

AUGUST 13, 2023
THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The 12 Sons of Jacob



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***CALL TO WORSHIP:**

One: God moves among us.

Many: We welcome your presence, Lord, no matter by what means you arrive.

One: Reach out your hand and I shall always be with you.

Many: We reach for you, Jesus, and trust that you are present when we fear or ache.

One: Your presence, Oh Lord, calms the seas as it calms our hearts.

Many: May we rest assured that you are ever present with us, assuaging our worries as you love our anxieties into softness.

***INVOCATION:**

God of so many names, you command us to come to you, yet we are doubtful of our abilities to make the journey. We are so uncertain of our steps, yet we long to have the faith in ourselves that you have in us. Be with us and embolden us through faith to rise as we are called to walk with you and walk alongside those who need companionship. Show us how to be children of God who can set skepticism down and take up the mantle of faithful presence. Amen.

***CALL TO CONFESSION:** We profess our faith in God, yet we rely more heavily on our own ingenuity. We say we believe, but our lives seldom show confident trust. We want to care as Jesus did, but we're often ready, as were Joseph's brothers, to sell off those with whom we disagree. Who can save us from ourselves?

***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

God, we confess that we are dreamers more intent on our own importance than on your vision for us. We like our favored position on this earth, and we are

jealous of those who have even more than we. We want to walk of water before we have even learned to stand upright on the land. We want to rise above others rather than reaching out with helping hands, that all might be uplifted by you. We pray for pardon, for greater insight, for another chance to live and serve with faithfulness. Amen.

***WORDS OF ASSURANCE:**

O you of little faith, why do you doubt? Take heart. Do not be afraid. The harsh winds will abate. The seas will not overwhelm. The treachery of some will not wipe out the good God intends. Everyone who calls on God's name will be saved. Remember God's wonderful works and share the good news. Let all humankind praise God. We are forgiven.

Praise the Lord!

***GLORIA:**

Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat two more times.) (end) One God always here. One God always here.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS: Genesis 37:1-4. 12-28

Joseph dreams of power

37 Jacob lived in the land of Canaan where his father was an immigrant. ²This is the account of Jacob's descendants. Joseph was 17 years old and tended the flock with his brothers. While he was helping the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives, Joseph told their father unflattering things about them. ³Now Israel loved

Joseph more than any of his other sons because he was born when Jacob was old. Jacob had made for him a long robe. ⁴When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him and couldn't even talk nicely to him.

Joseph's brothers take revenge

¹²Joseph's brothers went to tend their father's flocks near Shechem. ¹³Israel said to Joseph, "Aren't your brothers tending the sheep near Shechem? Come, I'll send you to them." And he said, "I'm ready."

¹⁴Jacob said to him, "Go! Find out how your brothers are and how the flock is, and report back to me."

So Jacob sent him from the Hebron Valley. When he approached Shechem, ¹⁵a man found him wandering in the field and asked him, "What are you looking for?"

¹⁶Joseph said, "I'm looking for my brothers. Tell me, where are they tending the sheep?"

¹⁷The man said, "They left here. I heard them saying, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.

¹⁸They saw Joseph in the distance before he got close to them, and they plotted to kill him. ¹⁹The brothers said to each other, "Here comes the big dreamer. ²⁰Come on now, let's kill him and throw him into one of the cisterns, and we'll say a wild animal devoured him. Then we will see what becomes of his dreams!"

²¹When Reuben heard what they said, he saved him from them, telling them, "Let's not take his life." ²²Reuben said to them, "Don't spill his blood! Throw him into this desert cistern, but don't lay a hand

on him.” He intended to save Joseph from them and take him back to his father.

²³ When Joseph reached his brothers, they stripped off Joseph’s long robe, ²⁴ took him, and threw him into the cistern, an empty cistern with no water in it. ²⁵ When they sat down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with camels carrying sweet resin, medicinal resin, and fragrant resin on their way down to Egypt. ²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, “What do we gain if we kill our brother and hide his blood? ²⁷ Come on, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites. Let’s not harm him because he’s our brother; he’s family.” His brothers agreed. ²⁸ When some Midianite traders passed by, they pulled Joseph up out of the cistern. They sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, and they brought Joseph to Egypt.

EPISTLE LESSON: Romans 10:5-15

The words of the Apostle Paul

⁵ Moses writes about the righteousness that comes from the Law: *The person who does these things will live by them.* ⁶ But the righteousness that comes from faith talks like this: *Don’t say in your heart, “Who will go up into heaven?”* (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ or *“Who will go down into the region below?”* (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? *The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart* (that is, the message of faith that we preach). ⁹ Because if you confess with your mouth “Jesus is Lord” and in your heart you have faith that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ Trusting with the heart leads to

righteousness, and confessing with the mouth leads to salvation. ¹¹ The scripture says, *All who have faith in him won’t be put to shame.* ¹² There is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord is Lord of all, who gives richly to all who call on him. ¹³ *All who call on the Lord’s name will be saved.*

¹⁴ So how can they call on someone they don’t have faith in? And how can they have faith in someone they haven’t heard of? And how can they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, *How beautiful are the feet of those who announce the good news.*

MESSAGE: “The End and the Beginning”

In the semicontinuous Old Testament readings for this season, we are now in the fourth generation of the ancestors of Israel, having moved from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to the sons of Jacob which include Joseph. We read about him this morning. The twelve sons of Jacob are ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. (*The cover of this bulletin shows you the names.*)

Today’s story of Joseph is our last for this summer’s “Adult Vacation Bible School.” Next week we will go back to making the Gospel scripture our focus for learning.

I’ll briefly summarize what happens to Joseph after today’s reading. One of the main reasons his brother’s hated Joseph was because he could interpret dreams. In verse 5 - 11, which we did not read. “Joseph had a dream and told it to his brothers, which made them hate him even more.” This dream was interpreted to show that Joseph would be king and ruler over his brothers.”

When Joseph had been taken down to Egypt, Potiphar, Pharaoh's chief officer, the commander of the royal guard and an Egyptian, purchased Joseph from the Ishmaelites. The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man and served his master's household, eventually becoming Potiphar's assistant who appointed Joseph head of his household and put everything he had under Joseph's supervision. Joseph's success was due to the Lord being with him and the Lord blessing everything Joseph had and did.

Some time later, Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph into sleeping with her. When he refused, the wife had Joseph arrested saying that he tried to rape her. While in jail the Lord was with Joseph and remained loyal to him. Because of this loyalty to God, the jail's commander thought highly of Joseph and eventually put Joseph supervisor over all the prisoners.

Joseph began to interpret the dreams of the prisoners and Joseph's predictions came through. Two years later, Pharaoh had a dream that he wanted interpreted. It was suggested to him to have Joseph interpret his dream. Joseph told Pharaoh that his gift of interpretation came from God. The message of this dream was that Egypt would enjoy seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph recommended that they store much grain during the years of plenty to have for the years of famine. Joseph was given back his position as assistant to Potiphar to make that happen.

That's why Joseph's family went to Egypt to get food during the famine. In chapter 42 – 50 when Joseph's

brothers came to Egypt to get food. They did not recognize Joseph as the person in charge. Eventually Joseph told them who he was and the family was reconciled and they moved to Egypt during the famine to be kept safe by Joseph.

This Bible story of Joseph, from the Book of Genesis, is **one of heroic redemption and forgiveness.**

The next story in the Bible is the one about Moses leading his people to safety, escaping slavery from the then Pharaoh. I often wondered how this happened. Jacob's family was well cared for in Egypt under the watchful eye of Joseph. However, in the next book they are slaves. Have you ever wondered about that? We must read the book of Exodus to answer our questions.

Scholars say that there is a 300 year gap between Joseph's death and the story of Moses. What happened during those 300 years? All we know is what is written in chapter 1 of Exodus. Eventually Joseph, his brothers, and everyone in his generation died. But the Israelites were fertile and became populous. They multiplied and grew dramatically filling the whole land.

Verse 8 "Now a new king came to power in Egypt who didn't know Joseph." THERE IS THE ANSWER. The Israelites forgot Joseph. They forgot their ancestors. They forgot history. And, worse, they forgot about God. You've probably heard the saying; something like "we must never forget history or we might repeat the mistakes that were made."

That's the whole reason I suggested we look at these stories. Whether or not they are true or just a myth we can learn from our ancestors. Bad things happen when

we forget about God. **How do you always remember God?**
Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER:

God of crisis, God of everyday, God of eternity, we prefer the view of beauty around us, but we are grateful for warning signs that make us more attentive to the hazards of a careless road of life. We give thanks for all who have set an example for us of certainty and assurance amid trouble, conflict, and disaster. In emulating them, when the end of the journey comes for us, we will rejoice.

Sovereign God, you have called us to pray not only for ourselves but for all humanity. We pray for your church everywhere in the world that all your people may pray without ceasing, using whatever name for God they wish.

Bless all those people in government and positions of authority that they may govern with clarity and charity. Sustain all who give themselves to serve those in need; those who teach immigrants, social workers who care for the poor and the incompetent, church visitors who attend to shut-ins and those who send them cards. Bless all our clinics, nursing homes, hospitals, and health services that your work of healing may continue among us.

Merciful Parent, heal your children of any age. They look to you for new health and strength no matter the ailment. We also pray for the caregivers who also suffer when loved ones are ill and need help.

We pray all these things in the name of the one who taught us to pray . . .

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

PRAYER RESPONSE: NCH 769

**Hear our prayer, O God, hear our prayer, O God;
Incline your ear to us, and grant s your peace.**

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

The gifts of faith come to us in many ways, and the miracles we witness are not always so obvious. May the manifestation of God's great abundance in our lives inspire us to generosity in as many ways as we see God's love unfurl.

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING:**

Holy One, we thank you for revealing yourself to us in ways both big and small, in ways miraculous and mundane. Use our gifts to further your loving justice in our communities near and far.

***BENEDICTION:**

As we go forth from this time of intentional community and ministry, let us practice replacing fear with faith and worry with a calm that is rooted in God's grace. May we more deeply connect with the freedom that comes from trust in something larger than ourselves. Go in peace and do God's work among all of God's people.

BENEDICTION RESPONSE:

"Let There Be Peace on Earth"

PRAYER LIST: Carson Edwards, Yvonne Weber, Marilyn Paul, Beth Sheldon, Mary Holcomb, Syd Safriet, Ronald Bopp, Rosemary Williams, Becky Ballard, Jacky Canterbury, David Seneczyn, Urban Baum, Luz Captain, Olivia Captain, S.B.