**“God DOES Have a Plan”**

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Genesis 45:1-15

Luke 23:26-47

Lenten Midweek 6

**SERMON READING** Genesis 45:1-15

Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, “Make everyone go out from me.” So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

So Joseph said to his brothers, “Come near to me, please.” And they came near. And he said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So 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. Hurry 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 tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.’ And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.” Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

Through trial and, even, tragedy, we’re encouraged by the reminder that “**God has a plan, despite the sometimes chaos of circumstance**”. Though that fact of His plan might be **hard to believe**, it is **still a fact**. Sometimes, we hesitate to say those words, as hard as they are to believe and count on. Yet **they are factual**, and “all things work for good to those who are God’s”. Romans 8 states the case of it … and it is **ours assured but not always clear**.

Last Wednesday, **what** we missed hearing in the story of Joseph (because of the bad weather expected) was **the repentance of a bunch of brothers**. Tonight, **what we get to hear** is the **good forgiveness and grace and mercy shown by a wronged brother who could, then, deliver an abundance of good from that reinstated brotherhood**. **God had a plan all along in the life and story of Joseph and his brothers**. **God had a plan**, and **energized that plan** for the Good of everyone … including you and me.

**GOD HAS A PLAN STILL**

**1**

If there’s a **theme** emerging from this travel with Joseph, it’s that **God has a plan**. He always **did** and He always **will**. The very theme for **this season** (and **all seasons in the Good News of the Gospel**) is **God’s plan**, and **it unfolded**. But His plan can often seem **hidden** from us (so it’s right to **observe it** in this MEGA way). We **see** or **hear** or **experience** one thing (maybe terrible). Yet **in, with, and under even a terrible thing, God’s doing a thing that’s His—unfolding Good for His people and the histories of this world from everything else**. The jealousy and hatred of Joseph’s brothers resulted in them doing something horrible (selling their own flesh and blood into slavery … evil). Yet **God was at work**, setting the stage (preparing) for saving the world, ensuring the survival of Abraham’s descendants and the “Seed” of woman promised upon the Fall of Adam / Christ who’d one day be born to die as sacrifice.

Joseph’s brothers were **unknowing parts** of God’s plan. Not that they did it **by God’s will**, but that **God used even their evil for an end that was eternally Good for mankind**. And tonight’s reading in Genesis describes a reunion those brothers **never saw coming**. A high-ranking official they’d never **expect, nor recognize for the moment**, terrified them / shocked them, jaw-dropping them at the words “I **am Joseph**”. With that, they (no doubt) thought the worst in retribution and punishment, yet in one sentence Joseph gave them the Good News that **their evil plan and God’s Good plan unfolded simultaneously: “Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here**, for **God sent me before you to preserve life**.” Joseph told his brothers: “**You sold me**, but **God sent me**”.

So, **which is it?** Did evil happen and just that got documented or did God send Joseph down the path he went? Was Joseph’s life victimized with evil and lousy circumstance or was God saving the world from the hunger of famine through him? The accurate answer to all of those questions is “**yes**” **… both happened and God’s plan over-rode the other in eternal (and even temporal) significance**. The answer wasn’t, just, “yes” to **either** of those two possibilities (evil circumstance and God’s plan), but **both**. What a wondrous example of the fact of **God’s over-riding control for the benefit of His own people / you and me**.

**2**

God has **always had a plan** … He always **still does** (and is **continuing to work it out in our faith in His completed plan**). Tonight’s reading makes it clear that (at the heart of God’s plan) is forgiveness. The entire process moved forward and hinged upon **forgiveness** (it always had). God’s desire to forgive Adam and Eve and their children, then Joseph’s treatment of his brothers is **profoundly forgiving**. Forgiveness **looks like** what’s happening here (in the text). Joseph (the second most powerful man in the world) forgives where he didn’t have to. Before him knelt was revenge “handy”, retribution fair, and what did Joseph do? Through eyes filled with tears of love, Joseph forgives **guilty** brothers. He **spoke tenderly** to brothers set upon harming him (forgetting him), and kisses every last brother of his, plus telling them also the Good News that **God has a plan**.

What if Joseph **hadn’t** forgiven them**?** What if Joseph did what’s comes naturally in a sinful world, **seeking vengeance?** Or, what if he **spoke** forgiveness, yet sent them back empty-handed for slow starvation**?** What if he’d **imprisoned them** and made them **earn** some good outcome**?**

If Joseph **didn’t forgive** his brothers, then God’s plan has to take another course (maybe not a straight path, or itself get imperiled). Forgiveness of you and I gets challenged if Joseph **doesn’t forgive**. The “Seed” of woman through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah is **put at risk** by this one moment in time if Joseph **doesn’t forgive sins committed against him**. If Joseph **doesn’t forgive**, what happens to the cross of Good Friday**?**

**3**

The crucifixion scene is **hinted at** **and pointed to** by Joseph with his brothers. The world’s most powerful man (Christ, God’s Son) hangs from a Roman tool of torture, beaten, bloody, and pained with every breath. As He looks down from there, brothers he sees who did that / disciples who didn’t even bother to come. Abandoned, even by the Father, He’s surrounded by those who hate Him, mocking Him, and hoping for His death to come conveniently for their schedule. Yet **Jesus submits to that (the Godhead’s plan to save the world)**. Instead of revenge, He prays: “Father, **forgive** them, for they know not what they do”. He sheds His own blood right before their gleeful eyes and dies for brothers and sisters including us. This is, again, **what forgiveness looks like**. God has a plan—and **THAT’S IT**.

The plan had been **underway from the beginning** (since **well before Joseph**)—God knew what Adam and Eve’s self-made dilemma would be. His plan was **hidden** in the evil of Judas and Herod and Pilate, scribes and Pharisees, and a mass who wanted Jesus crucified. And nails were, just, **sin in the form of metal**. **Our sin** bound the flesh of God’s Son to a crossbar of cruelty. Yet **in, with, and under that terrible thing, God did His wonderful thing: “God, in Christ, reconciled the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them**.”

**That** (by the way) is the best News we’ll ever hear. It means **we won’t get what we deserve**—but **grace**. Like brothers of Joseph with consciences heavy and shock upon the fact of our sin facing us, Jesus (our brother) **forgives us**. He **speaks tenderly to us** (where He doesn’t have to) through the proclaiming of His Good promises upon us. He **comforts us with salvation accomplished and promised “for us”**. He **serves us (flesh and blood)** and **saves us by it**.

From this **grand plan of salvation** is **God’s individual plan for you and me**. He **has a plan (because of His accomplished plan) for your life because of it**. It’s not a random series of events (actions and reactions and cause and effect) but **in, with, and under what’s that is His control**. Your baptism is (among other things) **God’s** **declaration that He’ll have His Good way with you overall**. And we, who’ve been forgiven so much, understand that God’s plan **includes our forgiveness of others**. To **refuse to** works against God’s plan, and **we imperil** what God works for ourselves and others.

Forgiveness is not “**trite**” (and I enjoy that word for what God’s plan and work is **not** / nor our Good work in Him). It’s **truthful** and **a comfort** / **useful in an eternal kingdom: God’s plan for you, centering your life in the life and forgiving work of your Savior**. Joseph’s trials have to remind you not to worry when brothers betray you or when temptations come. When it **seems** that your life is wasted or worthless, lonely and challenging, **remember** Joseph imprisoned through his twenties. We can’t see all God is planning and working in us, but we can **believe it**. **Trust** that He is working (as He always has) for and in those within His covenant (baptized believers). He’s working for your eternal Good through the life, death, then resurrection of Jesus (our Lord and Savior). **He’s done it and it affects you now (this day) and forever**. Amen.