

Lenten Devotional February 20, 2018

Scripture

Genesis 37:12-24

¹²Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. ¹³And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." ¹⁴So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron. He came to Shechem, ¹⁵and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" ¹⁶"I am seeking my brothers," he said; "tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." ¹⁷The man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. ¹⁸They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. ¹⁹They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. ²⁰Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." ²¹But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." ²²Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. ²³So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; ²⁴and they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

Devotional

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Young, bright, his father's favorite, not sure of what life will bring but only that it will be great, he heads off on an errand—and so begins the story of Joseph. The story is very personal. We love the story and even as we read it we are pulling for Joseph, for we remember all that has happened before in his dreams. We read quickly through the brothers' jealousy, for we know jealousy never leads to anything worthwhile. We read through their jealousy with great anticipation of how God will extract Joseph from this terrible situation and bring about God's dream of a nation.

We can identify with that pattern (dream, kicked to the curb, restoration), for it is not unlike our own story, or the story of our family. The youthful dive into life includes dreams, like those for career and family. Starting out, we anticipate great things, new things. We aren't exactly certain how they will happen, but the future looks bright. Then suddenly . . . we get thrown into a pit of many sizes and shapes—loss of income, job termination, medical issues, aging-parent concerns, emotional grief and loss. It can go on. Like Joseph at the bottom of his pit, we wonder not *how* is God going to get us out of this mess, but *whether* God is going to get us out.

Then comes grace—we are shown a way out of our pit. And looking back we wonder how we could have doubted God. Where was our faith? Where *is* our faith? In this season we look back at the pits we have been thrown into, and we give thanks for the grace that has raised us then and will continue to do so through faith.

Prayer

O Lord of light and darkness, of mountain tops and deep abyss, open our eyes and hearts to your grace shown to us in the past and awaiting us in our future. We pray that the darkness and depth of the pits we are thrown into would not only turn us to You in trust but also remind us of your power to redeem,

and your joy in doing so. In hope and with joy we lift to you our lives in the knowledge of your sure grace and love through Christ our Lord. Amen.