

“Leaving the Promised Land”

Genesis 46

July 16th, 2017

Jesse Clark Hoover was 8 years old when his family moved from Stillwater, Ohio to West Branch, Iowa. In his mid-20's, Jesse married Hulda Minthorn and he built a blacksmith shop in West Branch. The happy couple had three children, Theodore, Herbert, and Mary. Tragically, in December 1880 at the age of 34, Jesse died of heart failure brought on by pneumonia. Three years later, Hulda died. Jesse's then 9-year-old son Herbert would rise from such humble origins to become a rich, influential man.

After graduating from Stanford University in 1895 with a degree in geology, Herbert took an engineering job with a British mining firm. He left that company in 1908, but had first amassed profitable business interests all over the world. He became a millionaire several times over. Most notably, from 1929 to 1933, Herbert Clark Hoover served as America's 31st President.

If Herbert Hoover's father, Jesse, had been alive when his son was sworn in as President of the United States, no doubt he would have been very proud of him. And, I'd venture to guess, Jesse Hoover wouldn't have been envious of his son's success, either.

That's the way it is for parents – we yearn to see our children become successful in their endeavors. It comes as no surprise, then, when after traveling from Canaan to Egypt, Jacob sees his long-departed, feared dead son, Joseph. There was a reunion for the ages! But, you don't have to be a parent to enjoy the successes of young people. If you're a member or friend of this congregation, you should delight in the triumphs and victories of others in this Church, after all, we are family! And, it is the family of God that is true family.

We're closing in on the conclusion of our lengthy study through the Bible's first book, Genesis. Today, we come to the 46th of 50 chapters, and we see Jacob and his family moving to be with Joseph and his wife and two sons in Egypt.

Genesis 46:1-7, 26-34:

So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. ²Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, “Jacob, Jacob!” And he said, “Here I am.”

³So He said, “I *am* God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. ⁴I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up *again*; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.”

⁵Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. ⁶So they took their livestock and their goods, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him. ⁷His sons and his sons' sons, his daughters and his sons' daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

(Now jump down to verse 26)

²⁶All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob's sons' wives, *were* sixty-six persons in all. ²⁷And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt *were* two persons. All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy.

²⁸ Then he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out before him *the way* to Goshen. And they came to the land of Goshen. ²⁹ So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; and he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.

³⁰ And Israel said to Joseph, “Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you *are* still alive.”

³¹ Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household, “I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and say to him, ‘My brothers and those of my father’s house, who *were* in the land of Canaan, have come to me.

³² And the men *are* shepherds, for their occupation has been to feed livestock; and they have brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have.’ ³³ So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, ‘What is your occupation?’ ³⁴ that you shall say, ‘Your servants’ occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we *and* also our fathers,’ that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd *is* an abomination to the Egyptians.”

MP 1 – From Hebron to Beersheba (v. 1-7);

MP 2 – From Beersheba to Goshen (v. 26-34)

MP 3 – From Goshen to Aledo, Mercer County, and Beyond!

The first seven verses give a peak into Jacob’s move **from his home to the southern edge of Canaan**. The account of Joseph began in **Genesis Chapter 37**. There, we learned that Jacob and his sons dwelt in Hebron (v. 14). It was from Hebron that Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers who were tending sheep in Dothan. It was there, in Dothan, that Joseph’s brothers (who were very jealous of him) sold him to traders headed to Egypt. That explains how Joseph ended up in Egypt, and it was by God’s grace that Joseph served in Potiphar’s house, in prison where he met Pharaoh’s baker and butler, and eventually, Joseph met Pharaoh and was elevated to second in command over all the affairs of Egypt.

As he and his family traveled to Egypt, verse 1 teaches that Jacob, “...came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.” Beersheba was located at the far southern edge of the land God had given to Jacob’s grandfather Abraham and to his descendants. In later years, the phrase, “from Dan to Beersheba” was used to describe all the territory of Israel (**Judges 20:1; I Samuel 3:20**). Beyond Beersheba was desert, and beyond that was Egypt. Jacob was about to enter unknown territory.

What does Jacob do upon arriving in Beersheba? He worships God. That’s what is meant by “offering sacrifices to God” in verse 1. As Jacob worships God, a dialogue takes place between God and his servant Jacob in verses 2-4. There, God reaffirms His promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their future generations.

This also teaches us something important about worship. True worship is a dialogue between God and His people. Worship isn’t only singing and playing music (though singing and music are a part of the worship of God). God speaks to His people in worship and we respond to Him. This response is achieved in various ways – singing God’s praises; praying to Him; listening to His Word read, taught and preached; giving financially to the ministry of the Church; participating in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper; making vows; witnessing to and serving others. God spoke audibly to Jacob in Beersheba; and today, God speaks to His people by His Spirit through His Word, the Holy Bible.

If your Bible is habitually closed or unread, there's no way you can be assured that God is speaking to you. If you are confused as to God's working in your life, I'd suspect you haven't been combing through your Bible lately.

Worship will be central in the life of heaven, and so it must also be central in the life of the church on earth. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you should already have worship as the main activity in your life, both personally and corporately (publically). If you are merely a periodic attender of worship on Sundays, it can only be expected that you are a periodic believer in Jesus Christ, which really isn't possible. There are, in actuality, no part-time Christians. When God saves a person, it is a complete work of grace; God saves to the uttermost, not partially.

Verses 8-27 list all of the members of Jacob's family who, at that time, moved **from Beersheba to Goshen**. After all the time Abraham and his offspring spent in Canaan, the number is 70 Hebrews who began what would become a 430 year stay for God's people in Egypt. Goshen was located in the northeast part of the Nile delta, an area of Egypt about 900 square miles, which was very fertile land, and excellent for grazing cattle.

After arriving in Goshen, we have the tender reunion of Jacob and his favored son, Joseph. Verse 29 – "So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; and he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while."

It is good for us as God's people to show emotion. Some are afraid to show emotion, as it may be seen as a sign of weakness or immaturity. Showing emotion, however, was true of the people in the Bible. The people described in the pages of sacred Scripture are people of great passions. They weep in agony when bad times come. They also shout for joy in blessed circumstances.

From emotion, we move to fatherly pride of promotion. Notice Jacob's words upon seeing Joseph in verse 30 – "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you *are* still alive." *Can you imagine Jacob's chest expanding as he saw his favored son clad in the clothing of Egyptian royalty?* As I mentioned earlier in the message, there is nothing that makes a parent's joy greater than the success, particularly spiritual success, of a son or daughter. Conversely, nothing make a parent's heart break more irreparably than the spiritual shipwreck of a willful child.

My father, Kirk Dietmeier, was not a man of great means. He was not rich, nor was he famous for any inventions, heroic acts, or holding any significant office. To my knowledge, he never held a position of leadership in any organization. In fact, if he was anything, my father was notorious for living a life that didn't honor Jesus Christ. He rarely attended church, he didn't lead his family to serve God, and he was likely not a born again Christian.

However, my father was very proud of my active duty service with the US Air Force. He was fond of telling his drinking buddies of my exploits and honors and awards. It wasn't out of the question for Dad to make up things that didn't really take place. Zach was 5 and Molly was 1 when he died; he didn't get to see how his grandchildren have grown up; nor did he realize that he fathered a Christian pastor, since he passed away during my 15th year with the Air Force.

I find the late James Montgomery Boice's application helpful here when he writes, "You who are children, be careful to honor your parents by your moral choices. If you have any compassion for them – love for your mom and dad – do not disgrace them by disgraceful conduct. Do your very best for Christ. Use the talents He has given you – in part through your genetic inheritance from your parents. And then, when you have achieved everything you can achieve, honor them at the same time you place your crown of achievement at the feet of Jesus." (Boice, 1116)

The last four verses of the chapter are somewhat curious. Joseph explains to his family that they must meet with Pharaoh who then determines where they'll settle down. We already knew from **Genesis 45:18** that Pharaoh intended to give them "the best of the land of Egypt." Joseph coaches his family to emphasize during their time with Pharaoh that they are herders of animals, which was an abomination to the Egyptians. This teaches us that God's intent for His people in Egypt was that they would be unstained by the locals. They would continue on as shepherds in a foreign land, living in a part of the country where population was likely sparse (Goshen). Jacob and his family were God's special people – He was setting them apart from the pagan Egyptians, though closer to Joseph.

In further applying the lessons of this passage, let's move **from Goshen to Aledo** (ground zero of the ministry focus of Trinity Church). But, we also need to take it to the other places you live, work, and serve – Viola, Seaton, Joy, New Boston, Millersburg, Muscatine, Moline, East Moline, Taylor Ridge, Alexis, and every other place you may live.

God has called us to live for Him amidst the pagan culture all around us. We are to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world. **James 1:27** – "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." No matter how much we may try to protect ourselves and our family's from the depraved culture, its tentacles reach through forms of communication and entertainment – television programs, movies, and the Internet generally, but more specifically YouTube, NetFlix, Hulu, Vudu, Roku and other social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram – all accessible on computers, laptops, iPads, iPods, and cell phones.

Acculturation, or the assimilation of people and cultural practices together, is as much a problem for the church today as it was for the church of the Old Testament. Often one can see no difference between the way people behave and think within the church from those outside of it. That is apparent in dress, modesty (or lack thereof), language, morality, understanding of marriage, raising children, divorce, entertainment, and Sunday habits.

Recent studies, for example, indicate that sexual promiscuity and adultery occur as often among professing Christians as unchurched people. Christians, however, are called to be set apart and holy. God says in **I Peter 1:16**, "Be holy, for I am holy."

Rather than defending unholy life practices, professing Christians should be a people quick to repent and steer clear of immorality. It is possible because, as He did with Jacob, God promises us He will be with us.

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