

March 1 & 2, 2025

A New Way | *Reconciliation Part II*

Genesis 44:32-45:9

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Joseph was beaten and sold into slavery by his own brothers. The ringleader was Judah. Years later Joseph finds himself in a powerful position in relationship to his brothers, and Joseph threatens to hold Benjamin, (the new favorite son of Jacob) as a slave. It is Judah's offer to take the place of Benjamin, to be the slave, that softens Joseph's heart. Reconciliation requires sacrifice. Sacrifice of pride, of anger of self-righteousness. When we trust the story, we are led to sacrifice for the purpose of reconciliation.

Reconciliation... reconciliation is hard work. But work that God calls us to do. Work that when we see it happen, we know that Word becomes flesh. So, in this worship series a few weeks ago Pastor Sarah started us off with Reconciliation Part 1. And now we have another sermon today called Reconciliation Part 2. Because reconciliation is hard work and it's something that we have work at over and over again.

Maybe one of the best reconciliation stories in all of Scripture is a story of Joseph. Joseph and his brothers. Now, if you remember a couple weeks ago when Jacob, the father of Joseph, was going to go see Esau, the uncle of Joseph. The moment that Jacob was going to meet Esau, the sword wielder. Jacob lines up his family in order of importance. He puts his more important family members in the back. In case Esau starts swinging his sword, then maybe his favorites can escape and get away. He puts Joseph at the very back. Joseph is Jacob's youngest his most favorite son. Now, can you imagine being the other kids in this family? Dad, seriously, that's how you're going to do this? I grew up with eight kids, 8 kids in my family, and I know my parents are watching this and I will have to say, I would have been in the back. I'm the favorite one. Just kidding. My dad would never line us up like that. But so, you see already in this story this jealousy that's happening, this animosity.

And last week we talked about how jealousy turned the brothers into pre-meditated murders, then kidnappers, then slavers, the liar and then conspiracy creators. One of the brothers, Judah says. You know what? We can't just throw in Joseph in the pit. We got to get something out of this. Why don't we sell him? So, they sell them into slavery.

Judah comes up with this whole plan. Judah betrays his family, betrays his brother Joseph, betrays his father and the rest of the brothers go along to go along with it. So, Joseph ends up in slavery in Egypt and Joseph ends up because of his ability to interpret dreams, becomes pharaoh's right-hand man. In all of Egypt Joseph rises from a slave to the second most powerful. Well, at some point in time, years later. Everybody has forgotten about Joseph, right? Jacob and his family experience a famine. And so, the family goes into Egypt to try to get food. And to get food they must ask the second most powerful person in Egypt, Joseph. But they don't recognize Joseph. Why would they? They beg and they beg for food. And Joseph plays with them. I mean, wouldn't you? He's going to mess with them a bit. It's payback time.

As the story plays out, Joseph ends up framing the youngest son, and the new favorite son, Benjamin. Benjamin is labeled a thief and Joseph is going to take Benjamin from the family. Benjamin will now be a slave. This favorite son, Benjamin. And at that moment a decision must be made. Benjamin is the new Joseph and how easy would it be for the brothers to go back to their father again and this time tell the truth, and they would be rid of a new favorite. But Judah doesn't do that. Things are different this time. Judah has grown. Judah has trusted the story and Judah does something that's remarkable.

Judah the slaver appeals to Joseph about his father's love for Benjamin. Judah tells Joseph about the pain that Jacob went through when he lost his first son. And then Judah does something amazing. He gives himself up to be the slave. He said, "I will take Benjamin's spot. Take me. Let him live. I will be your slave." Judah, who was willing to sell his son his brother Joseph into slavery, is now willing

to sell himself into slavery to save his little brother. Judah digs deep and discovers the highest form of love anyone can give to the other.

Sacrificial love. Sacrificial love is to sacrifice yourself for the other. That's what happens with grace, right? We all experience grace because Jesus sacrificed himself for us. It's the highest form of love. And even someone as despicable as Judah had been, Judah, he showed sacrificial love. And in that experience, with that witness, Joseph can no longer keep the secret. Joseph can no longer keep it together and Joseph sends all the servants' ways and breaks down with tears, reveals himself to his brothers and the reunion begins.

Reconciliation. We have two stories of reconciliation in this family. In the first we see that Jacob must make his way to Esau and Esau had to drop this sword. And the second, Judah must live into sacrificial love and Joseph had to recognize that sacrificial love. All four of those things are present for reconciliation. Like Jacob, someone must make their way to the other. Someone must take the first step, even if there is hesitation, even if they must protect themselves a bit. Then the other, like Esau needs to drop their sword and lead with a hug and a kiss.

Then like Judah, sacrificial love brings a level of vulnerability and like Joseph is recognized and reconciliation is born. What is causing you to hesitate? What are you protecting? How hard are you gripping your sword? Do you still think that swinging that sword is the right thing? Do you still think that swinging that sword will bring you healing and wholeness? How can you show sacrificial love and when that is given to you will you recognize it and drop the charade?

God is calling God's people to a new way. A new way of living with one another. A new way that brings reconciliation. A new way that brings new life. A new way that brings new possibilities. That's what trusting the story brings us.