

Series: Joseph: God's Prevailing Goodness

Sermon: Waiting in Suffering

Scripture: Genesis 40-41

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Genesis 40:1-23 (ESV)

¹ Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt.

² And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker,
³ and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined.

⁴ The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.

⁵ And 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.

⁶ When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled.

⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, “Why are your faces downcast today?”

⁸ They 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.”

⁹ So 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.”

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.”*

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.*

1. God's love never ceases (40:1-23)

Romans 5:3-5 (ESV)

³ *Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,*

⁴ *and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,*

⁵ *and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

2. God's love never fails (41:1-57)

Genesis 41:1-57 (ESV)

¹ *When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile,*

² *when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds.*

³ *After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank.*

⁴ *And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.*

⁵ *He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk.*

⁶ *After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind.*

⁷ *The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.*

⁸ *In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.*

⁹ *Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “Today I am reminded of my shortcomings.*

¹⁰ *Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard.*

¹¹ Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own.

¹² Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream.

¹³ And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was impaled.”

¹⁴ So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.

¹⁵ Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.”

¹⁶ “I cannot do it,” Joseph replied to Pharaoh, “but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.”

¹⁷ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile,

¹⁸ when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds.

¹⁹ After them, seven other cows came up—scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt.

²⁰ The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. ²¹ But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up.

²² “In my dream I saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk.

²³ After them, seven other heads sprouted—withered and thin and scorched by the east wind.

²⁴ The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads. I told this to the magicians, but none of them could explain it to me.”

²⁵ Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do.

²⁶ The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream.

²⁷ The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.

²⁸ “It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do.

²⁹ Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt,

³⁰ but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land.

³¹ The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe.

³² The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.

³³ “And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt.

³⁴ Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance.

³⁵ They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food.

³⁶ This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.”

³⁷ The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials.

³⁸ So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?”

³⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.

⁴⁰ You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.”

⁴¹ So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.”

⁴² Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.

⁴³ He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, “Make way!” Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

⁴⁴ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt.”

⁴⁵ Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.

⁴⁶ Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh’s presence and traveled throughout Egypt.

⁴⁷ During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully.

⁴⁸ Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it.

⁴⁹ Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

⁵⁰ Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On.

⁵¹ Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, “It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household.”

⁵² The second son he named Ephraim and said, “It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.”

⁵³ The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end,

⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food.

⁵⁵ *When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.”*

⁵⁶ *When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt.*

⁵⁷ *And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.*

Romans 8:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

“Hope. The anticipation that the God who listens in love will one day speak justice. The hope that some final fantasy will come to pass that will make everything sad untrue. Unpainful. That across rivers of sewage and blood will be a field of yellow flowers blooming. You can get lost there and still be unafraid. No one will chase you off of it. It’s yours. A father who loves you planted it for you. A mother who loves you watered it. And maybe there are other people there, but they are all kind. Or better than that, they are right with each other. They treat each other right. If you have that, maybe you keep moving forward.”

(Daniel Nayeri, *Everything Sad is Untrue*, p. 346-347.)