

Joseph and His Brothers (Gen. 37-45):

A Story of Divine Providence, #4

**“Siblings Reconciled;
God Provides”**

Gen. 42-45

--CEFC 6/21/20

Topic: Providence

In that famous story in Genesis 22,

Abraham was told by the Lord to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac.

He takes the boy to the place that God had told him to go.

He went to Mount Moriah.

We read that,

**"Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac,
and he himself carried the fire and the knife.**

As the two of them went on together,

Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham,

“Father?”

“Yes, my son?”

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said,

“but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

In v. 8, Abraham, the father of faith, gives an astounding answer—

“God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son” (Gen. 22:6-8).

Abraham had been commanded to sacrifice his own son,

and he fully intended to be obedient to God,
but, somehow, he believed, he trusted, that despite all appearances,
God would provide a sacrifice to take the place of Isaac.
And in the end, God did.

After the angel of the Lord stopped Abraham as he lifted the knife,
Abraham looked in a thicket and saw a ram caught by its horns,
and he sacrificed that ram in place of his son,
and in v. 14 we read,

'Abraham called that place 'The Lord will provide.¹' (22:14).

The Hebrew here behind the word "**provide**" is the verb for "to see."

What Abraham says could be more literally translated,

"The Lord will see to it"—

in other words, he will take care of it.

The Lord sees what he wants to happen and he will work to make it happen.

"the Lord will provide."

And our English word "provide" comes from the Latin *providere*—

which means "to see in advance"—

and it is from that word that we get the term

that has stood behind our study of the story of Joseph during this last month—

it is the word **providence**.

Abraham expresses the conviction not only that God sees what is to happen in the future,
but also that he could trust in the way God intends to work out that future.

The Lord will provide.²

As we read earlier in the **Heidelberg Catechism (questions 26-28)**—

God's providence is that work of God,

in which, after having called the world into being,

he continually sustains, renews, and orders it according to his perfect will.

God's providence means that God is operative in all that comes to pass in the world,

and directs all things to their appointed end.

Without doing away with our responsibility for the choices we humans may make,

and even for the evil choices we may make,

God mysteriously weaves together all things to accomplish his good purposes.

That's exactly what we've seen in the last three weeks

in our study of Joseph in the Book of Genesis.

We've seen the unfolding of a mysterious plan—

a plan by which God shows himself faithful to fulfill his promise—

his covenant promise to Abraham to make of his offspring a great nation

and through that nation to bring blessing to all nations.

Yes, “God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.”

²cf. Calvin, Instit. 1.202.

Haven't we seen that in this story of Joseph.

His fortunes have gone up and down,

he's been tossed around like a rider on a roller coaster.

You remember the beginning of the story in chap. 37—

Joseph, the eleventh of twelve sons, was his father Jacob's favorite.

He was the recipient of a richly ornamented robe,

and he had received dreams of glory and honor--

dreams in which he saw his 11 brothers

and even his father and mother

bowing down before him.

But then his prospects tumble dramatically

as he is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, and he is sent to Egypt.

But there he is bought by Potiphar the captain of the guard,

and God was with Joseph and he prospered,

and he rose to become Potiphar's chief of staff

in charge of everything in his household.

But then Joseph again encounters trouble—

Potiphar's wife falsely accuses him of sexual assault,

and he is thrown into prison.

But again, God was with Joseph, and he prospered,

and the prison warden put him in charge of all the prisoners—

Joseph becomes the most trusted prison trustee.

But in the prison, he encounters two royal officials who had offended the king
who each had a mysterious dream
which Joseph was able to interpret.

Just as Joseph predicted,
the baker was executed,
but the cupbearer was restored to his position—
and when he was, Joseph asked
that the cupbearer remember him before Pharaoh
so that he could be delivered from that dungeon.
He had hope for his release.

But the cupbearer forgot Joseph,
and for another two years he languished in jail.

Then, as we saw last week, Pharaoh himself had two dreams—
for which no one in his court could give a satisfactory interpretation.
It was then that the cupbearer finally remembered Joseph
and told the king of this Hebrew slave in the prison
who had the power to interpret dreams.

Joseph was immediately brought before Pharaoh,
and he interpreted his dreams—
Egypt was to experience seven years of bumper crops,
followed by seven years of famine.

Joseph presented a plan to prepare for this famine

so that there might be grain to eat.

As a result, Joseph himself was appointed the grain czar of Egypt—
he was raised to a position of authority
over everybody and everything except Pharaoh himself.

And when the famine came, people from all the surrounding nations
had to come to Joseph to obtain food. /

Up and down it goes—
prosperity then trouble,
tragedy then triumph--over and over again in Joseph's life
in the providence of God.

Three times he is treated unjustly, and he suffers for it,
and three times God raises Joseph up to a position of honor,
even to the point of becoming the Egyptian prime minister.

Yes, God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

But where is this going?

What is God up to in all this?

And what about Joseph's dreams—will they every come to pass?

And what about God's covenant promise to Abraham
that he would make of his offspring a great nation
that would bring blessing to all nations?

How is that going to happen?

How will God provide?

That's where we left off the story.

This week the attention shifts back to Joseph's brothers and his father Jacob
otherwise known as "Israel."

Remember, back at the beginning of chapter 37,
this whole saga is entitled, "**the account of Jacob's family line**" (37:2).
Our writer wants us to know that how Jacob's family line survives and prospers
is really what this whole story is about.

Turn back with me to the passage we just read.

There was famine everywhere, remember.

**Gen. 42:1—"When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons,
"Why do you just keep looking at each other?"**

That's a great line, isn't it!

After Joseph has just been declared the wisest man in Egypt,
these brothers appear pretty lame.

Jacob continued, "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt.

Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die."

And so they do—

but only ten of the twelve sons go,

for Jacob held back his youngest son, Benjamin.

Benjamin was Joseph's only full-brother from their mother Rachel,

who was Jacob's most beloved wife,

who was able to bear children only late in life.

Jacob couldn't bear the thought of losing Benjamin, as he had already lost Joseph.

Clearly Benjamin has taken Joseph's place as first in his father's heart.

The ten brothers go down to Egypt and bow down before the Egyptian official
in charge of distributing grain.

This, of course, would be Joseph.

v. 8 –“**Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.**”

This is now over twenty years since the brothers sold him into slavery
when he was just 17.

They had no idea that he was even still alive,
and the last place in the world they would expect to see him
would be in the court of Pharaoh,
so it's no surprise that they didn't recognize him.

But Joseph recognizes them as soon as he saw them,
but he decides not to reveal his identity to them--not yet.

This provides the central drama in the story.

In v. 9 we're told that Joseph remembered his dreams—
his dreams in which his whole family bows down before him.

So Joseph begins to set in motion an elaborate scheme
that will not only reveal what is in the hearts of his brothers,
but will also result in the arrival of his entire family in Egypt
and the abundant provision for their needs.

Joseph pretends to be a stranger before his brothers,
performing his role as the governor, the Egyptian prime minister.

He speaks to them quite harshly—

“You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected.”

This is a shrewd interrogation technique—

it throws the brothers off guard, and they start telling this stranger
things about themselves and their family that he wants to know—

v. 10-- “No, my lord,” they answered. “Your servants have come to buy food.

We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies.”

“No!” he said to them.

“You have come to see where our land is unprotected.”

But they replied, “Your servants were twelve brothers,

the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan.

The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more.”

Now Joseph knows that his father and Benjamin are still alive.

His harsh words continue—

“It is just as I told you: You are spies!

And this is how you will be tested:

As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place

unless your youngest brother comes here.

Send one of your number to get your brother;

the rest of you will be kept in prison,

so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth.

If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!”

So they're all put in jail—

on the third day he relents somewhat,

appearing merciful since he fears God—
only one of them had to stay behind
while they go to bring back their brother Benjamin.
Perhaps Joseph realized that to get food back to his father and brother
and the rest of their families
more of them had to return.

They're devastated by this news that one of them would be held captive in Egypt.

What's interesting is their understanding of the cause of this harsh treatment.
v. 21— **"Surely we are being punished because of our brother (that is, Joseph).**

**We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life,
but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us."**
Then Reuben, the oldest who had tried to stop them years ago, puts in his two bits—
**"Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy?
But [no] you wouldn't listen!
Now we must give an accounting for his blood."**

They are still wracked by guilt
about the way they had treated Joseph twenty years before. /

As they were talking amongst themselves,
acknowledging the wickedness of what they had done—
**"They did not realize that Joseph could understand them,
since he was using an interpreter.
He turned away from them and began to weep,"**

Why was he weeping?
Was it for those long, wasted years?

Was it for the pain he had endured?

Was it for his own estrangement from his family?

We don't know.

But he had Simeon taken from them and bound.

Then Joseph gave orders to fill their sacks with grain

and to put the silver they had brought to pay for it

back in their sacks.

So they return,

and tell their father all that had happened,

and how the Egyptian wanted them to bring back Benjamin.

The discovery of the silver in their sacks only made things worse—

Their hearts sank; this can only mean trouble—

"What is this that God has done to us?" (v. 28).

What appears to them to be a curse,

was, in fact, a blessing—but only later would that become clear.

v. 36—"Their father said to them, "You have deprived me of my children.

Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more,

and now you want to take Benjamin.

Everything is against me!"

(Jacob is rather dramatic all the way through this story,

emphasizing the devastating effect Joseph's loss had on him.)

Reuben, the responsible first-born child, offers to sacrifice one his own sons

if they do not bring Benjamin back,

but Jacob will not listen.

v. 38—“My son will not go down there with you;
his brother is dead and he is the only one left.
If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking,
you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow.”

That’s how chap. 42 ends./

But in chap. 43, we see that the food they brought back from Egypt eventually ran out,
and the famine was severe,
so Jacob reluctantly relents
and says to them, “Go back and buy a little more food.”

This time Judah makes the case that they can’t go back without Benjamin,
and he gallantly offers to take personal responsibility for his safety—
43:9-- “I myself will guarantee his safety;
you can hold me personally responsible for him.
If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you,
I will bear the blame before you all my life.”

If it must be, then so be it—Jacob agrees and gathers up whatever he can
to try to appease their Egyptian lord.³

Jacob hopes he will see his son again, but he is resigned to his fate--

v. 14--“As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.” /

³just as he tried to appease his brother Esau years before.

The brothers return to Egypt and present themselves to Joseph,
but this time they are treated royally.

They are taken to Joseph's house and a lavish meal is prepared.

They tried to return the silver that they had found in their packs,
but the steward refused to take it,

v. 23— "It's all right," he said. "Don't be afraid.

Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks;

I received your silver."

There is truth in everything he says. /

At noon Joseph arrives for the meal.

He asks about their father,

and then he sees his full-brother Benjamin.

At the sight of him, we read,

Joseph is deeply moved and has to retreat to his private room to weep.

The brothers were served,

and they were amazed to see that they had been seated in the order of their ages—
from the youngest to the oldest.

Joseph instructed the steward to give Benjamin an extra portion.

Perhaps he wanted to see if such favoritism would arouse old jealousies.

But Joseph's scheming wasn't over.

He had one more ploy up his sleeve

in order to test the hearts of his brothers.

As they were leaving, loaded with grain,

Joseph had his steward secretly put his own silver cup in Benjamin's sack.

Then after they had left on their journey,

he sent his steward to confront them about this planted evidence of theft.

When confronted with this accusation, the brothers vehemently deny it—

They would never do such a thing!

"If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die;

and the rest of us will become my lord's slaves" they declare (44:9).

So confident were they that they opened their sacks for a search.

From the oldest to youngest the steward searches,

and in the last sack—that of Benjamin—there it was—

the silver cup that belonged to their Egyptian lord!

"At this they tore their clothes"—all is lost (44:13).

Now the brothers are the victims of injustice.

They return to Joseph's house and again throw themselves on the ground before him—

(this happens five times in the story in one form or fashion just to make the point—

Joseph's old dreams were being fulfilled!)

Joseph demands that Benjamin remain with him as his slave,

and at this point Judah speaks

in one of the most impassioned passages in the book—

beginning in 44:18.

In this speech, Judah recounts what had happened between them,
and reveals the struggle that their father had had in allowing them to take Benjamin—
and then he ends with a desperate plea to Joseph the Egyptian--
v. 33—

**“Now then, please let [me] your servant
remain here as my lord’s slave in place of the boy,
and let the boy return with his brothers.
How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me?
No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father.”**

Here Judah seems willing to do anything to spare his father any further grief.
Twenty-two years before Judah had been the one
who had engineered Joseph's sale into slavery;
now he is willing to offer himself as a substitute
to become Joseph's slave.

At this offer of self-sacrifice, we read in 45:1—**“Joseph could no longer control himself.”**

He empties the room of all his servants,
and he makes himself known to his brothers.
**“And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him,
and Pharaoh’s household heard about it,”** we read.

“I am Joseph!” he said.

Well, the brothers, as you might imagine, weren't exactly sure what to make of that!

In fact, they were stunned--terrified at his presence.

What could they expect to receive from him—

this brother of theirs that they had captured, nearly killed,
and sold into slavery?

And in perhaps the climax of the whole story,

Joseph draws them near—

45:4-- "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!

And now, do not be distressed

and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here,

because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.

For two years now there has been famine in the land,

and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping.

But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth

and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

"So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God.

He made me father to Pharaoh,

lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt."

Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says:

God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay.

You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—

you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have.

I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. . . .

Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt

and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly."

v. 14 Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept,

and Benjamin embraced him, weeping.

And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them.

Afterward his brothers talked with him.”

The sons of Israel were now reconciled.

And soon Jacob himself and his whole clan would be settled in Egypt,
their lives, and his family line,
preserved through the remarkable provision of Joseph,
and, of course, through the mysterious providence of God.

So what are we to take away from this story?

First, I want you to look at this story as **a picture of forgiveness and grace.**

If ever anyone had just cause to seek retribution
for the hardship he endured, it was Joseph.
He had been wronged—badly,
and for thirteen long years he had been a slave and a prisoner.

And when he had risen to power in Egypt
and his brothers came before him to get food,
he had just the opportunity he needed to see that justice was done.

But he doesn't take it.

He doesn't seek justice; instead, he forgives—
he forgives and, in the end, lavishes his love upon his brothers
who had so mistreated him.

This is a picture of grace—

grace is giving others a goodness they do not deserve.

Now Joseph doesn't ignore the wrongs done to him by his brothers—

it's not as if he pretends that what they did wasn't evil.

No, later in chap. 50, Joseph tells them,

“You intended to harm me,

but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done,

the saving of many lives” (50:20).

Part of his weeping in this story may have been caused

by the remembrance of all the hardship he and his father

had been through.

And the schemes that he uses to get his entire family to Egypt

may have been motivated by an effort to bring his brothers

to a point of true contrition and repentance for what they had done.

And that is importance for true reconciliation to take place.

But Joseph's actions are gracious in the end.

He forgives his brothers for hating him and abusing him as they did.

Do you think you could do that?

How was Joseph able to do it?

Why didn't his heart toward his brothers become rock hard

as he suffered those many years?

Why wasn't his first reaction when he saw his brothers

one of anger and retribution?

I think it was because Joseph was himself a recipient of the grace of God.

Despite the evil he had endured from his brothers,

Joseph still saw himself as one blessed by God,

blessed beyond anything he had a right to—

blessed beyond his imagination.

He was able to see that through their evil act,

and despite that evil,

God was still at work for his good

and for the good of others,

and so Joseph had the emotional and the spiritual resources to forgive.

And if there was to be judgment for what his brothers had done,

he could leave that judgment to God.

Jesus told a story about that, didn't he—

about a servant who had incurred a huge debt to his master.

He begged for forgiveness and received it,

but then that servant wouldn't forgive the debt of a few dollars

of one of his own servants.

When the master heard about that, he threw that unmerciful servant in jail

until he paid him back the last penny.

Freely you have received, freely give.

Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you.

Realize the way in which God has lavished his love upon you in so many ways—

he has forgiven you for cosmic treason,

for rebellion against his royal law—
it was you who condemned the Son of God to a Roman cross,
it was you who cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"
Yet as you turn to him in faith, seeking his mercy,
he receives you fully and completely.
Now on that basis, you *can* forgive others—
and you *must* forgive others.
Just as Joseph did.

But on the other side,
it is interesting to notice how **hard** it was for these brothers
to receive Joseph's gracious forgiveness.
When Joseph secretly and graciously returned their silver into their sacks,
they didn't rejoice at this gift—
they were frightened at what it might mean.
When they were brought into Joseph's home for a meal,
they were fearful and thought—
**"We were brought here because of the silver
that was put back into our sacks the first time.
He wants to attack us and overpower us
and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys" (43:18).**

Then, when Joseph finally reveals himself to them and says, "**I am Joseph!**"
the brothers are terrified in his presence (45:3).

They knew how guilty they were—

they knew what their sins deserved.

How could Joseph ever accept them?

How could he not pay them back for the evil they had done?

Grace is hard to receive, because in one sense it doesn't make sense.

It's not logical; it's doesn't fit our scheme of moral order.

Grace is not what *ought* to happen.

We *know* what we deserve,

and so did these brothers.

When Joseph first accused them of being spies

and demanded that they bring their youngest brother back to Egypt

or they would die,

their very first thought was

"Surely we are being punished because of our brother" (42:21).

Joseph's cries for mercy as they were throwing him into the pit

came back to them, ringing in their ears.

Rueben summed it up:

"Now we must give an accounting for his blood" (42:22).

The wages of sin is death—

and somehow, we know that's true.

Our conscience testifies that there will come a day of reckoning.

Even years later in chap. 50, after their father Jacob dies,

the brothers are still afraid of what Joseph might do to them,

"What if Joseph holds a grudge against us

and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?"

They still haven't come to grips with grace.

For grace is a gift, and it must be received as a gift—

a gift that is illogical, unreasonable, and totally undeserved. //

And I suspect that many of us have the same problem

when it comes to receiving the grace of God.

If you are at all morally serious—

if you think about issues of right and wrong,

good and evil,

sin and righteousness,

then you know what you deserve before a holy God.

The thought of appearing before him is a terrifying thought.

We will be confronted with all that we have ever thought or done.

You will be in the same position as the brothers before Joseph.

Just imagine it!

When the Lord God finally reveals himself to us in all his glory and holiness—

we will be speechless before him!

If you are not a Christian, what can you say?

who will come to your defense?

And even for those of us who are Christians, and who know Jesus as our Savior,

don't we still sometimes try to justify ourselves before him,

pointing to this or that as proof that we're not so bad after all,

and that we really do deserve God's love.

When we hear the message of God's grace

don't we still think,

That's a nice offer, but where's the catch?

What do I have to do to make myself worthy of it.

But there is no catch! and you can never be worthy of it.

The wonder of the biblical message is that in Jesus Christ

God has come among us,

and like Joseph, he has received the worst we could give him.

Jesus Christ was rejected and beaten and spat upon and then crucified.

But God was with him,

and Jesus was exalted to the place of highest honor—

and as we come to see what we have done

and feel the burden of our guilt—

we will see, at the same time, that he does not give us what we deserve,

but like Joseph, Jesus says it was God who sent me to that cross—

and though you intended it for evil,

God intended it for good for the saving of many lives.

You are forgiven.

Now be reconciled;

come to me, and enter into a new relationship with me and my Father.

Like Joseph's brothers,

it is often hard to believe that God can be for us—

for there is no good reason that he should be.

It doesn't make sense—

But that's what grace is all about.

And that's what the gospel of Jesus Christ declares to us—

That God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son

that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

And this brings us back to the central theme of this story—

God's providence.

Our faith in God's providence is not simply a conviction that God as Creator

controls, sustains, and guides his creation.

A Muslim could believe that.

The Christian's understanding of God's providence

is more than just a belief that God is great.

It is also a trust that God is good.

God is not just powerful;

he is also personal.

More than that, the Christian believes that the God who created the world

and who works all things in accordance with his perfect will—

that God is also our **heavenly Father**.

He is a Father who provides for his children.

And how do we know this?

It is not by looking around at the world,

and deducing it from our experience.

No, our experience in this world may lead us to the exactly opposite conclusion.

We believe in the providence of God—

we come to trust that the Creator and sustainer of the cosmos
is our heavenly Father—
through God's revelation of himself through his **word to us**.
That's what this word of God in the story of Joseph is meant to teach us.

We see God's providential care
working through all the circumstances of Joseph's life
to bring about his good purpose.

It's a mysterious providence;
it's an unpredictable providence.

Who could have foreseen how these brothers' cruelty
could have led Joseph to the courts of Pharaoh?

Who could have determined that Joseph's experience
managing the household of Potiphar
could have prepared him to administer the wealth of all Egypt?

Who could have realized that the gross injustice of a false accusation of sexual assault
could lead to his becoming the prime minister of all of Egypt?

Nobody could foresee all that—except God.

Only in the end can God's gracious hand be seen by the characters in the story.

It's been said that "The providence of God is like Hebrew words—
it can only be read backwards."⁴

Jesus said as much to his disciples,

**"You do not realize now what I am doing,
but later you will understand"** (John 13:7).

⁴ John Flavel.

God's providence is an invisible hand,
usually unrecognizable to us, but always there—
sustaining, guiding, controlling and providing—
moving all things inexorably toward their appointed ends
which are to his covenant people,
an expression of his Fatherly love.

Notice that the providence of God is not only pictured for us in the **experiences** of Joseph
but also in the **actions** of Joseph—
for on another level in this story,
Joseph is not just the object of God's providence,
he is the subject of that providence.

Joseph's own actions toward his brothers
is a picture of God himself guiding events to their goal.

Like God himself,
Joseph recognizes them, but they can't recognize him.
They have only a few hints that something beyond their understanding is going on—
like when they come to dinner in Joseph's house
and happen to be seated in the order of their ages—Hmm!
Do you even have those kinds of experiences?

Like God himself, Joseph knows all that is happening,
even the thoughts of his brothers
as they discuss these things in his presence in Hebrew
thinking that he can't understand.
But he does understand—he understands everything.

The brothers don't have a clue why these things are happening to them—
where the silver comes from in their sacks,
or why they are unjustly accused of theft—
but Joseph knows,
and his plan works out to perfection in the end.

And acting in the role of God, Joseph provides for his brothers.

The steward tells the brothers that the silver that Joseph had put back in their sacks
was a gift from their God (43:23),
and in a real sense, it was.

And Joseph assures them in the end—

"don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children" (50:21; 45:11).

That's what God is saying to us.

"don't be afraid. I will provide for you."

And isn't that exactly Abraham believed

in that moment of his greatest trial—

The Lord will provide.

We believe in the providence of God through the revelation of God's word. /

But supremely we believe in the providence of God

because of the revelation of God's word in the gospel of Jesus Christ—

that Word become flesh.

Jesus taught us to believe that our Creator is also our Father who provides—

Matt. 6:25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life,

what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. . . .

26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns,
and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not much more valuable than they?”

And more than that,

Jesus himself as very God in the flesh

gave his own life in love to pay the cost of our forgiveness

as the supreme demonstration that God is for us,

that he will provide for us—

for in Christ, God has indeed provided.

For it was on that place that Abraham called “The Lord will provide,”

on Mount Moriah, that the Lord did provide,

for there, Jesus died and became that Lamb

who died as a sacrifice in our place.

And if our God has provided that,

offering his own Son, whom he loves,

how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things—

providing for all our needs?

As Christians, we know our Creator as our Father,

because he has revealed himself as the God and Father

of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Is that the God that you know?

Is he the One whom you can trust?

Will you believe in God's providence?

Sure, it's mysterious;

sure, it invites questions—you think Joseph didn't have questions?

Or what about Jesus?

But it comes down to this—

Will you believe that this great God whom we worship

is really for you?

that's he really is a heavenly Father worthy of your trust—

not just when things are going well,

but especially when they're not.

In this mysterious and sometimes cruel world,

we cannot believe in the providence of God apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But once we come to see who God is through the gospel,

then we must believe in his providence.

we must believe that the Lord will provide,

for he *has*.

Prayer—

God Moves in a Mysterious Way

His wonders to perform

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

"The Lord is never absent, passive, non-responsive or impotent,
but always present, active, responsible and omnipotent.

He is never dead, but always living;
never sleeping, but always awake;
never uninterested, but always concerned;

never merely waiting in any respect,
but even where He seems to wait, even where he permits,
he always holds the initiative." (Karl Barth, CD III.3 p. 13)

In faith in your providential care, may we be patient in adversity
and thankful in prosperity
and as we look to the future, may we have confidence
in our faithful God and Father who will provide.

Closing song: *Great Is Thy Faithfulness* [vv 1,3]

Benediction:

Rom. 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Joseph and His Brothers (Gen. 37-45):

A Story of Divine Providence, #4

June 21, 2020

“Siblings Reconciled;

God Provides”

Gen. 42-45

“God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.” Joseph’s story is also God’s story, displaying his wondrous providence in guiding events according to his good purpose, often in very unexpected ways. Joseph suffers the vicissitudes of fortune, and plays an active role himself in bringing about blessing to Jacob and his brothers, which will eventually result in the blessing of the world.

I. A Story of God’s Providence—

Joseph Glorified;

His Brothers Humbled;

and a Family Reunited.

II. Lessons for Us—

A. A Drama of the Giving and Receiving of Forgiveness

B. The Blessing of God's Mysterious Providence

*The Lord has provided . . .
and the Lord will provide.*

Sermon Response:

**“Siblings Reconciled;
God Provides”**

Gen. 42-45

- Reflect on the “injustices” Joseph endures. How might they be paralleled in our contemporary culture? Have you ever felt unjustly treated? How did you deal with it?
- How does the experience of God’s blessing in your life obligate you to bless others?
- How have you seen the invisible hand of God’s providence in your life?
- How does an appreciation of God’s providence make a difference in your life? How does it give you hope?
- How can you grow in your confidence in God’s gracious providence in your life?
- How does Joseph’s statement about “dual intention” in Gen. 50:20 help you deal with evil things you may experience and the promise of Rom. 8:28?