



Lent reflection for March 4, 2024

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Genesis 44:18-34

Then Judah stepped up to him and said, “O my lord, let your servant please speak a word in my lord’s ears, and do not be angry with your servant, for you are like Pharaoh himself. My lord asked his servants, saying, ‘Have you a father or a brother?’ And we said to my lord, ‘We have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age. His brother is dead; he alone is left of his mother’s children, and his father loves him.’ Then you said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me, so that I may set my eyes on him.’ We said to my lord, ‘The boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.’ Then you said to your servants, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.’ When we went back to your servant my father we told him the words of my lord. And when our father said, ‘Go again; buy us a little food,’ we said, ‘We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother goes with us will we go down, for we cannot see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.’ Then your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons; one left me, and I said, Surely he has been torn to pieces, and I have never seen him since. If you take this one also from me and harm comes to him, you will bring down my gray hairs in sorrow to Sheol.’ Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father and the boy is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the boy’s life, when he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. For your servant became surety for the boy to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I will bear the blame in the sight of my father all my life.’ Now therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord in place of the boy, and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the suffering that would come upon my father.”

Today's Reflection is by Nancy Smith

When Judah begs Joseph to be made a slave in Benjamin's place, it shows a huge change of heart and character for Judah. This is the same man who sold his brother into slavery and then broke his father's heart, letting him believe Joseph was dead. Judah's concern for family, putting their welfare before his, is new and shows Judah has changed.

While I haven't sold a sibling to slavery, I have my share of sins, many from my youth. I was selfish and self-centered. I cringe at some of the things I said and did to my own sister as a young adult. Five years younger, she looked up to me and I treated her badly at times, as if I was somehow entitled.

Thankfully, the grace of God, aging and parenting have bettered me, made me much more interested in the welfare of others, especially my family. I can hardly relate to the woman who belittled her sister years ago. I've since apologized for these actions and our relationship is more equal. If anything I look up to her.

I can relate to Judah wanting to replace Benjamin. When one of my children has suffered I have wished I could take their place, endure the pain for them. Whether a breakup, surgery or bullying, I want to shield them from harm. Their welfare is more important than mine. Once, status and career were my identity. Now I value my relationships and how useful I am to others.

This passage in Genesis has helped me see how much I have grown. I understand that I am just one of God's many, not above or below. Change is possible, with God's help.



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