Pentecost 11 Genesis 41:41-49
August 16, 2020 420-445-416-449

God Knows What He's Doing (Even When We Don't!)
I. God loves us.
II. God is in control.
III. God is faithful.

Dear Christian friends,

It can be one of the HARDEST LESSONS to **learn** but it's so comforting - the SIMPLE TRUTH that GOD KNOWS **what He's doing** even when we don't.

We don't always understand God's ways. "WHY, God? HOW COULD You, Lord? Where are You, God?" There's nothing new about those questions.

I'm sure Joseph had PLENTY OF TIMES when he wrestled with those **doubts** and **fears**. But looking at Joseph's life **we see** that GOD KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING (even **when we don't!**). We may not always understand **God's ways** but we HAVE THE COMFORT - we CAN BE SURE – that 1)God loves us, that 2)God is in control and that 3)God is faithful.

I. God loves us.

Do you remember the basics of Joseph's life? Joseph was one of the 12 **sons** of Jacob. There were 12 brothers with four different mothers but the **same father**. MESSED-UP families are **nothing new**!

Joseph was not the FIRSTBORN but he was definitely daddy's FAVORITE. Joseph knew it and **so did** his brothers. Do you remember how Jacob HAD SHOWN his favoritism by giving Joseph a ***"coat of many colors"***? We could compare it to Jacob giving the **other brothers** JEANS and **Joseph** a SUIT. You don't take care of **sheep** – you don't do DIRTY WORK – **wearing a suit**!

Then Joseph had those dreams that seemed to indicate that SOMEHOW – SOMEWHERE – SOMETIME Joseph would be exalted and ruler over his brothers. Joseph JUST HAD TO tell dad AND his brothers.

One day Jacob sent Joseph to CHECK ON his brothers who were taking care of the sheep. The brothers had had enough of Joseph. AT FIRST they were going to kill him but they ended up selling him into slavery instead. To COVER THEIR TRACKS they took Joseph's fancy coat – **splattered** some animal blood on it – and then told their dad that a **wild animal** must have killed Joseph.

Joseph was taken to Egypt and sold as a slave to a **man named** Potiphar. JUST GREAT! He's **a slave** in a foreign country and nobody knows **where** he is. PUT YOURSELF in Joseph's sandals! How could GOD LET this happen to you? Several years later things **went** FROM BAD to worse. Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph of **trying to rape** her. Joseph the SLAVE ends up a prisoner in a **foreign country**. Can you hear Joseph praying – **asking** – "WHERE are You, God? What are You **doing**?"

You know that feeling, don't you? We can bring up ANY NUMBER of **examples**. A catastrophic illness – this **Covid-19 pandemic** – the death especially of a child or grandchild – a crippling car accident, etc. "WHERE are You, God? How could You **let this happen**?" **Some** people wrestle with those questions and they become ANGRY – BITTER – **resentful**. They GIVE UP on God. They're all ticked off at God **as if** God OWES them an explanation.

God doesn't explain EVERY DETAIL of **His plans** for us and He doesn't owe us any explanations either. But even when **we don't understand** we CAN BE SURE God loves us. We don't measure God's love by HOW WELL **life is going** for us. Paul points us in a DIFFERENT DIRECTION. ***"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."***

John put it this way: ***"This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."*** That the eternal Son of God took on our human **flesh and blood** TO BE our perfect Savior – that Jesus gives us **all the credit** for His holy life – that Jesus willingly took the punishment for the sins of the whole world – that Jesus shares with us His **Easter victory** over death and the grave – THAT'S HOW MUCH God loves you and **me** and **everybody** else. **When** we are confused by God's WAYS and questioning God's LOVE we need to kneel again at the manger – stand again at the cross – look again at Jesus' empty grave. We need to read our Bibles – come to Communion – recall our baptism. We may not understand **everything** but THERE'S THE PROOF God loves us!

Joseph was 17 when he was **taken as a slave** to Egypt. 13 years pass – years spent as a **slave** and a **prisoner** – years when if OFTEN LOOKED and **felt as if** God had forgotten about him. Joseph didn't know what God was all doing. But he had the comfort that God LOVED him AND…

II. God is in control.

Joseph was now 30 years old. **Pharaoh** has had two VERY WEIRD **dreams** that **bother** him. In one dream seven fat cows are eaten by seven **skinny, ugly** cows. Then seven full, healthy heads of grain are eaten by seven thin, scorched heads of grain. NOBODY was able to explain the dreams to Pharaoh. Then Pharaoh's cupbearer remembered how **two years earlier** Joseph had correctly interpreted his dream. Joseph was quickly called from prison – cleaned up and presented to Pharaoh.

God enabled Joseph to **explain** the dreams. The seven fat cows and seven full heads of grain PICTURED **seven years** of **abundant harvests**. The seven sick cows and seven scorched heads of grain pictured seven years of SEVERE FAMINE that would follow the seven years of plenty. Joseph explained, ***"The reason the dream was given in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided …and God will do it soon."*** Joseph then suggested a plan **to prepare** for the coming famine. During the seven years of plenty 20% of the harvest should be PUT INTO STORAGE. ***"This food should be held in reserve …so that the country may not be ruined by the famine."***

Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph that he immediately put Joseph IN CHARGE of the **preparations** – in fact ***"in charge of the whole land of Egypt."*** Joseph was given all the OUTWARD SIGNS of **his position** – the ring, robe, chariot, etc. Just think FROM PRISON CLOTHES and **prison** life to second only to Pharaoh – all IN ONE DAY!

I doubt that Joseph was EXPECTING any of this yet see how GOD WORKED it all out! See God IN CONTROL **all along**. **See** how God used those years of **trials** and **troubles** to PREPARE Joseph for this. YEARS LATER Joseph would tell his brothers, ***"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."***

Even though we may not always understand what God is doing we should see God IN CONTROL. **Instead** of questioning God's WISDOM and grumbling about God's WAYS we should ask ourselves, "**What** is God be TRYING TO TEACH me? Is God making me wait so that I **learn** PATIENCE? Is God leading me on paths confusing me so I **learn** to TRUST Him and His **promises**? is God teaching me to BE HUMBLE **before Him** and others – to rearrange my priorities in life? Is God withholding some blessings to **teach** me to APPRECIATE the blessings He **has given** me? Is God taking people out of my life so I LONG MORE for **eternal life** in heaven?" JUST THINK of how many lessons God **wants to teach** us and our country with this Covid pandemic! God doesn't put us through TOUGH TIMES to **make us miserable** but to help us GROW in our faith and to GROW CLOSER to Him. God knows what He's doing **even when we** don't. God IS in control AND…

III. God is faithful.

As God had announced in **Pharaoh's** two dreams SO IT HAPPENED. ***"During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain; …so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure."***

As God had announced in **Joseph's** two dreams SO IT HAPPENED. Joseph was exalted even over his brothers **as the story** continues. God proved FAITHFUL to His Word.

But this IS MORE than just God fulfilling the dreams of Pharaoh and Joseph. This was God acting in accord with HIS PROMISE of the Savior. That promise was all tied up with **Jacob's family** and the **land of Canaan**. God used these preparations to also provide food for Jacob and his family during the famine. EVENTUALLY Jacob and family moved to Egypt – settled there until the **time of Moses**. There are more lessons there of God IN CONTROL and FAITHFUL to His Word!

Jesus is the ultimate proof of God's **faithfulness**. AS PROMISED the Son of God was born a son of Abraham in the land of Canaan. **As promised** Jesus lived for us the holy life we never could and then He died to ***"take away the sin of the world."*** **As promised** Jesus conquered death and the grave and trusting in Jesus we can now confidently look forward to going straight to heaven when we die. **As promised** in Jesus we have God's forgiveness of ALL our sins – INCLUDING **all those times** we've questioned or doubted God's **love** and **promises** – **all those time**s we grumbled or complained about God's **ways** – **all those times** we thought WE KNEW BETTER than God.

We DON'T always understand God's ways but we have the comfort of His FAITHFUL promises. Treasure, for example, Psalm 46. ***"God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble."*** The psalm pictures the world CRASHING DOWN all around us and then we hear God say, ***"Be still, and know that I am God."***

Or there's this in Habakkuk 3 – ***"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stall, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; He enables me to go on the heights."*** That's the picture of a farmer TOTALLY WIPED OUT – yet we STILL HAVE our God – His love – His forgiveness – His presence and **promises**. It's OK. My **Savior** is with me and He's IN CONTROL.

That is a hard lesson to learn but it is SO COMFORTING – God knows what He's doing **even when we don't**! Amen.

NICENE CREED