**Genesis 50:15-21 15When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him.” 16So they sent *messengers* to Joseph, saying, “Before your father died he commanded saying, 17‘Thus you shall say to Joseph: “I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.” ’ Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.” And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. 18Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, “Behold, we *are* your servants.” 19Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? 20But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive. 21Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.**

Two weeks ago, we talked about Hagar and Ishmael. Much has happened between this time and that. Isaac grew up, got married, had Jacob and Esau. Jacob grew up, got married, and had his name changed. Isaac dies. The family picked up and moved to Egypt. Pharaoh welcomes Joseph’s family as the famine grows worse. So begins the fulfillment of Genesis 15:13 – the children of Israel are starting their time in Egypt, sojourners and servants in a strange land. Joseph serves as a vessel by which God delivers His promise.

Now, we join Joseph in Genesis 50. Jacob, now known as Israel – God did this twice, once in Genesis 32 and again in Genesis 35, has arrived in Egypt. He has seen Joseph’s face. The famine has come. Food is scarce and people from all over the known world are coming to find food and live! Now Jacob dies at 147 years old.

We never know the great things God is doing through the suffering and challenges in our life. We hold a myopic view, self-centered and selfish – never mind what’s God may be doing if it’s an inconvenience to me! Jesus does not call us to be this way. Many say that they have given their heart to God, but when the true rubber meets the road, it’s simply not true. Many give their heart to God, but hold the bank account… give their heart to God, but make no room for Him to use them. God, I’m all Yours… to do with as I see fit, what’s comfortable and pleasant for me. If we haven’t given God our all… are we really His at all?

Let’s look at our scripture. Verse 15 When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him.”The death of loved ones are opportunities in families. There is a choice. Here we see the brothers react in fear. While Jacob was alive, they enjoyed the shield he provided. Now, Jacob is gone. There’s been plenty of years to mend fences. There’s been plenty of time to show remorse and ask for forgiveness; yet, here we are. They know that Joseph can simply speak, and they will be imprisoned, enslaved, exiled, tortured, or killed. Joseph is second only to Pharaoh. His power is virtually limitless. The brothers are revealing how they think, what their expectation of human nature is. It shows that they still don’t know their brother and, I believe, it also shows that Joseph has not done a good job to display his love and forgiveness.

Verse 16 *So they sent messengers to Joseph, saying, “Before your father died he commanded saying*. In this verse, we read the word messengers and commanded. The interesting thing here is that this is the exact same word! Tsaw-vaw… it means to send a messenger. Literally, the verse is communicating that the messengers are not bringing a message from the brothers… but literally a command from the father. They are staying behind the shield and under the shadow of their father! The “messengers” has the idea of the people being chosen from among the brothers and the extended family.

In verse 17, we hear the message that Jacob is said to have sent - ‘Thus you shall say to Joseph: “I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.” ’ Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.” And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. There is power in personally acknowledging the wrongs we’ve done. We don’t see that here – we see a message, sent from a now deceased father, asking for forgiveness of the sons who are still very much alive. We see this in families today! Mothers and fathers asking siblings to forgive one another. I’ve seen grandmothers and grandfathers cry as they wonder to me what will become of the family when they’re gone. God expects us, as far as it depends on us, to be at peace with all men. This means asking for forgiveness and willingly forgiving. It says that Joseph wept – it means he mourned – for the situation, for the blindness of his brothers… for them thinking he could do such a thing. He weeps.

Verse 18 Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, “Behold, we *are* your servants.”Remember Joseph’s dream from Genesis 37:5 told to his brothers? “There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.” Joseph was 17 when he had this dream. He was likely close to 30 when he became second ruler in Egypt. We know that Jacob lived in Egypt 17 years from Genesis 47 and died at 147 years old. Joseph was likely around 50. 33 years more or less and God kept His promise. He fulfilled the vision. What has God been working in you? It probably won’t take 33 minutes the way we wish… miracles can take years and years! Faithfulness should not be confused with Quickness.

Notice though in verse 18, there is still no repentance… no apology… no “we were wrong”. Joseph didn’t wait for an apology to love and forgive. Joseph loved and forgave, knowing that he may never hear an apology.

Verse 19Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? God is Judge. God sorts out good from bad. It’s not our place to seek vengeance. Romans 12:19 says Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Joseph got it. Joseph had matured. He knew who was in the drivers seat – God. Often we hear, Jesus is my co-pilot… I hope not! I hope He is your Pilot… don’t sing Jesus take the wheel, sing Jesus You keep the wheel! I’m on a road I don’t recognize, but Jesus designed. Joseph says to his brothers – don’t be afraid. Jesus says the same to us.

Verse 20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.Sounds like Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.All things – even sickness, even death, even pain, even imprisonment, even poverty, even dirty politics… all things work together for good. Joseph learned to praise God even from the depths of a pit, even in the bonds of slavery, even behind the bars of a prison… even as his brothers hated him… He grew to know – what some meant as evil, God meant for good. We have that same assurance today. Our suffering can be service when we follow God’s call.

Verse 21 - *Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.* He loved them. He forgave them. Even when he didn’t hear the words. Jesus loved and forgave even as we crucified Him. He knew that what we meant for evil, God meant for good to save many people with the Hope of eternal Salvation only He could bring.

Tonight, let’s leave here praising God that He’s not short sighted like we are. He sees the end from the beginning. He knows what must happen to save as many souls as possible. Not everyone will make it, but I praise God that we will. I praise Him that I’ve been willing to follow His purpose and bow to His Will, that, when He called, I gave Him my all – all my talents, all my time, all my money, all my love – If I’ve given myself to Him completely, it follows that all that I have, all that I am, all that I possess is His to do with as He pleases… My approval is not required.