

Place Lurgan Baptist 9:5:2010

GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD

Reading: Genesis 45:1-28

9. I AM JOSEPH

I heard the story of an English boy from Liverpool. One day he went for a swim. He stripped off his clothes and ran into the water. It was not long before he found himself carried by the tide out into the sea. *He struggled long and hard, but was not able to swim against the ebbing tide.* At last he was picked up by a boat that was bound for Dublin. The sailors were good to him giving him clothes to wear and food to eat. That evening a man was walking along the shore and found the boy's clothes lying on the beach. Inside the boy's coat he found his name on a piece of paper by which he discovered who the clothes belonged to. The man assumed the boy had drowned and with a heavy heart went to break the news to his parents. He said to the father, *"I'm very sorry to tell, I found these clothes on the shore, and could not find the lad to whom they belonged. I almost fear he has been drowned."* The father could not speak. He was so overcome with grief, the mother was wild with sorrow. They searched and searched for the boy, but he was nowhere to be found. It was a sad hour as one can imagine. A memorial service was planned, and the mother spent her time crying, while the father was silent in grief.

Meanwhile, the boy was transferred in Dublin to a ship bound for Liverpool. The ship arrived on the day the memorial service was planned. As soon as the boy reached Liverpool he headed for home. At last he came to the hall door and knocked. When the servant opened the door, she screamed with joy, and shouted to the mourners that were gathered, *"Here is Master Tom."* The father rushed to the door and burst into tears. The mother so overcome, fainted. My ... if you can imagine that story, maybe you can imagine what it must have been like for old Jacob, when he received the news, that Joseph, his son was alive. For twenty two years he has believed that his son was dead, but then there came the news that he was alive. **Think of it.** Twenty two long years had passed since Joseph was separated from his family, by the hostility and jealousy of his brothers, but now Joseph and his brothers are reconciled, reunited, never again to be parted. You see, there are those moments in life when it seems that suddenly the clock stops and the action freezes. One moment in time when things, will never be the same again. This was a moment like that. What made it such a moment ? Well, notice here,

(1) THE REVELATION OF JOSEPH: WONDER

When those ten brothers heard the words, *"I am Joseph,"* (45:3) it was like being hit with a powerful electric shock. Leupold says, *"The simple statement 'I am Joseph,' must have come like a thunderclap out of a clear sky on these unsuspecting men."* Now Joseph knew his brothers before they knew him. They would not have known him if he had not revealed himself to them. John said about the Lord

Jesus, “ *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.* ” (Jn 1:10) The way Joseph reveals himself to those who knew him not, is the same way Christ reveals himself. You see, this was,

(a) A PRIVATE REVELATION:

The revelation was between Joseph and his brothers. *Why did he put the Egyptians out ?* Because he didn’t want them to know of his brothers past behaviour. Do you see what Joseph was doing ? He was actually protecting his brothers. There was no telling what the Egyptians might have done to Joseph’s brothers had they found out what they had done to their hero. Such a discovery would have jeopardized the entire future of the coming nation of Israel. So Joseph made sure that no one but family was in attendance. There are those times when family matters need to be addressed and no one but family members need to be present. (a) *Is this not how the Lord Jesus reveals Himself to you and me ?* He does it privately in our hearts, in our soul with that still small voice. One moment they knew Joseph as Zaphnath-paaneah “ *the Saviour of the world,* ” but they next moment they knew him as “ *Joseph your brother.* ” After all the events that led up to this encounter, you might think that Joseph would have had a long and impassioned to give to his brothers but he didn’t.

All he says is, “ *I am Joseph.* ” Why not call everyone in and expose these men for their jealousy and cruelty ? But Joseph didn’t do that. He had the attitude that Peter described when he spoke of a love that covers a multitude of sins. (1 Pet 4:8) You know, there are some folk in

every church that just seem to have the ability to find something bad about everyone. They have ears like rubbish bins. They just gather up all the bad. They just go around pickling up the rubbish and finding fault. And when they find it, they expose it. Now that’s not love. Love does not rejoice in iniquity. (1 Cor 13:5) Love wishes it never happened. Love tries to cover it up. *That does not mean we condone sin, we just cover it.* (a)

(b) A PASSIONATE REVELATION:

For we read “ *And Joseph wept aloud,* ” (45:2) “ *Moreover he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them.* ” (45:15) There are seven different occasions recorded in Scripture where Joseph wept. Men are not supposed to weep, but here is the most powerful man in all Egypt, the Saviour of starving nations, the man whose dreams came true, again and again and he weeps. Do you recall that Nehemiah, was the man who took upon himself the project to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem ? Do you know how that project started ? It started when Nehemiah “ *sat down and wept.* ” (Neh 1:4) We do not want to develop any false “ *art of weeping,* ” but tears can be a true test of what kind of a heart we have. Tell me what a man cries at and I’ll tell the kind of man he is. “ *Tell me, Sexton, what do you think was the success of McCheyne’s preaching ?* ” said the man being shown around the famous young preacher’s church in Dundee. Taking him to the pulpit he said to the man, “ *Weep, sir, and when there is a pool of tears around your feet you will have found the secret of Robert Murray McCheyne’s preaching.* ”

When was the last time you and I shed genuine tears for the lost ? Oh, for tear filled eyes, oh for sleepless eyes because of the imminent danger and doom of the lost.

(c) A PLAIN REVELATION:

Look if you will at (45:3) That's all it took. That's all they needed to hear, no explanation, exposition, just simply, "*I am Joseph.*" Did you know that the gospel is just that simple and just that plain ? Many centuries later a fiery Jew was marching north along the Damascus road from Jerusalem as fast as his goaded camel could go. You see, in Damascus there were those who were daring to proclaim that Jesus of Nazareth, a crucified man was actually the Messiah and Saviour of the world. That dangerous cult must be stamped out thought Saul of Tarsus as he urged his camel on that day, hurrying north as the official agent of the Sanhedrin to root heresy out of Damascus. Then came a blinding light and Saul of Tarsus, smitten from the beast lay prostrate on the ground. "*Who art thou, Lord, ?*" he cried. Back came the simple answer, "*I am Jesus.*" (Acts 9:5) That was all.

One moment Saul was a sinner, the next he was a saint, one moment a blasphemer, the next a believer. "**I am Joseph,**" "**I am Jesus.**" My do we not try to make salvation so complicated at times ? We arm ourselves with proof texts, with "*the four spiritual laws,*" with arguments, with proved methods. But with God it is all so simple. "*I am Jesus.*" You see, when the time is ripe, the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to the sinner's soul in such a simple way and the work is done.

(d) A POWERFUL REVELATION:

For Joseph sees God in it all. "*And God sent me before you to preserve you posterity in the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.*" (45:7) It was all of God alone. Joseph said it, believed it, and lived it. "*Not you but God.*" My Joseph is a wonderful real life illustration of the biblical doctrine of God's providence. You see, through the events of his life Joseph understood that God sovereignly orders all things that comes to pass and preserves the lives of his creatures for His purposes. In both his triumphs and tragedies Joseph was able to see through his circumstances and find the Lord at work behind the scenes. He understood the concept that Paul wrote about in (Rom 8:28) "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.*" Joseph always seems to be conscious of God in his life. He refused the invitation of Potiphar's wife because he recognized that it would be a "*sin against God.*" (39:7) He refused to exalt himself when interpreting Pharaoh's dream, instead insisting that "*God shall give Pharaoh an answer.*" (41:16)

Now he refuses to take vengeance upon his brothers for selling him as a slave. **Why ?** Well, he now knows that the Lord had it in mind all along. He understood that he wasn't just sold by his brothers, he was sent by God. He saw Divine providence more than Devilish persecutions in his trials. "*But as for you ye thought evil against me but God meant it unto good.*" (50:20) What ? Good. I am reminded of the story of a man who was shipwrecked on an uninhabited island. He managed to get a few meager

belongings together that had washed up on shore after the shipwreck, and built a little hut to protect those things and himself from the sun, rain and wind. For weeks the only thing he had for company was the hot sun, the cold rain and dark nights. *He prayed every day that a ship would come, but nothing came.* Then late one evening he went out to look for food, and he noticed across the island a cloud of smoke rising where his hut was. He ran back terrified, to find that his little hut was going up in flames. His campfire had caught fire to the hut and not only burned up the hut but what few possessions he had were all gone. He went to sleep that night crying out to God, asking him, “ *Why has this happened to me ? Why did you let the tent burn ? Why did you even cause me to lose everything I had ?* ” Well, early next morning he awoke to find a ship anchored off the island, the rescue he had been praying for. Still trying to believe his eyes, he heard footsteps and turned around, and there were some men from that ship who had come to rescue him. He said, “ *How in the world did you find me ?* ” They said, “ *We were just passing by and saw your smoke signal and came to rescue you.* ”

My God can take a fire and turn it into a light that delivers you from darkness. He can take a flood and turn it into a river of blessing. He can take a brother's hatred and turn it into a nation's salvation. Like Joseph do you have an attitude that sees God as the First Cause in everything ? Do you live with this eternal perspective ? We don't always understand or particularly like what God arranges, but we understand the fact that He is in charge and we bow to His sovereignty. (1)

(2) THE OBLIGATION TO JOSEPH: WITNESS

You see, no sooner were these brothers forgiven, when they were given certain responsibilities. The sequence of events here is worth noting. **(1) The Revelation:** “ *I am Joseph.* ” **(2) The Invitation:** “ *Come near to me.* ” **(3) The Reconciliation:** “ *Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves.* ” **(4) The Obligation:** “ *Go up,* ” (45:9) “ *This do ye,* ” (45:17) “ *This do ye,* ” (45:19) You might say they were given a ministry. Conversion is always followed by a calling. Salvation is always followed by service. A change of life leads to a commitment of life. These brothers had discovered a life of abundance. Their father and the rest of the family were still down in Canaan suffering from the famine. They were to go and bring them back to enjoy what they had found. *Is this not our ministry ?* Are we not to go to family, to friends, to the fallen and tell them of the life of abundance in Christ ? Did you notice here,

(a) THE PERSON THEY WERE TO EXALT:

Joseph's brothers were to speak about Joseph. Their message was to glorify Joseph, for Joseph instructed them to “ *tell my father of all my glory.* ” (45:13) Do you know what they were to say about Joseph ? They were to proclaim that ***Joseph was Risen:*** “ *And they told him (Jacob) saying Joseph is yet alive.* ” (45:26) That was the best news that Jacob had ever heard in all of his long life. I want to tell you that the greatest news that you will ever hear in all of your life is that God's Son is risen.

They were to proclaim that **Joseph was Ruling:** They told Jacob “ *he is governor over all the land of Egypt.* ” (45:26) Is this not the kind of preaching and witnessing we need today ? My our message is about a person, our Lord Jesus Christ crucified, risen, exalted, and able to save. Do what we are doing today ? Plunging frantically in all directions trying to popularize the gospel. The Ichabod Memorial Church decides to pack them in with folk music. And then they say over at Ephesus “ *Well, we’ll try a T.V. personality.* ” Then over at Laodicea they have a talking horse. I read about one of those horses some time ago. They asked him how many commandments and he stomped ten times. How many apostles ? He stomped twelve times. Some nit wit in the crowd asked, “ *How many hypocrites are there in this church ?* ” The old horse went into a dance on all fours. My have we got away from speaking about Christ ? Its Christ not politics, its Christ not football, its Christ not entertainment. (a)

(b) THE PROVISION THEY WERE TO EXPERIENCE:

For we read “ *And Joseph gave them wagons and gave them provision for the way.* ” (45:21) It would not be an easy job to transport their families to Egypt (46:26) but Joseph enabled them to do the job. You see, when the Lord enlists us for service He also enables us for service. If God wants us to preach, He will give us the gift to preach. If He wants us to sing, He will give us the voice. If He wants us to give, He will bless us financially. The

Lord will provide the proper “ wagons,” for each task so we will be able to fulfill our responsibilities adequately.

(c) THE PASSION THEY WERE TO EXPRESS:

1. They were to be Fervent:

The brothers were exhorted “ *Haste ye and go up to my father,* ” “ *And ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.* ” (45:9, 13) Fervency was to characterize their mission for Joseph. The task was important, the time was a factor, that meant the job needed to be done with earnestness. *How is it, that we seem to get enthused about everything only serving the Lord ?* We get more excited about holidays than holy things. Entertainment turns many believers on but edification turns them off. Others get more emotional about sporting events than spiritual things. Its so common now for believers from Ulster to hit the mainland to watch their team on Saturday. Cost does not seem to be a problem, time does not seem to be a problem, and energy does not seem to be a problem. They can’t wait for the weekend. So much commitment to their team, so little commitment to their Lord. Is this you ?

2. They were to be Faithful:

For Joseph gave them a warning about their conduct. He said, “ *See that ye fall not out by the way.* ” (45:24) To fall out signifies “ *to be moved or disturbed with any violent emotion particularly with anger.* ” You see, on the journey home there would be a great temptation for the brothers to relive the events at Dothan (37:18) and to

quarrel over who was to blame. Joseph commands them not to hold post mortems and create unnecessary tension. Are these not words that Christian people still need to hear ? My the sin of Cain mars and destroys many a present day fellowship. It is a sad commentary whenever Satan is allowed to make small issues into wedges which drive God's people apart. But more than that. Division distracts us from our duty. And what is our duty ? What is our obligation ? To speak of Christ. Joseph was saying, " *Your sins are forgiven. Forget it. Anyway, you have a truth to proclaim. To speak of me.*" Someone once asked Lyman Beecher the question, " *Mr. Beecher, you know a great many things. What do you consider the greatest thing that a human being can do or be ?*" Without hesitation the great preacher said. " *The greatest thing is not that one should be a scientist, important as that is. Nor that one should be a statesman, vastly important as that is. Nor even that one should be a theologian immeasurably important as that is. But the greatest thing of all is for one human being to bring another human being to Christ Jesus, the Saviour.*" Is this not our obligation ? Do you feel like Paul when he said, " *I am debtor ?*" (Rom 1:14)

(3) THE INFORMATION ABOUT JOSEPH: WORSHIP

You see, Joseph wanted his brothers to talk to the father about him. Do you see what he says ? " *And ye shall tell my father of all my glory.*" (45:13) Where can we find a more expressive description of worship than that ? " *Tell my Father of all my glory.*" So might the Lord Jesus say

to us. What volumes those brothers had to tell their father about Joseph. As John Philips says, " *We can picture the brothers telling Jacob about Joseph. We can almost hear their words. They extolled,*"

(a) THE GLORY OF HIS PERSON:

We can imagine what they said, " *Father we have come to tell you about your beloved. We confess that once we hated him, cast him out, rejected him and sold him for the price of a slave. But we have seen him. Father, our eyes have seen Joseph's glory. Let us tell you about this one who as is alive as it were from the dead and seated on high. We have seen him wearing the authority and power of a royal prince. We have seen him wielding the staff of an office higher than we ever imagined existed. Father, we have seen the glory of his person and it took our breath away.*" My was there ever such a person as Christ ? He is the eternal, uncreated, and self-existing. He is omnipotent and omniscient the second person of the Godhead. Yet He is truly man. He lived a sinless life. He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. He was God manifest in flesh. " *The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.*" (Jn 1:14) Then, they would have extolled,

(b) THE GLORY OF HIS POSITION:

" *Father when we first saw Joseph we saw the opulence of his palace, the abundance of his table, the robes of his office. We realized that Joseph has a new name now. The*

Egyptians call him Zaphnath-paaneah, “ **saviour of the world.**” It’s a name above every name. At that name every knee must bow and every tongue must confess that he is lord to the glory of Pharaoh. And Father we bowed the knee. We confessed Joseph to be lord.” How high is Christ’s position. He has ascended above the stars and entered into glory. He has carried His human body with Him through the gates of pearl along the streets of gold, up to the throne of God. My can you see these brothers telling old Jacob about Joseph, they would have extolled,

(c) THE GLORY OF HIS POWER:

“ *Father, Joseph now wields all the might of the Pharaoh, all the business of the throne. He rules a vast empire. The power of life and death are in his hands. The kingdom and the power and the glory are all his. The world is at his feet, he controls all things, people are coming to him from the ends of the earth.*” My how vast is Christ’s power. He has the right to say, “ *All power is given unto me in heaven and earth.*” (Matt 28:18) Not a blade of grass stirs, not a speck of dust moves, not a piece of volcanic ash clouds the sky without His permission. “ *Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance, behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.*” (Is 40:15) Did you ever consider the fine dirt that covers potatoes ? The nations of the earth are like that dust in the eyes of God. My the world this is in chaos, but the believer is in calm. Why ? Because of the glory of His power. “ *Go tell my father of all my glory.*” Would they not have extolled,

(d) THE GLORY OF HIS PARDON:

“ *Father he said ‘ Ye sold, ! God sent !’ Not for one moment did he minimize our guilt, he simply magnified God’s grace. He kissed us. He forgave us all our debt. And Father that is not all. He has decreed that where He is, there we shall be also. He wants us to share in his glory.*” My what can we say of Christ’s grace ? Men mocked Him, scourged Him, crucified Him. And all He said was “ *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*” (Lk 23:34) He has forgiven all our sins and now He lives to makes intercession for us, to be our Advocate with the Father. “ *Go tell my father of all my glory.*” Joseph wanted the father to hear about his glory from his brother’s lips. Is this not how Christ would have us appear before His Father in heaven ? Does He not want us to talk to the Father about the glories that are His ? Is this not what worship is all about ? It’s the ascription of “ **worship,**” to the Lord Jesus. Worship is spreading before the Father the manifold glories of His beloved Son. It is saying with the hymn writer,

**Majestic sweetness sits enthroned
Upon the Saviour’s brow
His head with radiant glories crowned
His lips with grace o’erflow
No mortal can with Him compare
Among the sons of men
Fairer is He than all the fair
That fill the heavenly train**

“ *Go of all my glory.*” Will you do that ?

