

Lent Devotional March 5, 2020

Scripture

Genesis 39:1-23

1 Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. 2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 His master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hands. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him; he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. 5 From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field. 6 So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge; and, with him there, he had no concern for anything but the food that he ate. Now Joseph was handsome and good-looking. 7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." 8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, with me here, my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand. 9 He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" 10 And although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not consent to lie beside her or to be with her. 11 One day, however, when he went into the house to do his work, and while no one else was in the house, 12 she caught hold of his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside. 13 When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, 14 she called out to the members of her household and said to them, "See, my husband has brought among us a Hebrew to insult us! He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice; 15 and when he heard me raise my voice and cry out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside." 16 Then she kept his garment by her until his master came home, 17 and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me; 18 but as soon as I raised my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside." 19 When his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, saying, "This is the way your servant treated me," he became enraged. 20 And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; he remained there in prison. 21 But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. 22 The chief jailer committed to Joseph's care all the prisoners who were in the prison, and whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. 23 The chief jailer paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper.

Devotional

The Rev. Dr. Tami Hooker '02, Specialized Ministry (2017)

As a prison chaplain, I read with great interest a number of stories about inmates who spent decades in jail, only to be exonerated and released. But one story was different. It was about an inmate I had known and had been blessed to work with for years. When I heard what had happened at court, I looked up the news articles. The pictures all showed him wearing the same smile that he had on his face most of the time I'd encountered him as an inmate. Sure, there were days when he was a bit discouraged, and he was always ready to tell someone he hadn't met before that he had been wrongly convicted. But I don't ever recall his being bitter or taking his anger or disappointment out on anyone else. I wonder how he did it day after day for more than 21 years. I'm not sure that I could have done it.

We live in a fallen world where family members or people with power are vengeful because they haven't gotten what they wanted, and where oppressive and unfair circumstances can all harm the

innocent. It's tempting, when it happens to us, to put on our victim label and to think that, because we're wearing it, we're entitled to act out and treat others badly or be angry with God.

But Joseph and my friend, both wrongly convicted prisoners, show us a different way. It doesn't require that we stop working for justice. But it does involve refusing to grant the actions of others or even our circumstances the power to change who we are and what we do. That power rightfully belongs only to God, who claims us as God's own, who is with us in our times of struggle and disappointment, and who finds a way to show us *such* great favor in our most challenging circumstances that it is apparent even to those outside the faith.

Prayer

Holy God, when we are tempted to claim the right to behave badly toward others or toward you because of what has happened to us, remind us of Joseph's integrity even as a man sold into slavery in Potiphar's house by his own family, and as a man sent to prison for doing the right thing. Remind us that our Savior bore the injustice of being wrongly accused and condemned, so he knows our struggles when we are treated in an unjust way. Help us to hold onto our integrity and our trust that you will be with us even in times of trial. And may our actions be a witness of this belief to others. Amen.