

Forgotten in Your Dreams

Gen 40:1-23



Background: God never does leave us, but sometimes it seems that he does. What happens to the human soul when our dreams are forgotten in a prison of silence? Our blessed narrator has no fear taking on these questions. And the tale that he weaves will shape Israel with a spirituality that enables her to live in the worst of times. The question for us is whether we are courageous enough to receive it.

Sermon Text: Gen 40:1-23 (ESV)

I. The Butler and Baker Imprisoned with Joseph (40:1-4)

¹Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. ²And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. ⁴The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.

II. Joseph Interprets Their Dreams (40:5-19)

A. God breaks into prison through dreams (40:5-8)

⁵And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation. ⁶When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. ⁷So he asked Pharaoh’s officers who were with him in custody in his master’s house, “Why are your faces downcast today?” ⁸They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.”

B. The cupbearer’s dream and interpretation (40:9-15)

⁹So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him, “In my dream there was a vine

before me,¹⁰ and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes.¹¹ Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."¹² Then Joseph said to him, "This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days.¹³ In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer.¹⁴ Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house.¹⁵ For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit."

C. The baker's dream and interpretation (40:16-19)

¹⁶ When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, "I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head,¹⁷ and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head."¹⁸ And Joseph answered and said, "This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days.¹⁹ In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you."

III. The Fulfillment of the Dreams (40:20-23)

²⁰ On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants.²¹ He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.²² But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.²³ Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

IV. Forgotten in Your Dreams

A. The God of dreams (Amos 3:7)

B. The fulfillment of dreams: Heaven's hope and the human touch

C. The mystery of waiting in our dreams (Isa 40:31)

Discussion Questions

1. Preparation

- a. As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out to you most?
- b. What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- c. What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?

2. Sermon questions (pick 3)

- a. Have you ever felt forgotten by God? What were the circumstances and how long did it last? How can this prepare you for the future?
- b. Have you ever been forgotten/overlooked by your family? a friend? a colleague? in sickness? in your career? What did being forgotten feel like? How did you respond?
- c. Brian said each of us are “priests” wherever we are. As Joseph asked his prison mates how they were doing, we have the opportunity each day at work to check in with our workmates, to value them for who they are and not only for what they do. Do you find yourself doing this in your life? Why or why not?
- d. Have you ever been so focused on “being forgotten” that you felt “stuck” and forgot to live?
- e. Extra Credit: Here are some psalms of lament, in which the psalmist struggles with feelings of abandonment by God or others and gives voice to his sorrow. Note how in the process of giving voice to his lament, the poet is drawn into hope. Using one of the psalms as a springboard, write a lament psalm describing a time when you felt forgotten by God or the Lord seemed distant (Pss 13, 38, 42-43, 44, or 142).