

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

Senior Pastor Titus Green

September 1, 2024

JOSEPH: Our God Is Always Faithful (The Lord was with Joseph)

Genesis 39:1-6; 20-23

This week, I was reminded of an idea my kids came up with when they were younger. I don't have time to go through the whole backstory, but about 10 years ago someone thought it would be fun to have a family picnic up on the roof of our house.

And, since Emily and I apparently value fun over safety, we decided to give it a try. And, while the church's attorney insists I tell you not to try it for yourselves, we had a lot of fun, especially watching our neighbors drive by - "Honey, that pastor's family is eating on the roof. You don't think that's a religious thing, do you?" "I don't know, but I say we try out Georgianna just to be safe."

Now, I don't know what your family rules are about picnics on the roof, but we had one hard, fast rule: you don't ever get up there unless dad is with you. And, when I say "with" I mean I was hovering over them like a hawk. They weren't allowed to get outside of my reach. I always stayed between them and the edge. I pointed out everything they needed to do and where they needed to sit down. I wasn't just with them as a spectator, I was with them and their every move.

And there are two reasons I tell that story this morning:

1. I'm just stalling to make sure my iPad doesn't start speaking in tongues again.
2. I had three types of children while we were up on the roof...

The first type of child wanted to walk on the roof like I wasn't with them. There was an independent streak that wanted to prove to themselves they could do it without any help from Dad, which is natural as we are growing up and preparing for adulthood.

The second type of child wouldn't take a step without telling me what I needed to do to make the experience better for them..."Don't get too close to me, you might make me trip." "Don't go so slow, I just want to get to where I can sit down." "Don't go so fast, this isn't a sprint." Finally, I'd have to say, "Emily, if you don't cut it out, I won't be able to help the kids."

The third kind of child just enjoyed the experience. They had a kind of confidence that wasn't self-confidence. They took every step knowing that I was with them. Even though they were walking on their own, they were depending on me with every step. They were glad I was with them.

And, when it comes to our spiritual lives, we are called to live like that third kind of kid. And that's what our text for this morning is all about. It teaches us what it looks like to live as though the Lord is with us.

So, let's pick up where we left off last week.

Genesis 39:1-23

Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. 2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. 5 From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the LORD

blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field. 6 So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.

We'll skip this next section because we covered it last week, but it's the scene where Potiphar's wife falsely accuses Joseph of attempting to force himself on her. Joseph runs from her, and she goes to her husband right away.

19 As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled. 20 And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. 21 But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. 23 The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.

To this point in his life, Joseph's story is a series of one step forward and two steps back.

- He was the favorite son in the house of his father. Then, he was wrongfully betrayed and sent away to slavery.
- He was the favorite slave in the house of Potiphar. Then, he was wrongfully betrayed and sent away to prison.
- He was the favorite prisoner in the "big house" of the chief guard. Then, in the next chapter, he will be wrongfully forgotten and kept away in prison.

One step forward and two steps back...many of us can identify.

At the same time, something extraordinary is happening. In slavery, in temptation, in prison...he doesn't succumb to his environment or his circumstances. Joseph isn't bitter or cynical. He isn't plotting revenge or obsessed with the ways he has been sinned against. He doesn't use the ways he has been wronged to live in ways that would be wrong. He is faithful. He is thriving. In terrible circumstances, slavery and prison, he is personally prospering.

What's his secret? Well, it isn't a secret. Four times in our text, we are told the key to Joseph's prosperity.

- ***2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man***
- ***3 His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.***
- ***21 But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.***
- ***23 The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.***

The Lord is with Joseph. Joseph isn't alone. The Lord is with Him, working in and through and around him. The Lord is working in the brokenness and betrayal. The Lord is meeting Joseph in the suffering of slavery and the pain of prison. In so many ways, this is the entire story of Joseph – the Lord is with Him.

So, we are getting a glimpse into what it looks like when the Lord is with His people. But there's more to it than that.

Remember who is writing this and why. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Moses is writing this account to the people of Israel as they are coming out of Egypt and preparing to re-enter the promised land. He is reminding them about God's promise to be with them and bless them.

And don't forget that this isn't the first time Moses tells us about someone from Joseph's family going to Egypt and going through a difficult time.

Back in Genesis 12, Joseph's great-grandfather, Abraham, came to Egypt in a time of personal distress. He was afraid that Pharaoh would kill him because his wife, Sarah, was beautiful. And do you remember what Abraham did? Rather than depend on God to take care of him, Abraham took matters into his own hands and told Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister. So, Pharaoh took Sarah intending to make her one of his wives. But what happened? The Lord was with Abraham and brought a curse against Pharaoh and all that he had until Sarah was returned to Abraham.

The Lord was with Abraham but when Abraham went to Egypt in a time of trouble, he didn't live like he believed the Lord was with him.

So, this passage is giving the people of God a contrast to the story of Abraham. It shows God's people what it looks like to live like you believe the Lord is with them. Moses is giving this to people who are finally coming out of Egypt but are entering a new place of extraordinary challenge, a land filled with giants and battles. The Lord wants them to learn the lesson and live like they believe the Lord is with them.

And, before we move on, think about your life, the giants, the battles, the trials. Like Joseph, some of you feel like prisoners in your own life. You've been sinned against. You never dreamed your life would turn out the way it has. You feel the temptation to grow bitter or cynical or weary. You feel the pressure to adopt the ways of this world. You feel a growing desire to take revenge.

Your feet aren't on level ground and there's a very real possibility that you could lose your footing and fall into despair, into sin, into a life you know God isn't calling you to live.

So, what would it look like for you to live today like you believe the LORD is with you? And that begs the question: Is the Lord with us like He was with Joseph? And the clear answer of Scripture is a resounding "YES."

One of the last things Jesus said to His disciples after He has risen from the dead and was about to ascend into heaven is found in Matthew.

Matthew 28:20

...And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Jesus promises to be with His followers until the end of this age or, until He comes again. And how is the Lord Jesus with us?

Romans 6:5

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

When we place our faith and trust in Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior, we are mysteriously and miraculously united to Him, to His death and resurrection.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are so united to the Lord Jesus that He actually lives His life in and through us as we trust in Him.

1 Corinthians 6:19

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Friend, if you are trusting in Jesus, the Lord is with you, dwelling in you as His very temple on this earth, living in and through you by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The story of Joseph is your story and mine. In every setback and disappointment and struggle, in every betrayal and attack, in every pit and prison, wherever you might find yourself today, the Lord is with you if you are trusting in Him. And He is calling you to live like He is with you.

And He isn't just present as a spectator. Like Joseph, He isn't just watching your life. His presence in the lives of His people comes with certain amazing promises.

Listen to the words of Isaiah 41.

Isaiah 41:8–10

But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off"; fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

At least three things come with God's promise to be with us.

- I will strengthen you – that power.
- I will help you. I will give you what you need – that provision.
- I will uphold you. I won't let you be defeated or destroyed – that's preservation.

Big Idea: As the Lord is with us, He gives us His power, provision, and preservation.

How do we overcome our circumstances? How do we keep from growing bitter or cynical? How do we remain faithful and fruitful even when our lives feel like we are taking one step forward and two steps back? The secret is not a secret. We are called to look at our circumstances through the eyes of faith, believing that the Lord is with us; to believe we live with His power, His provision, and His preservation.

Now, let's see that taking shape in the life of Joseph.

1. The Lord is with us in His Power and Provision.

When we find Joseph at the beginning of chapter 39, he is a seventeen-year-old young man who has just been separated from his home and his family. He is a slave. That means he has work to do. He has to learn a new language. He has to learn a new set of skills. His family were shepherds, and those skills weren't much use in his role at Potiphar's house. When he gets promoted as the overseer, he has to learn accounting and management.

When he gets thrown into prison, he has to learn how to relate to prisoners, which might have been the easiest thing he had to do since his brothers were a bunch of criminals. Eventually, he had to learn to run a prison. How does a seventeen-year-old do all of that on his own?

3 His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands

22 And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. 23 The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.

Notice that Joseph is doing it. In verse 3, it's the work of his hands. Verse 22 says Joseph was the one to do it. God isn't just doing it for Joseph, God is doing it through Joseph. Every day, Joseph had to get up and get to work and when he did, He found the Lord providing him with power and ability that made the work of his hands succeed. As Joseph picks up a spreadsheet or an abacus or whatever they used in Egypt, the Lord is giving Joseph wisdom and skill. As Joseph is overseeing prisoners, the Lord is giving him ability and strength. While Joseph really is waking up each day and deciding to get to work, the Lord is providing power and ability so that Joseph is able to do things he never could have done on his own.

And that's how the Lord lives with those who trust in Jesus. He provides His power to flow through us.

Philippians 2:12-13

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

God calls us to a life of complete obedience to Jesus, a life that reflects the righteous life to Christ in the darkness of this world. He intends for us to do it. The life of faith isn't a life where we kick back in our spiritual lazy boys and sweep everything under the rug of God's sovereignty as though God will do it. Make no mistake, He will accomplish all His good purposes. And one of those purposes is to pour out His power in and through the lives of His people.

Last week, we talked about the Lord's power to enable us to resist sin. But the Lord desires to empower us to not only step away from sin, but He also empowers us to step into righteousness and obedience. He desires to make us faithful and fruitful.

1 Peter 1:3

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness,

And, when we truly live by faith in Jesus, we step into obedience precisely because we believe He has provided us with His Divine power to live.

What place of obedience would you step into if you believed Jesus would be Jesus in you?

- What if you believed the Lord would provide you His power to obey the command to rejoice always, including today?
- What if you believed the Lord would provide you His power to obey the command to love your wife like Christ loved the church or respect your husband as is fitting in the Lord?
- What if you believed the Lord would provide you His power to obey the command to live sober even in hard times?

- What if you believed the Lord would provide you His power to obey the command to pursue purity and live with integrity and speak with complete honesty?

To step away from bitterness and revenge...

To step into standing up for what is right in a harsh or difficult environment...

To tell your friend or coworker about Jesus...

To forgive those who have sinned against you...

To face the uncertainty of the future with hope...while you walk through cancer...

How would you live if you believed the Lord is with you? He is...so take the next step of faith and obedience.

2. The Lord is with us in His Preservation.

As you look at Joseph's trajectory, it seems like he is spiraling downward. Down into slavery, then down into prison. But, when you take a step back, you see that the Lord is preserving him every step along the way, like Isaiah 41:10 promises, the Lord is upholding him.

21 But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

God was showing Joseph steadfast love. That phrase translates a word in the Hebrew that is found 250 times in the Old Testament. It means "loyalty and lovingkindness." The pain and suffering of Joseph was filtered through the steadfast love and loyalty of God. God wasn't sparing him from suffering, He was preserving him within the suffering. He allowed Joseph to become a slave. He allowed Him to go to prison. But He would not let Joseph be destroyed. It looked like Joseph's dream was dying and that every step he took was taking him further away from God's promise, but the exact opposite was happening. God was preserving Joseph and preserving His plan for Joseph and, in loyal love, God was only allowing things that brought Joseph closer to His destiny.

Going to Potiphar's house brought Joseph one step closer to the throne of Egypt. Going to prison brought him even one more step closer. The dream wasn't dying, it was being fulfilled through the pit and prison. What looked like setbacks were really steps forward. And the same is true for us in Christ.

1 Peter 5:10

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

He will not spare us from suffering. But God will not allow the trials of this life to destroy us. He will preserve us by His steadfast love and will use the pain to advance His plan of making us more and more like Jesus.

And some of you are living in what feels like prison. You are experiencing pain you never imagined you would encounter. And you are tempted to believe it's going to destroy you. Your dream is dying. Your hope is almost gone.

But, if you are trusting in Jesus, you need to hear the word of God: The Lord is with you. He will not let this destroy you. Every setback is filtered through the steadfast love of your Father in Heaven and is bringing you one step closer to your destiny in Christ. Do not fear. Do not be dismayed. He is with you. In due time, He will restore you. And, in the meantime, He will preserve you.