**“A Miracle of Miracles”**

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Genesis 39:1-21

Luke 22:31-51

 Lenten Midweek 3

**SERMON READING** Genesis 39:1-21

Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. **The Lord was with Joseph**, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. **His master saw that the Lord was with him** and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. So Joseph **found favor in his sight** and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, **the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field**. So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, “Lie with me.” But he refused and said to his master's wife, “Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me **except you, because you are his wife**. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.

But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, she caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me.” But he left his garment in her hand and **fled and got out of the house**. And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house, she called to the men of her household and said to them, “See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house.” Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home, and she told him the **same story**, saying, “The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house.”

As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, “This is the way your servant treated me,” his anger was kindled. And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. **But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison**.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

Luther called this “A **Miracle of Miracles**”. That Joseph doesn’t lose hope … that Joseph doesn’t lose faith … that Joseph doesn’t **give in** to temptation and lose his virginity, even, in a shameful and wicked sin—**that is** “A Miracle of Miracles”.

**3**

Don’t forget that Joseph was a mere boy at the time of this story. Or **was this boy a man?** He was seventeen, and his brothers had just sold him off to the Ishmaelites. We’re not told how old he was when he rose to such prominence in the house of Potiphar, but maybe eighteen he was by then. He was handsome we’re told. And **of a kind of character and faith and wisdom** that few men of any age possess.

**The devil attacked him from two directions**. He tempted him to doubt and despair (forgotten and forsaken by God he could have thought, betrayed by brothers so maybe also God). It would have been easy to abandon God (**back** as he could have thought was happening), abandon all that he’d been taught by his father about God. It would have been easy to hate—his own family and the God who was supposed to be loving even if no one else is.

Beyond that, his boss’ wife tried to seduce him every day. He could have fallen easily to that temptation one might think: “What harm would it have caused” he could have thought? “Who’d ever know?” As Luther said of it: “Joseph **spurned and rejected an opportunity that was, both, seemingly convenient and safe: pleasure without consequence**”. But he **doesn’t give in to either**. He knew sexual immorality for what it was, so said, “How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

From where did Joseph get that kind of clarity about right and wrong and strength of character? He pre-dated the documented 10 Commandments, so hadn’t the formal 6th Commandment on sexual purity clearly identified. Joseph didn’t have a Bible open and learn from at that time in history. All he had was the Law of God written in his heart and that no doubt shared with him by his father. Yet, just with that, **“A Miracle of Miracles” happened:** **faith with faithfulness reigned in a young man**. Two thousand years before the Apostle Paul instructed the Corinthian Church to “**flee from sexual immorality because your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit**”, Joseph had already fled from that and **knew his body as God’s temple (not his toy to play with)**.

**2**

**For us**, it’s **written**. **For us**, it’s **taught and preached**. Because temptations toward despair and sexual immorality and adultery, we’ve got Scripture to clarify right and wrong. Potiphar’s wife kinds of things (with suggestions of sexual sin seemingly without consequences) is most everywhere presented. **She** is on TV and the internet and Satan never quits seeking to violate chastity and purity in God’s people, always trying to **destroy faith and faithfulness**.

And, so, we have **this with Joseph** tonight. The Bible made a document of it eventually (God told Moses of it to write down), and it’s honest (and brutally so) to hits very close, maybe even, to **our secret struggles**. And Joseph’s faith and refusal to sin **how it was made available** shows **perseverance in a faith “contended with”** **and, even, persecuted for**. Joseph got **jailed** for his unwillingness to **go along and sin, persecuted for faith**.

**1**

**Jesus** is the **much greater Joseph**. Tempted **in all ways that we are**, yet **without sin at all, He** never found **faithfulness to the Father’s mission** anything to mess with. **He never did fall**. Though thousands of Potiphar’s wives certainly offer themselves to Him in lots of ways, He “contended” and won, as our substitute in that task. Where we fail, Jesus succeeded. **He stood firmly faithful**. When we show weakness, **He demonstrated perfect strength**.

And (“**Miracle of Miracles**”), **He took on Himself our weakness**. All our guilt **He assumed, returning to us for that (through baptism) His purity (in fact)**. **He** **bore what was our sins and forgives us for them by His blood**. **He accepted the Heavenly Father’s appropriate wrath for sin** and **samples to us the sweet taste of His victory over death and damnation, saving us from it**. He **took our punishment and died the death we deserve** to **raise us up to live forever as He does**.

Like Joseph (but **so much the more**), **Jesus submitted Himself to Divine Law and His Father in Heaven**. Like Joseph (but **so much the more**), **Jesus delivered the Gospel and proclaimed it to all (receive it or not), casting out demons, cleansing lepers, giving sight to those blind, stilling storms and raising some who had died to life (showing His authority to do even that)**. Yet, for Him shouts of praise gave way to a call for “Crucifixion”. He “came to His own, but too many (if any of His own) did not receive Him”. He was betrayed with a kiss. He was denied by His closest.

The worst, **Jesus got**. **Joseph got** jailed. **We** can’t expect **earthly accolades** for faith and faithfulness … just **Heaven’s reward**.

This **world won’t note** **(probably)** the times that you stood against temptation (“character best shown when you’re showing it” apart from earthly eyes). Succeeding in being sexually pure and decent by the grace of God, **you won’t hear (likely)** the earth cheering in your ears, yet angels will notice. Luther’s words: “You must never hope that the world will acknowledge your faithfulness (your resistance of sin”) and be ready for your faithfulness to **land you in prison or worse**, since it did Joseph and the Lord.

But **the “Miracle of Miracles” is this: that you can know yourself (even your body) precious to the Lord God. Baptized, the Lord God made you (your flesh) His home and Temple. You are the Lord’s … all of you. You are His. You (in entirety) are redeemed by Christ who was crucified to do that**. Amen.