

Epiphany 7 2/24/19
Genesis 45:3-15 C

AND GOD SENT ME BEFORE YOU TO PRESERVE FOR YOU A REMNANT ON EARTH, AND TO KEEP ALIVE FOR YOU MANY SURVIVORS. SO IT WAS NOT YOU WHO SENT ME HERE, BUT GOD.

Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his sons, and everybody knew it. Seventeen-year-old Joseph is out pasturing his father's flock with his brothers, and they did some type of evil thing, and he couldn't wait to go to dad and tattle on his brother. And he has a dream, of his brothers bowing down to him and he is not shy or hesitate about telling his brothers about that dream. And then, as if anyone doubted Joseph was the favorite son, his father gave him that coat of many colors. I suppose we could say Joseph, **17-year-old Joseph**, is a living witness on how NOT to win friends and influence enemies. He most certainly did not have the love of his brothers, that's for sure. Moses tells us, "his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him (Ge 37:4)."

You know the story of Joseph -- loved more than all his brothers by his father; hated, reviled, by those same brothers; sold into slavery and rises to become Pharaoh's right-hand man in all of Egypt. Because of the famine in their homeland, his brothers were forced to go to Egypt, where under the wise leadership of Joseph, they had laid up food for the lean years. The day comes, in our Old Testament lesson reading for this Sunday, that Joseph reveals Himself to his brothers and look at his words, "And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth. And to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me, but God (vv. 7-8a).".

The story of Joseph makes us pause and ask the question: Why does God work the way He does? The story of Joseph teaches us the truth that God works good, even in the midst of evil

Why? You've heard that question; maybe, you've been the one asking that question. Where was God? Yes, we know God works good in all things, even in evil, but in the day of trial, we often find ourselves walking by our feelings and the emotions of the moment, rather than walking by faith.

Put yourselves in Joseph's shoes for minute. There's Joseph's, stripped of his coat of many colors, thrown into that pit by his brothers. What do you suppose he's thinking? Or, how about when he's making that long, hot journey to Egypt, as a slave to the Ishmaelites? Probably had a few days on that journey to ponder his future. Or, how about when he finds himself in the king's prison in Egypt, because of the lies of Potiphar's wife; in that prison for two years, by the way? Do you think Joseph rested in peace, saying, "What good are you working for me, Lord?" Or, do you think he had many days and night of anxious thought, asking, "Where are you, God?"

You know what it's like to walk by your reason and senses, the emotion of the moment, don't you? The phone call comes informing you of the death of a loved one. You've walked out of the doctor's office after hearing what you didn't want to hear. You've walked out of the attorney's office after signing the divorce papers. You've heard your child say he/she doesn't believe in God anymore. You've seen your property stolen, vandalized. You've had your reputation trashed by wagging tongues, by a post on social media; now, where do you go to get your reputation back?

In this season of Epiphany, we rejoice and are glad that God has revealed and made Himself known to us His Son, Jesus of Nazareth. And we remember that the Old Testament looks forward to the cross. And the life of Joseph looks forward to the earthly life of Jesus. Like Joseph, Jesus was dearly loved by His Father; and yet hated, reviled, and mocked.

The Apostle John says it this way, “He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him (Jn 1:11).” He begins His public ministry and returns to teach in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth, and the people welcome the Messiah with the disdainful words, “Is not this Joseph’s son (Lk 4:22)?” And they took Him to the brow of a hill, to throw Him down the cliff. His own brothers and sisters thought he was out of His mind. He rides into Jerusalem to be lifted up upon the cross that sinners may look to Him and be saved, and it’s not long before He is greeted with cries of “Crucify Him!”

But, here is why the Son of God took on human flesh to dwell among us: He took upon Himself all the mockery and ridicule and hatred of a world dead in sin, and carried it all to the cross. And that mockery sounded like this, “Prophecy! Who is it that struck you (Lk 22:64).” “If you are the Son of God come down from the cross (Mt 27:40).” He trusts in God, let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him (Mt 27:43). “He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He is the Christ of God (Lk 23:35).” “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him (Mt 27:49).”

Upon that cross, enduring all the mockery and ridicule hell could throw at Him, He died. He died for all those times you doubted God was working good; for all the times you gave into temptation and despaired of God’s way and God’s will; for all those times you thought God had

abandoned you; He died for all your sins. And because He did, you are forgiven all your sins

And on the 3rd day, He rose victoriously from the grave and showed Himself alive again to Mary in the Garden; to Peter; then to the twelve; then to more than 500 brothers at one time (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5-6). He revealed Himself alive again to prove that God the Father accepted His sacrifice for the sins of the world and that you could be sure and certain, Dear Child of God, that you would rise to eternal life.

Though He ascended to the right hand of the Father, He is with us always, "to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20). He was with you in your baptism, when He revealed Himself to you in the water and the Word, to clothe you with the robe of His own righteousness that covers over all the guilt and shame of your sin, so that God the Father looks at you and proclaims, "This is my beloved Son[/Daughter], with whom I am well pleased (Mt 43:17)."

He is with you, Dear Child of God, just as He was with Joseph in that pit, on the journey to Egypt, in Egypt. This day, we learn from Joseph, "So it was not you who sent me here, but God (Ge 45:8)." When bad things happen in our lives, we sometimes wonder, "Where is God in all this?" This morning, as you gather for the Divine Service, you don't have to wonder "Where's God?" He's right where He promised He would be. Jesus is present in His Word and Supper joyfully delivering His gifts to you -- forgiveness and life, hope and peace, comfort and strength. Look to the altar and the font. Hear the Word of forgiveness declared and preached, and rejoice! There's God for you!

Jesus is here, once again reassuring you, comforting you, that He is with you always, even to the very end of the world, working all together for

your good, good even when the evil words and actions of men intend to harm you.

Renewed in Christ Jesus, we hear and act upon the words of Jesus, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you...Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful (Lk 6:27-28, 36).” Just as we hear it and see it in the life and witness of Joseph.