

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 12/13/92
Genesis 46 "Out of the Limelight"

Intro: Do you enjoy family reunions?

Illust: Story of reunited triplets (Swindoll, 84)

This morning the long-awaited moment has arrived. The fragmented family of Jacob is about to be reunited. After 22 years of separation, after 22 years of buried sorrow, a father and all 12 of his sons will be together. It's a touching scene.

But something intriguing happens in Genesis 46. If you read over the chapter in preparation for our study, you may have noticed it. A slight shift occurs. Joseph moves out of the limelight in Genesis 46. The spotlight stops shining on him.

Why? Remember this statement? The story about Joseph in Genesis 37-50 is not so much a story about Joseph as it is a story about whom? The main character in the story of Joseph is not Joseph, but God.

So in Genesis 46, Joseph moves out of the limelight. But don't feel sorry for Joseph. He would have it no other way. In fact, it's true of all the great Bible characters. Take the story about David and Goliath. That story is not so much about a brave young boy as it is about a God who is great enough who can use even a teenage boy to accomplish His purpose. And the same goes for great characters like Daniel, Elijah, Paul, and Stephen the martyr. If we come away from the accounts of their lives impressed solely with these men, they would be the first to say, "You've missed it." What made those men great was that they served a Great God.

That's our challenge, too.

Illust:

Proposition: There are 3 parts to the story in Genesis 46. I would suggest that these 3 scenes illustrate 3 things about God for us.

I. Scene #1: The Move (1-7)

*The Promises of God

II. Scene #2: The Mention of Names (8-27)

*The Precision of God

III. Scene #3: The Meeting (28-34)

*The Power of God

A. Removes Family Barriers (28-31)

B. Removes Social Barriers (32-34)

C. Removes Spiritual Barriers

I. Scene #1: The Move (1-7)

***The Promises of God**

Scene 1 begins with the spotlight on Joseph's father, Jacob. When we left off last week, he had just learned the unbelievable news that his son was not only still alive, but was in fact the Prime Minister of Egypt! Watch carefully what Jacob did.

V 1 "And Israel took his journey....to Beersheba."

"Israel"--that's the name God gave Jacob, a name of hope. Jacob had been living in Hebron (37:14). He loaded up his family and headed south. The made it about 25 miles, and stopped at Beersheba.

Q: Why did Jacob stop at Beersheba? Two reasons...

1. To Reflect

Beersheba was the last stop before leaving Canaan, the land God promised to Abraham (Illust: Wall Drug signs!). Do you remember what God told Jacob's father, Isaac, about Egypt?

Gen 26:1-2 "And there was a famine in the land...And the Lord said...Go not down..."

Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, had had his share of problems in Egypt (12:10). Isaac did too. No doubt Jacob reflected. He wondered. Am I doing the right thing?

There was another reason he stopped at Beersheba...

2. To Worship

V 1 "and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac."

Something special had happened at Beersheba several decades earlier. It was at Beersheba that Jacob's dad Isaac worshipped the True God who had established a covenant with him. How?

Gen 26:25 "And he builded an altar there, and called on the name of the Lord."

Observation: Apparently, Isaac's worship experience impacted his son Jacob.

V 1 "offered sacrifices to the God OF HIS FATHER, ISAAC."

It's quite possible that Jacob worshiped God on the very altar his dad had built. Now, like father, like son. He approached God through sacrifice. That's the only way sinful people can approach God.

Illust:

Implication: Think of the impact a dad can have on his children! Isaac worshipped at Beersheba. So did his son Jacob. And just think of how that sight must have impacted Jacob's descendants, all 70 of them. As we'll see in a moment, they're all there. True, Jacob had blown it many times in his life. He had deceived his brother. He had tricked his father-in-law. He had played favoritism with 2 different sons. He had gone through periods of doubting. But watch Jacob now! He's worshipping.

Key: It's never too late to do what is right!

Q: Men, have your children and grandchildren ever seen you worship?

"What do you mean? We go to church every week!" That's good, but that's not the issue. Have they ever seen you worship God? To worship God is to declare His Worth. That's what Jacob did at Beersheba. He was saying, "Lord, I don't want to do anything that may detract from your glory. I want to do your will. If you want me in Egypt, I'll go. If not, I'll stay."

That's worship.

Watch what God did...

V 2 "And God spoke unto Israel..."

When God spoke, He did 3 things for Jacob:

1. God revealed Himself to Jacob.

V 3 "I am God, the God of thy father."

2. God relieved Jacob's fears.

V 3 "Fear not to go down into Egypt."

3. God renewed His Promises (3-4).

Vv 3-4 "...I will there make thee a great nation..."

What's going on? God is revealing a great truth to Jacob. God is not limited to a geographic location. He's not limited to Canaan. By the way, He's not limited to America and the Western world either. The God of the Bible is the only true God, and He's the God of the universe!

Q: Did God keep His promise to Jacob? Notice 4 promises and fulfillments:

--I will there make thee a great nation (3). >> fulfilled Ex 1:7

--I will go down with thee (4). >>

--I will surely bring thee up again (4). >> fulfilled in Exodus

--Joseph shall put his hand on thine eyes (4). > Gen 49:33

Great Principle: God invites His people to live by His promises.

Q: What are some promises God has made to us?

1. God promises Salvation.

Rom 10:13 "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

2. God promises to answer prayer.

I Jn 5:14-15 "And this is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask..."

3. God promises us Victory.

II Cor 2:14 "Now thanks be to the God and Father who always causes us to triumph."

Ph 1:6 "Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work..."

4. God promises Forgiveness of Sins and Freedom from Guilt.

I Jn 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just..."

5. God promises us Guidance.

Pr 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord..."

God invites His people to live by His promises. Are you?

Illust:

Jacob did.

Vv 5-7 "And Jacob rose up..."

Illust: Story about obedient dog that died in fire...

Tran: That's scene 1, the Move. Scene 1 illustrates the Promises of God.

II. Scene #2: The Mention of Names (8-27)

*The Precision of God

V 8 "And these are the names of the children of Israel who came into Egypt..."

If we're honest, most of us skim over lists like this one. Why did God include vv 8-27? Why would He prompt Moses to take the space to record 70 names?

I think it illustrates the Precision of God.

God doesn't see "masses" of people. He sees individuals. What's more, this is no ordinary list. This list represents the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham.

God chose one Man, Abraham, and from that man formed a Family. God sent that Family into Egypt, and there blossomed it into a great Nation, the nation of Israel. Out of that Nation, God would eventually send the Messiah, the Savior of the world. This list of "meaningless" names then is an important link.

In fact, I marvel at how God used an unlikely family to accomplish His great purpose. Just think about some of the people in the list: Reuben (8) had defiled his father's bed. We're told that Simeon (10) married a pagan Canaanite. Judah (12) had 2 wicked sons that died prematurely, and he himself was guilty of hiring a prostitute. Jacob's daughter Dinah (15) is mentioned; she had been violated by Hamor (34:2).

What a messed up family! They had glaring flaws just like many of ours! Yet God accomplished His purpose through them.

Illust:

Let's look at the list, and see the Precision of God.

V 26--mentions 66 people (those that traveled to Egypt)

V 27--mentions 70 people (including those already in Egypt)

Q: How did Moses come up with these figures?

The following tabulation shows how these two figures are determined:

{taken from B.K.C}

Moses records Jacob's descendants according to their Mother's names:

33 Leah's children and grandchildren (8-15)

16 Zilpah's children and grandchildren (16-18)

14 Rachel's children and grandchildren (19-22)

7 Bilhah's children and grandchildren (23-25)

70

+ 1 Dinah (v. 15)

71

- 5 Er and Onan (who died in Canaan; v. 12); Joseph and his two sons, already in Egypt (v. 20)

66 Those who went to Egypt with Jacob (v. 26)

+ 4 Joseph, Manasseh, Ephraim, Jacob (v. 27)

70 Jacob and his progeny in Egypt (v. 27)

In Gen 46, God moved 70 family members to Egypt. 400 years later, this tribe blossomed into a mighty nation 2 million strong. And the world has never been the same.

There's the precision of God. God cares about individual people. He cares about you. You are important to God.

Illust:

Tran: Two scenes so far, the Move and the Mention of names. They teach us about the Promises and Precision of God. Now we come to scene 3.

Here's the long awaited reunion.

III. Scene #3: The Meeting (28-34)

***The Power of God**

Q: In what way does scene 3 reveal the power of God?

A: We see the power of God removing some stingy barriers.

A. The Power of God Removes Family Barriers (28-31).

V 28 "And he sent Judah..."

Jacob sent Judah ahead for directions. Just think of the logistics of traveling in a large caravan! Children, wives, infants, wagons, flocks of sheep, herds of goats. They couldn't afford to roam for miles looking for Goshen!

What happens next is heartwrenching. Any loving parent can appreciate...

Vv 29-30 "And Joseph made...he fell on his neck..."

"wept a good while"

Their eyes had not met for 22 years. Jacob had given up his son as dead long ago. Joseph wondered if he'd ever see his father again. How they savored this moment!

By God's power, Jacob and his son were reunited. But there's more.

It's been several weeks, even months since Joseph expressed his forgiveness to his guilty brothers in Gen 45. Had he changed his mind?

V 31 "And Joseph said to his brethren..."

If there's one thing that stands out in the Joseph story, it's God's power to restore broken families. Here we see Joseph, once again, showing love to the very brothers that had hated him and sold him into slavery.

I can't help but wonder if Joseph didn't address his brothers here for his father's benefit. I would think that Jacob would have had trouble forgiving his sons for their gross sin against their brother. But Joseph's loving treatment of his brothers helped salve the wound for his father.

Application: You know, I'm challenged by the emphasis the Bible places on Family Relationships. God instituted the family. The family is important to God. God wants to bless your family.

Q: Is your family important to you?

I talk with many people. I come across a lot of hurting families. Fragmented families. There is hope. God has the power to restore broken families. Just ask Jacob.

Illust:

B. The Power of God Removes Social Barriers (32-34).

Vv 31-34 "I will go up and show Pharoah...the men are shepherds..."

Key Phrase: V 34 "for every shepherd is an abomination to Egyptians"

Q: Is that significant?

It says something about Joseph's integrity. He wasn't eager to upset Egyptian custom. He wasn't pushy and rude. In fact, one of the impressive things about Joseph is how he brought unlikely parties together, and put them on speaking terms.

Mt 5:9 "Blessed are the Peacemakers."

That's what Joseph was. He was a Peacemaker. God used him to remove family barriers. God used him to remove Social barriers.

Illust:

C. The Power of God Removes Spiritual Barriers.

Joseph is a portrait of Christ in so many ways, isn't he?

Listen. The greatest barrier to bring down is not a family barrier, not a social barrier. It's a spiritual barrier.

Joseph brought people together who weren't on speaking terms. How much more so did Christ.

All of us are born into this world with a problem. We're not on speaking terms with God. The reason is Sin.

Is 64:6-7 "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...And there is NONE THAT CALLS UPON THY NAME..."

Even the best of men and women, even reputable citizens, are not on speaking terms with God. The Bible says that ALL are unclean in God's holy sight.

O friend, do you see? That's why Jesus Christ came into this world. To remove the spiritual barrier! To put us on right terms with Almighty God.

I Tim 2:5 "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus."

Illust: "Letter from a Friend" (from an inmate at Lucasville to Hank P)

Conclusion:

We've turned the corner today in our study of Joseph. Joseph moved out of the limelight in the story. We've seen God today.

We considered the Promises of God. We watched the Precision of God. We marvelled at the Power of God.

God is ABLE. No matter what the need, He is able. He is able to remove Family Barriers, and Social Barriers, and Spiritual Barriers.

Illust: Child at Christmas, "Daddy what does 'ignore' mean?..."

Q: How is it in your life? Have you been ignoring Jesus Christ?