

Friday, February 23, 2018

Irony

Genesis 37-38

Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay a hand on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed.
Genesis 37:26-27

After all, he is our brother. As I read this passage, this sentence jumps out to me as very ironic. As a reader of the text, I can very easily see how these brothers could come to this point. For reasons only God knew, Joseph was to be specially chosen. It would be Joseph who God would use for His glory in miraculous ways and Joseph was given a glimpse of that in his dreams. Once the dreams were experienced and shared, everyone who was involved had choices as to how they would respond. I believe the text today shows the struggle of the brothers, although not in great detail. But in the end, God would use their sense of family for His purposes. Yet the irony I see is in their reasoning, though they do not see it. Their hatred of him could not be fully lived out because of the strong sense of family, but the call of family is not merely a call of restraint, it is a call to love. Jesus will come and make that very clear. I need to consider my relationship with my brothers and sisters in the Lord. Am I living out my relationship to all God's family in deep love or does it merely lead me to restraint? Are there times that it doesn't even do that?

My Father, please help me love my brothers and sisters as You love them. Remind me often that this is one of the great privileges of being in the family of God. Amen.

Saturday, February 24, 2018

How?

Genesis 39-40

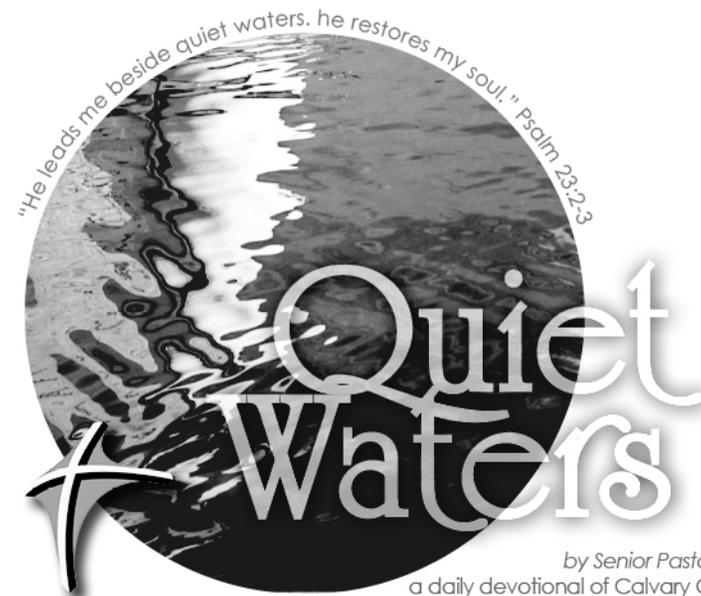
No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?

Genesis 39:9

What a great question, and one I think I would do very well to remember and ask often. Joseph is a testimony for me of great restraint. He makes 1 Corinthians 10:13 come alive! He knew well the way out of temptation. He rested in the provision of God. He had self-control. He understood that there were things that were off limits. He was satisfied with what he had been given. That allowed him to take the one way out—to run away from that which is forbidden. But it is in his reasoning, shared in the text, that I see what I truly need to learn well, by rehearsing the truth often. My sin is not personal. My sin is against God. My sin is wicked. Any sin. Any sin is me saying that I am not content with God and His provision, in whatever area of my life that may be. The LORD was with Joseph, and Joseph's response reveals that he was with the LORD. It is a beautiful thing. I long for that as well. How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God who is with me and in me?

Dear Lord, How? How is it that I can do such wicked things and sin against You? How is it that You are always so ready to forgive? I long for more. I long for victory over every sin. I long to show my love for You by fleeing from even the thought of a wicked act of sin. Please, Father, help me. Amen.

February 19 - 23, 2018



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, February 19, 2018

Jealous

Genesis 29-30

When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, "Give me children or I'll die!"

Genesis 30:1

This seems a bit dramatic. But then again, drama is what we see in these chapters of the Bible. It is the drama of a dysfunctional family. There is competition and jealousy and envy and negotiating and anger and positioning and bargaining. It is hard to find love and truth in the story. Rachel gets jealous and looks to Jacob to solve her problem. It would seem from the text that it was not for lack of trying that Rachel had not conceived. Jacob tells her that he is not the one who will open her womb—God is. It appears that Rachel went to every possible solution except God for what she wanted. And what she wanted became her idol. She had the love of Jacob—but that wasn't enough. She wanted sons. Even when she was given one, the name she gave him indicated that one would not be enough (30:24). She was jealous of Leah. Leah had what she longed for. Rachel had what Leah longed for—the love of Jacob. Both women were unhappy because they had not learned to be satisfied with what they had. Jealousy is ugly and makes me do ugly things. I must learn to be very content with what God has chosen to provide for me and celebrate with others for what He has chosen to provide for them.

Lord, help me be satisfied with Your provision. Please keep me from jealousy. Keep me from the mean spirit that jealousy raises up in me. Amen.

Tuesday, February 20, 2018

Struggled

Genesis 31-32

Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

Genesis 32:28

The text for today includes a great turning in Jacob's life and an establishment of the name of a nation. Jacob has struggled with God, not merely physically, but spiritually as well. As we see in the account, all the angel needed to do was touch Jacob and he was instantly wounded. Jacob is alone and concerned about what waits for him when he returns home. He didn't leave on the best terms. This night would signify a change in the character of Jacob that would be pronounced through the changing of a name. He wants assurance that God is with him as he returns to see Esau. He perseveres in the struggle and relents to God's control. I can learn from this. I can see my self-sufficiency as a struggle against recognizing the sovereignty of God in my life. I wrestle with God, not wanting to have my will fully submitted to Him. I wrestle, but I wonder if my wrestling isn't more with my self. I long to put my self to death so that I may live for Christ (Galatians 2:20). When uncertain moments and temptations come my way, I would do well to remember that I overcome when I relent and allow God to be in control. It is there that I find peace and purpose—living out my life in the new name God has for me.

Dear LORD, please help me overcome through Your power and presence in my life. Help me stop struggling against Your sweet control of my life. Amen.

Wednesday, February 21, 2018

Deceitfully

Genesis 33-34

Because their sister Dinah had been defiled, Jacob's sons replied deceitfully as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor.

Genesis 34:13

This text reveals that the sons learned from the father. As Jacob had solved problems through deception, so will his sons. His sons carry it much further, moving into violent measures. The sin escalates in the new generation. They rationalize their behavior as righteous judgment against what has happened to their sister. Shechem has treated Dinah as a prostitute in her brothers' eyes, though Shechem said he loved her. They use circumcision as a tool for destruction. That which was intended to be a sacred sign was manipulated for deceitful purposes. When the destruction was complete, the women and children were brought into Jacob's camp. What do you think they would have thought of Jacob's God after this type of deceit? In what ways am I tempted to act deceitfully? Are there any ways that I manipulate the gifts of God for my own purpose and vindication? God used the actions of Simeon and Levi to keep Israel pure, but that does not justify the measures. I must be very careful not to manipulate the truth of God in a way that would keep people from finding God!

Dear God, please help me be very careful not to use You or the knowledge You have given me about You as a weapon. Help me turn to You in all situations and trust in You as You lead and guide me in how to be a witness, even in very difficult situations. Amen.

Thursday, February 22, 2018

Prepare

Genesis 35-36

So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes. Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone."

Genesis 35:2-3

This is how to prepare a heart to worship God. Jacob will name the place El Bethel, which means "the God of the house of God." At first, he had seen the place as the house of God, now he sees and knows the God of the place. He is learning to worship differently and he is leading his family to worship differently. How will I prepare myself for worship this weekend? I will go to church—that which we designate as the house of the Lord—because of the times we have met Him there in mighty ways, but am I preparing myself to meet the God of the church? Am I going for what is in it for me or what I can bring to Him? I want to prepare myself inside and out to come and worship the Lord this weekend and every weekend.

Dear Lord, help me cleanse myself in preparation to come into Your house this weekend. Help me not take it lightly. Help me remember the times You have met me there and have changed my life. Stir in my heart great excitement to throw off everything that would hinder me from pure adoration of You with my brothers and sisters who are doing the same! Be magnified in me. Amen.