

## WELCOME 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021 – 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after the Epiphany '21 B

Genesis 50:15-21

(The over all theme slide) **Welcome!** It's great to be together again. Happy New Year!

The Guilfoyles are away in South Australia but will be back before next Sunday so we have the privilege of leading worship today & know that when God's people gather to hear his word...his grace makes things new & wonderful & we hope your new year has started off just like that!

As has become our custom there are Group Study & Discussion resources right there in your hands. *So that for each of us worship is an all week long experience & as God leads you into the fullness of His word & his work in your lives & he will then lead you to someone this week who needs to hear the good news from you.* We are still doing those things we need to maintain a level of safety: Hand sanitizer. Masks. Sign in. No morning tea just yet. Offering. Communion.

*As we move into this week...* With 2020 decidedly behind us it's easy to start saying "I'm glad that's over. Hope this \_\_\_\_\_ is better." Having said goodbye to a difficult year, we hope to herald in the new with hopes of a smoother, less complicated & more normal existence.

But it is not just the word "year" we use to fill in the blank. Perhaps you insert job or relationship, or school, or home or church or... As we begin a new year, we get caught between our fears & our longings, between planting our feet where we are & with what we know, or being open to something new & venturing into the unknown... accepting change. (this week's slide)

What if we were to look at this new year like the "re-set" button on an electronic device: the "on/off" switch that brings everything back to 0 – starts over? What if we were to start 2021 asking God to re-set our lives to his will – our hearts to his way – our path to his purpose? Start today...ask the Father to re-set your perspective – your way of seeing – through his eyes & his grace...as He makes all things new.

We'll explore & experience that together. Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

### PRAYER OF THE DAY:

*Heavenly Father we will kneel in the darkness until we see your light emerge. We will wait with hope filled hearts as Christ's image grows within us and creates abundant life for all. We will listen to him speaking to us so that his word may create love deep inside & we open our hearts to be his home...In the name of your beloved Son Jesus we pray. Amen.*

Let's sing & then we'll hear God's Word...

### FAITH CHAT:

1. What are you most thankful for from 2020? Hard year in a lot of ways BUT Looking back...the biggest blessing...greatest lesson...an exciting moment?
2. Can you look back at parts of 2020 now & see things differently than when they first happened? Why do you think that is?
3. What is one thing you hope God does in your life this year? Think bigger than "I want to live through it." Could be for you...family...Living Water....? Why that?

### Prayer at the end of the Sermon:

**Father we make no pretence to your throne, so have your way in us. Re-set our lives to your will. Re-set our hearts to your way. Re-set our path to your purpose. Re-establish your rule over us and revive our lives so we become a movement of your grace to all we know. Through Jesus Christ we pray... Amen.**

## 1 Epiphany '21 B – RE-SET...PERSPECTIVE

(medal images I sent same slide) Right after the 1996 Olympics, the *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, published a study noting bronze medal winners are generally happier with their prizes than are silver medalists. Why would that be? Bronze medalists are thrilled to win any medal at all, while silver medalists can't stop thinking about how close they came to gold & all the coulda, mighta, shoulda of their training & their performance. (cow, soldier & quote on same slide) Makes sense.

A dairy farmer down in Bega was approached by a stranger one day & asked how much he thought one of his prize Jersey cows was worth. The farmer thought for a moment, looked the stranger over, then said: "Are you the tax assessor, or has she been killed by your car?" Great question...makes a difference I suspect.

During WWII's Battle of the Bulge, US tank commander Creighton Abrams found himself & his battalion surrounded by German forces. Outnumbered & outgunned, he told his officers, "For the first time in the history of this campaign, we are now in a position to attack the enemy in any direction." (glass of water)

Olympians, dairy farmers, soldiers...you & everyone you know...know the difference perspective makes. **How you see** a circumstance, situation, person, or problem or anything for that matter makes a difference in **what you see**. We're all familiar with the old "glass of water"...half-what? full? empty? This isn't an exercise in optimism vs pessimism...but perspective...**How** we see...which makes all the difference in the world...For instance... (Joseph)

Joseph...the favoured son of 12 sons. What would **that** do to your perspective? If Dad sees you as the best of his children...talk about family dynamics, but how then do you view your siblings? How do you relate to your siblings, all of whom are older than you? But it wasn't just Dad...Remember Joseph had a dream that could only be interpreted as his brothers eventually bowing to him submitting to his rule over them. Then a dream that included Mom & Dad acknowledging his rule over even them...his superiority his sovereignty over even them. They **ALL** bow to him!

But then what does Joseph's world look like from the bottom of the pit into which his brothers threw him...with killing him or leaving him for dead in their minds only to drag him out & sell him into slavery? How would his view of his "favoured-ness" have changed while being stripped of his fancy clothes & thumped up-side the head a few times & landing unceremoniously on his backside in a dark hole? How would he have seen his dreams while being chained to the other slaves & carted to Egypt?

How would he have viewed his blessed-ness by God serving in Potiphar's household...being accosted by Potiphar's wife...wrongly accused & imprisoned for assault?

We all know it's one thing to see the world from the driver's seat...the winner's circle...from the top of the medals podium...when everything's coming up roses... **But** when every day's a slog...when every step hurts...when you'd rather not face the world or your family/friends...when you feel as if everyone has turned against you because maybe they have... (quote underneath Joseph)

I remember an acquaintance who suffered depression his whole life but only was diagnosed when he was nearing 40 saying, "I thought everyone saw the world through a dark tunnel & the light at the end kept moving away." (next 3 same slide) **How you see** a circumstance, situation, person, or problem or anything for that matter makes a difference in **what you see**. Which is why when Joseph's brothers show up in Egypt begging for food...it matters how Joseph is looking at the world.

So...let's see...while he's still in prison he's confronted by 2 fellow prisoners with dreams...To them Joseph says, Gen 40:8 - "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams." Joseph sees himself merely as an agent of God's wisdom. He's only able to do what God empowers. He can address their dreams only if God grants access. Then to Pharaoh, Gen 41:15-16 - Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, & no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." (next 3 same slide)

1<sup>st</sup> Joseph knows there **IS** a God & his name **IS NOT** Joseph. I don't know how else you see the world...but you'd do well to start there & put your name in for Joseph. There is a God & I am not him...you are not him (if Pr John were here he'd say *you ain't him*) There is absolute freedom in knowing from day one of your life that you are held secure by the hands that hold the universe in place & weave galaxies & galahs into such beauty & fine harmony. There is great joy in knowing that you are not responsible for the future of the world. When you are not expected to know all mysteries & have a full-on reasonable answer for every question. When you can say with a clear conscience...I don't know, but I know someone who does...let's talk to Him. Maybe he'll show us...I can't but God can...Joseph knows there **is** a God & his name **is not** Joseph. That alone makes a huge difference in the pit in chains in bondage in prison or in the palace...because it's from the palace, that Joseph confronts his brothers again...this time from the position of power he saw long ago.

When was the last time somebody hurt you? The last time you were treated in a way inappropriate for or not reflective of the relationship you thought you had? In the vernacular of a recent generation, when was the last time someone did you dirty? If I know, like I think I know, you probably didn't have to think long to come up with an answer. But beyond being able to remember, you know how Joseph must have felt. The interesting thing is that Joseph is now a man of position, prestige, & power. He has the wherewithal to get even...Have you ever considered revenge? Be honest... Sure...or at least you thought, "I hope you get what's coming to you." If not you then someone exacts just punishment on the one who hurt you...who cost you...

Not Joseph...Once he is firmly entrenched in his reliance on God...once he trusts that his life is firmly in God's hands...once he has given up any thought to a claim on the throne of the universe...he lives as a man who is not resentful, nor does he seek revenge. In fact, he is intentional about extending both a handout & a hand-up.

Here's the deal...Joseph encounters his brothers on 4 separate occasions. They travel from Canaan to Egypt & back again 4X (Gen 42, 43, 45, & 46). Only in Gen 45 does Joseph confront them with what they have done wrong & *Only then* does he show it hurt him. 4X they meet, but only once does Joseph share with them what they did & how much it hurt. When they return in Gen 46, he never says another word about their malicious treatment. Not. Another. Word. How many times do you recount an injury insult or injustice before you finally figure out talking about it doesn't make it better? At some point...retelling the story of your wound is a deliberate exercise in keeping the wound from healing. You keep grinding it over in your mind it's going to fester & when wounds fester your heart dies.

But remember Joseph's starting point? There is a God & I am not him! So he can go to the next thing...2<sup>nd</sup> **God is a God of sovereign grace who always seeks to bless** Up to the point that Joseph finally speaks to them in today's text...the brothers are un-changed. They are still looking out for themselves first & foremost. They have not yet grasped the magnitude of grace & mercy Joseph extends. How do we know? Well...after Jacob's funeral they cook up another lie to get themselves off the hook. They want to play him for a sucker one last time. "Before your father died, he instructed us to say to you: 'Please forgive your brothers for the great wrong they did to you—for their sin in treating you so cruelly.' Flat out bald faced LIE.

Joseph's brothers are naturally worried about how Joseph will respond. But while they were worrying, Joseph was weeping, because Joseph had chosen to release them from their worry. How does he do it? How is it that Joseph is not resentful?

How is it Joseph does not look to get even? How is it Joseph does not remind them of their offense? How is it Joseph does not seek revenge? Simple—he sees his life differently from how they do. "Don't be afraid of me. Am I God, that I can punish you? You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. No, don't be afraid. I will continue to take care of you & your children." (next 4 same slide)

Joseph knows that our lives are never ours, but are God's gifts of grace & through each moment of each day God seeks to make his grace move through us for the good of someone else. Joseph knows there's a difference between a moment & a movement. Being thrown into a pit—a moment. Being sold into slavery—a moment. Being forsaken & forgotten—a moment. But knowing God is using those moments to manifest grace & mercy & restoration & reconciliation & preserve life & rescue from death...that's a movement of grace through Joseph to the nations.

Joseph has allowed God to re-set his perspective – his life to the Father's will – his heart to God's way – his path to the Father's purpose. Joseph can say with absolute certainty: God was in & before & behind every event in my life. God took every twist & turn & tumble & trouble & used it to make me a bearer of his grace & mercy & saving love. God sent me ahead of you. I take no credit for my position power or wealth. God sent me here for all of this. I am clay in the hands of the Potter. My life has never been my own. I have trusted God in this land of many gods, & now I can look back & say without question God led me every step of the way. I couldn't have come any better way than the way God led me, slavery & prison & all.

Joseph knows that our lives are never ours, but are God's gifts of grace & through each moment of each day God seeks to make his grace move through us for the good of someone else. You are intended to be a movement...of grace & love, of hope & help, of forgiveness & freedom, of life & joy. Paul writes to Timothy: *I have been sent out to tell others about the life he has promised through faith in Christ Jesus. – 2 Tim 1:1* In the face of shipwreck, beatings, jailings, floggings, stonings, attack, hunger & unceasing travel under threat...my life is a movement...*And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God & are called according to his purpose for them. - Rom 8:28* We can never know all the ins & outs in this life but we do know...*"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, & no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." - 1 Cor 2:9* And we know without fail...*Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? – Rom 8:32*

Let's pray w/ that in mind...