

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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The Foundation for Transformation
Genesis 43

This morning, we are jumping back into our study of the life of Joseph. Since it's been nearly a month, let me give you a quick refresh.

Joseph was one of 12 sons of a man named Jacob. Their family was dysfunctional, to say the least. Jacob only loved one woman, but he had 4 different wives. Not good. For a long time, the only wives able to have children were the 3 women Jacob didn't even love. But, after a while, his favorite wife finally had a son who became his favorite child. That's Joseph.

Jacob's extreme favoritism toward Joseph caused Joseph's 10 half-brothers to hate him. Ultimately, they sold him as a slave and led their father to believe he had been killed by wild animals. As a slave, Joseph was accused of a crime he didn't commit and thrown into an Egyptian prison. But the Lord was with Joseph. And by the providence of God, Joseph was elevated to the second in command over the nation of Egypt. In particular, he was tasked with guiding the nation through 7 years of crippling famine. That's the first part of this story.

The second part of this story broadens the focus to the rest of Joseph's family. In the last passage we studied, Joseph's 10 half-brothers come to Egypt to buy food during the famine. Through God's providence, they find themselves standing before Joseph. God is bringing these brothers back together through a process of restoration and reconciliation.

And, as I've studied this section, I see Four Stages of Reconciliation vividly portrayed.

1. God awakens their consciences. Genesis 42

This is what we looked at last time. Joseph recognizes his brothers but doesn't make himself known to them. Rather, he puts them through a series of tests to see if they've changed. He speaks harshly to them and accuses them of being spies. During that exchange, they tell him their father and a younger brother are back at home.

Once Joseph hears that his dad and younger brother are still alive, He decides to keep one of them (Simeon) as a prisoner and then sends the rest of them home. He tells them that the only way they will get their captive brother back is if they return with their youngest brother, Benjamin. He also instructs his servant to hide all their money in their bags of grain. That will be a test as to whether or not they are honest men or still the lying crooks they used to be.

Through all of that, God was working in their hearts. They remembered their sin against Joseph. They saw their guilt against God. They realized that they deserved to be punished. The seeds of genuine repentance are starting to take root in their hearts, but they aren't quite there, yet.

2. God reveals His mercy and grace. Genesis 43

This will be our study for this morning. God shows them His amazing grace and incredible mercy. It's their exposure to God's grace that solidifies their change of heart.

3. God brings them repentance. Genesis 44

The kindness of God brings them to repentance. Their hearts are changed in a way that transforms their lives. And their lives are transformed in a way that enables Joseph to trust them and open his heart and life to them again. That's genuine repentance. And it results in the last phase of reconciliation.

4. God restores them to Joseph. Genesis 45

In one of the most powerful scenes in all of Scripture, Joseph extends forgiveness to his brothers, and they reconcile their relationship to one another.

So, there are the four stages of Reconciliation and Restoration that I see here. This morning, we are going to pick up where we left off and look at chapter 43: God reveals His grace and mercy.

I want to go ahead and give you the big idea, and then we will dig into our text.

Big Idea: The mercy and grace of God are the foundation of transformation.

Over the next few chapters, we are going to witness a massive transformation in the lives of Joseph's brothers. But our text this morning is the foundation for that transformation and it all centers around the mercy and grace of God. Apart from them seeing and believing the mercy and grace of God, they would have been sinful men trapped in guilt and shame. Only God's mercy and grace can truly change our hearts and lives.

Now, let's jump into Genesis 43 and I'll show you what I mean. For the sake of time, I'm going to summarize some sections of this chapter.

Our chapter begins when the food has run out and Jacob's family needs to go back to Egypt. But remember, the only way they can get more food is to take their youngest brother to Egypt, as proof to Joseph that they were telling the truth. But Dad isn't having it. He doesn't want to send Benjamin. Ben isn't just the baby of the family, he's Joseph's only full brother, the only other son of Jacob's favorite wife. Plus, every time his sons go someplace together, they come back with one less son. But Judah steps up and promises that he won't come back without Ben. Jacob consents and sends them out with this word...

Genesis 43:14

May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

This is the first time in the Bible that this word translated "mercy" is found. Notice that the appeal is that the mercy would come from God. Jacob doesn't pray that the ruler in Egypt will show them mercy. He is praying that God will show them mercy. So, if they receive mercy, where should they believe it came from? From God. Keep that in mind, it's setting the tone for the entire chapter.

With that, they head out to Egypt. They take Benjamin, the money that Joseph had placed in their bags the last time, money for more grain, and a present from their father.

Genesis 43:16

When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Bring the men into the house, and slaughter an animal and make ready, for the men are to dine with me at noon."

You know what we call that? We call that mercy. As a matter of fact, if you are a student of the bible you might have pictured something when you read that verse – the story of the prodigal son – which is one of the most powerful stories in the bible about the mercy and compassion of God. He sees them and tells his servant to kill the fattened calf and make a feast.

But the brothers don't see the mercy of God, yet.

Genesis 43:17-18

The man did as Joseph told him and brought the men to Joseph's house. 18 And the men were afraid because they were brought to Joseph's house, and they said, "It is because of the money, which was replaced in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may assault us and fall upon us to make us servants and seize our donkeys."

Instead of believing that God is answering their father's prayer and showing them mercy, their guilty consciences are causing them to make all kinds of crazy assumptions. They think it's an ambush. One of them says, "I bet he's after our donkeys!" Why on earth would a man who has an entire nation at his disposal be trying to steal their donkeys?

We don't have time to go down this road, but they think Joseph is going to do to them what they did to the men of Shechem...remember that? They tricked an entire city into thinking they were being kind to them, only to get them to let down their guard so they could kill them all. Their unresolved guilt is causing them to project what they are like onto everyone else. Sin does that to us. It makes us suspicious and untrusting.

So, the brothers approach Joseph's servant and try to repay the money that had previously been placed in their bags of grain on their first trip to Egypt. Notice what Joseph's servant says to them.

Genesis 43:23-25

He replied, "Peace to you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has put treasure in your sacks for you. I received your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them. 24 And when the man had brought the men into Joseph's house and given them water, and they had washed their feet, and when he had given their donkeys fodder, 25 they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they should eat bread there.

More mercy. The brothers couldn't yet believe the kindness of God could be extended to them, so God stirs the heart of an Egyptian servant to give them the good news. Somehow, he knows their God and he seems to know the story of their father's family. Sounds like Joseph has been hosting a Bible study in Egypt. The servant tells them that this is all the mercy of their God, just like Jacob had prayed. The first words he speaks to them are "Peace to you, do not be afraid." That word "peace" translates the Hebrew word "shalom." It refers to complete wholeness or well-being. It's not just the absence of conflict, it's the presence of all that is good and blessed.

And that's what Joseph's servant reminds the brothers they have in relationship with their covenant God. He is showing them mercy and grace...giving them shalom, even though they don't deserve it.

He tells them God has given them their treasure. They don't have to buy mercy because mercy can't be bought. He brings Simeon out to them. He brings them into the master's house. He allows them to have their feet washed. He takes care of their beloved donkeys. None of their fears are realized as they receive gift after gift, grace upon grace.

Genesis 43:26-30

When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present that they had with them and bowed down to him to the ground. 27 And he inquired about their welfare and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?" 28 They said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive." And they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves. 29 And he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son!" 30 Then Joseph hurried out, for his compassion grew warm for his brother, and he sought a place to weep. And he entered his chamber and wept there.

Joseph gets home and they all get ready to eat together. They all bow down before him, fulfilling the dreams God gave him over 20 years ago. He asks them how they are doing. He asks about their dad. He makes sure all is well. Contrast this with the last time they were standing before Joseph. In that passage, it says he spoke harshly to them. But not this time.

Then, he lifts his eyes and sees Benjamin, his mother's son. The only full brother he has. And what does Joseph say? He says, "God be gracious to you, my son!" There it is again. The focus is on God's grace. As a matter of fact, when verse 30 says that Joseph's compassion grew warm, that word "compassion" is the same word translated "mercy" in Jacob's prayer. So, this chapter is coming full circle. God is showing mercy.

Joseph's heart is warmed. He feels himself beginning to cry. But he isn't quite ready to trust his other brothers. He can't see the change that God is bringing about in them. So, he steps out of the room, gathers his composure, and comes back in.

Genesis 43:31-34

Then he washed his face and came out. And controlling himself he said, "Serve the food." 32 They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians. 33 And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth. And the men looked at one another in amazement. 34 Portions were taken to them from Joseph's table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. And they drank and were merry with him.

As they sit down to eat this feast that Joseph has prepared, Joseph has arranged for them to be seated according to the order of their birthrights. In honor of all the math nerds, there are more than 39,000,000 ways you can seat 11 people in a row. I'm not sure Joseph's brothers did the math, but they knew it wasn't random chance that they were seated in perfect order. They are amazed. I believe they finally see that God is at work. None of this is random chance. I believe they finally believe their father's prayer has been answered. I believe they finally took to heart the words of the servant. The God of their father has brought them shalom – completeness, wholeness, well-being.

Then, Joseph decides to lay down another test. He gives Benjamin 5 times more than the other brothers and watches to see how they respond. The last time their younger brother was singled out and given more, that brother was Joseph and they hated him for it. Do you remember what chapter 37 says about how they responded? It says they couldn't even speak "peacefully" to him. That's the word "shalom." They couldn't speak from a place of shalom. But what about now?

Would they fall back into their old pattern? Would they hate Benjamin for being favored above them? Nope. They're too amazed by grace to be phased by favoritism. They know they don't deserve to even be at the feast and they're happy to have a seat at the table.

The scene ends with these words: They drank and were merry with him. They are no longer afraid, no longer slaves to their guilty consciences, no longer cynical or selfish or guarded. They are different men than we've ever seen them be. While the world around them is starving in famine, they are smiling at a feast. 10 messed up, sinful sons transformed by the mercy and grace of God.

What an incredible story and it's not just a story from 4000 years ago. It's a story for today. It's a story for you and for me.

Some of us have come to this place today desperately in need of a change. Our lives are broken and nothing we have tried can fix them. Our marriages are broken. Our families are broken. Our world is broken. Our hearts are broken. We need change. We want to be transformed.

Similar to Jacob, we find ourselves almost wishing that God would do something in His mercy to change our lives, to transform us.

Friend, have I got good news for you. In more ways than I could begin to recount, God has poured out His mercy and grace for you. The story of our text is just a shadow of the great mercy and grace God has already extended to each and every one of us, a kind of grace that will change everything about your life and death and eternal destiny.

And, in the time we have remaining, I want to share with you 3 ways God has shown us mercy and grace that are foreshadowed in our text.

1. In mercy and grace, God did not withhold His beloved Son.

Our text begins with Jacob reluctantly agreeing to send his beloved Son on a mission to save his other children. In an infinitely greater way, God sent His only begotten and beloved Son, Jesus Christ, into this world on a mission to save every man, woman and child who would trust in Him.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Unlike Jacob, God wasn't reluctant to send His beloved Son into this world – it was His plan from before the beginning of time. Jesus came to this world on a mission to save whoever would be willing to place their faith and trust in Him. By His perfect life, His sacrificial death, and His powerful resurrection, Jesus made a way for us to be forgiven of our sin and adopted into the family of God.

Your eternal destiny can be instantly changed from hell to heaven, from death to eternal life, from condemnation to complete forgiveness, if you will simply place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

Friend, do not leave this place today without knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt that you are saved and safe in Jesus. God's mercy and grace are extended to you in Christ. Come to Jesus today and be saved forever.

2. In mercy and grace, God brings us Peace.

Romans 5:1-2

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Like Joseph's brothers, we are all held captive in guilt and shame. Deep within our hearts, we know the ways we have sinned against God. And we know our sin has made us enemies of God. That's what sin is, it's a declaration of rebellion toward God.

And there is no such thing as peace when we realize God is against us. How can you have peace in your life if you believe that God himself is opposed to you? No amount of money or worldly success can satisfy a guilty conscience.

But, when we come to place our faith and trust in Jesus, we are forgiven of all our sin and have complete and eternal peace with God. And that peace with God creates a peace within. Romans 5:2 says we have access into a new standing before God, a standing that is based on grace. In other words, in Christ, God will always and only show us grace.

The God who was once our enemy is now our loving, heavenly Father. And, friend, how can you not have peace when you realize that the God of this universe is your Gracious Father and is forever on your side?

Romans 8:31-32

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

God will not withhold any good thing from you as His child when you trust in Jesus. The fullness of well-being that is referred to as shalom is given to us completely through faith in Jesus.

How differently would you feel today if you knew that the God of this universe was actively using everything at His disposal to meet your needs and bless your life? Well, that's exactly what He is doing. That's peace of mind.

I know many of us are a bit anxious about the upcoming election. And I believe this is a historically significant election. Exceptionally important issues are being decided. That's why I believe every follower of Jesus should exercise holy stewardship by voting and voting in alignment with biblical truth.

But the reality is that while we may be for or against a certain candidate, God is for us, so who could possibly be against us. Brothers and sisters, no matter the outcome of November 5, our destinies are secure in Christ. Almighty God is for us, and He will not withhold one, single thing that is good for us and glorifying to Him.

The mercy and grace of God can give you peace within because the mercy and grace of God has given you peace with HIM if you are trusting in Jesus.

3. In mercy and grace, God gives us Joy.

I love the picture of Joseph's brothers sitting around the table, laughing and smiling and enjoying the feast that was set before them. Knowing they had a seat at the table and that God was showing them grace brought them joy they had never known before. While the world languished in famine, they rejoiced at the feast that was graciously given to them. Joy is the by-product of enjoying good things. Joy is what happened when you pull up a seat at Thanksgiving and enjoy the feast and fellowship that has been set before you.

How much more for us in Christ? Do you want to live with joy today? Then, stop obsessing with the bad news of this world and start focusing and feasting on the Good News for you in Jesus.

Let me just give you a summary from one of my favorite chapters in the entire bible, Ephesians 1, that gives us reason after reason we have to rejoice in Jesus today.

Ephesians 1:3-14

- In Christ, you have every spiritual blessing that heaven holds (v. 3)
- In Christ, you are chosen and wanted by God (v. 4)
- In Christ, you are holy and blameless before God (v. 4)
- In Christ, you are loved and adopted by God (v. 5)
- In Christ, you are redeemed and forgiven of sin (v. 7)
- In Christ, you will inherit everything that belongs to God (v. 11)
- In Christ, you are sealed and eternally secured by the Holy Spirit (v. 13)

Do you want to be transformed into a person of perpetual joy, no matter what is going on in the world around you? Then feast on the blessings that are yours in Jesus. Enjoy what is yours today by God's grace to you in Jesus.

The mercy and grace of God are the foundation for transformation, and they are yours today and forever if you are trusting in Jesus.