

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**

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**September 8, 2024**

**JOSEPH: Our God Is Always Faithful (Faithful and Forgotten)**

**Genesis 40; 41:1,9**

When we first meet Joseph, he is 17 years old and living at home with his 11 brothers, who were basically history's first mafia family. They hated Joseph. Not just because he was their father's favorite, but because God gave him two dreams that revealed Joseph's destiny. He would be a great ruler, and all his family would one day be under his authority.

Those dreams loom large over the story of Joseph. He is destined for greatness and glory. But, for a significant portion of his life, he seems to be getting further away from his destiny rather than closer to it. His brothers sell him as a slave, taking him out of his homeland into the nation of Egypt. As a slave, his master's wife makes false accusations against him, and he lands in prison. His is a story of one step forward and two steps back.

But we know how the story ends. God will fulfill His promises about Joseph. In all the sin and injustice and disappointment, God is working within every detail to accomplish what He had destined for Joseph.

And, knowing that helps us interpret the events of Joseph's life. When you know that God is working out a good and perfect plan, you can look for the traces of His hand in the events of Joseph's life. In a universe that is under the care of a Sovereign God, there's no such thing as "just so happened."

And there's a theological term for that dynamic. It's called the Providence of God.

Providence is the protective and provisional care of God in and through all things. It's a way of seeing all things as under the direction of God's Sovereign hand as He is guiding the lives of His people into His purposes. While the word "providence" isn't in the Bible, the concept is clearly taught throughout Scripture.

*Proverbs 16:33*

*The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.*

Casting lots was similar to rolling the dice. It seems completely random from our point of view. But God is at work in it. That's not telling us to live our lives and make our decisions by rolling the dice. It's telling us to trust the work of God in the details of our lives that seem random and unplanned.

*Romans 8:28–29*

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

This is the hallmark passage about the Providence of God. He is at work in ALL THINGS to bring about His destiny to transform His people into the image of Jesus. And our text for this morning is a powerful example of the Providence of God. His unseen hand is moving in the details of Joseph's life, bringing him closer and closer to his God-ordained destiny.

Before we read our passage of study, let me go ahead and give you the big idea for this morning so you can be looking for it in the text.

**Big Idea:** In His providence, God orchestrates the details of our lives to fulfill His good and glorious plan.

#### **Genesis 40**

**Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. 2 And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, 3 and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. 4 The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.**

**5 And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation.**

**6 When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. 7 So he asked Pharaoh’s officers who were with him in custody in his master’s house, “Why are your faces downcast today?” 8 They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.”**

**9 So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him, “In my dream there was a vine before me, 10 and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes. 11 Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand.” 12 Then Joseph said to him, “This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days. 13 In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh’s cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer. 14 Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house. 15 For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit.”**

**16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, “I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head, 17 and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head.” 18 And Joseph answered and said, “This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days. 19 In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you.” 20 On the third day, which was Pharaoh’s birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. 21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand. 22 But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. 23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.**

#### **Genesis 41:1,9**

**1 After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile...**

**9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “I remember...”**

Do you see God’s Providence? This passage is a culmination of a series of events that lead Joseph to the fulfillment of God’s destiny in his life.

- It just so happens that when Joseph’s brothers sell him as a slave he is purchased by the chief of security for Pharaoh, the most powerful man in the world at the time.
- It just so happens that when Joseph is falsely accused, he lands in the prison where Pharaoh’s political prisoners are kept.
- It just so happens that Joseph is put in charge of two of Pharaoh’s most trusted servants.
- It just so happens that those servants of Pharaoh have dreams on the exact same night.
- It just so happens that Joseph notices that they woke up disturbed by their dreams.

- It just so happens that Joseph is able to interpret dreams.
- It just so happens that those dreams come true.
- It just so happens that one of Pharaoh's servants is restored to his place of service in Pharaoh's court.
- It just so happens that Pharaoh has a couple of dreams that disturb him.
- It just so happens that Pharaoh's servant remembers Joseph.

Those "just so happens" didn't just happen. God is clearly at work in the seemingly random details of Joseph's life. And, let me show you several ways the Providence of God is specifically at work in our text.

### God's Providence includes our Experience of Time

#### ***40:1 Some time after this,***

This chapter opens with a reference to time. It's intentionally vague. Maybe it was a year. Maybe it was five. Time just seems to be passing by without any rhyme or reason. But the rest of the text shows us that God's clock was working with perfect precision.

#### ***40:5 And one night they both dreamed***

Pharaoh's servants both have dreams on the exact same night. That's clearly not a coincidence. God is at work with perfect timing.

Notice the interpretation of the dreams is about specific timing, as well.

#### ***40:13 In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office***

#### ***40:19 In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a tree.***

Both dreams have a very specific window of time for fulfillment – exactly three days. Again, that's clearly not a coincidence. It's the precision timing of the Providence of God.

#### ***40:20 On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants.***

Three days after their dreams, it just so happens to be Pharaoh's birthday, and he wants to throw a party. And, since it's a party in his honor, he wants the food and drinks to be perfect. That seems to remind him of his favorite cupbearer...a man whose job was to taste the food and drinks for the king to make sure they were up to par (and safe to consume).

#### ***41:1 After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile...***

#### ***41:9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "I remember..."***

The cupbearer doesn't remember Joseph until Pharaoh had two troubling dreams. Once again, God is working with perfect precision in the timing of each event.

And that's a great word for many of us this morning. Many of us find ourselves in the waiting room of life.

- We are waiting for word from our doctor.
- We are waiting for our prodigal to come home.

- We are waiting for the circumstances of our lives to start to make sense. All of us are waiting for something.

We are waiting for God to do what only God can do and while we wait, we wonder.

- Did I miss the boat?
- Did I mess the whole thing up?
- Does God see me? Does God hear me? Does God care?

Learn this lesson from the life of Joseph – while you are waiting, God is working. He's never early or late. His perfect plans for you will be accomplished right on time.

God's providence includes our experience of time.

### God's Providence includes our Experiences with People

**2 And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, 3 and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. 4 The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them.**

In God's providence, He brings two men into Joseph's life. From an earthly perspective, there usually isn't a lot of good that comes from befriending people in prison. Especially when they are on the bad side of the most powerful man in the world.

But things aren't always as they seem. God was weaving their stories together. He was at work. Keep this in mind, we'll come back to it before we are finished.

God is at work in the encounters we have with the people who surround us. His providence includes our experiences with people.

### God's Providence includes our Experiences of Pain

We've already talked about the painful events that brought Joseph to this place. But, in our text, we see a particular moment of pain that could have been a breaking point in the life of Joseph.

As he is interpreting the dream of the chief cupbearer, Joseph tells him he will be restored to the service of Pharaoh in three days. And look what Joseph says to him.

**14 Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house. 15 For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit."**

After a decade of endless pain and disappointment, Joseph can almost see a light at the end of the tunnel. If the cupbearer will just tell Pharaoh about Joseph's story, maybe Pharaoh would intervene.

Three days go by, and the cupbearer is back in the good graces of the one man on earth who could give justice to Joseph. I can almost imagine Joseph, lying in bed at night, wondering what's going on behind the scenes. But nothing happens. Days turn into weeks and weeks turn into months and months turn into years.

**40:23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.**

**41:1 After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile...**

Two whole years went by, and the darkness only grew darker. The physical pain of prison was nothing compared to the mental and emotional pain of having every hope for freedom crushed day after day. If we didn't know the rest of the story, it would all seem pointless. The dream about Joseph's destiny wouldn't seem like a glorious promise, it would seem like a cruel reminder of the life Joseph had never lived. As Joseph is in prison, forgotten and abandoned, it all seems so pointless.

But we know the end of Joseph's story. And we know Joseph's pain was far from pointless. God was at work. His providence includes our pain. And the same is true for you and me. As we live in the waiting place, our pain rarely makes much sense. But, just like Joseph, God is working through our experience of pain.

Perhaps there is no better example in the past 100 years of this truth than the life of Corrie Ten Boom. My girls know her well.

During WW2, she and her family were placed in concentration camps because they helped Jews evade Nazi soldiers. In ways we can't imagine, she suffered the loss of everything from her personal dignity and freedom to the death of her beloved sister, Betsie.

In the years after her release, Corrie told countless stories of how God used that time of suffering to shape her soul and advance His plan. As she shared the work God did through her pain, she often quoted her favorite poem:

My life is but a weaving  
Between my God and me.  
I cannot choose the colors  
He weaveth steadily.

Of't times He weaveth sorrow;  
And I in foolish pride  
Forget He sees the upper  
And I the underside.

Not 'til the loom is silent  
And the shuttles cease to fly  
Will God unroll the canvas  
And reveal the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful  
In the weaver's skillful hand  
As the threads of gold and silver  
In the pattern He has planned

He knows, He loves, He cares;  
Nothing this truth can dim.  
He gives the very best to those  
Who leave the choice to Him.

Friend, I don't know the pain you are experiencing. I don't know the darkness of your sleepless nights. I don't know the tears you've cried. But I do know this: if you are trusting in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, your pain isn't pointless. Our God has a plan, and He is weaving dark threads of

pain and disappointment into a glorious work of art that is your life. Like Joseph, you are His masterpiece. And you'll be on display for all of eternity in the gallery of Heaven as an eternal reminder that our glorious God is working in His providence even in our pain.

As we reflect over the providence of God in the life of Joseph, I want to close by showing you two ways this truth should impact the way we live. You see, Joseph isn't just an example of God's providence, he's an example of someone who lives in light of God's providence.

Let me show you what I mean. After the cupbearer and baker have their dreams, notice what Joseph says.

**40:8 They said to him, "We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them." And Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me."**

Joseph knows that God is the One who interprets dreams. And, so he says, "Tell your dreams to me."

Why would he say that? Does he think he's God? Clearly, he doesn't. Four times in the last chapter, we are told that the Lord was with Joseph. And Joseph clearly believes that. As he encounters the events of his life, he is seeing them through the lens of God's providence. He knows it's no accident that they both dreamed on the same night...God's providence works in our experience of time. He knows it's no accident that they are in prison with the dreamer. God's providence works through our experience with people. He knows it's no accident that their dreams have brought turmoil to their souls. God's providence includes our pain.

So, he steps into the open door because he sees His life through the lens of God's Providence.

And there are two ways he lives with purpose in light of God's providence...they are ways we can live in light of God's providence, as well.

1. Look for opportunities to serve the people in your life.

**6 When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. 7 So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why are your faces downcast today?"**

Joseph doesn't just blow by the people in his life. He notices them. He cares about them. Two dudes wake up in prison, and Joseph is aware enough to notice that they are especially downcast. He asks, "What's wrong?" Which is an interesting question to ask prisoners. "Dude, we're in jail. What's wrong with you?"

In the midst of his own pain, Joseph isn't consumed with himself and his problems. He's looking for God-ordained opportunities to serve. I'm convinced this is one of the reasons Joseph didn't grow bitter in his suffering. He knew what it felt like to get tossed into a pit. He could relate. And, as a result, he could serve people who were going through the same thing.

What would it look like if you went through your week, and rather than being consumed by your own problems, you looked for open doors to help people with theirs? What if you believed it was no accident that you were the one who was sitting at a table in a restaurant that was being served by someone who is clearly having a bad day? What if you went home this afternoon and believed it was no accident that you live next to someone who is hurting or in trouble? What if you didn't just attend this church but believed it was God's providence that placed you here so you could serve the people who gather with you each and every week?

When we truly believe in the providence of God, we look for opportunities to serve the people God has strategically placed in our lives.

2. Look for opportunities to share the message from God.

***40:8 They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.”***

Joseph isn't afraid to get involved with a couple of troublemakers. He sees God opening the door to deliver God's message to people who need to hear His voice.

What about you? You are the light of this world. If you know Jesus, then you know the greatest message there is for lost and hurting people.

In His providence, God brought His Son, Jesus, into this broken and sin-filled world. Jesus entered our pain and suffering so that He could redeem and restore us to God. As Jesus suffered and died on the cross, God was working out His perfect plan to save every man, woman, and child who would place their faith and trust in Him. That message of Good News applies to everyone you know: God forgives and redeems any and all who trust in Jesus.

And God wants to bring that message to this world through you. So, by faith, open your eyes to the open doors He might place in your path this week to tell someone about Jesus. You never know what pit they might be in. You never know how His plan includes you.

In His providence, God orchestrates the details of our lives to fulfill His good and glorious plan.