

Genesis: God and Man

Why Do You Look At One Another?

Genesis 42:1-24

Previously:

- Joseph had two dreams (sheaves of wheat; sun, moon stars)
- Brothers hated him
- Plot to kill him, saved by Reuben. Sold by Judah.
- Potiphar, Prison, Pharaoh
- Years of Plenty, Years of Famine

Does your life feel like it's in a year of plenty or year of famine?

How are you measuring your harvest?

Physically or spiritually?

Physical plenty can lead to spiritual famine

Rev 3:17 NKJV - "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked--

Spiritual famine leads to destruction

Hosea 4:6a My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

Do you have crops of your own? Or do you rely on another?

Walmart empty shelves, dependence...China tariffs and farmers, yet we import from other nations

But more importantly, where does your spiritual food come from? Where is your main sustenance? Does it come from your own time with the Lord, or are you gleaning off of others who are on the way?

Feed yourself. God will let you know how to handle the season you're in...the season coming...and even help you get over issues from the season behind you.

If we're not spending that time from him, sure, we may find something to eat... but it's never enough.

Psa 81:10 NKJV - I [am] the LORD your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

Deu 8:2-3 NKJV - "And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you [and] test you, to know what [was] in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. "So He humbled you,

allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every [word] that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.

God will allow certain famines in our lives - physical, spiritual, and more...that we might learn to depend on him. And that it might show us who we really are...that we DO need him more and more.

Genesis 42:1-5

Jacob found out about the grain in Egypt.

Word had spread.

But why did it take so long for the old man to find out? His sons were in the know. His sons were adults. Capable of taking care of each other and were supposed to be responsible.

Jacob basically says, "Guys, why are you standing around looking at each other? We have no food. Egypt has food. Why have you not gone to get any?"

Remember, these are not children, not teenagers...fully grown men with families. Joseph was one of the younger brothers and he is at least 37 by now, if not 40 if the famine has been going for a few years...

They were looking at one another.

They were standing around, looking at which one of them was going to go...I'm not going to go...you go...no way, you go! I'm not going down there...

That's where we sent Joseph. That's where we sold our brother.

Their guilt and their shame was preventing them from getting anything to eat in the famine.

People who won't come to church, who maybe are open to the gospel, recognize their need for it...but let their sin stay between them and God.

"The walls will fall on me!" "everyone there is too good, I'll stand out"

The conviction cuts them, but the enemy uses their guilt to bind them.

But like we read earlier, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it"

Jhn 6:37 NKJV - "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."

"Go down to that place and buy grain for us...that we may live and not die"
This was a matter of life and death. I don't think he is being dramatic.

The famine has been raging....the worst maybe even in recorded history. And they don't have food.

The Dust Bowl was the name given to the drought-stricken Southern Plains region of the United States, which suffered severe dust storms during a dry period in the 1930s. As high winds and choking dust swept the region from Texas to Nebraska, people and livestock were killed and crops failed across the entire region.

Economic depression coupled with extended drought, unusually high temperatures, poor agricultural practices and the resulting wind erosion all contributed to making the Dust Bowl. The seeds of the Dust Bowl may have been sowed during the early 1920s.

*"On the fourteenth day of April in 1935
There struck the worst of dust storms that ever filled the sky....
From Oklahoma City to the Arizona Line
Dakota and Nebraska to the lazy Rio Grande
It fell across our city like a curtain of black rolled down,
We thought it was our judgment, we thought it was our doom...."
-Woody Guthrie*

*"The nation that destroys it's soil
destroys itself."
-Franklin D. Roosevelt*

*"In other periods of depression, it has always been possible to see some things which were solid and upon which you could base hope, but as I look about, I now see nothing to give ground to hope—nothing of man."
-Calvin Coolidge*

*"His mother is wishing her boy would come home."
Lots of mothers wishing that these days,
while their sons walk to California,
where rain comes,
and the color green doesn't seem like such a miracle,
and hope rises daily, like sap in a stem."
— Karen Hesse, *Out of the Dust**

There was a time of plenty in America (the 1920s) and it was followed by a time of Great Depression (the 1930s). It has happened here. We are not immune. It will happen again. The question is when. Maybe God will be merciful and warn us, if we would listen.

The world is so caught up worrying about a physical fire (amazon, global warming) that may or may not even be real or have severe consequences...and yet they willfully ignore the spiritual fire that is real, is coming and has eternal consequences.

The brothers finally listen to their father and head down to Egypt

Jerusalem to Cairo is roughly 460 miles. If you walk at 3mph, walk for 10 hours/day, it will take you over 15 days one way.

Not a short trip. Lots of time to think.

Jacob was holding on tight to Benjamin. Rachel's other son. Remember, she died giving birth to him, Joseph's younger brother.

They weren't the only ones. There was a famine everywhere so everyone was going to Egypt. I wonder what the atmosphere was like?

Power outage in NJ after 9/11, driving home

:6-17

Joseph was in charge and he was directly in charge of day-to-day operations. He was THE man.

What do his brothers do? BOW DOWN BEFORE HIM FOR...GRAIN
Dreams anyone?

Joseph recognized them. Some 20+ years have passed at this point. They don't recognize him. They look the same, just older. He looks and sounds completely different.

Would people from our past recognize us now that we are believers? Do we look, act and sound the same, or completely different? In some ways I hope so, in some ways I certainly hope not...especially if we've been walking with the Lord for 20+ years.

THEN Joseph remembered the dreams...can you believe he hadn't thought about the dreams? They were long put away. He hadn't been thinking about them, wondering when they'd come true...maybe he just thought they too were dreams or all the years in captivity buried

them...maybe it was good enough for him that he was lifted up (remember naming his sons), or maybe he was just too busy to be thinking about these spiritual things coming true for him anymore.

Can you imagine the feelings rushing back? The adrenaline? The trembling in your heart and soul and maybe even body?

**He sees and recognizes his brothers...he remembers the dreams...
his countenance immediately changes and he goes on to interrogate them.**

Solomon is always counted as wise, but i don't think Joseph gets enough credit here. I'm sure he is emotionally charged, but I get the sense this is much deeper, a test for them. Trying to find out what they're really made of...

And it takes a famine...it takes hard times...it takes pressure and sometimes accusation or persecution to show us what we're really made of. Sure, we follow Jesus, but when he is arrested, do we run? When a little girl challenges our relationship to him in public, do we back down?

Job. Enemy allowed to hurt him for a season...and it only revealed even further that Job loved God...although it also brought him to a point where it revealed, it exposed that he at some point thought he was really smart and wise and God said, "Job, where you there when I made the earth?" It not only was a tool to rebuke the enemy it was also a tool to whittle down Job and show him what was really deep down in his heart and ultimately to draw him closer to God and allow God to bless him 2x over again in everything in his life.

Joseph says they are spies...my guess would be that is punishable by death. It would be hard to prove or disprove. But if Joseph is #2 in Egypt...he has the power to imprison them.

They say they are honest men, not spies
right, just, honest, true, veritable

They are not lying, they are not there under false pretense, they are there because they are hungry and dying.

But are they honest? Are they true? Their actions of several decades ago would say not. But, Joseph doesn't use his power and authority and accusation as an opportunity to get revenge. He uses it as an opportunity to get his family back.

1Co 13:4-7 NKJV - Love suffers long [and] is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Joseph loves his brothers no doubt, and he wants to know about his family and I'm sure he longs for restoration among them.

I would hope we would all want that for our families, whether they are severely broken like Joseph's or even just a little distant...you only get one family.

1Ti 5:8 NKJV - But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Joseph accuses them of wanting to find out the vulnerabilities of Egypt.

When he opened up to them as a young man he exposed his vulnerabilities to them and they took full advantage of his trust in coming to them alone.

They say one brother is no more...meaning Joseph.

I wonder if they thought he was really dead? Were they just continuing the story? Or had they just had to accept that he was dead to them because there was no way for them to track down their brother who was sold into slavery.

My personal struggle with do I share or not share about my child in heaven

Joseph tests them by putting them in prison...three days.

I don't know that he told them it would be three days, but that's how long they were in there.

to examine, try, prove, scrutinise, try (of gold, persons, the heart, man of God)
Dross brought to surface

1Pe 1:6-9 NKJV - In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, [being] much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see [Him], yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of [your] souls.

Methods of torture

Joseph is going to see if their guilt comes to the surface. If they are repentant or not. Let them be tested by this pressure and imprisonment put on them...

to put them in a real survival situation where only the truth can set them free.

Joseph uses Pharaoh as the authority here...that if they are indeed spies, they are indeed out for Pharaoh's life...but more than that, he is swearing by one greater than himself.

Heb 6:13-16 NKJV - For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation [is] for them an end of all dispute.

He tells them he fears God...their God - elohiym...the plural, triune God

His plan...have them leave a brother in prison...and if they are changed men, really care about their brother, they won't leave him there like they left Joseph.

Bring Benjamin...would they care for their youngest? Would they care for Joseph's direct brother? And Joseph wanted to see Benjamin. Joseph wanted to be reunited with them all.

This is the only way to prove it to me.

We can't make demands of people in life, but sometimes, the only way to know is to see what they will do. Not to put them to the test, but watch as their life is tested and see if they are the right one.

Ministry, friendship, marriage.

They begin to speak to each other about it.

Picture the circumstance...they're in chains, about to be let go, Joseph and his entourage before them translating ancient Egyptian into their ancient Hebrew...

Their buried guilt and years of arguing about it or avoiding it has come to a head.

This circumstance truly proves to them, truly breaks them down to not be able to bury it internally any more and go on with it...they see it as divine circumstance, divine punishment for their sin. That their sin, which they buried and got away with technically has finally caught up with them and the consequences are very real and unavoidable.

Reuben answered...didn't I tell you!!! I told you not to harm the boy. You wouldn't listen and now we're all going to die for it.

Can you picture Joseph there...hearing and seeing all of this. A clear window into the hearts and minds and souls of his brothers?

This is when he weeps...he breaks down...he can't contain it any longer.

He talked with them after. I wonder what was said, how it was said. It seems they determined who would be bound and it was the second oldest, Simeon.

I wonder if it was second oldest because Reuban tried to get them to release them so the second oldest would be bound...or IDK. But Simeon was it.

The emotional depth of what's going on here. The anguish. The turmoil. All in the shadow of a horrible famine. Overwhelming to say the least.

Yet this was all a part of God's plan to get Israel (Jacob and his family) into Egypt. To survive. To Grow. To become a nation that one day, would turn around, go back and inherit the Promised Land.

What are you going through right now?

What and where is your family going through or has gone through?

Could it be that God has a bigger plan for all of it?