in me recently....

I feel very angry and frustrated about a particular situation,....that I just need to let go of,....but it has been difficult....Can anyone relate to this?

The lesson,....lessons,....I think God is helping me to grasp is,....Joseph didn't blame anyone,....not even himself....He didn't point the finger,....or say why me,....and when he forgave,....it was indeed total forgiveness....That is why God blessed him!

My pray for you is that God will bring you to a place where you can be open and honest with Him and yourself,....to be able to dump all the hurt and pain anyone has ever caused you and forgive,....TOTALLY!

Go forth into the world in peace:....be of good courage;....hold fast that which is good;....render to no one evil for evil;....strengthen the faint hearted;....support the weak;....help the afflicted;....honour all people;....love and serve the Lord;....rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit....Amen.

