

Ps 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b; Ge 37:1-4, 12-28;
Ro 10:5-15; Mt 14:22-33

Choosing & Being Chosen

The Father of our Faith, Abraham, has become a huge family – *or* a small nation – take your pick. His grandson, Jacob, the one who wrestled with God – Israel – has taken wives and concubines. He now has twelve sons – many flocks and herds – many servants. This family/nation is still living in tents. While they are camped near Hebron, a loving father (Jacob) sends his favorite son (Joseph) to discover what his older sons are up to out on the range. These older brothers are fed up with Joseph. He is always dreaming that he is ruler and supervisor – and that his brothers are servants and subordinate to him. He is not popular with these men. They are the sons of four mothers who have brought the twelve of them into the world: Leah, Rachel, Zilpah and Bilhah. Joseph is Rachel's son. Recall that Jacob loved Rachel from the first time he saw her. Rachel presented Jacob with two sons, Joseph and Benjamin, in his old age.

I have often wondered why Joseph told his dreams to his father and his brothers. He believes that God has set him apart for a special purpose. And this belief gets him in trouble with the rest of the family.

He was not wrong about being chosen – about being special. At the same time, with all the gifts and goodness God has given Joseph – he is tested and refined to the limit. Jesus tells His disciples, "Great gifts bring great responsibility; greater gifts, greater responsibility! (Luke 12:48) The very master, Potiphar, who saw such potential in Joseph, will also throw him into prison on a false charge of rape. Joseph will spend at least two years in jail. And the jailer, seeing the young man's talents, makes him a warden of the other prisoners. He used his dream interpreting ability in jail. Though at first forgotten by Pharaoh's cupbearer, he is finally remembered for correctly interpreting the cupbearer's dream. Joseph is called to court when a dream interpreter is needed for Pharaoh himself.

The king had a dream that disturbed him greatly.

Pharaoh says, "I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not I; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." Joseph relies upon the Lord through all the good times and the bad times. His continued existence hangs by a thread several times in his life. Joseph steadily trusts God and calls upon God at all times. God has remained faithful to Joseph through everything. God chose Joseph – and Joseph chooses God.

Joseph survived some close calls. He had no place to go when his ten older brothers surrounded him, seized him and threw him into the empty cistern. There was no use pleading that his life mattered. It didn't matter to them. He had no way of escaping his captors in the caravan to Egypt. The Ishmaelites had little time for listening to his dreams. There was money to be made. He was powerless as he stood, most likely naked or nearly naked, on the slave block before prospective buyers in Egypt. Being a dreamer – being the beloved of the Lord – are not considered when you're sold as a slave. When circumstances are way out of your control, who do *you* choose to call?

Joseph cried out to God – and he came to understand that his many gifts and talents had a purpose far beyond his own human measure. God pulled Joseph's bacon out of the fire time after time. He was divinely positioned to accomplish God's will. That plan was to take place in Egypt. It involved the power and the richness of Pharaoh's court, and the administration of the government.

How is the Lord using you to accomplish His will? Some of us never get over the idea that we chart our course, we accomplish our goals, we alone decide everything about our lives.

I pray that you can hear this word today, knowing that some cannot hear it. The Apostle Paul offers us a key:

*The word that saves is right here,
as near as the tongue in your mouth,
as close as the heart in your chest.*

It's the word of faith that welcomes God to go to work and set things right for us. This is the core of our (message). Say the welcoming word to God—"Jesus is my Master"—embracing, body and soul, God's work of doing in us what he did in raising Jesus from the dead. That's it. You're not "doing" anything; you're simply calling out to God, trusting him to do it for you. That is salvation. (Ro 10:8-9 MSG)

I'm not fully knowledgeable about the gifts and graces God has planted in you – the talents – the abilities. You may be like Joseph. You may be like Peter. You may be like Potiphar – or even Pharaoh. Will you cry out, "Jesus is my Master!?"

I cannot know who you think you are – what you think of yourself. But today I call upon you to remember the wondrous works God has done. Remember the wonders God is able to do. The marvelous works – the justice He brings to an unjust world. Whoever you think you are, here is the truth: you are the sons and daughters of Abraham, the servant of God. You are the children of Jacob, God's chosen ones. Choose God because He has chosen you. (cf Ps 105) Amen.