

Genesis 50:15-21

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" 16 So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 17 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

18 His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? 20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. 21 So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

Right place. Right time. I was 13 years old. I was at High Cliff State Park in Sherwood, Wisconsin, perusing the forest and enjoying my time outside. High Cliff was always very calm and serene to me, and since I only lived a few miles from there, a bike ride and walk through the park was all I needed to clear my mind while taking in the calm atmosphere. But one day the park was not so calm. As I was walking by myself I was startled because I heard a **craaaack** and a scream. I stopped, thinking to myself if I should run in case there was danger, or if I should go check it out. I heard groans that grew louder and louder until finally what was said was, "Help. HELP!" I followed the voice, running to find another 13-year-old boy. He was a classmate of mine. He was on my bus route. And his leg was shattered. It was horrible sight, one that has been etched in my mind for a decade now. He fell off the state park's namesake. He fell, very literally, from the high cliff. About 30-some feet. I picked him up. I carried him around the cliff and up a hill. Laying him down with his feet elevated because I remembered to do that from some episode of CSI, I called his parents. When his dad showed up, and got the boy in his truck to take him to the hospital, he said to me, "Thank God you were at the right place at the right time."

Coincidence? Maybe. Maybe I was just in the right place at the right time. Or maybe God did place me there fully knowing that I could help this very helpless classmate of mine. We can often dismiss events as coincidences, but there's certain things that are certainly not just a mere coincidence...like Old Testament Joseph. The very character in our lesson for today who was in the exact *right* place at the exact *right* time. And through Joseph God showed that throughout the timeline of history **THERE'S A BIGGER HEART AT WORK. It's bigger than our plans, and it's big enough to save the world.**

But to understand this story this, we have to understand what happened to Joseph. He was the son of Jacob, and therefore the great-grandson of perhaps the most famous

Old Testament hero, Abraham. But Joseph was not just the son of Jacob, the grandson of Isaac, the great-grandson of Abraham...he was Jacob's *favorite* son. And daddy sure did show his preference towards Joseph. He made him a fine coat of the finest material with a variety of colors, clearly showing Joseph to be his biggest pride and joy. And Joseph, he wasn't oblivious to this. He knew daddy loved him more than his 11 other brothers and he made sure they knew it. He described to his brothers dreams that he had, one of which was the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowing down to him. This only added gas to the fire of hatred his brothers had for him. And eventually they said, "Enough with Joseph!" And they took him, threw him into a well until they should decide how to kill him, but instead of killing him they made a profit off of his body, and they sold their very own brother into slavery. Joseph's life took a complete 180. He had the favor and love of his dad, and now, due to his brothers' scheming, his dad thought he was dead.

Joseph was carried off to Egypt and enslaved for years, eventually being betrayed by his master's wife and then thrown into prison. The pit of his life just became deeper and deeper...until Pharaoh needed his helping. Being able to understand the meaning of dreams, Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, foretelling of a severe famine that was going to hit Egypt. And not only that, but Joseph enacted a plan to save the nation of Egypt and the entire known world at that time from starvation. Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph that he then made him second-in-command in Egypt. Another 180 turn. From slave to ruler. From criminal to hero. Right place. Right time.

And after all these years, Joseph has an unexpected reunion with his brothers. They arrive in Egypt to gather food to survive this famine, and they discover that the hero vice-king of this land is their brother...Joseph...the one the sold into slavery, the one they murdered in their hearts. Imagine the guilt that overcame them when they found out that the brother they thought they destroyed was alive...and more than capable of *exterminating* them.

Have you ever been in that place, where a sin you thought you left behind comes *creeping* back in? When that mistake you made in your youth comes knocking, "Hey, remember me?" When that stupid thing that you did, that horrible thing that you said, those vile thoughts that suffocated your conscience years and years ago...or even just last week...they not only say, "Remember me?" But they also say, "Remember how guilty you felt about me? Do you remember what you deserve *because of me*?"

Joseph's brothers knew what they deserved. Criminal behavior deserves justice! Wrong must be balanced out with right! And they certainly thought that Joseph was ready to right the wrongs...but he didn't, at least not in the way they expected. They thought that they were getting the handcuffs. They thought they were getting the chains. They thought they were getting either the edge of a sword or the end of a rope but you know what they got? **LOVE**. Joseph forgave his brothers, even for the wicked sin they did, because he knew that he wasn't in Egypt by accident. He knew God placed him there even through the hardships he endured. He knew that God made him one of the most powerful men in the ancient world to *save* so many lives...and he also knew, God placed

him there *save* his brothers from their guilt. Joseph didn't plan this. No one could have written this story, at least no human could, but God did. As much as we try to schedule, everything comes down to God and his perfect will. Joseph was in the right place at the right time. Right where God wanted him to be.

When Joseph had every right, at least in the eyes of the world, to take revenge...he didn't. Though they didn't deserve it, Joseph chose love over vengeance. Peace over discord. Saving instead of killing. He chose to save his brothers from their guilt. Now this may be the place where you think I say "Amen" and wrap it up for the day, but not yet. Because even though Joseph planned out the saving of many lives, There's a Bigger Heart at Work. One big enough not to just save the civilization at the time of Joseph, but one big enough to save all humanity of all time. You see, Joseph didn't just save Egypt from starvation. He didn't just save the entire known world from a drought of epic proportions. He didn't just save his brothers from dying and from their guilt. God used Joseph to save the world. Through Joseph His brothers were preserved, and since his brothers were preserved, the line of the Savior was preserved. God had you in mind throughout the course of all of history. He kept the line of the Savior alive so that Jesus could come because that is how much God loves you. By keeping his brothers alive, Joseph kept the line of Jesus alive.

God's love for you is overwhelming. God's love for you is intense, so focused, even so aggressive that he had a plan in place to save you from your sin. To save you from your guilt. But he didn't just conjure up this plan and then leave it on the drawing board, he enacted it! He sent Jesus to the *exact right place* at the *exact right time* so that when that sin comes knocking at your door and says "Hey remember me?" You can say "Sure I do. But what of it? Jesus paid for you with his death on the cross, and you can't make me feel guilty anymore." It was all part of God's plan. The saving of many lives. The forgiveness of every life. The saving of your life.

Right place. Right time. Joseph was in the right place at the right time to save the entire nation of Egypt. Jesus was in the right place at the right time to save the whole world. Right place. Right time. And in every place, at every time...God forgives you. And God, He loves you.