

**Weeping May Lodge for the Night,  
But a Shout of Joy Comes in the Morning**  
**Genesis 41:37-57**

This is the second Sunday of our indoor gathering and the first sermon resuming our studies in the life of Joseph from the book of Genesis. Before diving into the message, I would like to give some context and background of why we do what we do for those of you who may be new to the faith or to our church, or for those who exploring the claims of Christianity. Last week Shawn stated that one of our key family values is devotion to the Word. So you might be asking, Why do we give our attention to these ancient stories written over 3000 years ago? I'm glad you asked.

First, we believe that, "The original writings of both Old and New Testaments were inspired by God by means of the Holy Spirit, who chose the words employed."<sup>1</sup> Though there are many human authors, there is One Divine author, which gives an overarching unity and coherence to salvation history. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, is the story of beginnings where we learn about the beginning of the created world, of mankind, of sin and the horror and desolation it leaves in its wake. And then, we get our first look at God's compassionate heart as he initiates his plan to rescue mankind from slavery to sin and restore us as a "new creation" remade in his image.

Immersing ourselves in these stories anchors us with deep roots. But there is more. The Bible is not merely an inspired record of salvation events, it is also a history that is going somewhere with a divine purpose, such that earlier persons, places or events become prototypes or patterns of later persons, places or events. Theologians call this "**typology**." These events do not reoccur in a repeated pattern, like a refrain, but in a greater fulfillment that advances salvation history.<sup>2</sup> In this way earlier acts became the lens through which Israel comprehended their history and shaped their expectations for a glorious future.

**Summary of the "*humiliation-exaltation*" pattern**

When we examine the Joseph story, we are seeing God at work in transformative ways that follow the pattern of *humiliation-exaltation*. In previous weeks we have seen the pattern escalate with each repetition. The poet's response to *humiliation-exaltation* is found in Psalm 30:5, where David writes, "*Weeping may lodge for the night, but a shout of JOY comes in the morning.*" When our son David died nine days after his birth, this was the verse our beloved pastor, Ray Stedman, wired us from Australia to bring us a word

of comfort. This shall be our refrain this morning and, with each repetition, the sorrow and joy will be felt at a deeper level.

First, as the favored son of his father Jacob and the recipient of divine dreams, Joseph incited the jealousy and wrath of his brothers, who threw him into a pit and sold him to Ishmaelite traders—**humiliation #1**. They in turn, transported Joseph to Egypt, where he was again sold as slave to Potiphar, Pharaoh's commanding officer of the royal bodyguard. But the Lord was with Joseph and granted him great success in the house of his Egyptian master so that he made him overseer of his entire house—**exaltation**.

Sadly, Joseph's joyous service was cut short when Potiphar's lustful wife falsely accused him of assault and Joseph was thrown into prison—**humiliation #2**. But the Lord remained with Joseph and he found favor in the eyes of the chief jailer, who put him in charge of all his prisoners and gave him free reign to manage his entire operation (39:21-23)—**exaltation**.

After several years, Pharaoh's chief cupbearer and baker offended the king and ended up in the same prison as Joseph and placed under Joseph's care. One night they both had a dream, each with its own meaning, but there was no one to interpret them. In the morning Joseph asked why they were distraught and then accurately interpreted their dreams and contrasting fates—life for the cupbearer and death for the baker. Hopeful that this would be the opportunity for his release, Joseph pleaded with the cupbearer to advocate for his release when he is restored to his position.

But the cupbearer **forgot** Joseph for two more years—**humiliation #3**. But then at just the right time, Joseph's God invaded Pharaoh's world in the night with two dreams that struck right at the heart of Egyptian civilization and her ability to feed the world. Shaken to core, Pharaoh sought out all the magicians and wise men of Egypt to unlock the dreams' message, but no one was able to break the code and avert the crisis. The cupbearer's memory of Joseph was awakened and finally, after thirteen years, Joseph is brought out of prison and given the opportunity to exercise his spiritual gift for a third time, now in the very presence of the king. With one swing of the bat Joseph knocks it out of the park, correctly interpreting the two dreams as having one meaning. Egypt will experience a bumper crop for seven years followed by seven years of famine so severe there will be no memory of the good years. Pain will purge the memory of all that was good. Pharaoh makes no response. He is stunned into silence.

At this point Joseph makes a bold move, demonstrating his faith and courage. He outlines for Pharaoh a threefold plan to preserve the nation through the crisis: (1) He proposes to put the whole nation under a strict food-rationing program; (2) the program is to be administered in a quasi-military fashion, dividing the land of Egypt into regions, with overseers over each region; (3) and all of the overseers are to report to one supreme vizier. In offering unsolicited advice, Joseph runs the risk of appearing presumptuous and incurring the wrath of Pharaoh, but the consequences of doing nothing would have been more severe. With Joseph's resume on the table, what will Pharaoh do?

## **I. Pharaoh's Exaltation of Joseph (41:37-45)**

### **A. Pharaoh's intention and praise (41:37-40)**

**37 This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you." (41:37-40)**

After Joseph outperformed Egypt's best and brightest, Pharaoh lauds him as one who stands far above anyone in his court. There was no one else in all of Egypt who could save Egypt, but this young Hebrew. Then, to our amazement, the king acknowledges that it is God who is behind Joseph's gifts of divine inspiration, wisdom and understanding (Is 11:2-3). In appreciation for the gifts that Joseph has brought to bear in the present national crisis, Pharaoh places him as second in command over his house and over all Egypt.

It is always an amazing moment in salvation history when the world pauses to applaud one of God's servants as praiseworthy according to its highest standards. When Jesus told the disciples that they were to be the salt and light of the world (Matt 5:13-14), I think this is what he had in mind. The ultimate test of an authentic disciple may not be what Christians think of us, but how the world praises us for the benefit we have brought to our workplace, the larger community and the world. It comes as no surprise that the apostle Paul exhorts us multiple times in his letters to keep our

reputation impeccable with outsiders, and when selecting leaders for the church, it is a non-negotiable requirement (Col 4:5-6; 1 Thes 4:10-12; 1 Tim 3:7).

The stunned Joseph cannot speak, just as Pharaoh was unable to speak following the interpretation of his dreams. Having found his “silver bullet” to save the nation, Pharaoh is not about to give Joseph any room to negotiate or have second thoughts. The groom has found his bride, everyone is smiling, so let the wedding begin! If Joseph was hoping Pharaoh would be decisive, he got his wish.

#### **B. Joseph’s installation ceremony (41:41-43)**

**41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. 43 And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, “Bow the knee!” Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt.**

Pharaoh’s public acts of installation are framed with the words “**in charge of all the land of Egypt.**” Joseph holds the position of what would be the equivalent of our prime minister, the highest executive office below the king. The transfer of the king’s signet-ring gave Joseph the authority to authorize royal edicts, while the garments of fine linen and the gold chain were marks of royal distinction. Imagine the elation of this former Hebrew slave and prisoner of the empire, now escorted through all the land in Egypt’s version of Air Force II, hailed by shouts of “Bow the knee!”

#### **C. Joseph’s authority and approval (41:44-45)**

**44 Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt. (41:41-45)**

Following the Pharaoh’s royal proclamation, the insignia of office and public acclaim, Joseph is given a new name to symbolize his new identity and Pharaoh’s greater authority. No longer is Joseph a foreign slave, but an authorized Egyptian citizen and ruler. Waltke suggests, “His unique name probably means in retroverted Egyptian, ‘God speaks and lives.’”<sup>3</sup>

To further legitimize Joseph's new position, his investiture concludes with a wedding to the daughter of the priest of On. As Nahum Sarna notes, "The high priest at On held the exalted title 'Greatest of Seers.' Joseph thus marries into the elite of Egyptian nobility."<sup>4</sup>

Waltke insightfully observes how Joseph's models for us how to be "in the world, but not of it."

While in Egypt, Joseph, like Daniel and his friends, must accommodate his appearance but not his principles to participate. Both Joseph and Daniel are willing to wear pagan clothing, bear pagan names, and in the case of Daniel and his friends receive pagan schooling. However, Daniel and his friends refuse to violate Israel's explicit dietary laws, and Joseph never violates the eternal law of God written on the heart. He takes an Egyptian wife (cf. Gen 24; 26:34–35; Deut 7:3–6), but he uses Hebrew names for his children and associates them with the praise of God and possibly with his destiny back in the land of his fathers.<sup>5</sup>

This beloved son of Jacob is now the beloved son of the empire. But Joseph is not caught up by all the accolades. He immediately tours the entire land to assess the national inventory. Fame is meaningless when the life of a nation is threatened.

## **II. Joseph Rules According to the Plan (41:46-57)**

### **A. The seven years of plenty (41:46-49)**

**46 Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. 47 During the seven plentiful years the earth produced abundantly, 48 and he gathered up all the food of these seven years, which occurred in the land of Egypt, and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it. 49 And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured.**

The narrator concludes this scene by describing Joseph's robust faithfulness in carrying out his plan during the seven years of plenty (vv. 46-49) and the seven years of famine (vv. 53-57). During the seven years of plenty the land produced bumper crops. Joseph gathered the fifth part, which was levied into the cities, and in each city he

stockpiled surplus from the surrounding fields. In this manner he collected so much grain it was “like the sand of the sea,” so his calculator broke and he gave up keeping track.

#### **B. The seven years of famine (41:53-57)**

**53 The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end, 54 and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do.” 56 So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. 57 Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth. (41:53-57)**

As Joseph predicted, nature’s generosity was only temporary, and strict discipline needed to be maintained to protect the surplus for the drought years that would follow. And follow they did! Reading these verses, you can’t help but feel the all-encompassing events in the eight fold repetition of word “all” The famine was so severe that it impacted all Egypt and all lands. On the other hand, so successful was Joseph’s administration that he not only brought life to “all” of Egypt during the famine, but “all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth (v. 57).”

Joseph’s sacrificial and wise leadership single-handedly brings life to all the world. When the world languishes for bread, the king says, “Go to Joseph, for there is nowhere else to go and he has an abundance for all.” The apostle Paul will say the same thing about Jesus. When the world is languishing at the edge of death, go the Jesus, for there is eternal life in no one else, and he has an exhaustive supply. As sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, how much more will the free gift of eternal life abound to the many through the one man Jesus Christ (Rom 5:12-17).

The severity of the famine will set up the next scene, where Jacob’s family is forced to make a visit to Egypt for their own survival. Between these two descriptions of Joseph’s administration during the years of plenty and famine, the narrator describes

the grace of God to Joseph, with the gift of two sons. In the naming of these two boys, Joseph gives voice to his profound appreciation to God as he grapples with the significance of his exaltation.

### C. Sons of a New Era (41:50-52)

**50 Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphra priest of On, bore them to him. 51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house." 52 The name of the second he called Ephraim, "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."**

As is typical of God in these narratives, he graces his servants who have been deeply wounded with not one, but two children. Their highly significant names speak of what God's exaltation of Joseph has done to his soul. The first name, Manasseh, is a pun on the verbal root *"to forget."* With his exaltation in Egypt, God makes Joseph forget his painful past associated with his father's household. Joseph's old life is over. A new era has begun. Though the years of pain may grind upon us ceaseless sorrow, God's salvation breaks upon us in a moment, and his vindication can erase even the most painful accumulation of memories.

Joseph names his second son **Ephraim**, a derivative of the verb *"to make fruitful."* Here the patriarch celebrates God's blessing and future hope that he is able to embrace even in the context of terrible afflictions. As Brueggemann states, "The first son affirms *discontinuity* of Joseph from the old troubled history of Jacob. The second name sharply contrasts this family of *blessing* with the kingdom of *curse*."<sup>6</sup> Whenever children are born out of painful context of rejection or barrenness God often makes a deep theological connection with the parent at the time of birth. This was certainly true for Emily and me after the death of our first two children, when God graced us not with one or two, but three daughters—"weeping may come to lodge for the night, but a shout of JOY comes in the morning."

### **III. The Significance of Joseph's Humiliation and Exaltation**

#### **A. It shaped Israel's spirituality**

This story did much to strengthen Israel's faith in a God who is faithful to his promises and works all things according to his inscrutable will. Joseph's humiliation and exaltation became a consistent pattern, one that shaped Israel's future as a nation and many of her leaders. Before Moses was recognized as a leader among his people, he lived in a wilderness for forty years. Before Israel enjoyed the fruits of Canaan and being lauded by gentile rulers for her wisdom during Solomon's reign, she wandered in the desert for forty years. Before David was embraced as the true king by all Israel, he endured over a decade of being hounded by a demonized king, hiding in caves at times and surviving solely by his prayers. But just as each one endured severe humiliation, God was faithful and exalted each one at the proper time.

#### **B. It became a type of Christ**

So significant was Joseph's exaltation it not only shaped Israel's spirituality, it became the paradigm for God's Son. As Paul writes in Philippians,

**Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:3-13)**

The author of Hebrews adds an important perspective.

**Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of**



**death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. (Heb 2:8-9)**

### **C. It is the exemplary model for the Christian**

And because of Christ's example, humility is enjoined upon every believer. As Peter writes, the gateway to exaltation is humiliation; there is no other door. Therefore all believers are encouraged to be like Joseph, to "humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you at the proper time" (1 Pet 5:6). Humiliation is not optional, but exaltation is guaranteed. This is the obvious thrust of the text that glories in the sovereignty of God at the highest level. In Joseph's case, he was exalted and ruled over three houses in Egypt—Potiphar's house, the chief jailer's house and Pharaoh's house (all of Egypt). In similar fashion, the apostle Paul, after humiliation and untold sufferings (2 Cor 11:24-27), experienced an ever-widening influence in his three missionary journeys and gave his testimony before kings (Acts 9:15).

The Joseph story grants us the liberty to cast ourselves with reckless abandon into God's care even in the darkest of times. Though the world stands against us, though we face betrayal and abandonment, God will not forget us. He is faithful. Peter adds that while we are waiting we are exhorted to "*cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you*" (1 Pet 5:7). We do not have to wait alone, nor do we have to wait without heavenly comfort. Amen.

### **Benediction:**

Though the fig tree does not bud  
and there are no grapes on the vines,  
though the olive crop fails  
and the fields produce no food,  
though there are no sheep in the pen  
and no cattle in the stalls,  
yet I will rejoice in the LORD,  
I will be joyful in God my Savior.  
The Sovereign LORD is my strength;  
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,  
he enables me to tread on the heights. (Hab 3:17-19 niv)

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from our doctrinal statement, <https://pbcc.org/what-we-believe/>.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 137.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 534.

<sup>4</sup> Nahum Sarna, *Genesis: JPS Torah Commentary 1* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 288.

<sup>5</sup> Waltke, *Genesis*, 538.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (INT; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 329.