

MIDWEEK SERMON #4 – JOSEPH AND JESUS – GENESIS 41:9-16, 25-44

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

³⁷ This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. ³⁸ And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" ³⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. ⁴⁰ You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you." ⁴¹ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." ⁴² Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. ⁴³ And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, "Bow the knee!" Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁴ Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

(Gen. 41:37-44). Thus far our text.

Sometimes we miss the fact that Genesis chapters 37-50 doesn't take place in a short period of time. Rather, it took a matter of years for some of the events to come about. For example, once Joseph was accused of adultery with Potiphar's wife, and was thrown in prison, he languished there for a long time. It had been over 13 years, we're told, from the time that Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery until his elevation to the side of Pharaoh, as his lieutenant. That's a long time to suffer slavery, false accusation, and imprisonment. Joseph was waiting for his vindication; he was interpreting dreams for the cupbearer and the butler and expecting them to relay his request to Pharaoh for his release. However, it took a LONG time – the text tells us that the cupbearer FINALLY remembered Joseph and

mentioned it to Pharaoh. Joseph was intimately familiar with waiting – something that none of us likes to do.

When we are trying to get a project done on the computer, and it all of a sudden gives us the message that it has to install updates, and it takes 5 or 10 minutes, we're impatient and complain about it loudly to anyone who will listen. Even the 28 seconds that a stop light impedes our forward travel on the road is cause for grouching and grumbling. We want, in the words of the old Burger King slogan, "our way, right away". This has gotten worse in the digital society in which we now live – we aren't used to having something take 3-5 days to get to someone by "snail mail" (see, that's a term that goes along with what we're talking about); we want the item to be instantaneously there by email or through a portal. And, when these systems don't work, we're angry and don't know how we're going to deal with the delay. When we order something from Amazon, and it doesn't arrive on the day that it was promised, we fume and vow that we won't order from there again, although usually our anger fades within a few minutes.

Most importantly, we're not used to waiting for God to fulfill His promises. Eve, Sarah, and the other women of the Old Testament, who learned of the promise of a Savior coming from their lineage from their husbands, probably thought that their child was going to be the Promised One. Imagine their disappointment when they were told that the Savior was coming, true, but it wouldn't be in their lifetime. It took generations upon generations for the Christ to come and dwell among His people, and live a sinless life, and die on the cross and rise again. It took so long, that many of the Israelites abandoned hope in the coming Savior, and rather resigned themselves to keeping the Law of God, which was impossible, but at least it was spelled out for them. That's why, when Jesus came into Jerusalem, the people thought that He was coming as a political leader, rather than the Savior of the world from sin. They thought that He had delayed so long in coming, that He had actually cancelled His plans!

There is a perfectly good reason for Him to delay His coming to the manger at Bethlehem, and return for the second time at the end of time – it’s in keeping with His perfect time. We think that we know when it is best for Him to come at the end of time, and when things have gotten so bad that He MUST be coming soon – we think it couldn’t possibly get worse. God knows when the greatest number of people will believe and be saved, will confess their sins and their sinfulness, and receive the absolution that God alone offers. We are upset, uneasy, and anxious that His coming has been delayed – we’re looking forward to it like Christmas morning as a child, only 100 times more. We’re straining forward like creation, groaning at the impossibly great joys that await us on that glorious day. But, we have to wait. I know, we don’t want to wait – we want it right now. But, our heavenly Father knows what time is best for us, and He will not be dissuaded – thanks be to Go that He isn’t!

We’re given examples from Scripture of how not to be, how not to act, how to be impatient and not in keeping with God’s will. Peter was exuberant, ready to defend the Lord to the death, if need be. But, when the actual time came for staying with the faith, he wavered and fled. Not that we would have done anything different – our sinful nature would make us the same. But, we should see this as an example of how our sinful flesh gets in the way of us having a perfect conception of when the time is right. Sarah was impatient when God promised to send her a child, even when she was old, and convinced Abraham to conceive a child with her maidservant, Hagar. And how did that turn out? Sarah’s desire for God’s promise to happen RIGHT NOW resulted in strife between her and Hagar, and ended up with Hagar and her son Ishmael leaving the group, and going off on their own. This rending of the family has reared its ugly head throughout the centuries, with all of the strife between the Christians (children of Isaac and his descendants) and the Muslims (those who claim Ishmael as their father). All of this could have been avoided if Sarah had allowed God to be God, and His perfect time to come, with her conceiving a child when she was 90 years old. We’ll talk more about this later on in the sermon on

Sunday, where we have the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews citing this spat between Sarah and Hagar.

Suffice it to say that waiting is not natural for us. Whether we're at the DMV, the grocery store, or at the doctor's office, we grumble and complain at the slightest of delays. Thanks be to God that Jesus was perfectly content to wait upon the Father's will, that He came in the perfect timing of God, and accomplished our salvation at the time that was appointed from the foundations of the world. Man didn't sin in the Garden of Eden, and then God implemented "Plan B" to save His people from that sinful nature. No, He knew in His perfect foreknowledge that we would sin against Him. Not that He wanted it to happen, but He knew that it would happen. He determined from before the foundation of the world that He would save us His children from our sin and our sinful inclinations. His love motivated Him to do all of this, irrespective of the pain involved for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus, like Joseph, was punished beyond measure. He was driven to the point of asking the Father to spare Him from the torture that He knew was coming. He endured days of flogging, beating and eventually killing, all because the sin of the world was placed upon His shoulders. Joseph, as we've discussed before, is a type, a pointing ahead, to Christ. There are countless aspects and episodes in the narrative of Joseph that closely resemble what occurred in the life of Christ, so many that it's uncanny! But, Joseph is given to us so that we can gain some understanding into what Jesus went through for our sakes. He lived over 30 years here on earth, in His humiliation, setting aside many of His divine powers. Jesus didn't have to do this; in fact, He could have stayed in the glories of heaven, and not sullied Himself in coming here and dwelling with us. But, thanks be to God, the love of the Father, and the obedience of the Son, knows no bounds.

During this Lenten season, we reflect upon this love, this patience, this willingness to suffer and die on our behalf, so that we wouldn't have to. Even when we get impatient, and think that we're wasting so much time that we can't fulfill our vocations, we are reminded by the Holy Spirit that there

are more important things than earthly pursuits – there are heavenly blessings. They will come in God’s time – not a minute later, not a second sooner than He has ordained and planned for our salvation. We wait, we prepare, we anticipate with baited breath the coming of our salvation, the second coming of Christ. Until then, we glory in what He has already done – secured our salvation from sin, from death, and the power of the devil. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to wait patiently for the kingdom of God to be revealed to us. Even though it’s nearer now than when we first believed, as Paul states it, we still struggle to retain hope in something we haven’t seen yet. The Spirit will guide and lead us, and make us less impatient, and more content.

Luther gives us instruction, as he often does, on how to wait. I’ll quote this from Volume 7 of the collected works of Luther in English, when he writes his commentary on the book of Genesis:

“I know that I have been baptized, that I have eaten the body and drunk the blood of the Son of God, that I have been absolved by divine authority, that all my sins have certainly been forgiven me, and that victory over the devil, death, and hell has been promised me. What more should I ask for? That is what Joseph concluded.”

That’s a great way to sum this up. Christ has truly done everything for our salvation. Amen.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Amen.