

## Leaders of Reconciliation

Genesis 43:1-34



1979 – Anwar al-Sadat, Menachem Begin and Jimmy Carter sign the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty

**Background:** When wounds cut deep and family members separate and no longer speak to one another, the work of reconciliation becomes extremely difficult. Last week we left our story of Joseph’s reconciliation with brothers deadlocked in a stalemate between a son in Egypt and a father in Canaan who refused to come to the table. When the head of the home refuses to lead spiritually, what can children do? The text is a masterpiece of God’s grace in the process of reconciliation and serves as a model of how to be a leader for reconciliation, even when you haven’t been given the *authoritative* role.

**Sermon Text:** Gen 43:1-34 (ESV)

### I. Family Negotiations to Return to Egypt (43:1-14)

#### A. Jacob’s command, Judah’s objection (1-5)

*<sup>1</sup> Now the famine was severe in the land. <sup>2</sup> And when they had eaten the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Go again, buy us a little food.” <sup>3</sup> But Judah said to him, “The man solemnly warned us, saying, ‘You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.’ <sup>4</sup> If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. <sup>5</sup> But if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, ‘You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you.’”*

#### B. Israel counters with self-pity (6-7)

*<sup>6</sup> Israel said, “Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?” <sup>7</sup> They replied, “The man questioned us carefully about ourselves and our kindred, saying, ‘Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?’ What we told him was in answer to these questions. Could we in any way know that he would say, ‘Bring your brother down’?”*

#### C. Judah’s courageous proposal (8-10)

*<sup>8</sup> And Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. <sup>9</sup> I will be a pledge of his safety. From my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you,*

*then let me bear the blame forever. <sup>10</sup> If we had not delayed, we would now have returned twice.”*

#### **D. Permission granted (11-14)**

*<sup>11</sup> Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be so, then do this: take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry a present down to the man, a little balm and a little honey, gum, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds. <sup>12</sup> Take double the money with you. Carry back with you the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks. Perhaps it was an oversight. <sup>13</sup> Take also your brother, and arise, go again to the man. <sup>14</sup> May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.”*

### **II. The Brothers Come Clean Before Joseph (43:15-34)**

#### **A. Preparations made by each party (15-17)**

*<sup>15</sup> So the men took this present, and they took double the money with them, and Benjamin. They arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph.*

*<sup>16</sup> When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, “Bring the men into the house, and slaughter an animal and make ready, for the men are to dine with me at noon.” <sup>17</sup> The man did as Joseph told him and brought the men to Joseph’s house.*

#### **B. The brothers confess their fears (18)**

*<sup>18</sup> And the men were afraid because they were brought to Joseph’s house, and they said, “It is because of the money, which was replaced in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may assault us and fall upon us to make us servants and seize our donkeys.”*

#### **C. The brothers prove their honesty (19-22)**

*<sup>19</sup> So they went up to the steward of Joseph’s house and spoke with him at the door of the house, <sup>20</sup> and said, “Oh, my lord, we came down the first time to buy food. <sup>21</sup> And when we came to the lodging place we opened our sacks, and there was each man’s money in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight. So we have brought it again with us, <sup>22</sup> and we have brought other money down with us to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks.”*

#### **D. Joseph alleviates their fears (23)**

*<sup>23</sup> He replied, “Peace to you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has put treasure in your sacks for you. I received your money.” Then he brought Simeon out to them.*

### **III. A Feast of Reconciliation (43:24-34)**

#### **A. Mutual preparations for the feast (24-25)**

*<sup>24</sup> And when the man had brought the men into Joseph’s house and given them water, and they had washed their feet, and when he had given their donkeys fodder, <sup>25</sup> they prepared the present for Joseph’s coming at noon, for they heard that they should eat bread there.*

#### **B. Joseph inquires about his father (26-28)**

*<sup>26</sup> When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present that they had with them and bowed down to him to the ground. <sup>27</sup> And he inquired about their welfare and said, “Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?” <sup>28</sup> They said, “Your servant our father is well; he is still alive.” And they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves.*

### **C. Joseph sees his brother (29-31)**

*<sup>29</sup> And he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son!" <sup>30</sup> Then Joseph hurried out, for his compassion grew warm for his brother, and he sought a place to weep. And he entered his chamber and wept there. <sup>31</sup> Then he washed his face and came out. And controlling himself he said, "Serve the food."*

### **D. A family united, free of jealousy (32-34)**

*<sup>32</sup> They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians. <sup>33</sup> And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth. And the men looked at one another in amazement. <sup>34</sup> Portions were taken to them from Joseph's table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. And they drank and were merry with him.*

## **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 seen the hand of God using circumstances to initiate or nurture a reconciliation process? What did God do?
- b. Has God ever used someone to awaken you out of spiritual paralysis or apathy like Judah did with his father, Jacob (who was spiritually paralyzed with "self-pity")? Or have you ever had the courage to awaken or shake someone out of their out of their spiritual paralysis?
- c. How do you discern the difference between showing *empathy* and courageously *confronting* someone with the truth in love? Do you tend toward one extreme or the other?
- d. Were you surprised by Judah's character transformation? Here is a man who once sold his brother for profit, turned a deaf ear to his pleas in the pit, used deception as a cover for his guilty past, abandoned his family of faith for Canaanite fellowship, forsook his God by intermarrying with the Canaanites, and he threw away his identity and "name" for a brief burst of sexual pleasure from a young woman he thought was a "cult" prostitute. Now he emerges as the leader of the family, who boldly confronts his father with the truth and further urges him with self-sacrifice coupled with empathy. What does this do for your faith in the power of God's grace to change lives? If God did this for Judah, do you think he can do this for you? What about your worst enemy?
- e. If Judah models the grace of God that transforms human leaders, Joseph is a type of Christ modeling the heart of God by serving a lavish feast as a tangible offering of forgiveness to those who wronged him. Have you ever had the opportunity to do this for someone? Or has ever welcomed you into a "feast" when you felt unworthy?

- f. Extra Credit: How is God speaking to you in this text? Write a letter or poem to God expressing how you would like him to transform your life like he did Judah, or thanking him for how he has reconciled you.