

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

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JOSEPH: Our God Is Always Faithful (A Reminder of God's Blessing)

Genesis 46-49

As we approach the final chapters of our study of the life of Joseph, we find that God is increasingly bringing the focus of this story back to an entire family and not just Joseph. As a matter of fact, Joseph isn't the main character of chapters 46-49. The focus is on Jacob, Joseph's father. In a sense, this story is being reintegrated into the greater story of Abraham's descendants and the purpose God has for them.

So, for this morning, we are going to do a broad overview of these chapters that focus on Jacob and see an important biblical principle on display. Then, Lord willing, we will conclude our study on Joseph next week by looking at chapter 50.

Genesis 46:1-4

So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. 2 And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am." 3 Then he said, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. 4 I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes."

Jacob has been separated from Joseph for over 20 years. He's getting ready to make the trip to Egypt to be reunited with his long, lost son who is now the prime minister of Egypt.

But he's apparently afraid to leave Canaan. Why? Well, he knows that God had promised to bless his grandfather Abraham with the land of Canaan. That promise was to Abraham and his descendants. So, Jacob doesn't want to leave the place of God's blessing. That's why he stops in Beersheba, one of the southernmost places in Canaan.

- This is where his father, Isaac, met with God in Genesis 26.
- It was the place claimed by Abraham in Genesis 21.
- So, this is a place with great significance in this family God had promised to bless.

And, in the verses we just read, God shows up in a vision to Jacob.

You might have noticed that the name Israel is used interchangeably with the name Jacob. Without going into detail, Jacob had an earlier encounter with the Lord in Genesis 32. God blessed him there and changed his name to Israel. Subsequently, the twelve sons of Israel became the heads of the tribes that made up the nation of Israel.

It seems likely that one of the reasons Jacob is being called "Israel" so often throughout these final chapters is because God is intentionally grabbing the attention of the nation of Israel. He's essentially saying, "This story isn't just about the man named Jacob, it's about the nation that carries his name. It's about you." There are truths here to which they need to pay attention.

And what does God say to Jacob? He says:

"Don't be afraid. I am the God of your father." I take that reference to include Abraham, Jacob's grandfather, as much as it might be a reference to Isaac, Jacob's dad. The reason I say that is

because God reiterates the covenant promises to Jacob that He first made to Abraham. He promises to make a mighty nation out of Jacob's descendants. He promises to bring Jacob back to Canaan, a promise he fulfills through Jacob's descendants. They bring Jacob's body back to Canaan and the entire nation eventually comes back to Canaan. Then, God says something immensely important. He says, "I myself will go with you." I will be there.

So, there are at least two things God emphasizes here to Israel.

1. God's blessings are primarily about God's presence among His people, not their presence in a particular place. Israel didn't have to be in Canaan to be in the place of God's blessing because God would be with him.
2. The blessings of God to Jacob aren't just about Jacob. God tells Jacob to go down to Egypt. He will have God's blessing there. But the blessing will not just come TO Jacob, it will come THROUGH Jacob. God would make a mighty nation, not primarily while Jacob was still alive but through Jacob's life and beyond.

So, this section from chapters 46-49 begins with this powerful encounter with God where God makes promises to bless Jacob and to bless others through Jacob. And, like I said a moment ago, that connects this section with the big story of God's people that began with His covenant with Abraham.

Genesis 12:1-3

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

This is the initial call of God to Abraham.

1. He promises to be with Abraham. God says that when Abraham goes out on a journey to a new country, God will show him the land He would give to him. That means God was going on the journey with Abraham. The blessing was about the presence of God with Abraham.
2. He promises to bless Abraham in a way that would bless all the families of the earth. In other words, God would give blessings to Abraham that weren't just about Abraham. The blessing would not only come TO Abraham, it would come THROUGH Abraham.

So, our text is just another way of saying what God told Abraham was His purpose for His people. He would be with them and give blessings to them for the purpose of blessing others through them.

And, that dynamic is not only central to the first four verses of Genesis 46, but it also dominates all of chapters Genesis 46-49. We won't read all four chapters, but I do want to show you what I mean.

God is with Israel and blesses Israel...

- By giving him a family of 70 people (Genesis 46:5-27)

Genesis 46:27

All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy.

This is the next section right after our text. Jacob has been multiplied into 70 descendants and that family is all preserved from famine. The first people to read this Scripture were the descendants of

those 70 people 400 years later under the leadership of Moses, the nation of Israel that was now a great multitude. They were living proof that God had blessed Jacob.

- By giving him land for his family (Genesis 46:28-47:12)

Genesis 46:11

Then Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

God uses Joseph to go to Pharaoh and secure a portion of the land in Egypt to be set aside for the family of Jacob. God is blessing Jacob by multiplying his descendants and giving those descendants land. That's the first part of God's purpose. God is with His people, giving blessings to them. But, what's the second half of His purpose? It's not just blessings TO His people, it's blessings THROUGH his people. He intends for the people He has blessed to bless others. Do we see that in this section? Yes. It's actually everywhere.

In Chapter 47, Joseph brings Jacob to meet Pharaoh. Look at what happens in that meeting.

Genesis 47:7

Then Joseph brought in Jacob his father and stood him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

Genesis 47:10

And Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from the presence of Pharaoh.

In the next chapter...

Genesis 48:3-5; 9 (Joseph learns that his father is near death, so he brings his 2 sons to see Jacob) ***And Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, 4 and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession.' 5 And now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are...9...And he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them."***

This entire chapter is about Jacob, the man blessed by God, choosing to bless others, the sons of Joseph.

In the next chapter, chapter 49, this whole chapter details the interaction between Jacob and all of his sons before he dies. Notice the summary statement in verse 28.

Genesis 49:28

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel. This is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each with the blessing suitable to him.

Jacob blesses each of his sons. So, look at this snapshot of these four chapters.

- In chapter 46, God meets with Jacob and promises to bless Him by being with him and bless others through him. Then, Jacob experiences those blessings. God provides land and prospers his descendants.
- In Chapter 47, Jacob meets with Pharaoh and blesses him.

- In Chapter 48, Jacob meets with Joseph and Joseph's sons and blesses them.
- In Chapter 49, Jacob meets with Joseph's brothers and blesses them.

These chapters illustrate what God said was His purpose in blessing Abraham and His descendants: God blesses His people to bless others through His people.

And time won't permit me to show you all the places this occurs in this section, but I just have to mention that the people who first read the book of Genesis, were the recipients of this dynamic.

Here's what I mean. In chapter 47, Joseph is presiding over the famine. As he distributes grain to the people in Egypt and beyond, he uses his position to build unimaginable wealth for Pharaoh. Look how Genesis 47:14 describes it.

Genesis 47:14

And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, in exchange for the grain that they bought. And Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.

Pharaoh amasses the wealth of Egypt and Canaan through the life of Joseph. Again, there's the principle – God gives blessings to His people to bring blessings through His people. But Egypt isn't the ultimate recipient of this wealth.

400 years later, as God is bringing the nation of Israel out of Egypt, something remarkable happens.

Exodus 12:35-36

The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

As the people of Israel came into Egypt, they were a group of famine-stricken shepherds who were struggling to stay alive. As they leave Egypt, they are a mighty nation that plundered the wealthiest nation on earth. The vast treasures of Egypt that were amassed through the life of Joseph were given to the people of God. Those treasures were used to build the Tabernacle where God would manifest the glory of His presence as a light to the coming generations and the surrounding nations.

God was with His people, giving blessing TO His people so that He could bless others THROUGH His people.

And that's our big idea for this morning.

Big Idea: God gives blessing TO His people to bless others THROUGH His people.

From Abraham to Jacob to Joseph to the nation of Israel to you and me, God gives blessings TO His people so that He can bless others THROUGH His people. If you have been blessed by God, those blessings aren't just for you.

2 Corinthians 9:10-13

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 13 By

their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others,

The apostle Paul is teaching us what God taught Abraham and the people of Israel. God gives blessing through us so that He can bring blessings through us to others.

Here, he uses the picture of a sower with a bag of seed. God puts the seed in so that we will grab a handful to spread around. The plan isn't for us to hoard. The plan is for us to let go and spread to others.

It's the difference between a conduit and a container. Quite a few years ago, I was digging out the roots of an old tree in the flower bed of my home. I got caught on a root that was about an inch in diameter. It was one of those tough ones that require jumping on top of the shovel with all your weight to get through.

So, there I am in my front yard, jumping on my shovel like it's a pogo stick. Finally, I broke through the root. It took about half a second to realize that it wasn't a root, it was the water supply that connected to my house.

I don't know if you've ever taken a look at a water line, but it's only about the diameter of a shot glass. And I don't know how much liquid goes into a shot glass, but I know it's not much at all...just a sip. So, you wouldn't think that a pipe that's the diameter of a shot glass could pour out much water. But, as I stood in my front yard, something like Old Faithful emerged and began to form a small lake in our little cul-de-sac. All from a pipe no bigger around than a small shot glass.

What's the difference? One is a container and the other is a conduit.

And that's the difference between a life that is aligned with the purposes of this world versus a life aligned with the purposes of God. God desires our lives to be conduits of His blessings, not just containers. He blesses us so that we can be blessings to others.

Let me challenge you to ask the Holy Spirit to help you take an inventory of your life. Are you a container or a conduit? Do you live to receive the blessings of God or to release the blessings of God into the lives of others?

There are four ways in which God blesses Jacob that become a blessing for others.

1. God blesses us with time.
Genesis 47:9; cf. Genesis 47:28
God blessed Jacob with 17 additional years spent in fellowship with his family.
2. God blesses us with the tongue.
Spoken words – God speaks in Genesis 46:1-4
Jacob speaks blessing in 47:7,10; 48; 49
3. God blesses us with treasure.
Jacob: Genesis 47:27

2 Corinthians 9:7;10-11

7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and

multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way,

This passage is referring to financial giving to the work of God. Paul says God blesses us financially, like He did His people in the Old Testament. And He did so that we can be a blessing to others. And notice that Paul isn't teaching a vow of poverty or a promise of prosperity. He's not saying that you have to give it all away. He's actually saying that you can't ever give it all away because God will always give you more. He's not saying that God doesn't want you wealthy, He's saying God doesn't want you stingy and selfish. God has blessed you to be a blessing.

Many of us grew up living under the principle of the tithe or giving a tenth of our income as an offering to God. And I believe there is biblical precedent for the tithe to be a baseline for our giving. But notice that Paul doesn't reduce this teaching to simply a tithe. He's calling us to see giving through the lens of something much greater than dividing what we have by 10. He's calling us to see giving through the lens of multiplying what we have by eternity. He's saying we should give as though an infinite God is giving to us for an infinitely important purpose in the lives of others.

How would you give to the work of God if you truly believed that you cannot outgive God? How would you give if you believed that God has blessed you so that you could invest in an infinitely important purpose in the lives of others?

I believe many of you would do exactly what you are doing right now. This church family is so blessed by faithful and generous giving in the lives of so many. I also know that you are the first to say Amen to this kind of message because you've seen firsthand how God pours out blessings, and not just financial blessings, on those who live to be conduits and not just containers.

But I also believe the Spirit may be stirring some of us to take a step into this kind of God-centered giving and, in a moment, I want to share a few ways that is taking shape among us. But I don't want to neglect another thing Paul is saying in our text.

4. God blesses us with truth.

Jacob: Genesis 48:15-16

2 Corinthians 9:11

...which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.

Paul is referring to something that is deeper than a financial work. Namely, he is saying that through the generosity of the Corinthians, God is doing a work that is turning the hearts of people toward God. The people who are being blessed are giving thanks to God for His great gift to them. What Paul is talking about is the gospel. The giving of the Corinthians is not just a generosity that helps people have their material needs met. It's a generosity that helps advance the gospel message of Jesus.

Remember, the ultimate blessing of God is His presence, that we would live with God and He would live with us, that we would experience the glory of His presence in this world and for eternity. And the only way for us to have that is through Jesus.

Jesus, descended from Abraham and the people of Israel as the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan to bless the nations. He lived the perfect life that we have all failed to live and He died the death we all deserve to die, as a payment for our sins. But, when Jesus died, He didn't stay dead. He rose again and promises to raise us up to a brand-new life if we place our faith and trust in Him. He promises to

fill us with the presence of His Holy Spirit so that the life of Christ can dwell in us and pour out from us, like a conduit of Christ's life shining like light in the darkness of this world.

That truth is a blessing God desires to spread throughout this world through us. That includes the way we share Jesus with the people in our lives. And it includes the way we give to advance that message in this community and around the world. God has poured out blessings to us so that He can pour out blessings through us.

How is He calling you to respond?

- Have you received the blessings of knowing Jesus and having His life flow through you?
- Are you living as a container or a conduit of God's blessings?
 - Sharing the gospel truth with other?
- How is God stirring you toward generosity?
 - General giving through His church?
 - Giving above your regular giving to things like "Let Love Continue?"