

## **Reflecting on God's Word**

Reading: Genesis 37:1-11 (OT page 41)

Reader: Margaret Peden

### **Background to the reading**

It seems as if the text put Joseph in a very negative light. One almost wants to believe that he is the spoiled brat and his poor brothers the victims. But is it really so simple?

There is definitely so much more to Joseph and his life story.

Let us recap. He is 17 years old. He comes from a fairly dysfunctional family - his father had four wife's, his mother Rachel and Leah, two maidservants whom he took as wives', one brother and 11 stepbrothers and one stepsister. His mother died when he was still young and left him and his brother Benjamin as orphans.

His father loved him so much that he gave him a special coat, which resulted in his brothers resenting him. Joseph's brothers were jealous and they grew to hate him. And his telling stories to his father, did not help his popularity. His dreams not help either. But Jacob who previously experienced God's speaking to him in a dream thought about Joseph dreams. Joseph dreamed that all his brothers - even his father would one day bow down before him. Now Joseph was clearly in trouble.

So his brothers decided to kill him but two brothers convinced them otherwise. So they sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt and convince their father that he has been killed by wild animals.

One minute he is a seventeen- year-old boy with all of his life ahead of him and in the next a slave who's only prospect is a life of drudgery.

But Joseph trusted in God and because God was always part of His life, God made sure that he had a future. But God also made sure all his people survived drought and famine because of Josephs dreams!

**MP 396:1,3,4**

**Just as I am**

### **Sermon**

**3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented<sup>a</sup> robe for him**

Last night at the games night I played "snakes and ladders" and I must say it was an eye opener once again to play this game after almost twenty years. What strike me most is the significance of a snake to almost bring you back to square one again, just as you are winning! And then as you climb the ladder and you feel almost certain that you are on a winning streak, then one throw with the dice let you land on a snake to remind you again that "pride can lead to a fall".

Joseph's life seems to be like this board game of snakes and ladders. Just as he thought everything was ok in his life, climbing the ladder, he experienced turmoil and upheaval, landing on a snake! He did not have an easy life. He was a gifted child with no mother to care and nurture him emotionally. He was "adored" by his father, which was not good for him with regard to his relationship with the rest of his family. It seems

as his whole life was full of ups and downs. But each and every time - His trust and faith in God saved him. Likewise do we not have any control over the throwing of the dice, meaning we do not have control over our lives. But God threw one dice that completely changed the "whole game" - pardon the pun, when He through Jesus Christ overpowered all the snakes (evil) and climbed the whole ladder to please God. He died for the sake of you and me so that we do not have to struggle to climb the ladder to God.

God loved us so much that He gave each and every one that has faith - a coat of redemption. We can wear it everywhere we go. We can wear it with pride. When we wear it we will feel the warmth of God's peace all around us and experience His love. And when we wear it, people will see it - And just maybe will want to have a similar coat. So when we wear it we must not be too proud or too boastful but humble servants who received our coats as a gift of grace from God.

If you and I do put on this coat, we will reach the finishing line where God is awaiting us as a loving father. He made it possible through His only Son Jesus Christ for us all to inherit His kingdom. We can all go through life, with all our struggles, trials and tribulation, knowing that there will be a finishing line. But we need to have faith and trust God when it goes well and when it does not go so well just like Joseph did.

God gives us choices. If we choose to live with Him in a living relationship, our lives will still consist of up and downs but with one big difference - we will be able to survive because He gives us the strength and the courage to do so. We can rejoice because God is with us while we wear His coat of redemption and love.

In the words of Dolly Parton her coat reminded her of her mother's love and acceptance. Her coat made her

feel worthy despite her being so "poor". Her coat gave her a voice and a opinion to face the other children and proclaim a truth that is bigger than life namely that one is only poor if they choose to be! The same is true of our coats of redemption. Despite our circumstances, despite every bad thing that happens to us, we are only victims if we choose to be! God redeemed us, He showed us His love, He showed us His acceptance through faith - He gave us hope, what more do we need?

All we need to do is to play the game, live life to the full and accept the inevitable. God is in control. He was in control of Josephs life. In the end God used Joseph for His big plan namely the salvation of his people from drought and starvation. Joseph's wrong choices was changed into God's working a miracle of gigantic proportions.

If we do feel like Joseph did - feeling that our lives are spiralling out of control, and that no matter how good and hard we play the game that is life, we never seem to get ahead, every time that we move forward, something happens that move us right back again - Maybe we must do what Joseph did - wear our coats of redemption and trust God. After all He did die for our sins and proclaimed for us His eternal kingdom! We need to just wait on the Lord and pray like Joseph did and believe the Lord when He says He will be with us forever.

May God help us never ever to take off our coats of redemption and love and to wear it always in all weather conditions - in sunshine and rain, when it is hot and when it is very cold. And may we wear it and proclaim to all people that this coat is the only one who can protect us against the onslaughts of life, against any cold wind and against all the challenges we face on a daily level!

May we wear it with pride! It is a gift from God.

Amen

**Responding to God's word**

Our offerings are given for the ministry and mission of the church while we sing **MP 396: 5&6: "Just as I am"**.

Prayer of thanksgiving: Andrew Coutts

**MP 469**

**My faith looks up to Thee**

**Benediction Receive the blessing of God and go in peace:**

May you wear your coat of redemption in this coming  
week and always,  
And the blessing of God almighty,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit  
Be with you all  
Now and for evermore  
Sung Amen