

## Joseph – *Waiting on God* May 17, 2020

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church  
Genesis 40

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*"Waiting is a sustained effort to stay focused on God through prayer and belief."* Max Lucado, *You'll Get Through This*

As we continue studying the story of Joseph from the Book of Genesis, it can be easy to lose track of time. The chapters and the verses in the Bible sometimes portray stories that have large "gaps" in the chronology; from sentences and paragraphs in the account, we are moved along in the story months or even years! If God, through His holy writers, does not give us an indication of time's passing, most of us figure we are talking about days and weeks while the timeline is actually years in the making.

Joseph's story in Genesis is a prime example of what I'm getting at. When we started this epic tale of a multi-colored robe, misery, and mercy in Genesis 27, Joseph is seventeen; by Genesis 41:46, we read that ***"Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt."*** His time of misery was thirteen years in direction – an "eternity" to a modern teenager. By the end of his story in Genesis 50, Joseph is a 110-year-old-man. His story spans ninety-three years. That can take your breath away! It means that Joseph lived almost as long as Pastor Wiechmann.

We have noted that Joseph's life-lesson can be summed up as: ***"You'll get through this. It won't be painless. It won't be quick...Ah, now you see! When we are in a time of toil or tragedy, we feel like time has stopped and we are never getting out of our misery...never!"*** Pain can do that to you. In life, there

are times of waiting. We are waiting for God to reveal the next step of His plan and purpose for our lives. We don't want to wait, but God has all eternity on His side. Max Lucado shares an interesting insight: *"To wait, biblically speaking, is not to assume the worst, worry, fret, make demands, or take control. Nor is waiting inactivity. Waiting is a sustained effort to stay focused on God through prayer and belief."*

As we pick up Joseph's story from where we left off, Joseph is in the middle of a time of waiting.

We are at Genesis 40: ***"Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer, and the chief baker, and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued some time in custody."***

Catch that? Twice we read the phrase "some time." In the Biblical narrative, that could range from days and weeks to months and years. "Some time" after his brothers ambushed him; "some time" after Potiphar bought him; "some time" after being imprisoned; the days, weeks, and months were starting to accumulate for Joseph. But still, he waited on his God.

Picking back up at verse 5: ***"And one night they both dreamed – the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison – each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation. When Joseph came to them in the morning; he saw they were troubled. So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, 'Why are your faces downcast today?' They said to him, 'We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.' And***

***Joseph said to them, 'Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.' So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him, 'In my dream there was a vine before me, and on the vine, there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.' Then Joseph said to him, 'This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days. In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer. Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house. For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me in the pit.' When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, 'I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head, and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head.' And Joseph answered and said, 'This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days. In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head – from you! – and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you.' On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph but forgot him."***

We have noted that God was with Joseph throughout his ordeal. As the Bible says, “...**the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor...**” (Genesis 39:21) Of the many, potential outcomes Joseph could have faced, God’s providence, plan, and purpose continued to move Joseph closer to his ultimate destination – to be where God needed him to be in order for Joseph to be in the place to do what God wanted done.

Yes, God was faithful – is faithful – but men, not so much. Joseph favorably interprets the chief cupbearer’s dream and makes one simple request: “**Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, to get me out of this house.**” Everything turns out good for the chief cupbearer. He gets his job back. What Joseph told him came true. “**Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph but forgot him.**” Well, that’s disappointing – and that’s my point.

When faced with trials, toil, and tragedies, we try to work harder and do more or do things better. And, when that inevitably fails, we turn to others, expecting them to rescue us from our predicaments. We decide that either we have done something for which God is punishing us, or God isn’t up to the job. Hope seems to escape us when tragedy strikes, and troubles arise. **We tend to judge God’s goodness based on our own comfort and ease of life.** There are many people who only follow God as long as they get what they want from the relationship. The moment difficulty arises, and they have to face disappointment, or they are denied what they wanted from God, they bail.

If God is unchanging and good, then He is good all the time, whether we are getting what we want or not. If God has not changed, then it is our perception of Him that has changed.

In life, there are times of waiting, when we are waiting for God to reveal the next step of His plan and purpose for our lives. But we are not good at waiting; never have been, probably never will be.

Let's go back to Joseph's great-grandfather, Abraham. Abraham and Sarah were an old couple who had been childless. The Bible indicates that Sarah was passed her child-bearing years. God had promised He would give them a son, but after "some time" had passed and there was no child, Sarah took matters into her own hands. She encouraged Abraham to sleep with her servant, an Egyptian by the name of Hagar, who gave birth to a son who Abraham named – wait for it! – Ishmael. God did deliver on His promise and later, Sarah gave birth to Isaac, Joseph's grandfather, but now there was enmity between her and Hagar and their sons, Ishmael, and Isaac. It was so bad that Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away. Ishmael is the father of the Ishmaelites, who bought and traded Joseph off to Potiphar. These Ishmaelites were cousins to Joseph! And their descendants are the various Arab peoples in the world today. So, in the Middle East, we have constant war and violence among people who can trace their heritage to a common ancestry, simply because Sarah and Abraham did not trust God at His Word!

Thankfully, Joseph did not repeat the mistake of his great-grandparents. He couldn't depend on his family. He couldn't depend on his friends. He did the right things and helped others in their time of need, only to be forgotten by them when circumstances changed favorably for them. Through it all,

Joseph waited on God. Repeating what was earlier said: *“Waiting is a sustained effort to stay focused on God through prayer and belief.”* Joseph was faithful because he knew who God was and that He cared for him. Others may have acted toward him with evil intent and forgot about him once things started going their way, but God intended for these things to shape Joseph’s journey from multi-colored robe and misery to majesty and mercy.

“Why doesn’t God do something? Why doesn’t He act now?”

Ever hear people complain about God’s timing? Have you complained about God being “slow” to act? The prophet Isaiah has an answer to that: ***“...they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”*** (Isaiah 40:31) The idea of waiting may not sit well with a “microwave generation” or a milieu of instant gratification, but there is a time to, as David puts it, ***“Be still, and know that I am God.”*** (Psalm 46:10) Abraham waited decades for his promised son. Jacob waited and worked for decades to have Rachel, Joseph’s mother, as one of his wives. God’s people waited millennia for the Messiah to come. We await Jesus’ “Second Coming” when He will come to take us where God wants us to be – the place whose doors are open because the Good Shepherd, Jesus, opens them for us.

God’s sense of time is not measured on the basis of man’s clocks. If you would turn with me to 2 Peter 3, picking up at verse 8 where the apostle writes: ***“...do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all***

***should reach repentance.***” (2 Peter 3:8-9) If we know and if we trust God is at work in the world, we realize that He has me on His mind along with millions of others. Just because I feel ready to move on to the next stage does not mean everyone else is. ***God ...is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish...*** We need to learn to wait on our gracious and patient God.

Psalm 27 puts it like this: ***“Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord.”*** (Psalm 27:14)

St. Paul wrote to the Galatians and told them that ***“...through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness”*** (Galatians 5:5) which is found only in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So, once again, I share this advice as a life-lesson to be embraced:

You'll get through this.

It won't be painless.

*It won't be quick*

God will use this mess for good.

Don't be foolish or naïve.

But don't despair either.

With God's help, you'll get through this!

Amen.

## Sermon Notes: Joseph – Waiting on God

1. [Biblically] *Waiting is a \_\_\_\_\_  
to stay focused on God through prayer and belief.*
2. Whenever we're in a time of \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_,  
we feel like time has stopped and we're never getting out of  
our misery...never!
3. Of the many, potential outcomes Joseph could have faced,  
God's \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and  
\_\_\_\_\_ continued to move Joseph to his  
ultimate destination.
4. We tend to \_\_\_\_\_ God's goodness based on  
our own comfort and ease of life.
5. ***"...they who wait on the Lord shall renew their  
\_\_\_\_\_; they shall mount up with wings like  
eagles; they shall run and not be \_\_\_\_\_; they shall  
walk and not be \_\_\_\_\_" – Isaiah 40:31***
6. ***"Wait for the Lord; be \_\_\_\_\_, and let your heart take  
\_\_\_\_\_; wait for the Lord" – Psalm 27:14***