

**“Mean Boys”**  
**Genesis 37:12-36**  
April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017

Anger weakens. It puts us at a disadvantage in every undertaking in life. When Sinbad and his sailors landed on one of their tropical islands, they saw coconuts high up in the trees, which could quench their thirst and satisfy their hunger.

The coconuts were far above the reach of Sinbad and the sailors, but in the branches of the trees were chattering apes. The sailors began to throw rocks and sticks up at the apes.

As you might imagine, this enraged the monkeys, and they began to pick the coconuts and throw them down at the men on the ground. That was just what Sinbad and his men wanted. They got the apes angry so that the apes would gather their food for them.

That is a good illustration of how by dabbling in anger; we play into the hands of our foes.

Several years ago, a movie was released entitled, “Mean Girls.” It was about the cruelty that can exist among high school girls trying to elevate themselves above each other. Such cruelty is often fueled by jealousy and anger.

In a similar way, Joseph, the favorite son of Jacob, bore the brunt of his brother’s anger and envy. His brothers could be the stars of a movie entitled “Mean Boys.”

The seeds of the fruit evident in today’s passage of Scripture are sown in the first 11 verses of **Genesis Chapter 37**, which we examined last Sunday. Jacob (aka Israel) loved Joseph more than his 11 brothers. As a token of his favor, Jacob gave Joseph an impressive, colorful, tunic. We also learned that God came to Joseph in two dreams; and those dreams pictured Joseph in an exalted position, and his family serving him as his subjects. This didn’t sit well with Joseph’s brothers.

As we read through the remainder of Genesis 37 today, we’ll note some similarities between Joseph and Jesus Christ, the Seed of the Woman God prophesied in **Genesis Chapter 3**. We’ll also look at Joseph’s brothers, and as we do, consider to whom they are similar. Joseph was God’s gift to His family, even though they didn’t know it. And, Jesus is God’s gift to humanity, even though we often resist Him.

**Genesis 37:12-36:**

<sup>12</sup> Then his brothers went to feed their father’s flock in Shechem. <sup>13</sup> And Israel said to Joseph, “Are not your brothers feeding *the flock* in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.”

So he said to him, “Here I am.”

<sup>14</sup> Then he said to him, “Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me.” So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem.

<sup>15</sup> Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, “What are you seeking?”

<sup>16</sup> So he said, “I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding *their flocks*.”

<sup>17</sup> And the man said, “They have departed from here, for I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.

<sup>18</sup> Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. <sup>19</sup> Then they said to one another, “Look, this dreamer is coming! <sup>20</sup> Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, ‘Some wild beast has devoured him.’ We shall see what will become of his dreams!”

<sup>21</sup> But Reuben heard *it*, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, “Let us not kill him.” <sup>22</sup> And Reuben said to them, “Shed no blood, *but* cast him into this pit which *is* in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him”—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father.

<sup>23</sup> So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph *of* his tunic, the tunic of *many* colors that *was* on him. <sup>24</sup> Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit *was* empty; *there was* no water in it.

<sup>25</sup> And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry *them* down to Egypt. <sup>26</sup> So Judah said to his brothers, “What profit *is there* if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? <sup>27</sup> Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he *is* our brother *and* our flesh.” And his brothers listened.

<sup>28</sup> Then Midianite traders passed by; so *the brothers* pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty *shekels* of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

<sup>29</sup> Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph *was* not in the pit; and he tore his clothes. <sup>30</sup> And he returned to his brothers and said, “The lad *is* no *more*; and I, where shall I go?”

<sup>31</sup> So they took Joseph’s tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. <sup>32</sup> Then they sent the tunic of *many* colors, and they brought *it* to their father and said, “We have found this. Do you know whether it *is* your son’s tunic or not?”

<sup>33</sup> And he recognized it and said, “*It is* my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.” <sup>34</sup> Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. <sup>35</sup> And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, “For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning.” Thus his father wept for him.

<sup>36</sup> Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh *and* captain of the guard.”

Given the amount of space devoted to Joseph in Genesis (14 chapters), he is mentioned sparingly in the New Testament. “We have more spoken words of Joseph than any other Old Testament character. Yet he is never quoted in the New Testament. In fact, Joseph is mentioned in only four New Testament passages:

- In **John 4:5** (which says that Jacob had given Joseph a plot of ground near Sychar in Samaria);
- In **Acts 7:9-14** (where Joseph’s story is recounted by Stephen before the Sanhedrin);
- In **Hebrews 11:21-22** (where Joseph is included among the Old Testament heroes of the faith);
- And in **Revelation 7:8** (which speaks of 12,000 servants of God from the tribe of Joseph in the latter days).

Jesus does not make any reference to Joseph. Yet, there are numerous points at which Joseph is a type of Jacob’s greater Son.

## **MP 1 – Let’s look at a few parallels between Joseph and Jesus in today’s text.**

1. In verse 13, Joseph was sent by his father to Shechem where his brothers were tending sheep. Jesus’ mission was to the ‘lost sheep of Israel;’ He was sent by His Father (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38-40; 12:48-50; 17:21)
2. In verses 14-17, Joseph goes great distance seeking out his brothers; Jesus “has come to seek and save that which was lost” (His brethren). (**Luke 19:10**)
3. Verse 18 of today’s text reveals Joseph was conspired against by his brothers who sought to kill him; Jesus was also conspired against as “the Pharisees...plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.” (**Matt. 12:14**)
4. Verse 23 shows Joseph was stripped of his tunic; Jesus was stripped of His tunic by the Romans soldiers at His crucifixion. (**Matt. 27:28; John 19:23**)
5. Verse 24 shows Joseph was cast into a pit; Jesus was placed in a grave. (**Matt. 27:59-60; Mark 15:46, Luke 23:53; John 19:40-42**)
6. In verse 28, Joseph was taken out of the pit, alive in his body; Jesus was bodily-resurrected from the tomb (pit). (**Matt. 28:6; Mark 16:6, Luke 24:3-6, John 20:6-9**)
7. Verse 28 also teaches Joseph is sold for the price of a slave (20 shekels of silver); Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver (the price of a slave). (**Matt 26:15**)
8. Verse 31 reveals Joseph’s blood sprinkled coat (goat blood) is presented to his father; Jesus is our scapegoat and His blood was presented to the Father as a sin offering in our place. (**Leviticus 16:8-10**).

As we continue working our way through the remaining chapters of Genesis, we’ll see God used Joseph in a magnificent ways to deliver Jacob, his father, and his brothers from their plight. Joseph was not the deliverer God had promised beginning with **Genesis 3:15**, but he clearly prefigures Him and His work.

**MP 2 – Parallels between us and Joseph’s brothers.** Joseph shares the stage in this chapter with his brothers. As we recount their behavior and words, much of which we are introduced to in the opening verses of Genesis Chapter 37, it is important that we see how our behavior and words often mimic theirs.

1. Look back up to verse 11. Joseph’s brothers envied him; we often envy others. Joseph’s brothers resented the special treatment Jacob gave him. Search your heart, friend. *With whom are you envious?*

I must be careful of envy. Pastors without radio or television ministries can be envious of those who do. And pastors of small or mid-size congregations can be envious of pastors with larger churches. You must be careful, too. *Are you envious of a popular person at school or work who seems to get everyone’s attention? Perhaps you envy someone who beat you out for a work assignment, a promotion, or a reward?* Whatever the situation, envy is

a work of sinful flesh. It is held in contrast to the fruit of the Holy Spirit (**Galatians 5:19-23**). **Proverbs 14:30** – “A sound heart *is* life to the body, but envy *is* rottenness to the bones.”

2. The envy of Joseph’s brothers came about because they hated him. Verses 4, 5 and 8 reveal their hatred. Lest you be deceived, it is likely you presently hate at least one other person. **Galatians 5:20** reveals hatred to be a work of the flesh. *Perhaps it’s people of a certain social or economic class that you despise? Or, perhaps it’s people of a certain skin color that you hate? Could it be that you hate people who practice other world religions?* Some here hate their spouses, a sibling, an in-law, or even another member of this congregation.

In **Matthew 5:23 & 24**, Jesus exhorts His followers, “... if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

Reconciliation of broken relationships is the path to overcoming both hatred and envy. Instead of hating others, Jesus commands His children to love. Later in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup>But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,” (**Matt. 5:43-44**)

3. Look again with me at verse 25. “And they sat down to eat a meal.” It’s easy to overlook this. But, consider what took place immediately before this verse. Joseph traveled some 50 miles to find his brothers. They saw him approaching in the distance, and they plot evil. His brothers stripped Joseph of his colorful tunic and cast him into a pit. Some greeting! Joseph’s brothers lacked compassion for him; we often lack compassion for others. If only Joseph’s brothers could see that God was elevating Joseph for their own good, they’d have thought better of him, and treated him as an equal.

Look back over the last week. *Who did God bring into your thoughts that could use your help? Was there a person who reached out to you for help, and you turned away? Perhaps it was a phone call, a text, an email, or even you learning of another’s need in a conversation with another person? Did you decide not to help? Will you at least think twice when God brings another’s plight to your attention this week?*

The story is told of Shah Abbis, a Persian monarch who loved his people very much. To know and understand them better, Shah Abbis would mingle with his subjects in various disguises. One day he went as a poor man to the public baths and in a tiny cellar sat beside the fireman who tended the furnace. When it was mealtime the monarch shared his tasteless food and talked to his lonely subject as a friend.

Again and again the Shah visited and the man grew to love him. One day the Shah told him he was the monarch, expecting the man to ask some gift from him. But the fireman sat gazing at the ruler with love and wonder, and at last spoke; “You left your palace and your glory to sit with me in this dark place, to eat of my coarse food, to care whether my heart is glad or sorry. On others

you may bestow rich presents, but to me you have given yourself, and it only remains for me to pray that you never withdraw your gift of friendship.”

The King of glory, the Lord God Almighty, has stooped to us, become like us in every way, yet He did not sin. He came from heaven to earth to redeem sinful humanity from an earthly existence of depravity and indifference, to a life of meaning and joy today...and an eternity of delight with God in the next life, which begins immediately after this one ends. So much for the impact of “mean boys!” Let us strive not to be named among them!