

Peace be to you from our lord and savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. You may be seated. So in our Old part of it may be a little bit less familiar. But of course, Joseph being the youngest child, at least at the time when he was sold into slavery, his brothers Testament, we have the familiar story of Joseph, or at least we know the beginnings of this story. This were jealous because he got all the fancy clothing from his dad. His dad loved him best of all. They got jealous. They wanted to kill him. They were that jealous. Then someone said, "Nah. Let's at least make some profit off of this." So they sold him into slavery. He goes to Potiphar in Egypt. He gets accused falsely of adultery. He gets thrown in prison. Spent wallows in prison for a while, interprets some dreams, gets forgotten some more.

Finally, Pharaoh has a dream and a vision that he can't interpret. Somebody remembers Joseph. He comes. He becomes second in command. The second most powerful person in one of the most powerful nations of that time, Egypt. And then his brothers a few years later, several years later, come because of the famine and obviously they don't recognize him. Joseph looks like an Egyptian rather than a Hebrew. And there's all the shenanigans going on with that. And they come to this point finally where Joseph decides to reveal himself. "I'm your brother Joseph." And the brothers are going, "Oh no. What have we gotten ourselves into?"

Think about it. They sold this guy into slavery. They deceived his father and said that he was dead, and now he's the second most powerful man in the world and they're coming asking for grain and food. And they discover this is their long-lost beloved brother. At least that's what they're trying to convince themselves of. They were scared and rightfully so. He had every right to hold a grudge against them. He had every right to wreck vengeance upon them for what they had done to him.

That's only right and proper, right? That's what we do. How many movies are about this very thing? Somebody gets wronged and the rest of the movie is them getting revenge. That's the way the world works, but it's not the way we work. We operate on a different economy. We operate in a different means and way of doing things. As Jesus said, we should love our enemies and do good to those who hate us. To give generously without thought of being repaid. To explain everything in the kindest way as Luther says. Or the way I learned it, put the best on everything.

But how do we do that? Love your enemies? Really? I have a hard enough time loving the people that I like. Think about how often we struggle with the people that we actually like. How many times do we grumble and complain to other people about what that other person did? Gossip behind their backs. How often do we have a church body, not really this one, but other church bodies where we have people talking against each other in the church. I'm sure many of you have been in the church where there's been strife and conflict, where people have not explained everything in the kindest way. And that's within the church, yet alone people who

don't even believe the same as we do and who hate us and mock us. We're supposed to love them. We're having a hard enough time loving each other. This is a tall order, but this is what we are called to think and believe.

We are different. We have been bought with a Christ by Christ's blood and his righteousness. He has given us new life. He has raised Jesus Christ from the dead and promised that he will also raise us. And if he has done that, then what does it matter if we get treated unfairly in this world if we can demonstrate the love of Christ. Because we know that even when we are treated poorly, even when things go opposite of the way they should, even when we are wronged rather than seeking revenge, we know that God works all things together for the glory of those who love him. For the good and benefit of those who love him and for his own glory.

Joseph had no right to expect anything good to come out of his life once he was sold into slavery and yet God designed it so that he might bring the people to safety. How many times do you look back on your own life and realize that the things that you thought were the worst things that happened to you actually guided you into a better place because God was working behind the scenes and in it all? So if God promises that he is going to guard and protect us and keep us in his loving care, if God promises to bless us with every blessing ... And what does it say? Push down, overflowing, shaken together, running over. More than we can possibly imagine. Why do we put such a close hold on our finances and our time and on our thoughts? We are called to be generous with one another. To give. Not to look for our own benefit and our own well-being, but rather the benefit of others. God did not bless us with earthly goods so that we might live fat, dumb and happy. He gave us these earthly blessings so that we might share them with one another. That they might know the graciousness and the love of God. So that they might come to know the confidence that we have.

Now, when it says that we will be given all that we need, it's not necessarily saying we're going to have plentiful money and health and all this other stuff. That's not really the focus. Because God does not want us to focus on the here and the now. He wants us to consider our life here on earth as temporary. As a phase that we're just passing through. Because what's waiting for us on the other side is so much more glorious than anything that we have today. And let's face it. It does not matter how much money you have or how much science investigates the mysteries of this world. There is one problem that still exists and that will always exist with humanity. We are going to die. That's a given. If you're hyper rich or you're hyper poor, death does not care. It's a great equalizer.

So if we all know we're going to die and we can't take it with us, we're called to use it for his glory while we're here. We're called to use it for his kingdom and to trust that he will continue to bless and guard and keep us to love one another. Now, we

are also called to be wise as serpents, innocent as doves. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide in your giving. You don't just necessarily give discriminately. But when it serves the purpose of God. When it serves to show God's love. He has solved and given us the hope to survive the one problem that nobody else has the answer for. Death and life. And so therefore, we do not hold on to these things because we know that in order to achieve eternal life, we sacrifice what is here.

Think about this. If you had a bunch of seeds that you were going to plant in your garden and you just kept them in the little packets, how much good would they do you? They need to be planted. They need to die. They need to germinate so that you can have the fruits and the vegetables that are the blessing afterwards. So our lives are sacrificed to Christ so that we might then receive the benefits of his sacrifice, the blessings that come and that are ours today. And so we can seek grace instead of vengeance. We can be at peace instead of being anxious and afraid. We can explain everything in the kindest way rather than assuming that everybody is out to get us. We can be generous even though we suspect we're never going to see that back. Because it's not about the finances. It's not about the time. It's about the word of God. And how can we share his love with a world that desperately needs to know it?

Because when they think about death, they're afraid and there is no hope. And they will pour a lot of money into trying to stave that off for as long as it possibly can. Whereas we know death is but a passage to life. And therefore, let us live this life as if Christ were actually dwelling with us and in us. Let us be generous. Let us be kind. Let us be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to get angry. Let us be ready to forgive.

If you look at the bumper sticker for our church, it says, "I know that my redeemer lives." Who said that? Job. After all the chaos that went on in his life, he still stood confidently and said, "I know that my redeemer lives," and it follows, "and I will see him with my own eyes." In spite of all the job suffered, he still had hope in his redeemer. Paul being beaten and put into prison and suffering all sorts of depravity. There was a group of 40 or 50 men that swore they would never eat or drink again until they had killed Paul. That's how vicious their hatred was. And yet, what does Paul do? He rejoices that he can suffer for the sake of Christ. And that is how we as Christians are called to live. To trust that God's will is going to work even when we are maligned, even when we don't get what we think we ought to. Even when we are abused and neglected, even when we are taken advantage of and persecuted, we know still God is with us. Because none of that can take away what God has given us.

It is ours because he loves us. And if he loves us, what else is there to be afraid of? What is there to be concerned about? Why do we fret? Why do we worry? Why do

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we get anxious? Why do we get angry? Why do we gossip? God's got us. Let us stand firm in his faith and in his promises and let everything else go away for the sake of Christ. May his grace, his mercy, and his peace be and abide with you always now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.