

WELCOME 14th September 2025 – 14 Pentecost '25 C

Genesis 50:14-26

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...

"Don't let the perfect, be the enemy of the good." It's an old saying that warns us away from waiting for the "perfect" moment, opportunity, or situation before we do something needed....right. Athletes, business owners, farmers, parents, students, followers of Jesus...often fail to take advantage of opportunities because the "moment" isn't "right." Whatever that **means**. "Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest." - Eccl 11:4

The perfect becomes the enemy of the good.

Joseph never had a perfect opportunity...he simply served wherever God put him. Even his darkest moments were part of something far greater than personal success or even survival. Today, Joseph speaks his final words to his brothers, & we see that every act of faithful service, every moment of integrity in difficult circumstances, every choice to trust God...rather than a step toward bitterness, was part of God's story of grace & salvation...He was an agent of God's rescue mission that would save not just Joseph's family, but entire nations. That's true also for us...

Joseph replied, "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. We said last week that Joseph chose to be defined by what God was doing **THROUGH HIM** rather than by what was done **TO HIM**. Joseph, over years of choosing to serve faithfully, even when circumstances seemed hopeless discovers he is an agent of God's redemptive purpose. Our circumstances don't define the purpose for our lives. How God shapes us through them into faith-filled living does.

True purpose isn't found in comfortable circumstances or perfect moments, but in faithfully serving wherever God has placed us, trusting that God can weave even our pain into his great story of redemption. Like Joseph, we're called to live not as victims of our circumstances, but as servants positioned by God to bring his saving grace to a world in need in every circumstance of our lives.

God's saving grace is for all, and meant to be shared with all.

Let's pray together, & experience from **SERVING TO SAVE** today...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, in your Son Jesus, we are more than conquerors over hardship, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril & sword. Protect us from the evil one. Give us your authority & your power to withstand the forces of evil at work in our lives & in our world. By your Spirit in us advance the work of your kingdom against this world's darkness; bringing life, light, hope, love, peace & security. Let it be so today for your glory & our witness to the world. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen!

Let's hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. Share a time when you asked "Why God? Why 'this'?" What came of that?
2. Where in the last week have you seen God at work either "for" you or "through" you? What was that like? What happened?

Dreaming amidst Dysfunction God's dream outlasts our dysfunction. Our mess can't cancel his mission.

Silence in Betrayal Trouble comes. Pray that God uses it for his will.

Integrity in Temptation Integrity is living faithfully, anticipating God's faithfulness.

Faithful while Forgotten Don't work to be remembered, work to be faithful in the role God has given you because God never forgets you.

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

Revenge to Reconciliation Like a defibrillator, God's grace shocks us; not to hurt us, but to restart our broken dead hearts.

Serving to Save God's saving grace is for all, and meant to be shared with all.

14 PENTECOST '25 C – BEHIND THE SEEN: SERVING TO SAVE

Here's a question: Have you ever passed on an opportunity because it seemed to you the "time" wasn't right, but now wished you'd taken the chance?...that moment when you let the "perfect be the enemy of the good." What happened? Leonie/I can are that story...should've cemented our relationship b/4 I left in '87.

If I'm hearing Joseph clearly after these 7 wks...I think he'd say, "Don't let a chance to forgive pass." Let me 2nd that...Don't let a chance to forgive pass. Don't wait. Don't put it off. I'm strongly on the side of Janeen Latini in our GP: "Forgiveness is a powerful thing. It doesn't change what has happened; it changes what is to come." Forgiveness **DOES NOT** make the past go away...erase scars...mean you can go back to how things were...Joseph can never go back to being the 11th of 12 sons doing his father Jacob's bidding. But by forgiving his brothers & pointing to God as the author of his journey from the outset...Joseph opens the door to a completely redeemed future for himself, his family, his brothers (who still don't get it), his new homeland **AND** the surrounding nations whose survival depend on his Godly-wisdom & faithfulness. Forgiveness does not make the past go away...but it opens the door to a completely redeemed future.

Joseph could have spent his entire life consumed by bitterness over his brothers' betrayal, his years of slavery, or his time in prison. He could have planned & plotted revenge & when he was elevated into position of 2IC in Egypt he could have stuck the knife in & twisted it...his brothers could have felt the full weight of their betrayal. None of that happened. Instead, Joseph chose to see his entire life's journey through the lens of God's greater plan to preserve life & serve to save others. That lens only fits in the frame of forgiveness bred in faithfulness. Remember last week:

"I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. ⁵ But don't be upset, & don't be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. ⁷ God has sent me ahead of you to keep you & your families alive & to preserve many survivors. ⁸ So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he (God) is the one who made me an adviser to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace & the governor of all Egypt. 4X God is credited for the incredible, often painful, always unpredictable road Joseph has travelled thus far. At no point did Joseph wake up & think, "Today I will advance my position. Today I will loose my chains." No...Joseph woke up every day, from the 1st day of that Ishmaelite camel trek more than 20 years previous not knowing if he would live to see sunset. But he woke up every morning guided by a promise whispered into a long ago dream that one day he would lead his family into the inherited promise of Abraham...every day knowing Almighty God was behind the seen in his life...**AND** the lives of those around him.

Knowing that...3 things stand out...1st "...now that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers became fearful. "Now Joseph will show his anger & pay us back for all the wrong we did to him," they said. The world around you will not understand forgiveness...The world assumes we will act like they do. Joseph's brothers assume now that Jacob isn't there as a barrier to his anger, Joseph is going to "punch back twice as hard." They just "know" there's hell to pay & Joseph has the receipts. But Joseph sees the world through eyes that know God has a greater plan in place than simply blotting out the bad guys in the world...as attractive as that is from where you & I might stand, it's likely Joseph remembers an old story...The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, & he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently & totally evil. – Gen 6:5 What comes next is the flood that wipes out most every living thing on the planet...but ends w/ God declaring: "I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you & all living creatures, for all generations to come. ¹³ I have placed my bow in the clouds. It is the sign of my covenant with you & all the earth. ¹⁴ When I send clouds over the earth, the bow will appear in the clouds, ¹⁵ & I will remember my covenant with you & all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life.

The world assumes we will act like they do, but Joseph sees the world through eyes that know God has a greater plan in place than simply blotting out all the bad guys... Because that would leave none of us standing upright. Which is why forgiveness is such a strange thing that the world can't comprehend it. Forgiveness is an act of will in which we give up the right to hold another person accountable for the wrongs they have done to us. It means releasing that person from any obligation to ever make things right to me. Forgiveness **DOES NOT** make the past go away...erase scars...mean you can go back to how things were...trivialize or excuse the wrong...Just that I'm not going to demand payback on my terms. In fact, as God acts toward me...now I act...Jesus called the disciples together & said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, & officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, & whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others & to give his life as a ransom for many." – Mk 10:42-45 God's greater plan is that rather than raising his fist against his brothers, Joseph will open his hands toward them as Jesus would open his hands to us in saving love.

NB: Forgiveness opens the door to a completely redeemed future – a future brimming w/ opportunity...abundant in hope & joy...& that will confuse folks...Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you. – 1 Pet 4:4 Forgiveness changes lives... It transforms hopes aspirations values attitudes...& that will confuse folks...

When your values attitudes hopes dreams & aspirations & behaviour are overwhelmed by the power of forgiveness...the heart-deep understanding that you don't owe God a debt you can't pay that God isn't waiting to smack you down for the gross stuff you've accomplished or the petty back-stabbing you've carried out... those who are still being gross or small & petty will be confused. Joseph's brothers concoct a crazy story about dad's deathbed wishes...but all Joseph can say is: *"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 (God) brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.* Joseph sees the world through eyes that know God has a greater plan in place than simply kicking his ne'er do well brothers in the shorts until they hear the Bells of St Mary. He's just not going to play their game...he's in this for God. The world assumes we will act like they do...don't. God has a greater plan for you too.

2nd...Look at this again...The brothers sent this message to Joseph: *"Before dad died, he instructed us to say to you: 'Please forgive your brothers the great wrong they did to you—for their sin in treating you so cruelly.'* Who is the center of the brother's world? Who is their #1 concern? *Themselves!* The world always puts **"SELF"** at the center of the universe. But Joseph lives for God & his call & his role in God's plans. Behind the seen, at the center of Joseph's view of the world, God holds all things according to his will. As Joseph looks at the world around him, he sees God's hand at work in all of it **AND** he knows God has a role for him to play in that plan. Joseph chose to be defined by what God was doing **THROUGH HIM** rather than by what was done **TO HIM**. Joseph, over years of choosing to serve faithfully, even when circumstances seemed hopeless discovers he is an agent of God's redemptive purpose. *He (God) brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.* Joseph is never going back to Canaan in his lifetime. His call is to Egypt. Wherever you are right now in this world...if you're a baptized child of God...that's your call too: **To** make the saving love of Christ visibly & verbally known to everyone you can at whatever cost...at whatever cost.

Come to Jesus. Grow in His Grace. Go in His Power. Show His Love. It is not that hard.

Because ultimately...3rd...**Grace** ultimately "wins" & carries responsibility in the victory. *"Soon I will die," Joseph told his brothers, "but God will surely come to help you & lead you out of this land of Egypt. He will bring you back to the land he solemnly promised to give to Abraham, to Isaac, & to Jacob."* Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath, & he said, *"When God comes to help you & lead you back, you must take my bones with you."* **NB:** God's promise to Abraham included this: *"The Lord said to Abraham, "You can be sure your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, & in the end they will come away with great wealth."*

The whole of God's people will experience the slavery as did Joseph, but God will not forget them either. They will suffer 400 yrs but their suffering leads to a glorious Exodus that overthrows the very power of Egypt once & for all. God will never relent on his promise: *"I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you & make your name great, & you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you & curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."* – Gen 12:2-3 Joseph never had a perfect opportunity...he simply served wherever God put him. Even his darkest moments were part of something far greater than personal success or even survival. Our circumstances don't define the purpose for our lives. How God shapes us through them into faith-filled living does. *He (God) brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.* Grace ultimately "wins" & carries responsibility in the victory. *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere — in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, & to the ends of the earth."* – Acts 1:8

True purpose isn't found in comfortable circumstances or perfect moments, but in faithfully serving wherever God has placed us, trusting that God can weave even our pain into his great story of redemption. Like Abraham...Joseph...every faithful ancestor ^{b/4} us, we're called to live not as victims of our circumstances, but as servants positioned by God to bring his saving grace to a world in need in every circumstance of our lives.

God's saving grace is for all, and meant to be shared with all.

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

TAKE IT HOME

How might God be using your current circumstances — even difficult ones — to serve his saving purposes?

Where do you sense God calling you to use the lessons of the past 6 weeks for the benefit of the people you encounter in your daily living?

Let's pray... Lord Jesus rescue us from ourselves...our fears & worries, our grievances & grudges, our small living & smaller faith. Let the grandeur of your love & the greatness of your saving death/resurrection lift us into the fullness of life in you. Defend us from the tricks & traps of our world & the evil one who seems to run so much of it so that our lives give unashamed witness to you. Lead our hearts to serve at every opportunity, to pray at every moment & to give thanks in all times rejoicing in all circumstances. Let the world see you at work in us through all our broken places...through you Lord Jesus Christ we pray... Amen