

Genesis (2011) 45A

- Today comes the moment we've been waiting to see for the past several weeks and chapters...the moment when Joseph reveals himself to his brothers
 - And if you think you've been anticipating this moment, just think how much Joseph must have longed for this moment
 - He spent 21 years separated from his family, wishing to embrace them and to tell them that he forgave them
 - Then one day he watches incredulously as 10 of his brothers walk right up to him
 - Perhaps for a split second he considered revealing himself at that first moment
 - But instead he stops and recognizes he must act judiciously under the circumstances
 - The famine and his knowledge of the future give him a decided advantage in seeking out his brothers' hearts
 - Joseph realized this remarkable encounter was a part of God's plan to fulfill Joseph's dream and to reconcile his family
 - Joseph knew he must test their hearts
 - While the Lord brought to mind their jealousies and hatred
 - And they will be given the opportunity to repent
- So for nearly a year now Joseph has kept his secret, all the while working with God to produce the repentance that would be a prerequisite to any reunion
 - God has tested the brothers and the father, Jacob
 - The brothers were forced to place themselves at risk to save a brother
 - They did so not just once, but twice
 - Jacob was forced to relinquish his selfish favoritism for Rachel's children, allowing Benjamin to return to Egypt under duress
 - And Judah, the man whose double sin led Israel into exile, has been tested as well

- Remember, it was Judah's sin of marrying a Canaanite woman that prompted the Lord to move Israel into Egypt
- Then later it was Judah who advocates for Joseph to be sold into slavery, thereby triggering the mechanism to lead Israel into the exile
 - So the Lord places a special emphasis on Judah's repentance, because Judah was central to the sins of Israel
 - And his tribe will be central to God's solution for sin, in delivering the promised seed
- Then in our last lesson, we saw the tests producing good fruit, as Judah begged to be taken in Benjamin's place
 - Instead of advocating for his brother's slavery, Judah offers to become a slave himself
 - Instead of dishonoring his father through an ungodly marriage, he tries to save his father through an act of love and compassion
- Now we return to the climactic moment in the story, when Joseph comes clean and reveals his true identity to his brothers

Gen. 45:1 Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, "Have everyone go out from me." So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

Gen. 45:2 He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it.

Gen. 45:3 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

Gen. 45:4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt."

- In v.1 Joseph is described as no longer being able to control himself
 - The Hebrew word translated control is *afaq*, which means restrained or held back
 - Joseph reaches a point where he can no longer hold himself back from disclosing his true identity
 - Judah's confession gives Joseph the opportunity he wanted to reveal himself, since now he knows his brothers' true hearts

- Joseph does three things
 - First, he orders all Egyptians to leave Joseph and his brothers alone
 - So only Jacob's sons are present at the moment of the revealing
 - Second, Joseph weeps so loudly that the Egyptians, those who were ordered to leave the room could still hear the crying even through the door
 - In fact, even the rest of Pharaoh's household could hear it
 - So although the Egyptians were not taking part in the revealing, they were aware it was happening
- Finally, Joseph shows himself to His brothers truly
 - The brothers had always been aware of Joseph, of course, but everything they thought they knew about him was wrong
 - They thought their brother was dead but they were wrong...he was alive
 - They thought this ruler was their enemy, but they were wrong...he was their brother
 - They thought the prospect of Joseph's rule over them was an unbearable joke, but they were wrong...it was to be their salvation
- Then Joseph speaks the last three words his brothers could have ever imagined hearing in that moment: I am Joseph
 - And before the brothers even have a chance to respond, Joseph adds a declarative statement, though it's phrased as a question in our Bible
 - Verse 3 records the statement as "Is my father still alive?"
 - This isn't truly a question in Hebrew
 - In Hebrew it literally reads "Does my father yet live?"
 - But Joseph knows that Jacob is still alive
 - Joseph just heard Judah plead for Benjamin to go back to Jacob so that Judah can keep his promise to his father

- So Joseph knows Jacob is alive
 - The better way to phrase Joseph's words might be "I am Joseph, and my father lives too!"
- Joseph spoke these words in Hebrew
 - Remember, until now Joseph would speak through an interpreter, pretending to only know the Egyptian language
 - But at this moment he has sent all the translators out of the room, so the only way Joseph can communicate with the brothers was in their own language
- Then we have the reaction of the brothers
 - We're told they are dismayed, which is a classic Biblical understatement
 - The text tells us the brothers were dismayed, but the Hebrew word is *bahal*, which is usually translated terrified
 - What would we give to have seen the expressions on the brothers' faces as Joseph's words began to sink in?
 - In fact, the brothers heard the words, but they don't make sense
 - "This man is an Egyptian prime minister, yet he is suddenly speaking in Hebrew"
 - "He knows the name of our missing brother, but we've never told him the name of our missing brother's name"
 - "He says he is our brother, but surely our brother is dead by now"
 - "And he looks nothing like Joseph"
- Recognizing their confusion and fear, Joseph begins to speak tenderly to his brothers
 - In v.4, he says come closer to me, but in the Hebrew it's even more tender
 - Literally, it reads "come near to me, I pray"
 - He wants them to get a better look at him, to look into his eyes

- Remember, these brothers would have been looking down or avoiding eye contact with Joseph up to now as a matter of protocol
 - Then he adds once more, I am Joseph, the brother you sold into slavery
- That last part must have really knocked them for a loop
 - In all likelihood the brothers had never told anyone what they had done to Joseph
 - They never told Jacob, of course
 - They never told anyone else in the family
 - And they certainly never told Joseph
 - Yet now they hear Joseph repeating back to them their sins which they committed against him
- When someone confronts us with secret knowledge of our past mistakes, it's usually not a good moment
 - Usually, it's a prelude to retribution or justice in some form
 - As when you're confronted by a parent or supervisor
 - Or when an agent of the law exposes your mistakes
 - But in this case, Joseph has no interest in retribution
 - Joseph heard Judah's confession and desires reconciliation, not retribution
- To reassure his brothers, Joseph gives his well-known words of comfort and wisdom

[Gen. 45:5](#) "Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.

[Gen. 45:6](#) "For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.

[Gen. 45:7](#) "God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.

[Gen. 45:8](#) "Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

- Rather than being angry with his brothers, Joseph is worried that they might be grieved or angry with themselves for their past mistakes
 - Joseph acknowledges that his brothers sold him into slavery, yes, but it was actually God Who placed the brothers in Egypt
 - We know this is true, because we remember the words God spoke to Abraham many years earlier
 - The Lord said He would send Israel into Egypt to preserve them
 - And we learned in Chapter 38 what God was protecting Israel from: themselves!
 - So the brother's rejection of Joseph and their eventual decision to rid themselves of Joseph were events ordained by God's providence
 - In v.6 Joseph connects the brothers' actions with the famine they've been experiencing
 - The famine was a part of God's plan to drive Israel into Egypt, but someone in Israel needed to go before Israel to make a way possible for them
 - Without Joseph in Egypt, the nation of Israel would never be welcomed to settle in the land
 - In v.7 Joseph says the Lord sent me ahead of you to preserve a remnant in the earth and to keep Israel alive for a great deliverance one day
 - Israel needed someone to blaze a path into Egypt
 - Someone who would suffer at the hands of his brothers, experiencing shame and misery
 - Someone worthy to overcome these things and rise to a position of power where he could ensure their acceptance into the land
 - A man who could preserve a remnant during the trial of the famine on earth
 - Someone who would one day welcome Israel into his kingdom in Egypt
- In verse 8, Joseph says that man was me
 - The brothers didn't send Joseph to Egypt, though they thought they were doing that very thing

- Instead, Joseph says it was God the Father who brought Joseph to Egypt in the way He did
- And in the process, the Father made Joseph more respected than even Pharaoh
 - And lord of all of Pharaoh's household
 - And the ruler over all the land
- What a powerful statement of God's sovereignty and the inseparability of God's will from the circumstances of our everyday lives
 - Whatever we see happening in our life lies under God's control
 - Even the worst of circumstances fall under the sovereignty of God and fit into His plan
 - Our circumstances are often tied to our sinful choices, but like the brothers here, man's sin can't explain all outcomes
- In fact, a believer's sin explains virtually nothing in our lives...consider
 - For though we are all sinners and are due God's judgment and wrath, we receive none it because of faith in Christ
 - Meanwhile, the enemy and sinful men may work to destroy the church or the word of God, but their schemes will come to nothing
 - In the end, we come back time and time again to Romans 8:28

Rom. 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

- For those who love God and have been called into His family will see all things in history work for good...how can we explain that?
- Our passage this morning also reveals how the Lord will work for the good of the Jewish people in a future day – one of the most powerful pictures in the Bible
 - First, let me take you back to some things we learned in prior weeks regarding the picture of Christ and Israel and Tribulation visible in the story of Joseph

- We learned how Joseph pictures Christ while his brothers picture Israel
- We remember that Israel rejected Jesus, selling Him to the Romans and calling for His death
 - Just as the brothers hated Joseph and sold him into Egypt
- And we remember that after Jesus died, He humbly spent time in the lower parts of the earth
 - Just as Joseph spent years in slavery and prison showing himself worthy to rule
- Later Jesus rises in glorious ascension to the right hand of the Father
 - Just as later Joseph rises to become second in command of all Egypt
- Then at an appointed time, the Lord will bring a great stress and trial upon the earth, called Tribulation, causing Israel to come seeking for relief
 - Just as God created a worldwide famine to cause Israel to go into Egypt seeking after Joseph for the bread of life
- Now we see the final pieces of this remarkable picture falling into place, so let's revisit the key details of this story but with an eye toward the future
 - In Genesis 45 we witness the trial of the famine and Joseph's three tests working as intended to lead the brothers to repent of their sins and confess to Joseph
 - This outcome was truly miraculous
 - The brothers' hearts were transformed leading to the reconciliation of the family of God
 - Only now as we look back upon the circumstances since Genesis 37, we can finally make sense of all that God ordained and see that it was good
 - These events picture a similar result the Lord will orchestrate through the Tribulation that is yet to come upon the earth

- In that future time, the nation of Israel will be brought to their knees under supernatural disasters and persecution by the Antichrist
- And in that moment all remaining Jews alive in that day will confess the nation's past sins against Jesus

[Zech. 13:8](#) "It will come about in all the land,"

Declares the LORD,
 "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish;
 But the third will be left in it.

[Zech. 13:9](#) "And I will bring the third part through the fire,

Refine them as silver is refined,
 And test them as gold is tested.
 They will call on My name,
 And I will answer them;
 I will say, 'They are My people,'
 And they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"

- We can read of how this extraordinary moment will unfold in Zechariah 12

[Zech. 12:7](#) "The LORD also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah.

[Zech. 12:8](#) "In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD before them.

[Zech. 12:9](#) "And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

- This entire chapter describes events of Tribulation, at the end of the period, when the Antichrist is bearing down on Jerusalem and the Jews see themselves nearing destruction
 - Much like the brothers in Joseph's house, they sense they don't have much longer to save themselves
 - But then the rescue of Israel will begin with the tents of Judah
 - Judah will be the start of the Lord's work to rescue and protect Israel
 - Just as the confession of Judah was the beginning of the turn for the brothers

- Then the Lord will move to the second stage when he will bring repentance to the rest of the family of Israel

Zech. 12:10 “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

- The Lord turns the hearts of Israel by the outpouring of His Spirit
- The Spirit leads the hearts of the people of Israel to repent, just like the brothers of Joseph
 - Notice they mourn the knowledge that their fathers put their Messiah to death, the One they pierced
 - Just as Judah confessed to Joseph concerning the brothers’ sins against Jacob
- And this weeping is bitter, like the weeping of the brothers when they were accused by Joseph and felt the jeopardy of their sins
- As Israel experiences this new awareness of Jesus as their Messiah and mourns their fathers’ sin of crucifying the Lord, they realize that the Lord has been hiding Himself from them for generations
 - Isaiah records their words in Chapter 64

Is. 64:5 You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness,
Who remembers You in Your ways.
Behold, You were angry, for we sinned,
We continued in them a long time;
And shall we be saved?

Is. 64:6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;
And all of us wither like a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

Is. 64:7 There is no one who calls on Your name,
Who arouses himself to take hold of You;
For You have hidden Your face from us
And have delivered us into the power of our iniquities.

Is. 64:8 But now, O LORD, You are our Father,
We are the clay, and You our potter;
And all of us are the work of Your hand.

Is. 64:9 Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD,
Nor remember iniquity forever;
Behold, look now, all of us are Your people.

Is. 64:10 Your holy cities have become a wilderness,
Zion has become a wilderness,
Jerusalem a desolation.

Is. 64:11 Our holy and beautiful house,
Where our fathers praised You,
Has been burned by fire;
And all our precious things have become a ruin.

Is. 64:12 Will You restrain Yourself at these things, O LORD?
Will You keep silent and afflict us beyond measure?

- Notice that Isaiah records that the Lord has restrained himself because of the sin of Israel
 - As they come to this realization, Isaiah says the people will confess their sin and acknowledge their iniquities
 - And they call out for the Lord to reveal Himself to them now and save them
 - Joseph's decision to hide himself and test the brothers' hearts is a beautiful picture of this future day
 - Joseph hid his face from them
 - Then the brothers came to realize they had sinned against their brother and their father
 - And now through Judah they sought forgiveness
 - And in that moment Joseph revealed himself to them
- And so it will be for the Lord as well
 - He will reveal Himself to Israel, in His Second Coming, once Israel has confessed their sin

Zech. 14:3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.

Zech. 14:4 In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.

[Zech. 14:5](#) You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!

[Zech. 14:6](#) In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle.

[Zech. 14:7](#) For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.

[Zech. 14:8](#) And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.

[Zech. 14:9](#) And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.

[Zech. 14:10](#) All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses.

[Zech. 14:11](#) People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security.

- Thinking back through the details of Joseph's story, we can see the parallels to this event
 - As Jesus returns to Earth and rescues Israel, He destroys the armies that have come against the nation and sets the nation free in the land
 - The Lord's return is a blessing for Israel
 - He reveals Himself to them as a friend and brother and Lord of Israel
 - But the Gentile armies will not see the Lord in this way, though they will know of His revealing
 - Notice the return of the Lord is described as a bright light in an otherwise dark universe
 - Everyone will see the Lord's return, though not everyone will profit from it
 - This mirrors Joseph's revealing of himself to Israel while they are alone
 - Only the brothers are to enjoy the revealing of Joseph
 - The Egyptians hear the weeping and know that something is happening, but they are not a party to it

- There is a great deal more we could say about these events and the way Joseph's story reflects them, and you can learn them by studying Revelation and the end times
 - For today, it's enough to see that the Lord has not forsaken Israel
 - Though Israel lives in disobedience and ignorance to the Messiah, they will one day know the truth
 - The Lord will be faithful to His promises, both His promise to test and to bless Israel in a future day
 - Truly we serve a mighty and faithful God Who keeps His promises
 - Who does all things accordance with His purpose and will
 - Who brings all these things to good for His children
 - And yet Who also ensures that men's hearts are humbled