

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor

THE CUPBEARER AND THE BAKER

Genesis 40

March 13, 2022

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I have three points to my message today:

- Joseph was kind.
- Joseph was honest.
- Joseph was forgotten.

The message last week was about Joseph and Potiphar's wife. Joseph avoided the temptation in front of him and wound up being falsely accused.

JOSEPH WAS KIND

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 40:1-8

Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. ² Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³ and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined. ⁴ The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them. After they had been in custody for some time, ⁵ each of the two men—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison—had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. ⁶ When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. ⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why do you look so sad today?" ⁸ "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

EXPLANATION: The cupbearer was a servant who presented Pharaoh with his drinks. He probably was the official taster for him as well. If someone wanted to poison the Pharaoh, the cupbearer would discover it the hard way. He would get

sick or die first, and Pharaoh would know something was wrong. The baker, of course, would have been in charge of making much of Pharaoh's food. We have no way of knowing what happened to cause Pharaoh's displeasure with them, but suffice it to say, they were on his bad side.

The fact that the cupbearer and the baker, who were very close and personal servants of Pharaoh, were put in the same prison where Joseph was is another indication of God's provision. Not only did Potiphar not kill Joseph for his supposed transgressions, he put him in the prison where the most important criminals were kept.

Although Joseph was a prisoner himself, these two prisoners fell under his supervision. Again, we see Joseph's character demonstrated in this story. When the cupbearer and baker were downcast, Joseph noticed the difference in their demeanor and asked what was troubling them.

ILLUSTRATION: Bonnie was arguing with her elderly mother, Sue. Unfortunately, their exchange got heated, and Bonnie raised her voice. A few seconds later, Bonnie's young granddaughter came between the two women. She took Bonnie's face in her hands and said, "Stop it, Nanny. You need to be nice!" Then she turned to her great-grandmother and said, "It's OK, Ma. I always love you." Being nice is not always easy, is it?

APPLICATION: Joseph could have moped around whining and complaining about the injustice of his life. He could have curled up in a corner and cried himself to sleep, not worrying about anyone else. He could have lashed out at these two newcomers, giving them a piece of his mind. After all, he had no obligation to any of the other people there, and no real expectation that his kindness might be reciprocated. Still, he noticed these two and inquired as to what was bothering them.

As Christians, we are called to live in community with one another. Our faith is not one of isolation. The Bible instructs us again and again on how we are to interact with and care for one another. Joseph demonstrated concern for his fellow beings. We should too.

- Joseph was kind.

JOSEPH WAS HONEST

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 40:9-19

So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, “In my dream I saw a vine in front of me, ¹⁰ and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes. ¹¹ Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh’s cup and put the cup in his hand.” ¹² “This is what it means,” Joseph said to him. “The three branches are three days. ¹³ Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. ¹⁴ But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. ¹⁵ I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.” ¹⁶ When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, “I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread. ¹⁷ In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head.” ¹⁸ “This is what it means,” Joseph said. “The three baskets are three days. ¹⁹ Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and impale your body on a pole. And the birds will eat away your flesh.”

EXPLANATION: During this time and in this culture, people put a lot of stock in dreams. In fact, most people believed that gods communicated with humans through dreams. The Egyptians and other groups of people actually wrote books on how to interpret dreams, and kings, pharaohs, and other important rulers often had professional dream interpreters, also called diviners or wise men. Had the cupbearer and baker not been in jail, they probably would have sought the advice of such men. Because God often used dreams to communicate with his people, Joseph was also aware of their importance. Remember, he had a few dreams himself. As a worshipper of the one true God, Joseph understood that if a dream was a message from God, then only God could accurately interpret the message.

The baker did not seem willing to share his dream until after Joseph gave the favorable interpretation of the cupbearer’s dream. The baker probably had a sinking feeling that the dream was not predicting anything good. Still, when he heard

Joseph give the cupbearer good news, he jumped in and told Joseph his dream as well.

ILLUSTRATION: After a mother dropped her little girl off at gymnastics, she took her son with her to run errands. As she was driving down the road, she heard the toddler shout, “Mom! Sister hit me!” Of course, the mom was a little taken aback since no one else was in the car. She said, “Sister could not have hit you. She’s not even in the car.” The little boy said, “Oh, I forgot.”

APPLICATION: Honesty does not always come easy—even for adults. Joseph could have lied. After all, these were two very important men. Joseph made it clear to the cupbearer that he wanted his help when he got out. Surely, he did not want to make the baker mad. Even though Joseph knew the truth, he may have thought, “What difference would it make to give the baker the bad news? Why not just tell him something good to appease him?” But Joseph had too much integrity for that sort of thing.

Have you ever been in a situation where it seemed better to lie?

- Maybe you were in a complicated situation and to explain the truth would take too long.
- Maybe your boss wanted your opinion on his project, and you knew he would be angry if you told the truth.
- Maybe you decided to simplify your tax return by not reporting a bunch of information.
- Did you wonder who it would hurt? Did you question whether it would be OK to fudge the truth just a little? Joseph was a Godly man. Even when it was difficult, he told the truth.

So, we see Joseph was kind and he was honest.

JOSEPH WAS FORGOTTEN

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 40:20-23

Now the third day was Pharaoh’s birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials: ²¹ He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that

he once again put the cup into Pharaoh's hand—²² but he impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation.²³ The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

EXPLANATION: It all came true. Three days later, Pharaoh was celebrating his birthday and called for the cupbearer and the baker to be brought into his presence. Maybe there had been an investigation, and he had discovered the innocence of one and the guilt of the other. Maybe he was just in a festive mood and wanted to flaunt his power. For whatever reason, Pharaoh pardoned one and punished the other. The cupbearer was restored to his position, and the baker died. Unfortunately, the cupbearer quickly forgot the whole painful ordeal including Joseph and his kindness.

ILLUSTRATION: A woman was at Taco Bell one day eating lunch by herself. She'd just received her order and was walking to her table talking to her husband on her phone when out of habit she looked for her phone and couldn't find it. She panicked and asked the cashier if he had seen her phone. The whole time her husband was yelling into the phone, and she finally said, "What is it?" He said, "What are you talking to me on?" They both had a good laugh.

We all have our stories. But I'm sure Joseph did not think the cupbearer's forgetfulness was a laughing matter. Can you imagine how hopeful Joseph was the day that the cupbearer was released from jail? Just think how he must have waited, expecting any day to hear news that he would be remembered, but it didn't happen. The cupbearer forgot.

ILLUSTRATION: One of our international families has a wife/mother who is caring for too many people. She has kids and a husband, but for some reason, the members of her extended family think they can just drop off people at her home to care for. At one time, she was caring for three handicapped people, her six children, plus her husband, plus others. One night, there were about 14 people in her home. Over time, two of the handicapped went to another state to be cared for and others went elsewhere as well. I remember thinking, "I need to remember this and not let it happen again."

Recently, someone brought the handicapped people back to Tennessee. I had to get involved. I did not forget the burden she had been under. Some of the extended family is not happy with me because I spoke up.

It's easy to forget, but as Christianity is a community of faith, God expects us to be kind to one another, to look out for another, to pay attention to the needs of our fellow brothers and sisters, and to help them when we can and NOT FORGET our good intentions. He also expects us to be people of integrity, to live upright, moral lives, and to be honest even when it hurts. Unfortunately, that does not mean that we will be treated in the same manner. Such was the case with Joseph.

- Joseph was kind.
- Joseph was honest.
- Joseph was forgotten.

Just as Joseph was quickly forgotten, there are times in our lives when we feel that the very people we have helped have turned their backs on us. What do we do? How are we supposed to respond? Jesus said that we should turn the other cheek. As counterintuitive as it is, we should love one another regardless of whether or not they love us. The cupbearer may have forgotten Joseph, but God never did. He will not forget us either.

INVITATION: Joseph offers us a model of how we should behave even when things do not go our way. As a Christian, how are you doing? Are you modeling the character traits of Christ to the people in your life? The altar is open if you want to come pray about it. If you do not know who Christ is or if you do not have a personal relationship with him, I'd encourage you to come forward today. Let me pray with you and tell you more about him.

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