

“Rendezvous in the Land of Re”

Genesis 42:1-24

June 4th, 2017

Often, Christians remember the day God’s grace found them and they experienced the new birth in Christ. I remember the circumstances of my own rendezvous with Jesus. I was 19 years old and was stationed at RAF Lakenheath, England, and had been on active duty for just over 2 years.

The Bible teaches that God chose a remnant of people to be His children even before He created the earth! (**Ephesians 1:3-5**) Because God is sovereign, He purposed the day and location, even the circumstances! Consider some of them I experienced leading up to that glorious day in August 1981:

* From my early years, God planted in my heart a desire to pursue military service. I watched military-themed movies, read books on the military, and loved “playing Army” with friends. Growing up on a farm, I was proficient with my single-pump BB gun, pellet gun, and my Dad’s .22 rifle.

* Meeting with a recruiter early my senior year of high school, I joined the US Air Force as a Security Policeman, reporting for basic training on July 3rd, 1979.

* While in technical training, I received orders to report to my first duty station, Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona. Several days later, my orders were changed. I was no longer heading to Arizona, but was now going to RAF Lakenheath, England. I didn’t know the reason until after I arrived in November 1979. Some 80 Security Policemen stationed there were busted for drug use. The Air Force redirected many of us in training to take their place at Lakenheath. God had me right where He wanted me!

* Several months after arriving, God sent Roger Dubois from Rhode Island (the only person I think I’ve ever met from that state!) to Lakenheath. Roger told me of an acoustic concert coming to the base. The artist was Barry McGuire, a 1960’s folk writer (Christian).

* Long story short, God used Barry’s witness to draw me to Jesus in saving faith. As I walked back to my dormitory that night, I fell to my knees on the 50 yard line of the athletic field, and acknowledged Jesus as my Savior. It was a rendezvous with Jesus!

Similarly, the brothers of Joseph had a significant rendezvous – with their brother Joseph. We see that rendezvous in the 42nd chapter of the Bible’s first book, Genesis, as we continue our weekly sermon series entitled, *The Book of Beginnings: God’s Grace in Genesis*.

The setting is Egypt, the land of Re – the Sun God of Egypt. Joseph’s family finds itself in a life or death situation. Yet, Joseph has their welfare in his hands. God elevated him from Hebrew prison slave to governor over all Egypt. **Genesis 41:57** (which we studied last Sunday) reveals the context of the rendezvous – “So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy *grain*, because the famine was severe in all lands.” Egypt was the only place hungry people could turn to get grain during a severe 7 year famine.

Genesis 42:1-24:

When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, “Why do you look at one another?” ² And he said, “Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die.”

³ So Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. ⁴ But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "Lest some calamity befall him." ⁵ And the sons of Israel went to buy *grain* among those who journeyed, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

⁶ Now Joseph *was* governor over the land; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with *their* faces to the earth. ⁷ Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them. Then he said to them, "Where do you come from?"

And they said, "From the land of Canaan to buy food."

⁸ So Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. ⁹ Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them, and said to them, "You *are* spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land!"

¹⁰ And they said to him, "No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. ¹¹ We *are* all one man's sons; we *are* honest *men*; your servants are not spies."

¹² But he said to them, "No, but you have come to see the nakedness of the land."

¹³ And they said, "Your servants *are* twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and in fact, the youngest *is* with our father today, and one *is* no more."

¹⁴ But Joseph said to them, "It *is* as I spoke to you, saying, 'You *are* spies!' ¹⁵ In this *manner* you shall be tested: By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here.

¹⁶ Send one of you, and let him bring your brother; and you shall be kept in prison, that your words may be tested to see whether *there is* any truth in you; or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you *are* spies!"

¹⁷ So he put them all together in prison three days.

¹⁸ Then Joseph said to them the third day, "Do this and live, *for* I fear God: ¹⁹ If you *are* honest *men*, let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house; but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses. ²⁰ And bring your youngest brother to me; so your words will be verified, and you shall not die." And they did so. ²¹ Then they said to one another, "We *are* truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us."

²² And Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not speak to you, saying, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us." ²³ But they did not know that Joseph understood *them*, for he spoke to them through an interpreter. ²⁴ And he turned himself away from them and wept. Then he returned to them again, and talked with them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes."

MP 1 – Recognition is an Important First Step to Action.

MP 2 – Remembering Past Graces Strengthens Present Faith.

MP 3 – Repentance is a Change of Heart/Mind in a Godward Direction.

Jacob had to force his sons to action – they were just sitting around “looking at one another” (verse 1). Evidently, they didn’t know what to do for food in the midst of famine. So, Jacob sends them to get grain in Egypt. 10 sons go, while Benjamin stays behind with Jacob. You’ll recall that Jacob and his beloved wife Rachel had two children – Joseph and Benjamin. He wasn’t about to let something happen to Benjamin – Joseph, to his knowledge, was dead. You’ll remember the 10 brothers (presently going to Egypt) left the impression with Jacob that an animal had killed Joseph. In reality, the brothers had sold Joseph to a traveling caravan.

After the brothers arrived in Egypt, they went to Joseph, and bowed down before him (verse 6). You’ll recall God had given Joseph two dreams while he was still at home with Jacob and his brothers. One of the dreams showed a standing stalk (Joseph) with several other stalks bowing before him (his brothers – **Gen. 37:7**). Here, we see that dream coming to fruition.

Verse 7 reveals that Joseph recognized his brothers, and he asked where they had come from. They were from Canaan and came to Egypt to buy food. Verse 8 repeats the fact that Joseph recognized his brothers – but they haven't recognized him. After all, it has been years (perhaps as many as 20) since they last saw one another. And, they would expect to find Joseph dressed and speaking as an Egyptian, and serving at the highest level of the Egyptian government.

Application - Recognition is an awareness of others', as well as an awareness of one's own needs. Despite the incredible grace of God in bringing Joseph through the trials of slavery and prison, Joseph didn't take for granted his position as governor in Egypt. He worked hard to save up grain to feed the world. Further, he knew his brothers when he saw them. And, as we'll see, he exercised great grace toward them.

Likewise, we must know our own need for God's grace in all of life. He gives us "life and breath and all things" (**Acts 17:25**). Our greatest need, however, is forgiveness. Apart from salvation in Christ, our entire existence is one big stink to God. We must recognize we cannot get through this life, or the next one, on our own goodness and effort. We are weak, helpless, and lost without Jesus!

Recognition is an Important First Step to Action. Secondly, **Remembering Past Graces Strengthens Present Faith.**

In verse 9, we see that Joseph remembered the dreams God gave him. That strengthened him to confront them on their sin – he accused of being spies. That happens again in verse 14.

In verse 11, Joseph's brothers call themselves "honest men." Right! They were scoundrels of the first order!

- * After their sister Dinah was defiled by Shechemites, two of the brothers, Simeon and Levi, killed them all (**Gen 34:25**);
- * Reuben dishonored his father by sleeping with Jacob's concubine Bilhah (**Gen. 35:22**);
- * Judah had gone into his daughter-in-law Tamar, thinking her a prostitute (**Gen. 38**);
- * Then, all the brothers together sold Joseph into slavery (**Gen. 37**).

They were not men a person could treat gently. They were hard, and needed the softening of God's spirit to bring them to repentance. Many people had suffered at the hands of the men who would become the fathers of our faith.

Application – Just this past weekend – Memorial Day - we had opportunity as a nation to remember those who gave the last full measure. Their sacrifice has ensured our present freedoms. As a church, we'll soon participate in the Lord's Supper. We notice engraved on the table itself that we eat bread and drink from the cup "in remembrance" of what Jesus has done in his life and death for our eternal salvation. Individually, we must reflect on the past graces that God has given to bring us to this present salvation. You heard a part of my story at the beginning of this message. If you are a believer in Christ, you have one, too. For those who call Trinity Church home, I am so glad that He has brought you to our fellowship.

And, that brings us to our third point - **Repentance is a Change of Heart/Mind in a Godward Direction.**

As their conversation goes on, Joseph learns that his brothers are being truthful about something - their family make up. Verse 13 is the proof – “Your servants *are* twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and in fact, the youngest *is* with our father today, and one *is* no more.” Evidently, the brothers thought Joseph had died, not knowing they were in his very presence presently.

To bring them to a full acceptance of their guilt, Joseph suggests a test – one of the brothers would be kept in captivity in Egypt while the others return to Canaan to bring Benjamin to Joseph. He then casts the brothers into prison for three days to think things over.

Their words in verses 21 and 22 reveal that repentance was in the works. “*We are* truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.” Reuben then said to his brothers, “Did I not speak to you, saying, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us.”

At this point, we see Joseph’s tender heart toward his brothers revealed. He left the brothers to weep privately. As we continue through the rest of Genesis, Joseph weeps five more times for his family.

Application – Joseph’s brothers are hardened in their sins. As Joseph confronts them in their sin, they slowly, but surely come to realize it. They confess that they are guilty, and they realize that the hardships they are enduring are a consequence of their sinfulness.

When God’s people are confronted with their sin, they own it and seek forgiveness. *What are we to think of the professing Christian who doesn’t accept her sin? What about the so-called believer in Jesus who rationalizes his sin, and remains in it? We can only conclude that such people are not repentant. And, it could even be that they are not believers in the first place.*

Friend, if you have been fingered for your sin, your willingness to make things right is proof of your Christianity. If you expect others to accept your sin and get over it, you are in more danger than you know. Humble yourselves under the correcting hand of God and His Word. Seek to reconcile, even as we see that taking place between Joseph and his brothers.

It is estimated that the late great British preacher, Charles Spurgeon, preached to 10 million people in his lifetime. Today there is more material written by Spurgeon than any other Christian author of any generation. He had a rendezvous with Jesus when he was 15. A blizzard hit England in January 1850, and Charles was unable to reach the church he usually attended.

He ducked into another church where only a few people were waiting for worship to begin. Not even the preacher was able to make it. One of the men present read a verse and stammered through a brief sermon. In applying it, he pointed his finger at Charles and said, “Look to Christ, young man!”

He did. As he arrived home, his mother saw his expression and exclaimed, “Something wonderful has happened to you.” The man who would become the “Prince of Preachers” had met Jesus!

In verse 18 of today's text, Joseph says, "I fear God." He had a rendezvous with Jesus. *Have you?*