

The Gospel Project Session 13

Theological Theme: God is sovereign and He will bring _____ out of _____ circumstances.

What causes revenge stories and songs to resonate with people throughout the ages?

Answer: _____

1. God brings _____ out of our affliction (Gen. 41:46-57).

46 Joseph was 30 years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Joseph left Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout the land of Egypt.

47 During the seven years of abundance the land produced outstanding harvests. 48 Joseph gathered all the excess food in the land of Egypt during the seven years and put it in the cities. He put the food in every city from the fields around it. 49 So Joseph stored up grain in such abundance—like the sand of the sea—that he stopped measuring it because it was beyond measure.

50 Two sons were born to Joseph before the years of famine arrived. Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest at On, bore them to him. 51 Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, meaning, "God has made me forget all my hardship in my father's house." 52 And the second son he named Ephraim, meaning, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

53 Then the seven years of abundance in the land of Egypt came to an end, 54 and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in every country, but throughout the land of Egypt there was food. 55 Extreme hunger came to all the land of Egypt, and the people cried out to Pharaoh for food. Pharaoh told all Egypt, "Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you." 56 Because the famine had spread across the whole country, Joseph opened up all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. 57 Every nation came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, for the famine was severe in every land.

What are some challenges you've faced that you see others facing? In what ways can God bring fruit out of your past affliction by leading you to minister to others in similar circumstances?

Voices from Church History

"[Joseph] bore distress with endurance, endurance gave him character, having such character he acted in hope, and hope did not disappoint him."

—Chrysostom (circa 347-407)

2. God shows us a picture of _____ (Gen. 45:1-15).

“We follow a King who commands us to love our enemies, pray for those who persecute us, and forgive those who have wronged us. King Jesus puts forth a counterculture where we do not hold a grudge. He shows us a bigger and better plan where evil is used for good and forgiveness leads to salvation.”

Why is it so difficult for us to forgive those who wrong us?

What is it about forgiveness that is so painful?

1 Joseph could no longer keep his composure in front of all his attendants, so he called out, “Send everyone away from me!” No one was with him when he revealed his identity to his brothers. 2 But he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and also Pharaoh’s household heard it. 3 Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still living?” But they could not answer him because they were terrified in his presence.

4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Please, come near me,” and they came near. “I am Joseph, your brother,” he said, “the one you sold into Egypt. 5 And now don’t be worried or angry with yourselves for selling me here, because God sent me ahead of you to preserve life. 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there will be five more years without plowing or harvesting. 7 God sent me ahead of you to establish you as a remnant within the land and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. 8 Therefore it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household, and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

9 “Return quickly to my father and say to him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: “God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me without delay. 10 You can settle in the land of Goshen and be near me—you, your children, and grandchildren, your sheep, cattle, and all you have. 11 There I will sustain you, for there will be five more years of famine. Otherwise, you, your household, and everything you have will become destitute.”’ 12 Look! Your eyes and my brother Benjamin’s eyes can see that it is I, Joseph, who am speaking to you. 13 Tell my father about all my glory in Egypt and about all you have seen. And bring my father here quickly.”

14 Then Joseph threw his arms around Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept on his shoulder. 15 Joseph kissed each of his brothers as he wept, and afterward his brothers talked with him.

How does holding a grudge contradict the gospel?

How can meditating on the gospel empower you to be patient with and forgive others?

Voices from the Church

“Many years ago I was driven to the conclusion that the two major causes of most emotional problems among evangelical Christians are these: the failure to understand, receive, and live out God’s unconditional grace and forgiveness; and the failure to give out that unconditional love, forgiveness, and grace to other people...We read, we hear, we believe a good theology of grace. But that’s not the way we live. The good news of the Gospel of grace has not penetrated the level of our emotions.” -David Seamands

3. God _____ evil with good (Gen. 50:15-21).

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said to one another, "If Joseph is holding a grudge against us, he will certainly repay us for all the suffering we caused him."

16 So they sent this message to Joseph, "Before he died your father gave a command: 17 'Say this to Joseph: Please forgive your brothers' transgression and their sin—the suffering they caused you.' Therefore, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when their message came to him. 18 Then his brothers also came to him, bowed down before him, and said, "We are your slaves!"

19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? 20 You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people. 21 Therefore don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

What wrong actions toward you would make you consider someone an "enemy"?

How can we show our enemies love and mercy as an expression of God's love for us?

Acts 2:23 - Evil men killed the Messiah, but God used their evil deeds to accomplish His goal of salvation.

How does the gospel help you put the bad things that happen in your life in the right perspective?

Voices from the Church

"The cross shows us that God can take the worst possible evil and through it accomplish the greatest possible good—the destruction of evil itself."

–Christopher Wright

Conclusion

How can we suffer injustice and forgive while trusting that God's plan is better? The answer is the gospel of Jesus Christ. "When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He was suffering, He did not threaten but entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly," says 1 Peter 2:23. The power to forgive our enemies is found in trusting the justice and mercy of God, a justice and mercy that touched down clearly on Calvary's hill.

Christ Connection: God took the evil deeds of Joseph's brothers and used them for His greater plan of providing salvation from the famine. In the same way, God used the evil injustice of those who put His Son, Jesus, on the cross to bring about His master plan of providing salvation from sin and death.

His Mission, Your Mission

Since Jesus is the Savior who offers forgiveness to the world, how can you be part of the commission to take the message of forgiveness to all peoples?