

## **WELCOME 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025 – 12 Pentecost '25 C**

Genesis 41:37-52

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again...

As always...along w/ your worship order you have **Bible Study Qs** & **Growing Praise** inserts that over the week lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & then out to share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups**; Friday @ 1pm.

**As we move into this week...** **Rags** to riches ... **Wooden** Spoon to Grand Final...I don't care who you are...we love those stories. The poor immigrant who becomes a billionaire. The lucky duck who finds a vein of opals. The turnaround team. The underdog who triumphs...We. Love. Those. Stories.

Joseph...discarded as a slave by his brothers rises to 2<sup>nd</sup> in Command in all of Egypt. There is no other turnaround quite as dramatic & complete. But his transformation wasn't just a lucky break, a twist of fate, chance or clever political maneuvering. **THIS** is God's story unfolding in real time in his life after years of hurt, hardship & heartbreak.

Today we discover how God is at work in Joseph's darkest seasons, forming & shaping his character, wisdom, & faith essential for leading a nation through crisis. Joseph is a clear reminder that our seasons of waiting trusting God aren't wasted seasons. The very trials that lead others to hopelessness & discouragement can be the times where God, as he works in us for the purposes has planned for our lives, is seen & acknowledged by others.

**"Pharaoh** said to Joseph, 'Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. You will be in charge of my court, & all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours.'"

As bad as his life seems from the outside, behind the seen we know Joseph is never undone by his circumstances, but allows God to use his circumstances to lead him to his God-driven God-determined destiny as inheritor of God's promises.

**Never** live down to your circumstances,  
live up to God's dream for his people.

Let's pray together, & experience from **PRISON TO POSITION** today...

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

*Heavenly Father you alone are our source of strength & hope. By your promises today, replenish our faith & restore our trust to the full. Grow your Word in our hearts & your light in our lives until everyone we know knows you as the reason for our joy. In Jesus' Name...Amen.*

*Let's hear God's Word...*

## **FAITH CHAT:**

1. Have you ever been recognized or thanked for something for which you couldn't honestly take credit? What was that like?
2. In your vocational life (even the "retired" vocation) how are wisdom & hard work essential in the ways you honour God?

## 12 PENTECOST '25 C – BEHIND THE SEEN: PRISON TO POSITION

I don't know who this **guy** is...but years ago Pr John Kleinig @ ALC taught me that Biblical wisdom is like this. We only get brief glimpses of the future...so we have to guide our lives based on what we have seen along the journey we've travelled so far. This guy steers his boat by watching where he's been & by the occasional glimpse over his shoulder to what lies ahead...he keeps a more-or-less straight course navigating by where he's been. His past helps lead him into his future **AS** he moves away from it/leaves it behind. Watch as Joseph does **JUST THAT**

**During** this time, before the first of the famine years, two sons were born to Joseph & his wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara, the priest of On. Joseph named his older son Manasseh, for he said, "God has made me forget all my troubles & everyone in my father's family." Joseph named his second son Ephraim, for he said, "God has made me fruitful in this land of my grief." Now...you know/I know Joseph hasn't really "forgotten" he had a family. (like there's no memory of his mom/dad & nasty older brothers) He hasn't "forgotten" he's a Hebrew foreigner among Egyptians...he's been a slave then a prisoner. This isn't amnesia, Alzheimer's or a busy life where you forget where you left your car keys...or one of the kids at school...Joseph is doing what you do...Someone says, "Oh...shoot! I never paid you back for that stuff you picked up @ Woolies for me while I was sick..." And you say "Nah...forget it." Which is...let it go/don't worry. The past is not in charge of the future. In the Bible...forgetting, forgiving & letting go are all part of the same idea. Past helps lead into the future **AS** you move away from it.

I've told you about my classmate in the US who grew up w/ an alcoholic dad. For most of her life she convinced herself that if she could just be "good enough" he'd stop drinking. She tried to be the perfect child, the perfect teenager, the perfect young adult & then her mother died of cancer & not long after her father died of his drink-induced illnesses. She was in her first career & quite successful, but stuck at a crossroads in life. She laboured & laboured over "what next." She knew what she wanted to do **BUT**...Until the day she described her 'stuckness' to her counsellor in light of her relationship w/ her now deceased dad. He asked "How much longer are you going to let that dead guy run your life? How much power over you will you let him have?" Sounds awful when you say it out loud...but my friend described it as a chain-breaking moment. When does the power of past traumas, tragedies, hurts, disappointments, fears, stop defining the future? When does God's power in your life **RIGHT NOW** have more authority than the bad circumstances back then?

What we've seen in Joseph is that he never loses sight of God at work in the unfolding journey of his life. Rejection. Loss. Exile. Slavery. Betrayal. Lies. Prison. Being forgotten. "God has made me forget all my troubles...fruitful in this land of my grief."

The past is not in charge of the future, God is. Joseph sees God at work in his life through the tears & troubles that he now releases/let's go/forgets. As he does so, Joseph's not the only one sees God's hand guiding his...so does everyone around him

**When** Joseph was taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar, an Egyptian officer. Potiphar was captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. The Lord was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. Potiphar noticed this & realized the Lord was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did...the Lord began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. **Potiphar** was furious when he heard his wife's story about how Joseph had treated her. So he took Joseph & threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held, & there he remained. But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison & showed him his faithful love. The Lord made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden. Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners & over everything that happened in the prison. The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The Lord was with him & caused everything he did to succeed.

**So** Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?" Over & over & over again, as Joseph lives guided by the evidence of God's faithfulness to him over the course of his life, those around him unmistakably see behind the seen to God who is at work through Joseph. As Joseph lives toward the future...as he leans into the promise he has only glimpsed in his dreams, he lives unchained by the past...Tragedy, trauma, hurt, anxiety, fear, disappointment all fail to scratch the surface of his abiding trust in & faithfulness to Yahweh.

I've told you <sup>b</sup>/<sub>4</sub> how excited I am about the upcoming celebration of the centenary of Lutheran worship in the Riverina...100 yrs of Lutheran worship in this stretch of Oz. Any of you remember those days...I'm especially excited that we've been asked to tell the LWF story of "being Lutheran" & to share some photos of our 12+ yr journey. The page or so Philippa & I submitted includes this in the first paragraph & I believe not only is it true for us it's true to what we see in Joseph: **Living** Water Fellowship believes first & foremost that to be Lutheran is to be shaped by the future we are promised in Christ rather than being limited by the present or constrained by the past. What we know we already have right now in the risen Christ is more important to our lives today than anything from the past. **NB:** **The** past is not in charge of the future, God is. We only get brief glimpses of the future...so we live guided by what we have seen God accomplish along the journey we've travelled so far. Everything about us as a community of Christ-followers is a sign of God being faithful to his dream/desire/call for the good news of Jesus to penetrate & lay claim to every heart & every household in this city.

What did Joseph say as he interpreted Pharaoh's dreams? **God** is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. – Gen 41:25 Hey Pharaoh...God is giving you a glimpse of your future...forget everything else that came b/4...It is time to live into the future God has shown you. For us...**Then** I saw a new heaven & a new earth, for the old heaven & the old earth had disappeared. The sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them & they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, & there will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain. All these things are gone forever." And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" – Rev 21:1-5 We can only glimpse that future from here...**And** we only get there as we let go/forget/forgive the hurts, heartbreaks, hang-ups, & hardships from the past...That promise becomes our daily reality as we keep our eyes fixed on God's faithfulness throughout our lives & on the promises we know lie just ahead...

God takes Joseph from prison to his position at Pharaoh's right hand as Joseph trusts that God's future will be the next greater chapter of God's lifelong faithfulness to God's promises that Joseph has seen throughout his life. When Joseph lives guided by God's hand shaping his destiny he forgets his history... The past is not in charge of the future, God is. We only get brief glimpses of the future...so we live guided by what we have seen God accomplish along the journey we've travelled so far. I love how Pharaoh sees Joseph...

<sup>38</sup> **So** Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?" ... <sup>45</sup> **Then** Pharaoh gave Joseph a new Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah... Pharaoh gives Joseph an Egyptian name that means something like **"The One in whom God speak & lives"**...*THAT IS STUNNING*...In Egyptian theology, **THAT** is supposed to be Pharaoh...the living embodiment of their god Ra on earth. Pharaoh acknowledges Joseph by the God Pharaoh sees at work in Joseph. He recognizes God's "image" in Joseph. **THIS** is God's story unfolding in real time in Joseph's life after years of hurt, hardship & heartbreak. God is at work in Joseph's darkest seasons, forming & shaping his character, wisdom, & faith essential for leading a nation through crisis. Joseph is a clear reminder that our seasons of waiting trusting God aren't wasted seasons. The very trials that lead others to hopelessness & discouragement can be the times where God, as he works in us for the purposes he has planned for our lives, is seen & acknowledged by others. Paul writes:

**That** is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our slight, momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure! So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. – 2 Cor 4:16-18

**We** rejoice too & boast in our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, & endurance produces character, & character produces hope, & hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. – Rom 5:3-5 What we now have in Christ is far greater than anything else.

Isaiah was a prophet to God's rebellious people & announced an end to the nation... a destruction so severe there'd be only a remnant left...but God would use that suffering, punishment & pain to accomplish his restoring reclaiming work in them **Though** the Lord may give you the bread of adversity & the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself any longer, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." – Is 30:20-21 Even through the worst circumstances & grinding pain God promises to lead & speak his word of promise, restoration & hope to his people...That promise becomes our daily reality as we keep our eyes fixed on God's faithfulness throughout our lives & on the promises we know lie just ahead... What we know we already have right now in the risen Christ is more important to our lives today than anything from the past or any pain of the present. In Christ we ought never be undone by our circumstances, because God uses those circumstances to lead us to his God-driven God-determined destiny as inheritors of God's kingdom... Everything about us as followers of Jesus Christ is a sign of God being faithful to his dream/desire/call for the good news of Jesus to penetrate & lay claim to every heart & every household in this city by his faithfulness through us.

**Never** live down to your circumstances, live up to God's dream for his people.

As you leave today, be specific & share w/ your neighbour...

**TAKE IT HOME** (two part question)

What part of the past do you want to "forget" so that God's future becomes the driving force for you?

Where do you sense God shaping you now so you grow in your ability to serve others and point them to Him?

Let's pray... Lord Jesus help me to wait w/ hope & eager expectation, knowing that you are always w/ me; working in my situation for the good you want to accomplish through me... Lord, help me to trust that you always plan for my good & to forget the urge to control my own life. Father, give me eyes to see what you are already doing in my life & to be faithful to what I know you have called me to be & to do so that those around me witness your strength & overwhelming grace in me...through Jesus Christ my Lord...Amen