

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor

THE PRICE OF A FULL BELLY

Genesis 47:13-26

June 5, 2022

For public use: See non-copyright comments at the end of the message.

My sermon is a bit unique today. I have one point to make:

- Be careful what you trade.

In our series on the life of Joseph, we've covered:

- Some of his family lineage and sins that passed from one generation to the next, such as deception, jealousy, and extreme favoritism.
- Joseph's brothers hated him and sold him into slavery in Egypt.
- Joseph was Potiphar's trusted servant. He avoided temptation but was still thrown into jail.
- In jail, he interpreted a baker and a cupbearer's dreams.
- The baker was put to death by the king, but the cupbearer was let out of jail.
- The cupbearer did not immediately remember Joseph or help him get out of jail.
- But later, Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams and predicted a 7-year famine.
- As a result, he was freed and became Pharaoh's second-in-command.
- Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to secure grain during the famine, but Joseph did not reveal himself to his brothers.
- Instead, he devised an elaborate scheme to determine if their hearts had softened.
- When Joseph's brothers returned a second time with their youngest brother, Benjamin, Joseph honored them with a dinner but still did not reveal himself.
- He tested them again to see how they would treat Benjamin.
- After they passed all the tests, Joseph finally revealed himself to his brothers.
- Jacob learns that Joseph is alive and, at the request of Joseph and with the blessing of God, moves the family to Egypt.
- Joseph introduces his family to Pharaoh and relocates them to the land of Goshen.

1-BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU TRADE

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 47:13-26

There was no food, however, in the whole region because the famine was severe; both Egypt and Canaan wasted away because of the famine. ¹⁴ Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh's palace. ¹⁵ When the money of the people of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, "Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? Our money is all gone." ¹⁶ "Then bring your livestock," said Joseph. "I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock, since your money is gone." ¹⁷ So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, their sheep and goats, their cattle and donkeys. And he brought them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock. ¹⁸ When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, "We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land. ¹⁹ Why should we perish before your eyes—we and our land as well? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate." ²⁰ So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. The Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields, because the famine was too severe for them. The land became Pharaoh's, ²¹ and Joseph reduced the people to servitude,^[a] from one end of Egypt to the other. ²² However, he did not buy the land of the priests, because they received a regular allotment from Pharaoh and had food enough from the allotment Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land. ²³ Joseph said to the people, "Now that I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh, here is seed for you so you can plant the ground. ²⁴ But when the crop comes in, give a fifth of it to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths you may keep as seed for the fields and as food for yourselves and your households and your children." ²⁵ "You have saved our lives," they said. "May we find favor in the eyes of our lord; we will be in bondage to Pharaoh." ²⁶ So Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt—still in force today—that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. It was only the land of the priests that did not become Pharaoh's.

(An interesting side note here: This is the first mention of horses in the Bible.)

EXPLANATION: Why did Joseph sell the grain to the people instead of just giving it to them? The short answer is that Joseph worked for Pharaoh. Pharaoh did not want his people to starve, but Pharaoh—like most rulers of his time—was more interested in maintaining his position of power and authority than looking out for the people’s best interest. Joseph only had the power that Pharaoh gave him. Ultimately, Joseph obeyed Pharaoh’s commands.

The process that Joseph set up to purchase the grain was not unusual. Even before the famine, the people had to purchase their grain from somewhere, and Pharaoh likely already taxed them. Joseph simply ensured that there was grain available and instituted a more equitable system of trade. While the King came out on top, owning lands, people, and livestock, the people were allowed to continue to work their own land and to keep 80% of their crops. This rate was much lower than many of the business transactions of the day and is an indication of why the people did not feel that Joseph had mistreated them. In fact, the people seemed oblivious to the fact that they had essentially sold themselves and their families into servitude for the rest of their lives. They were so grateful for the grain that they failed to realize the severity of what they had given up in return.

ILLUSTRATION: Like the Egyptians, we make trades every day. The key is to be careful what we trade. There is an old song called “Cat’s in the Cradle.” It was originally sung by Harry Chapin and was written by his wife Sandy who was inspired by the relationship between her first husband and his father. The song is a sad tale about a father who is too busy to spend time with his son. The boy, who looks up to his dad, always says, “I’m gonna be like you, Dad. You know I’m gonna be like you.” As the dad ages, he finally wants to spend time with his son. But, by then, the son has grown up, has a family and a career, and is too busy. The son did, in fact, become just like his dad.

The father gave up time with his son in exchange for a career, money, and material possessions.

- Be careful what you trade.

ILLUSTRATION: Some of you may know this show called “Let’s Make a Deal.” The CBS game show airs during the daytime with comedian host Wayne Brady. On the show contestants dress in costumes and are given the opportunity to win cash

and prizes. Sometimes, they are given cash outright—just for being there—but then they are given the chance to trade that cash for a chance to win something else. At the end of every show, the biggest winner is given the opportunity to exchange whatever he or she has won for the big deal of the day. On one particular episode, a contestant had already won one of the biggest prizes available--a brand-new car. Still, Wayne Brady had to ask her, “Do you want to trade your car for a chance to win the BIG deal of the day?” She readily agreed. So, Wayne gave her a choice. In exchange for her car, she could choose between three boxes. Behind one of those boxes was the BIG deal of the day. She did not know what the big deal was, and she did not know which box it was in, but she took the chance.

The woman traded her \$30,000 car for a chance to win something bigger. Instead, she went home with a much less valuable prize. Many contestants make the same mistake and go home with nothing.

- Be careful what you trade.

ILLUSTRATION: Tonya thought she needed a truck, and she found one at a good price. Unfortunately, it did not take long to realize that the truck was a money pit. Constant repairs were needed to keep it running, and she used it much less frequently than she anticipated. Despite the fact that she lost money, she was relieved when someone finally took it off her hands.

Tonya traded time, money, and peace of mind for something she thought she needed but really did not.

- Be careful what you trade.

APPLICATION: The Egyptians really did need food, but their willingness to trade everything—including their own freedom—is a good lesson for us. How often do we trade something of real value for something of lesser worth?

- How often do we trade time with our families for more money?
- How often do we exchange hard-earned money for worthless treasures?
- How often do we sacrifice a relationship for power or status?

Henry David Thoreau wrote, “The cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run.”

How much of your life are you trading for things that do not really matter in the long run? There is only one thing that is important enough to require our all, and that is Jesus. How many people trade a relationship with Christ for some other worldly gain?

EXPLANATION: In Mathew 13:44-46 Jesus told this parable, “*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.*”⁴⁵ Again, *the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.*⁴⁶ *When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.*”

Jesus traded everything for us.

- He gave up his position in Heaven and came to earth in human form.
- He gave up his power and authority over creation and took on the weakness of human flesh.
- He gave up his life and allowed himself to experience one of the most painful deaths a man could ever face.
- He gave his all so that we might have a relationship with him and be accepted into the Father’s Kingdom.

The Egyptians were hungry; therefore, they were thankful for the trade that cost them everything. That’s how much value they put on the grain they were to receive. Christ considered our salvation worth so much that he willingly exchanged everything he had for our souls.

APPLICATION: That begs the question. Are we trading our relationship with Christ for lesser things?

- Are we choosing the ways of this world instead of following him?
- Are we giving up Bible study and prayer in exchange for another episode of Law & Order?
- Are we trading Sunday worship for golf or sleeping in?

- Do we neglect being a witness to the lost because we are more concerned about our pride?

The Egyptians realized there was a price to pay for their full bellies. They were willing to pay it.

There is a price for sin. Jesus paid it willingly on our behalf so that we might have salvation through him and a relationship with our God.

That gift is priceless. Let's be careful what we trade.

INVITATION: If you do not have a relationship with Christ, will you come forward today? Romans 10:9 says, *“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”* There is no need to wait. Jesus gave his all for you. He loved you so much and valued you so much that he died to make a way to have a relationship with you. Do not give away that opportunity. There is nothing greater than knowing Christ as your Savior.

If you are saved, please consider how you are spending the life God has given you. Are you using your time and resources in God-glorifying ways? Are you honoring him in your relationships, or are you making bad trades? The altar is open. Come and pray.

To preachers, teachers, students, and anyone else reading or using this message: I have posted this for all to use as you see fit. There is no need to cite me as the source. You are free to delete sections, add your own, or do whatever you want. There is no copyright. My request is that you do not copyright or sell my work. I am sharing my preaching notes in good faith with you because I know the challenges of putting together a lesson, especially when your week gets consumed with other things. Use it and enjoy!

I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

Find me at www.thbc.com. Click on sermons or YouTube channel: Pastor Paul Gunn
Thanks to Jennifer Anderson for her editing assistance.

Sincerely, Paul Gunn
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Nashville, Tennessee
USA