

Good Morning,

Over the past several weeks we have been following the life of Young Joseph, Son of Jacob. Now what's been most interesting is that we've learned not just about Joseph's early life but we've learned about the actions and behaviors of his family especially his brothers. We know that Joseph was Jacob's favorite son and that his brothers were jealous and wanted to get rid of him. They couldn't decide together that they should just kill him so they ended up selling him to a slave trader. We also learned how vicious his brothers were in killing all the men in town for the rape of their sister. I guess in today's thinking these men would be better off in prison than living among us. From last week's message we also learned that Joseph was sold into slavery and by his good fortune he was enslaved to a prestigious owner. Now his new owner, Potiphar, came to trust Joseph with his financial matters and land dealings. But we also learned that there was a problem with Potiphar's wife, in that she tempted Joseph with unwanted advances and when she was rejected she retaliated and lied to her husband that Joseph raped her. Potiphar had to take his wife's side even though he knew her allegations were a lie and was forced into having Joseph put to death. However he went against custom and decided to spare Joseph's life by sending him to prison. Well what happened next was that Joseph was tortured in prison but that did not last very long because God was again on Joseph's side. You see, Joseph was liked by the head prison guard and was put in charge of watching over other prisoners. Then one day there were two new prisoners brought into the prison. Now these were no ordinary prisoners as they were the Pharaoh's head butler and head baker. It appears that they were sent to prison for failing to do their jobs. And while these new prisoners were serving their time Joseph became good friends with them and shared many hours in visiting with them. But then one night each of the prisoners had dreams that they could not interpret and it was Joseph that told them to seek God's interpretation of their dreams. They then told Joseph about the dreams and Joseph being inspired by God told them that one of them would be hanged for his punishment and one would be set free to return to serving the Pharaoh. Now what happened next was that the butler, while enjoying his freedom, forgot about Joseph being in prison and went on with his life. However, two years later the Pharaoh had a dream that no one was able to interpret to his satisfaction and then the butler remembered Joseph's ability to understand dreams. He told the Pharaoh of Joseph's ability and Joseph's was then brought to meet with the Pharaoh. After hearing about Pharaoh's dream Joseph told the Pharaoh that God was telling him that Egypt would endure 7 years

of good harvests followed by 7 years of famine. Joseph then recommended that the Pharaoh find someone to administer and watch over and control the economy during the good harvests so a catastrophe would be averted during the bad harvests. The Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph that he appointed him to be the Governor over all of Egypt. And for the next 14 years Joseph controlled the management of the harvests and he was able to guide Egypt successfully through the bad years. Now Egypt was fortunate to have survived the 7 years of bad harvests but the countries surrounding Egypt were not so fortunate. You see since they had no food they came to Egypt to buy their food. Now Joseph had not forgotten about his family and he expected that someday they would come to Egypt to purchase food to take back home. Joseph did not want to miss their coming so he instructed that everyone who was planning to buy food was to be registered as soon as they entered Egypt. And just as Joseph imagined his 10 brothers did arrive in Egypt to buy food. Now Joseph, knowing that his brothers arrived, arranged to meet them and test them to see if they were still as mean as he remembered them to be. So Joseph met with his brothers but they did not recognize him as he was dressed in royal robes and was assisted by personal aides. Joseph asked the brothers where they came from and when they told him they were from the land of Canaan Joseph accused them of being spies. They then told Joseph that they were not spies but Joseph did not believe them and placed them all in prison. Joseph noticed that his younger brother Benjamin was not with them and told them to have one brother go home and return with Benjamin to prove that they were not spies. But after three days Joseph changed his mind and told his brothers that they could now leave with all their food but that one brother had to remain until they returned back to Egypt with Benjamin. Now the next part of Joseph's story is very important because it's where we find out if the brothers passed Joseph's test to see if they had changed from being the mean and ruthless brothers that he remembered. Now as Joseph happened to overhear his brothers talking he heard them tell each other that they were in this desperate situation because of what they did to Joseph many years ago. They believed they were now being punished by God for throwing Joseph in the pit and selling him to the slave trader. Now as Joseph heard them he was overcome by emotion and told his servants to secretly put the money they used to purchase the food back into their sacks. Joseph then told them to go home and return with Benjamin the next time they came to Egypt to buy more food. Well, the brothers returned home and brought Benjamin back to meet with Joseph just as he had asked. Now when the brothers arrived they were

invited to Joseph's house for dinner and it was at this dinner that Joseph revealed his true identity. But Joseph did not do so immediately as he had one more test to make sure that all of his brothers had changed. But his brothers passed the test once again and then Joseph told his advisors and servants to leave the dining room. Once they were gone Joseph said, "I am Joseph, is my father still alive?" The brothers were so stunned at Joseph's announcement that they were embarrassed and started to fear him but Joseph assured them that they had nothing to worry about for the things that happened in the past. Joseph went on to tell them that he believed that it was God's will that he was led to Egypt so he would be able to save many lives from hunger. He then asked his brothers to return home with a message for his father, Jacob. Joseph wanted his father to know that after all these years of being away from home that he forgave his family for all that had happened and wanted them to come to Egypt to live and be with him. So let's stop here for a moment and take a quick look inside our own hearts and see if there's something in our past that we're hanging on to and not wanting to show forgiveness for what has happened. Now I'm not looking for us to instantly offer forgiveness but I would like for us to make a note of where our thoughts went and acknowledge that maybe some day in the future we might re-visit our hurt and pain and see if it can be resolved within our hearts. Because if Joseph can forgive his family for all they did to him maybe we can find a forgiving heart within ourselves. But just like Joseph we must realize that it is God who brings us to understand the true feeling of forgiving others. So there you have it, Joseph's Story of Forgiveness. So what can we take away from Joseph's story that will help us in our daily lives? Well, what we can take away are seven examples of qualities or attributes for us to adopt into our personalities. I came across these qualities in a article and would like to share them with us this morning. Our first quality is **Acceptance**. □ Learning to accept the circumstances we are in helps us to better face our struggles. Accepting his status as a slave, Joseph simply goes to work for Potiphar. And when he is cast into prison he again sets out to work hard. Next we have **Hard work**. Joseph didn't seek to undermine those who enslaved him. He actually helped them to prosper. This happened in the house of Potiphar as well as in prison. They, in turn, recognized his talents and blessings. Our third quality is **Patience**. □ Joseph knew the Lord would bless him because of his dreams. So he endured these trials with patience, knowing the blessings would come. In tandem with that patience he also sought solutions. Next we have **Integrity**. When Potiphar's wife attempts to seduce Joseph, he flees. He is true to his moral code, even though no one is around. He understands that he

must be true to himself and to the Lord. Had he accepted her advances, he may have saved himself from prison, but he knew that it would hinder him from the blessings of the Lord. Our fifth quality is **Humility**. □ When Joseph is called to interpret Pharaoh's dream, he could have taken credit for his gift. Instead he immediately gives credit to the Lord when he says, ***"It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."*** (KJV Genesis 41:16) Joseph had learned through all his adversities it was the Lord who was blessing him and helping him. He didn't take the credit for himself. Next we have **Bless others**. Joseph could have had a vengeful reaction to those who wronged him. He could have withheld his gifts, his talents and his abilities to bless others. Instead, he uses them to bless others. He helps Potiphar and the keeper of the prison to prosper. He interprets the dreams of the Butler and the Baker. He interprets Pharaoh's dream and then uses his organizational skills to save the Egyptian kingdom and by so doing saves his own family. He truly lived as Christ taught when he said, ***"Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you."*** (KJV Matthew 5:44) And for our last quality we have **Forgiveness**. □ When Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers he told them, ***"Now, therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life."*** (KJV Genesis 45:5) He knew that his adversity had been part of a bigger picture and therefore he forgave them freely. When you forgive, you let go of all the bitterness and anger that can keep you from progressing. □ Adversity helps us to develop and grow as a person. By seeking to develop these character traits, we can face those trials that come our way and overcome them with the same strength and grace that Joseph had. I would like to close our message today with a verse that I found that sort of says it all about the love that Joseph held in his heart for all of those that God brought him to meet.

***1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.***

**Readings for Sunday, August 23, 2015**

## Genesis 45: 1-5

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Send everyone away from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.

Please stand as we sing together, Glory be to the Father #70

## Matthew 5: 43-48

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Please join together as we sing Hymn No. \_\_\_\_\_

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