

Lent Is Just Around The Corner

Genesis 45:4b, 7-8a

“I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.”

“God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God...”

I can't believe Lent is coming up soon. Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of Lent, falls on March 5th—less than two weeks away. The Season of Lent may involve different traditions and practices depending on your background and church. One of the things I look forward to is following the scripture readings provided in the *Revised Common Lectionary*, as outlined in the *Presbyterian Book of Common Worship*. Regardless of what spiritual practices you observe—whether it be a deeper practice of prayer, fasting, self-examination, or deeds of mercy—reflecting on the scriptures for the season is an invaluable source of grace that God has provided for us.

One of this Sunday's lectionary readings depicts a climactic moment in the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis—the moment when he revealed himself to his brothers. As you may recall, Joseph's brothers, out of jealousy, sold him as a slave to traders. He eventually wound up in Egypt, where he initially prospered, only to be thrown into prison. Later, through his ability to interpret dreams, Joseph's stature rose, and he assumed a high position in the Egyptian court.

After everything his brothers had put him through, Joseph did not seek revenge but instead saw God's purpose in his long, trouble-filled journey. Many are amazed at Joseph's ability to forgive his brothers' evil actions and his faithfulness to God's leading in times of great difficulty. But for many, the conversation surrounding Joseph's story revolves around the idea of divine providence—God's ultimate governance and control over all things, despite the brokenness of humanity. A well-known verse often quoted from Joseph's narrative is Genesis 50:20: “...you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.”

We don't always like the idea of providence. We tend to appreciate it when it works in our favor, and we may easily say “God is in control” when referring to matters of little consequence or things that don't directly affect us. However, for those enduring tribulation or desolation—especially in times of tragedy—the notion of God's providence can be difficult to accept. The phrase “God is in control” may even feel unbearable to hear.

Yet, there is another thread in Joseph's story that is worth remembering and highlighting. His story is not just about divine providence—it is also about God's faithfulness to the divine promise. God used Joseph to fulfill His promise to bless Abraham's descendants and the nations. Through Joseph's wisdom and administrative skill, God preserved not only his own family but also a remnant of His people, who might have perished in the famine. God worked through, and even orchestrated, the actions of evil men (as Joseph himself points out) to carry out His covenant, ensuring that one from the seed of Abraham—a descendant in the line of David—would come as the Savior and Ruler of all.

Therefore, it seems fitting to consider Joseph's story as a narrative reflection of Romans 8:28: “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.”

Some may see this as no different from saying, “God is in control.” However, Joseph’s story also reminds us of God’s faithfulness and care for all people—not for the sake of control, but for His glorious purpose.

Additionally, many regard Joseph as a “type” or foreshadowing of Jesus Christ. Joseph, the favored son, was rejected by his brothers yet, through faithfulness and suffering, rose to the highest position in the land despite seemingly impossible circumstances. Likewise, Jesus, the beloved Son in whom God is well pleased, through His faithfulness and suffering—even in the most impossible situation of death—rose from the grave and ascended to His place at the right hand of God. His life, death, and resurrection accomplished God’s glorious purpose.

Whatever season of life you find yourself in—whether one of consolation, desolation, or something in between—be encouraged that the story of Joseph provides an empowering picture of God’s faithfulness to His promises. May we hold onto this truth as we enter the season of Lent.

**Blessings,
Peter Tan-Gatue**