

June 17, 2018  
Forget or Forgive

Genesis 50

<sup>15</sup> When Joseph's brothers realized that their father was now dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge against us, and wants to pay us back seriously for all of the terrible things we did to him?" <sup>16</sup> So they approached Joseph and said, "Your father gave orders before he died, telling us, <sup>17</sup> 'This is what you should say to Joseph. "Please, forgive your brothers' sins and misdeeds, for they did terrible things to you. Now, please forgive the sins of the servants of your father's God.'" Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

<sup>18</sup> His brothers wept too, fell down in front of him, and said, "We're here as your slaves."

<sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I God? <sup>20</sup> You planned something bad for me, but God produced something good from it, in order to save the lives of many people, just as he's doing today. <sup>21</sup> Now, don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your children." So he put them at ease and spoke reassuringly to them.

## Living Well – Part II

"When we become Christians," P. Scazzero writes in his book, "we may choose to become Christ followers, but in reality we cannot."

Thank you so much for being here today. Today is our second Sunday of contemplating the topic: "Living well".



There is so many things that happen beneath the surface. All that you see in me and I see in you are just a top of the iceberg. But more than 90 % of who we and what makes us who we are we cannot see. I was not able to share the story that I was intending to share last Sunday but I will share it today.

" ... "

Our emotions matter. We need to recognize them, turn to the Lord and, if need be, ask for healing. Some of our emotions, such as compassion, move us in the right direction. Some emotions are not to be ignored-- like sadness. I continue to encourage

you to recognize your feelings. Ask why you feel this way? What is causing you to feel this way? We are created with emotions. Jesus expressed his feelings many times.



Today we will look at another aspect of our lives. In order to have a life of well-ness and to live well in the present we have to be healed from our past. I know how it is to look at the past. SO many of us have told ourselves and others: "I am over it." It's my past, I am living in present. I do not want have anything to do with my past nor with the people from my past.

Sometimes even our families we grew up in teach us the same. There are some things that you do not talk about. For example: In my family we were not allowed to talk about my father. Even though the past is the past, the present we live in and the way we live it is affected by our past. We came into families. Sometimes the way we have been raised and the values we have instilled in us are not the same values we should continue to follow. Often we adhere to the values unconsciously. They are thoroughly ingrained in us. The commandments and rules emerge in our family of origin". It is very challenging to recognize and even harder to change.

Last Sunday night several who attended the Bible study group stated that Joseph is their favorite hero in the Bible. Today we will talk about Joseph and how he deals with his past and the trauma's that his past brought into his life.

Jacob loved Joseph the most of all his children, because he was born during his old age and born from Rachel. We all know the story of the coat with many colors. We can understand Jacob, knowing his love to Rachel and how he had to work an extra 7 years because Leah was given to him in marriage first. But what did it do to the family and other siblings? What does it do if you do show favoritism to one of your children? When my dad passed he wrote in his will that all he has will be inherited by my youngest and my middle brother. So I, and my oldest brother were totally excluded from his will. My dad probably had a full and good reasons to do so. But what did it do to us after he was gone? You think it went very well? You probably can testify from your own experiences that this kind of thing breaks the families, brings divisions and unending hurts. We still today are influenced by his favoritism.



“ Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe. <sup>4</sup> But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn’t say a kind word to him” (Gen 37:3-4).

Joseph was rejected by his brothers. They hated him so much that they wanted to kill him. So think about Joseph’s past. He was rejected. While he was 17 years old in the cisterns he heard that his brothers wanted to kill him. He was sold to the Ishmaelites. He lost his family. You would think he had had enough, but after doing well in Potiphars’ home he ended up in prison. At least 2 years or more in prison for nothing. It was not his fault at all in any of the troubles he got into. He could blame God and say, why it is happening to me? He could have said, “For 13 years all I had were troubles.” Joseph knew God is with him. He believed in God and despite all these things happening to him. Joseph stuck with God in all the horrible things that happened to him for many years. Because he stayed faithful to God through all the troubles he was able to see how God’s blessing would come out of the troubled past.

By the time Joseph was 30 years old, life was going much better, what does he do with the past? He does not want to do anything with it. We can know this by names he gave to his children. His first-born is named Manasseh. “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my trouble and all those of my father’s house.” At least that is what he thought.

Every time he said his son’s name he was saying, “I forgot my past.”. I think it would have the opposite effect of reminding you of your past.

Even if you do not remember your past, if you are not been healed, if you have not reconciled, if you have not talked about it, it is still affecting your present whether you realize it or not. Somehow God has made us to be healed when we bring it to the light, when we talk in a safe environment about it, when we reconcile and we no longer ignore, hide and pretend it did not happen. Your past does impact your present. Yes, we are made new in Christ, but most of it is by choosing every day to do what is right in God’s eyes. It is a journey and by the grace of God we can be healed and we can be redeemed if we chose.

So as the story of the Joseph continues, he has to face his past. Even he thought he got forgotten his past, he was not over it. Six times it is recorded how Josephs felt when he saw and heard his brothers talking: “Joseph stepped away from them to weep” (Gen 42:24); “Joseph’s feelings for his brothers were so strong he was about to weep, so he rushed to another room and wept there. He washed his face, came back, pulled himself together” (Gen 43:30). It was all stuffed in him. He was leaking from unhealed and ignored past. He could have gone and visited his brothers and his father. But he chose not to until the past came to him. When all the brothers were sitting at the table with Joseph and not knowing that it is Joseph, they noticed that Benjamin had 5 times more on his plate. Do you recognize, that Joseph was actually continuing the

same mistakes as his father did. Why would he not treat all his brothers the same? Why would he continue to act unjustly? Yes, I understand that Benjamin was the full brother, his little brother. It was his little brother and the only brother that was born from Rachel. But what does it do for the family?



When he opened himself to the brothers and told them who he truly was, he wept so loudly all the household heard him. Then he threw his arms around the Benjamin and kissed all of his brothers. Joseph was not only able to forgive the brothers of all that they have done to them, he also embraced them all back to him. He helped, he provided and was in loving relationship with them all. That's only possible through the faith and strength we have in God. He could have continued to hide from his brothers, he did not have to invite them to come to live next to him. But he did do exactly that.

I had not communicated with my father for over 20 years. While I was in the seminary, I realized very well, that this was not right. I am so grateful for Asbury seminary, because they not only made sure we had good academic skills, they wanted to help us all to be well and healed in our souls.

We were called to have a desire for holiness and to have a heart in which God is able to dwell. So I prayed that I would be able to meet my dad as soon as I finished seminary. When Emma was 3 years old I went with Andrew and Emma to visit him. I knew I had to do it. Could I live without meeting him? Yes, of course. Would it be easier not to meet him? Yes, of course. But I chose to do what was right -- not what was easier. Did my mom like it? Of course not.

I had to do it for my present and for my future. I had to do it for my soul and my family's future. It affects us highly if we do not forgive. We must face our past and find healing. It was not as pretty wrapping my hands around my dad's neck as Joseph did. It was very awkward and hard. Healing does not come instantly Healing needs time.

### **Do not get over the past Get through the past**

But the healing comes, not when we ignore or deny or carry any illusions but, rather, face reality. Our present choices about the past make a difference about our future.

It was not Joseph's fault, that Jacob loved him the most. It was not Joseph's fault he got in prison, but it was his choice to forgive, embrace, and meet with his family.

Amazing things happen when we are not trying to get over but to get through. Let me tell you what Joseph got as he faced his past and dealt with it:

- he released all the bitterness
- he was able to rebuild relationships
- he was blessed
- he was able to see the purpose of God

Because he chose to forgive and embrace all his family, he was able to say: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Gen 50:20). He was able to see it only after he wept, his brothers wept and they were reconciled.

As we are celebrating Father’s day today, I am very grateful for Fathers - even for my dad, who left something good for me to remember. Even though I do not have him anymore here today, I have Andrew’s dad, who is my family and like a dad to me. Our heavenly Father is the perfect Father for us all. I do want to encourage all the men and say, you have a call from God, to model and be like our heavenly Father. Your love, your care, your respect to your dad, your faith helps us to see and know about our heavenly Father.