

Genesis 50:1 – 26

¹ Then Joseph fell on his father's face, and wept over him and kissed him. ² Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. ³ Now forty days were required for it, for such is the period required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days. ⁴ When the days of mourning for him were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, 'If now I have found favor in your sight, please speak to Pharaoh, saying, ⁵ 'My father made me swear, saying, 'Behold, I am about to die; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.' Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.''' ⁶ Pharaoh said, 'Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear.' ⁷ So Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household and all the elders of the land of Egypt, ⁸ and all the household of Joseph and his brothers and his father's household; they left only their little ones and their flocks and their herds in the land of Goshen. ⁹ There also went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company. ¹⁰ When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he observed seven days mourning for his father. ¹¹ Now when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, 'This is a grievous mourning for the Egyptians.' Therefore it was named Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan. ¹² Thus his sons did for him as he had charged them; ¹³ for his sons carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field for a burial site from Ephron the Hittite. ¹⁴ After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers, and all who had gone up with him to bury his father. ¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!' ¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, 'Your father charged before he died, saying, ¹⁷ 'Thus you shall say to Joseph, 'Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.' And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, 'Behold, we are your servants.' ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. ²¹ So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.' So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. ²² Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. ²³ Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim's sons; also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph's knees. ²⁴ Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.' ²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, 'God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here.' ²⁶ So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

Questions

1. What godly characteristics does Joseph show when his father Jacob dies?
 - a. He grieves openly (50:1). Notice that his emotions are highlighted by the narrator much more than in his early life – that is a curious thing. It draws our attention to these moments in Joseph’s life.
 - b. He fulfills his vows (e.g Mt.5:33 – 37).
 - c. He involves his brothers and leads the mourning. He makes space for them to be together and grieve together.
2. Why do the brothers suspect that Joseph bears a grudge (50:15)?
 - a. That Joseph just wanted their help in retrieving their father from Canaan
 - b. That Joseph just wanted their father to have peace while he lived; now that he’s dead, will Joseph take his revenge??
3. Joseph says, ‘Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place?’ (50:19). What does he mean?
 - a. This is surprising since for much of his story Joseph does stand in God’s place!
 - b. Joseph might take away their livelihoods and land in Goshen
 - c. Vengeance? Yes, but not in a strict sense of retribution. Joseph has learned that that is not how God works.
 - d. What to do about their past sins. What has God done with their past sins? Forgiven them, but also spoken through Jacob (Gen.49) about the future of their descendants based on their past actions. Recall that Reuben, Simeon, and Levi had disqualified themselves from being the firstborn. Simeon and Levi, because of their bloodshed at Shechem, disqualified themselves from possessing a land of their own in the Promised Land. Judah had first suggested that they sell Joseph for a profit instead of killing their own brother (Gen.37:26 – 27), but later offered to sell himself in sacrifice and exchange for Benjamin (Gen.44:16 – 34). Sins still do have consequences on one’s self and others, even though God forgives the person.
4. Joseph says, ‘You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good’ (50:20). How is that possible?
 - a. It’s not that God planned the brothers’ evil, nor that He helped them or made them carry it out. The prophecy-dream of Joseph could have been fulfilled in some other way. But when the brothers went into action, God also went into action to help Joseph. So God was with Joseph in Potiphar’s house, in the prison, and before Pharaoh. God helped Joseph all the way through.
 - b. Who else has learned that lesson? Judah with Tamar, in a sense. Judah meant evil towards Tamar, and then did evil by having sex with her while she was disguised. But God turned it into good: the inclusion of Tamar into the family and her children continued Judah’s line.
 - c. The amazing point is that God can turn anything into an opportunity for His goodness.
 - i. Paul said in Romans, ‘²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren’ (Rom.8:28 – 29). What he means is not that God plans evil and carries it out, but that God can make even evil work for His good purpose, which is this: for us to be more and more like Jesus.
 - d. Illus: Let me tell you what this has meant for me. In my early life, I felt like I had nothing to say. Part of the reason was because I didn’t have much purpose. Part of the reason was because communication was so difficult in my family. My dad would come home from work and not say much, unless it was to complain and yell at my mom, who sometimes yelled back. There was no safety so I grew up very quiet and stoic, bottling things up inside. There was one incident I remember where my parents said something very painful to me: At a swim meet where I did badly. I was already really mad with myself, but to make things worse, when we were driving home, my parents turned towards me in the car and said, ‘Mako, do you know how much we’re paying to keep you swimming?’ That was one of the most painful things I can ever remember. From that point on, I buckled down and tried to make sure I’d never hear that again. I became even more sarcastic. I stopped opening up about myself. I had the vague impression, ‘If there is a god, then he is cursing me.’ Then my junior year of high school, I heard Jesus call me to be new in him, and I responded with a yes. When I was in college, three very godly older friends found me and mentored me. I got to listen to the Jesus in them talking with me, counseling me about my friends and my family, and loving me. I realized God actually uses conversations! I also learned about turning my pain over to Jesus and letting him work through it, softening the hard places in

my heart. Eventually, Jesus changed me. I was shy, sarcastic, and stoic before. But I started to care about people and relationships. I've had the chance to mentor many young men and women over the last fifteen years, some from broken families and very unique personal problems. Two of those people are getting married this weekend: one of my housemates, Matt, and his fiancé Candice. Because we've been doing their pre-marital counseling, they asked my wife and me if we would speak at their wedding! What an honor!! God turned me around 180 degrees. That is how His transforming love transforms us into the likeness of Christ. Even incidents that are very painful work for our good because He intercepts them and transforms them.

- e. Illus: So when God says He loves you, and then He calls you to do these difficult and challenging things, it's not because He is using you. It's because He is loving you. In the movie *The Lord of the Rings*, there is the scene where Saruman is captured in his tower of Isengard. Saruman then stands on top of his tower and tries to place distrust between Gandalf, Aragorn, and the others. He says that Gandalf is foolish for thinking that Aragorn will ever sit upon the throne of Gondor, foolish for sending the hobbit on a fatal mission, and that Gandalf only uses those whom he purports to love. Sometimes we feel that way about God. When God calls us to love others who are hard for us, or care for non-Christians on campus, or move into the inner city, or take a courageous stand for justice and mercy, or give your money away, He is not doing it because He uses those whom He purports to love. Yes, He does it because He loves others, but He does it through us because He loves us. It's good for us. That is why He is not using human beings as pawns in some game to get more glory or whatever. That's why we do evangelism and social justice. It's just part of sharing in the character of Jesus.
- f. Illus: Jean Valjean, in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, learns that God bring good in the midst of evil. In the musical, when Valjean rescues Marius from the fighting in the barricades, he sings *Bring Him Home*. It's a prayer for Marius. And he sings, giving us an insight into how he has experienced God's goodness, strength, and presence:

*God on high, hear my prayer
In my need, You have always be there...*

This is despite being thrown unjustly into prison for stealing bread so that his sister and her son wouldn't starve, then being chased by Inspector Javert and hunted from place to place. He sees God's goodness in his life: externally through people like the bishop's generosity, Fantine's forgiveness, and Cosette's love. Then in the *Finale*, as Jean Valjean is dying on his deathbed, he sings a prayer for himself, echoing the same thought with the same melody:

*God on high, hear my prayer
Take me now, to Thy care
Where You are, let me be
Take me now, take me there
Bring me home, bring me home...*

- 5. When will the Israelites take Joseph's bones to the Promised Land? What event is this looking ahead to? The Exodus! But something happens that stalls Israel's departure. We will find that out in Exodus 1: there was a new Pharaoh who 'knew not Joseph' (Ex.1:8).