

Sermon - 02/20/2022
Ps 37; Gen 45:3-11, 15;
1 Cor 15:35-50; Lu 6:27-38

Betrayal happens when another undermines someone so completely that his/her life is destroyed. The betrayer must have the trust of the one who is being sold out. Ugly business, betrayal. The one you trusted lets you down. Perhaps you have experienced betrayal. It is a painful ordeal, if you live through it. But living through it will make you stronger.

We have before us the history of Joseph son of Israel. He is the next to youngest son of the Patriarch Jacob, who became the great nation Israel. Joseph's extraordinary story is a picture of God's power to overcome every adversity – even the murderous intentions of Joseph's jealous brothers. He lived about six thousand years before Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior of the world. Joseph's journey is a preview of Jesus' journey in the 1st c. AD. Joseph's story is prophetic.

Joseph was Jacob's favorite, being the son of Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife. His dad made a coat of many colors for Joseph. It was his mantle of favor. That very tunic was brought to Jacob/Israel soaked in goat's blood, to convince him that the boy had been torn apart by wild animals. Joseph was seventeen years old. It was the two older sons who held their brothers back from murdering Joseph outright. Murder is the ultimate betrayal, isn't it?

Even though Joseph lost his beautiful coat of many colors, he remained under the covering of God's watchful care all the years following being sold for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelite traders passing through. It was God's mercy that held the murderous crew in check, by the pleading of Judah and Simeon, who were more mature and compassionate brothers. That covering remained on Joseph through twenty years of adventures in Egypt. From the house of Potiphar, vizier to Pharaoh, Joseph was thrown into prison on a false charge. He spent two years locked up. But his reputation as an interpreter of dreams and as a gifted administrator grew on account of God's favor.

Long after the blood-soaked tunic was gone – the invisible Holy Spirit of God kept shielding his soul and spirit – even his body. The old coat gave place to the very armor of God that protected his life in prison, and eventually in Pharaoh's court.

Remember (in *The Lord of the Rings*) when Bilbo (the uncle) gave Frodo (his nephew) this extraordinary armor made from mithril, amazing garment, forged by the elves? As he gave the young man this wonderful protection, he told him, "It's as light as a feather, yet strong as dragon's scales." In my mind's eye, I see a picture of the supernatural covering of God's armor of light surrounding Joseph as he rises to favor after interpreting Pharaoh's dream. The Lord God was with him every step of what seems like set-back after set-back. Events were turning toward a great, divine plan to save not just Joseph – but through Joseph to save his people. Joseph's stores of grain provided for the entire known world through a seven-year famine by God's hand and the inspiration of God's Spirit.

Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm." (Eph 6:12-13)

Jesus says, "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return." (Lu 6:37-38 NASB) Consider how great a provision Jesus Christ makes for human beings. Indeed, how great provision – how great a covering for all of creation – in His suffering, betrayal and death.

By God's grace you and I can see ourselves like Joseph in Pharaoh's court when his brothers came to him for food. Joseph had been transformed – able to see God's greater plan – and able to forgive his betrayers. It is only by God's abundant grace that you and I can become more like Joseph – more like Jesus. The Lord Jesus saw the plot to

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betray Him tightening more each passing day, until He was taken into custody by His own people – armed temple guards. That betrayal led to His death. Jesus willingly offered Himself as the Sacrifice for all our sin and all the suffering that sin causes.

Later, on the day Jesus was raised to life, He walked unrecognized with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. He spoke with them – and they told Him what was troubling them. They shared how the One who was to save the people had been cruelly murdered. They had been so sure He was the Messiah. But now all hope was gone – the worst had happened.

What seemed like the end was really the beginning. We can draw great hope and strength from these events. Jesus provided these two walking the Emmaus road what they needed, the Word of Life. The promise of a heavenly outcome from evil intentions.

As they walked, they said, “Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see.’ And He (Jesus) said to them, ‘O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.” (Lu 24:24-27) Jesus walked through betrayal and death to accomplish the mighty work of delivering you and me from the pit. Joseph’s life is a picture of Christ – rising in glory from impossible circumstances.

Like Joseph, you may have been betrayed – perhaps more than once in your life. You may have walked through dark days – loss, discouragement, rejection. Even in the midst of trouble, Christ gives you the mighty covering of His grace and love. Joseph has believed in the Lord instead of becoming bitter and hateful. Seeing God’s grace, Joseph trusts in God’s plan and God’s protection from the sin of revenge – the sin of an eye for an eye. It is the covering of God surrounding you with His presence now and forever. His presence preserves your life. Amen.