

"The Dreamer Has To Go!"

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[0 : 00] And he made an ornate robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, Listen to this dream I had. We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field, when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it. His brothers said to him, Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us? And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. Listen, he said, I had another dream, And this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me. When he told his father, as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?

[1 : 13] His brothers were jealous of him. But his father kept the matter in mind. Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem.

And Israel said to Joseph, As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them. Very well, he replied.

He said to them, Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, And bring word back to me. Then he sent them off from the valley of Hebron.

When Joseph arrived at Shechem, A man found him wandering around in the fields, And asked him, What are you looking for? He replied, I am looking for my brothers.

Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks? They have moved on from here. The man answered, I heard them say, Let's go to Dothan. So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan.

[2 : 17] But they saw him in the distance, And before he reached them, They plotted to kill him. Here comes that dreamer. They said to each other, Come now, let's kill him, And throw him into one of these cisterns, And say that a ferocious animal devoured him.

Then we'll see what comes of his dreams. When Reuben heard this, He tried to rescue him from their hands. Let's not take his life, He said.

Don't shed any blood. Throw him into the cistern here, In the wilderness, But don't lay a hand on him. Reuben said this, To rescue him from them, And take him back to his father.

So when Joseph came to his brothers, They stripped him of his robe, The ornate robe he was wearing. And they took him, And threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty, There was no water in it.

As he sat down to eat their meal, They looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites, Coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, Bam and myrrh, And they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

[3 : 27] Judah said to his brothers, What will we gain if we kill our brother, And cover up his blood? Come, Let's sell him to the Ishmaelites, And not lay our hands on him.

After all, He is our brother, Our own flesh and blood. His brothers agreed. So when the Midianite merchants came by, His brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern, And sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, Who took him to Egypt.

When Reuben returned to the cistern, And saw that Joseph was not there, He tore his clothes. He went back to his brothers and said, The boy isn't there.

Where can I turn now? Then they got Joseph's robe, Slaughtered a goat, And dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, We found this.

Examine it. See whether it is your son's robe. He recognized it and said, It is my son's robe. Some ferocious animal has devoured him.

[4 : 35] Joseph has surely been torn to pieces. Then Jacob tore his clothes, Put on sackcloth, And mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, But he refused to be comforted.

No. He said, I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave. So his father wept for him. Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph into Egypt, To Potiphar, One of Pharaoh's officials, The captain of the guard.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Good morning, St. Silas.

If we've not met, My name's Martin Ayers. I'm the lead pastor here. Thanks, Ruth and the team, For reading that for us so helpfully. And you can find an outline inside the notice sheet, If you find that helpful, As we work through that together.

It's a new sermon series this morning, Heading into the summer, Looking at these last chapters of Genesis. Some of us will feel we know about the Joseph story From the musical.

[5 : 46] Not all of us, But some of us will remember The Andrew Lloyd Webber, Tim Rice musical. How old you are? Which actor you associate with that? I saw it in London's West End.

Jason Donovan was Joseph. That's how old I am. So to get it out of the system, Here's a moment inspired by this chapter. Cut.

If all his dreams come true, Jacob wanted to show the world he loved his son, To make it clear that Joseph was the special one.

So Jacob bought his son a coat, A multicolored coat to wear. Joseph's coat was elegant, But the tasteful style was the ultimate, This is why it was the eye, A king would stop and stare.

And when Joseph tried it on, He knew his sheepskin days were gone, Such a dazzling coat of many colors, How he loved his coat of many colors, In a black...

[6 : 55] Brilliant, brilliant. Everyone wants it to go on, But we have to stop. And I was trying to work out What it was all about, the musical, And in the prologue, The narrator sings this, If you think it, Want it, Dream it, Then it's real.

You are what you feel. Isn't that extraordinary? It's like our whole culture Absorbed Joseph. That's what we've become. That could easily have come out Of the Scottish school's curriculum today. If you think it and feel it, That is reality. But we need to know what God's message was Through these events. And that's what we're going to turn to now.

So let's pray. Let's ask for God's help. Gracious and almighty heavenly Father, Thank you for making yourself known to us Through your dealings with your people And through your word As you reveal your character.

We pray that you would help us To listen well. Give us ears To hear your voice, Heads that can understand, And hearts that are willing To respond rightly to you.

[8 : 02] For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, these events Make us ask the question, Who do we think Is in charge? When we think of our world, When we think of our lives, It's important we all have an answer To that question.

Is there anyone in charge? Am I in charge? Can I take control of my own life? Or actually, Am I under the control of others And their wishes? We might think it's politicians Ultimately who are in charge.

Or the difficult boss at work Is in charge, Controlling my life. Or maybe we think America is in charge. Or China. Or maybe we're anxious With the sense that No one is really in charge.

And this world, And my life in this world Is essentially chaotic. One of the things That lots of us found Destabilizing about the pandemic Was the sense that it showed us That there's a profound way In which humanity is not in charge In the way we like to feel we are.

When for all our human advances And achievements, People were fighting over toilet paper. So is anyone really Running the show around here? Well, we pick up this story In Genesis chapter 37.

[9 : 15] Genesis means origins. This is the story of the origins Of the world, Of humanity, Of God's dealings with people. And we have to see these events In light of the story so far, The bigger picture.

When we do that, We find that with the scene We're looking at this morning, God's plans for the world And for his promises, For his people, Are looking very precarious.

In the beginning, God made the world good And he made humanity good. He made us as royalty. Made in his image. Special to him.

But as the first people Turned away from God, And we all have done since, We've made a complete mess of things. And we've brought God's curse Onto our world.

Which is why we live in a world That's so broken With suffering and death. And the human race Could have ended there In that God would have been just To have brought condemnation At that point.

[10:15] But instead, God made a promise To one man, Abraham, That through his seed, Through his offspring, God is going to establish His kingdom. He is going to bring a people Who will be God's people And they will live in God's place And they will enjoy the blessing Of relationship with God, Living under his rule.

And God promised to Abraham That through his offspring, All peoples on earth Would be blessed. The nations would be blessed Through his family. Now that's important For us to bear in mind Because Jacob, Who we're hearing about In this story, Is the grandson of Abraham.

So his dad, Isaac, Married Rebecca And had two children Who were twins, Jacob and Esau. And it was Jacob, One of those twins, That the promises came through to, The promises to Abraham.

They're going to be for Jacob's children And their descendants. So this family We're looking at in this chapter Is the people of God. You could say This family is the church In their generation In the world.

And what we're wondering As we read Genesis is, Could this be the people Through whom God will keep his promises And establish his kingdom And bless the world?

[11:32] Could these be the ones? And that backdrop Makes it all the more shocking How dysfunctional This family is. So our first point is Israel's family future Is hanging by a thread.

And you'll see on the Outline there That we're going to look at A few different elements To these events. So first we see Jacob's foolish coat. In this chapter You might have noticed As it was read We have a man called Jacob And we have a man called Israel And just to avoid any doubt That's the same bloke.

Okay? Same guy. And his name Israel Which God gave him Reminds us This isn't just any man This is the very father figure Of the Old Testament people of God.

And he's a fool. So we pick up his folly In verse 3. Have a look. Now Israel loved Joseph More than any of his other sons.

Because he'd been born to him In his old age. And he made an ornate robe For him. Jacob had two wives Sisters Rachel and Leah And his twelve sons Were all born Either to those two women Or to two other women His two concubines Bilhar and Zilpah.

[12:48] He's not a good model for us. God has already said In Genesis chapter 2 That his design is one man And one woman In marriage. That's how God designed it. Where we encounter people Going against that design In the Old Testament They're a bit like You know sometimes You get these adverts About drink driving That show the aftermath Of a horrendous car crash.

To say drink driving Is foolish. And that's kind of Jacob's family Is a bit like That kind of example. He loved Rachel More than the other women And she eventually Had a son Joseph.

So Joseph and his Kid brother Benjamin Are Jacob's favourites. And knowing their dad Loves one brother More than the others Wrecks the family. As we'd expect.

Jacob also seems to lack Some basic parenting skills Here doesn't he? So when the musical said That Jacob lived In the land of Canaan A fine example Of a family man It's not true.

He loves Joseph With an indulgent love. A foolish love. If you think about That ornate robe Of verse 3 It's probably not An amazing technical quote.

[13:58] More likely The point is That it's The kind of robe That you wouldn't wear To work. He's not a working man. Because Joseph Is in a place Of privilege.

And when we get To Joseph's bragging He starts to look Like a man Who's just never Really been told off. And we see that In our world today Don't we?

We see around us In our culture Children whose parents Make the whole family Revolve around the child Who don't think That they have The authority To say no To their child Or they don't think That it's loving To say no To their child Whereas the Bible Calls parents To raise children And love them By raising them In the discipline And instruction Of the Lord.

That's how we're To parent well. And here in Jacob We see a man Who's failing his son Not because He fails to love him But because he loves him With a foolish Indulgent love. So next we hear About Joseph's Stupid bragging. Already in verse 2 He brought a bad report Home about his brothers And you're thinking I'm not sure I like this guy. And then he has These double dreams Of verse 7 And verse 9.

[15 : 15] So let's just look At the one in verse 7. Look at this dream I had, he says. Listen to this dream I had. We were binding Sheaves of corn Out in the field When suddenly my sheaf I mean already You can tell this is a dream Because I don't think Joseph did much Work in the field But he says Suddenly my sheaf Rose and stood upright While your sheaves Gathered round mine And bowed down to it.

Well they don't like it. They're in uproar. Verse 8 Do you intend To reign over us? Will you actually Rule us? Then he has A second dream.

This is God Giving two dreams Probably just to show The certainty Of his plan And in the next dream It's the sun and the moon Signifying his father And mother And eleven stars All bowing down To Joseph So the word From God To Joseph In the dream Is that His plan is To exalt him And that the family Will one day Bow to him There's nothing wrong With trusting that dream In that At that time For those people This is God's word To them But telling everyone About it Is at least Unwise I mean just Picture One morning The brothers All in their Working gear Munching on their Porridge Ready to head out Into the cold For a day's work In the fields And in swans Joseph In his ornate robe Sipping his Soya milk Chai tea latte And he says Boys How did you all Sleep Let me tell you About the dream I had And their reaction Is like a Festering wound If you have a look At verse Verse four We hear that They hated him And couldn't speak A kind word to him Verse five They hated him All the more And then verse eight They hated him All the more Because of the dream And what he had said So this is the people Of God This is the raw Materials that God Has chosen To save the world And the encouragement For us to hear At this stage Is that none of us Could ever think This morning God won't have Any time for me Because my family Is too messed up Jerry Springer Died on Thursday This is a family That would have Looked the very part On the Jerry Springer Show Rowing in front Of the camera You think Your family Situation Is messed up You think Our church Family Is messed up We're in good

Company here Among the people Of God The only hope This family Has Is that God Has chosen Them And they've Inherited a Promise From God But that's Enough But things Will get worse Before they get Better So we have To the brothers Festering plot In verse 12 They've gone out To work In the fields And Jacob Sends Joseph To find them He doesn't Go and work With them But he goes To find them And if we Just skip forward To verse 18 And have a look There But they saw Him in the Distance And before He reached Them They plotted To kill Him Here comes That dreamer They said To each other Come now Let's kill Him And throw Him into One of these Cisterns And say That a ferocious Animal Devoured Him Then we'll See what Comes of His dreams This is the First time The word Kill Has been Used in Genesis Since chapter Four When two Other brothers Ended like This Cain killed Abel

[18 : 53] The first Murder And here The plot Ames to Directly Thwart The purposes Of God They're saying If we do This It will Stop the Dream Coming true Then we'll See what Comes of His dreams Reuben Is the Eldest Son He's That's Meant to Lead He should Protect His brother He should Stand in The way He's Utterly Useless He puts In this Weak Plan Don't Don't Kill him And then Put him In the Cistern Just put Him In the Cistern He thinks I'll come Back later And I'll Get him Out of The Cistern Then he Seems To just Disappear Because he Comes back Later And finds That he's Not there Hopeless And then Joseph arrives So they Strip him Of his Ornate Robe It's the Kind of Word you'd Use when You skin An animal They take Him They throw Him down Into the Cistern And in Verse 25 They sit Down to Have a Meal Together Now these Cisterns Were like Bottle Shaped Underground Wells

To store Water in So Joseph Is trapped You can Picture him Trapped Inside a Pit With a Narrow Hole At the Top That he Can't Get out Of And later We find In a few Chapters Time As the Brothers Reminisce On what Happened That as They're Eating Their Lunch Together They could Hear him Screaming For mercy Desperately Crying That they Let him Out And then Judah Son number Four He decides In verse 26 Well they Could gain More If they Sell him To some Midianites Sorry Some Ishmaelites Who were Just passing By So the Brothers Sell Joseph Into Slavery For 20 Shekels Of silver And the Merchants Cart him Off To Egypt And then Finally To round Things off They bring

The news To Jacob So we Get the Grief Of a Familiar Deception They take Joseph's Robe They slaughter A goat And they Dip the Robe In the Goat's Blood And they Take it To the Father And notice What they Say in Verse 32 They say We found This Examine it To see Whether it's Not our Brother's Robe But your Son's Robe And then Verse 33 He recognised It and said It is my Son's Robe Some Ferocious Animal Has devoured Him Joseph Has surely Been torn To pieces He tears His robes In grief Reuben Tears His robes And in Verse 35 He says He'll never Recover I will Continue To mourn Until I Join my Son in The grave So his Father Wept For him And what We're seeing Here in This These events Is that Unless God Intervenes Dramatically The cycle Of human Sin Will never Recover It just Will go On And it Will Descend In fact Our sinful Characteristics Run through Generations

So Jacob Grew up In a Family Where his Father Loved his Brother More than Him And then He raises Eleven Sons Who know That he Loves Their Brother More than Them Jacob Was a Deceiver Who went Into his Father In his Old age And he Deceived him Using a Goat skin So that He Because he Wrapped it Around his Arms To pretend That he Was his Brother And get The blessing And now His sons Deceive him In his Old age Again Using a Dead goat As they Take the Blood From the Goat And use It with A robe To deceive Him The Sinful Habits Of our Parents That get Passed Down To us It's Quite an Alarming Thought Really Isn't It Are there Things About your Parents That sinful Habits You find Really Irritating Guess where They will Be in 20 years Time And this Is Jacob's Sin Catching Up With him Because That's

What sin Always Does You know We think Of our Sinful Habits As just The way We are Or Just a Bit Of Self Indulgence But the Bible Says Your sin Will catch Up With you And for The big Picture Story Of God's Dealing With humanity As we're Reading this You think The future Of the world Is hanging By a thread Here Because this Is terrible And these Are the people Who got God's Promise How From this Family Are we Going to Get the One Who will Come And deal With the Devil Who Genesis God Promised In Genesis Chapter 3 That one Will come Here is God's Own Family Ridding Themselves Of the Brother God said In a Dream Will be Their Leader Because The Brothers Are united By one Thing The Dreamer Has to Go But in That mess We come To our Second Point So We've Heard About Israel Dysfunctional Family Our Second Point Is About God's Hidden Hand God's Hidden Hand Is Unmistakably At

[23 : 55] Work Now There Are Still 13 Chapters To Go In Genesis And We're Going to See God Work Miraculously In The Coming Weeks In This Family And Through Them For The World Around Them So By The Time We Get To Genesis Chapter 50 Verse 20 We Could Just Turn There Now Chapter 50 Verse 20 On Page 57 Of The Church Bibles We Get This Control Over How We See These Events As Joseph Says To His Brothers Reunited With Them You Intended To Harm Me But God Intended It For Good To Accomplish What Is Now Being Done The Saving Of Many Lives You Intended To Harm Me But God Intended It For Good In Other Words As These Brothers Turn On Joseph God Is Not Just At Work In Spite Of Them He Is At Work Through Them For

Good Purposes And We Can See That In This Dreadful Chapter Genesis 37 That God Is At Work Under The Surface Already God Doesn't Get A Mention In Genesis 37 Why Not To Teach Us That God's Silence Does Not Mean His Absence Often The Way That We Will Experience God's Hand At Work In Our Lives Is Through His Hidden Hand His Providence God's And Grotty Things Happening To Us In Our Lives Doesn't Refute That And Doesn't Thwart God's Hidden Hand At Work We See God's Providence In Verse 13 As Jacob Sends Out Joseph A Man Of Leisure In His Ornate Robe To Find His Brothers Near Shechem Where They've Gone In Verse 14 He Gets To Shechem And He Can't Find Them And In Verse 15

It Just Happens That He Finds A Man Verse 15 A Man Found Him Wandering Around In The Fields He's Aimless Joseph But The Man Finds Him And He Asks What Are You Looking For And He Says Can You Tell Me Where My Brothers Are And It's Extraordinary That The One Man Who Finds Him Wandering In The Fields Doesn't Just Know His Brothers Have Moved On He Overheard Them Say Where They Were Going Verse 17 They've Moved On From Here I Heard Them Say Let's Go To Dothan So That's Where Joseph Finds Them Then They Throw Him Into The Cistern And While They're Having Their Picnic It Just Happens That A Caravan Of Ishmaelites Coming Up From Gilead Pass By And They Look Up And See Them On Their Way To Egypt And It Gives Them The Idea To Sell Joseph To Them And Then In Verse 36 At The End Of The Chapter We Get This Great Understatement Of Promise

Verse 36 Meanwhile The Midianites Sold Joseph In Egypt To Potiphar One Of Pharaoh's Officials The Captain Of The Guard So The Brothers They Think Joseph's As Good As Dead He's Landed With One Of The Most Prominent Households In Egypt And We're Going To See God Weaving His Tapestry In The Coming Weeks As He Takes Joseph From Exactly Where He Wants Him And Uses Him There Are Two Key Issues That We Can Pick Up This Morning About That One Is That Ten Years From Now From These Events God's Family Are Going To Need Saving From God's Hidden Hand Is At Work Here In The Midst Of This Painful Catastrophe To Get Joseph Where He Will Be Able To Save His Family From That Famine In Other Words If

That Man In Verse 17 Hadn't Overheard Joseph's Brothers Say Where They Were Going And If Joseph Hadn't Met Him While He Was Wandering Around And If That Midianite Caravan Hadn't Been Passing By Then The People Of God Would Have Died In The Famine That's To Come And Yet They Had No Idea That Was Going On At The Time But This Story These Chapters They're Not So Much About God Saving The Nations From A Famine As They Are About God Saving His Family From Themselves And We're Going To See Key Moments Of This Horrible Chapter And How The Brothers Behave Used By God In The Coming Chapters To Transform These Brothers Because He Is Going To Bring Them To Repentance And Reconciliation This Place Dothan Comes At Another Time In The Old Testament It's When Elijah And Elisha Are There And They're In Grave Danger And They Cry Out For Help And Elijah Asks God To Show

[28 : 56] Elisha That He's There To Protect Them And So They See Chariots Of Fire All Around Them Protecting Them And We Read About That And We Think Yeah That's The Kind Of God I'm Talking About That's The Kind Of God You Want On Your Side That's A God Worth Crying Out To One Who Sends Chariots Of Fire When You Need Them Why Didn't He Send Chariots Of Fire To Get Joseph Out Of The Cistern It's Because Joseph Needs Rescuing From More Than Just A Cistern If God Had Rescued Joseph From The Cistern He'd Still Have Been An Arrogant Man Of Leisure In A Fancy Pants Coat Waiting For God To Make His Family Bow Down To Him And God's Purpose For His People Is That They're Transformed That They're Made Humble And Holy That They're Reconciled To Each Other And To God So As We See God At Work Slowly

In These Chapters Allowing Horrible Things To Happen What We're Seeing Is Not Just His Power But His Patience His Wisdom His Priorities And It's A Great Relief For Us To See That This Is Our God This Is The Way That God Works With His People God Doesn't Choose People Because They Are Especially Religious Or Because They're Especially Good And Obedient Instead He Takes Messed Up Raw Materials Messy People And He Patiently Lovingly Works In Their Lives To Transform Them So That The Glory Goes To Him As We See How Wonderful He Is To Bring That Transformation And That Is Good News For Any Of Us Who Know That We're Messed Up Personally And Who Know That Our Church Family Is Pretty Messed Up God God God So through whom the people around us can be blessed as they come to him. So how will he build his kingdom and save his people?

Well, that's our third point this morning. Joseph's mistreatment takes the shape of God's grace. So among Jacob's sons at that time, it's going to be Joseph who will be God's chosen instrument to save his family and bless the nations.

And his life foreshadows another descendant of Jacob, one who will come, whom God will use to save his family because he will save everyone who looks to him.

[31 : 50] Like Joseph, the one who will come, will come to that which was his own and his own will not receive him. Like Joseph, the one to come will be despised and rejected by his own brothers.

He will be another who is sold for pieces of silver, a man of sorrows. And the Lord Jesus, after he was betrayed, was stripped and cast down.

And like Joseph, his cries for help were met with silence. And just as God uses Joseph's rejection here to get Joseph where he wants him to be and exalt him so that he can save his family when they come to him, so through Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension, God has placed Jesus where he wants him, at his right hand as Lord and Christ, so that anyone this morning can go to Jesus and find life.

The difference here is that Joseph was a man who was flaunting his status before his brothers and became an unwitting victim of their rebellion and rejection. But our saviour, Jesus, came knowing that this would be his destiny, choosing to lay down his life so that he could save his resentful brothers and sisters.

For the joy set before him, he endures the cross, scorning its shame, so that any of us, like those brothers can say later in the story, can say, I'm saved because I have a brother who went down into the pit for me.

[33 : 34] Folks, our time has gone this morning, but today we might wonder who is really in charge of the world. And Genesis 37 encourages us to trust that God is in charge.

He's at work by his hidden hand. His silence doesn't mean his absence. He's at work patiently, saving his family, making them holy, blessing people through his saviour, until one day every knee will bow down to him and confess that he is Lord of heaven and earth.

So let's pray together. Just a moment of quiet to reflect on God's word.

Gracious God and loving Heavenly Father, we praise you for your wisdom, your sovereignty, and your grace. We praise you that we see this pattern of our great saviour, the Lord Jesus, the true and better Joseph.

Thank you that his grace was big enough even to cover our sin. Thank you that he went down into the pit for us. And we thank you for your patience and mercy that you would save us and transform us as your people.

[35 : 03] By your spirit, we pray that you would move us to trust you even when your providence is a frowning providence, even when the clouds have gathered in our lives.

Help us to trust that your purposes are good and your promises are sure and one day our saviour will be revealed. In Jesus' name. Amen.