

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

GENESIS 50: 15-21

TRADITIONAL

TODAY'S OT TEXT IS IN THE STORY OF JOSEPH WHERE WE COME TO THE PART WHERE HIS FATHER HAS JUST DIED. AS SOON AS JACOB DIES, YOU NOTICE HIS BROTHERS SEND HIM A MESSAGE. BASICALLY, THE MESSAGE GOES, "DAD SAID BE NICE TO US." JOSEPH WEPT. DO YOU KNOW WHY JOSEPH WEPT? BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH HE HAD FORGIVEN THEM AND HE HAD EXPRESSED FORGIVENESS TO THEM FOR THEM SELLING HIM INTO SLAVERY AND SO ON, YOU CAN'T REBUILD A RELATIONSHIP LIKE THAT THAT HAS BEEN BROKEN. THE REWEAVING OF TRUST TAKES TIME, AND THEY DON'T TRUST HIM YET.

THE RECONCILIATION ISN'T COMPLETE. BECAUSE THERE'S STILL MORE WORK TO BE DONE. WHAT JOSEPH DOES IN VERSES 19-21 IS HE COMPLETES THE RECONCILIATION WITH THREE SENTENCES. THESE ARE MAGNIFICENT STATEMENTS. DEREK KIDNER WROTE A LITTLE COMMENTARY ON GENESIS THAT IS THE BASIS FOR AN AWFUL LOT OF WHAT I HAVE TO SAY HERE.

HE SAYS, "EACH SENTENCE OF HIS THREEFOLD REPLY IS A PINNACLE OF OLD TESTAMENT (AND NEW TESTAMENT) FAITH. TO LEAVE ALL THE RIGHTING OF ONE'S WRONGS TO GOD, TO SEE HIS PROVIDENCE IN MAN'S MALICE, AND TO REPAY EVIL NOT ONLY WITH FORGIVENESS BUT ALSO WITH PRACTICAL AFFECTION ARE ATTITUDES WHICH ANTICIPATE [CHRISTLIKENESS]."

THREE THINGS. THEY'RE THE THREE MARKS AND THE CHARACTER OF A PERSON WHO CAN REALLY LIVE IN THIS WORLD IN PEACE. THE THREE THINGS JOSEPH DOES ARE HE DOESN'T PLAY GOD (THAT'S VERSE 19), HE TAKES GOD'S VIEW (THAT'S VERSE 20), AND HE IMAGES GOD'S LOVE (THAT'S VERSE 21). LET'S LOOK AT THIS.

1. HE DOESN'T PLAY GOD

VERSE 19: "AM I IN THE PLACE OF GOD?" WHEN JOSEPH SAYS THIS, HE'S TAPPING INTO A VERY IMPORTANT THEME IN THE BIBLE. PUTTING YOURSELF IN THE PLACE OF GOD IS AT THE HEART OF ALMOST ALL OF OUR PROBLEMS

YOU PUT YOURSELF IN THE PLACE OF GOD BY ASSUMING YOU CAN BE YOUR OWN MORAL AUTHORITY. IN GENESIS 3 ADAM AND EVE ARE IN THE GARDEN, AND GOD ONLY GAVE THEM ONE COMMAND. DON'T EAT FROM THAT TREE." THAT WAS IT. WHEN THE SERPENT CAME AND SAID, "EAT FROM THE TREE AND YOU WILL BE AS GOD,"

SEE, IF YOU DECIDE WHAT IS RIGHT OR WRONG FOR YOU RATHER THAN FOLLOWING GOD'S WORD, YOU ARE PUTTING YOURSELF IN THE PLACE OF GOD.

THE SECOND WAY YOU CAN PUT YOURSELF IN THE PLACE OF GOD, PUT YOURSELF IN GOD'S CHAIR, OCCUPY THE PLACE ONLY GOD SHOULD OCCUPY, IS WHEN YOU LET PEOPLE LOOK TO YOU TO MEET THEIR DEEPEST NEEDS. THERE'S A PLACE IN 2 KINGS 5, WHERE NAAMAN, THE SYRIAN GENERAL WHO HAS LEPROSY, IS TOLD THERE'S POWER IN ISRAEL FOR HEALING. SO NAAMAN LOADS UP HIS WAGONS FILLED WITH GOLD AND SILVER, AND HE GOES TO THE KING OF ISRAEL AND SAYS, "I WOULD LIKE MY HEALING PLEASE." THE KING OF ISRAEL TEARS HIS CLOTHES AND SAYS, "AM I GOD? CAN I KILL OR MAKE ALIVE?"

DO YOU SEE WHAT HE'S DOING? HE'S ABSOLUTELY RIGHT. THE KING OF ISRAEL RIPS HIS CLOTHES AND SAYS, "LOOK, I'M A KING. THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS I CAN DO, BUT THE DEEPEST NEEDS YOU HAVE CAN ONLY BE MET IN GOD. DO NOT COME TO ME FOR WHAT ONLY GOD CAN DO. DO NOT ASK ME TO DO WHAT ONLY GOD CAN DO."

ULTIMATELY, YOUR DEEPEST NEEDS CAN ONLY BE MET AND YOUR DEEPEST PROBLEMS CAN ONLY BE SOLVED IN GOD.

LASTLY, THE WAY JOSEPH IS TALKING ABOUT IT AND USING IT IS YOU CAN PUT YOURSELF IN THE PLACE OF GOD SIMPLY BY KEEPING A GRUDGE. YOU SEE, THEY COME AND SAY, "PLEASE FORGIVE US," AND JOSEPH SAYS, "OF COURSE I'VE FORGIVEN YOU. AM I IN THE PLACE OF GOD?" WHAT HE'S SAYING IS EVERY PERSON WHO KEEPS A GRUDGE, EVERY PERSON WHO STAYS RESENTFUL, EVERY PERSON WHO HOLDS ONTO THEIR ANGER TOWARD SOMEONE WHO HAS WRONGED THEM, IS SITTING IN GOD'S SEAT.

THIS IS THE REASON GOD SAYS IN ROMANS 12, "VENGEANCE IS MINE; I WILL REPAY, SAITH THE LORD." IF YOU SIT IN JUDGMENT IN YOUR HEART ON SOMEBODY WHO HAS WRONGED YOU, DON'T YOU REALIZE, FIRST OF ALL, ONLY GOD HAS THE RIGHT TO SIT IN JUDGMENT? THE REST OF US ARE ALL SINNERS WHO DESERVE OUR OWN JUDGMENT. ONLY GOD HAS THE KNOWLEDGE TO SIT IN JUDGMENT.

BUT IF YOU REFUSE TO BE GOD, IF YOU REFUSE TO PUT YOURSELF IN THE PLACE OF GOD, TO BE YOUR OWN MORAL AUTHORITY OR LET PEOPLE LOOK TO YOU FOR THEIR DEEPEST NEEDS OR STAY IN JUDGMENT OVER PEOPLE, IT'S THE FASTEST WAY TO BECOME GODLY, HAPPY, WISE, GENEROUS. SO THE FIRST MARK OF A HEART THAT CAN MOVE IN THE WORLD AND LIVE IN THE WORLD IN PEACE, IS YOU AVOID PLAYING GOD.

2. HE TAKES GOD'S VIEW

IF YOU'RE HIKING AROUND THE MOUNTAINS AND YOU'RE IN A VALLEY AND YOU'RE LOST, STAYING IN THE VALLEY WON'T HELP. WHAT YOU NEED TO DO IS GET TO THE TOP OF SOME HILL OR PROMONTORY OR MOUNTAIN. GET UP HIGH, AND THEN YOU CAN SAY, "OH, OKAY. THERE'S WHERE WE CAME. OH, THERE'S THE TOWN WHERE WE'RE GOING. WE'D BETTER NOT GO THAT WAY BECAUSE THERE'S A RIDGE." IN OTHER WORDS, PERSPECTIVE. IF YOU GET THE VIEW FROM ON TOP, YOU'LL BE FINE. DOWN IN THE VALLEY YOU'RE JUST LOST.

HOW DO YOU LOOK AT THE TROUBLES OF YOUR LIFE? DO YOU LOOK AT YOUR TROUBLES FROM THE HUMAN DOWN IN THE VALLEY OR FROM THE TOP? DO YOU GET GOD'S VIEW? WHEN JOSEPH SAYS, "YOU HURT ME. YOU WRONGED ME. YOU MEANT IT FOR EVIL, BUT GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD," HE IS GIVING US SOMETHING ASTOUNDING: THE VIEW FROM THE TOP, NOT FROM THE VALLEY.

WHEN YOU HAVE GOD'S VIEW, YOU UNDERSTAND.

IT'S AN EITHER/OR. DOWN IN THE VALLEY, THE NORMAL HUMAN WAY TO LOOK AT TROUBLES IS, "IF I'M HAVING A GOOD LIFE, GOD IS GOOD. IF THINGS ARE GOING WELL, GOD IS GOOD. BUT IF THINGS ARE GOING BADLY, GOD IS BAD, OR MAYBE HE'S NOT THERE." SEE? IT'S EITHER/OR. EITHER LIFE IS GOOD AND GOD IS GOOD, OR LIFE IS BAD AND GOD IS BAD OR HE'S NOT THERE.

BUT NOT JOSEPH. JOSEPH'S PERSPECTIVE HOLDS TWO THINGS TOGETHER THAT THE HUMAN PERSPECTIVE CAN'T. HERE'S WHAT JOSEPH SAYS. "LIFE IS TERRIBLE, LIFE IS HARD, LIFE IS FILLED WITH PAIN, MY LIFE WAS FILLED WITH PAIN, BUT GOD IS GOOD

JOSEPH SAYS SOMETHING INCREDIBLY POWERFUL HERE. HE SAYS, "EVIL IS REAL; IT'S NOT AN ILLUSION. EVIL IS REAL, AND LIFE IS ORDINARILY FILLED WITH EVIL. DON'T EXPECT OTHERWISE. BUT GOD IS ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS WORKING FOR GOOD, EVEN THOUGH IT MAY BE YEARS OR CENTURIES OR NOT UNTIL THE LAST DAY OF HISTORY THAT WE'LL KNOW HOW."

3. HE IMAGES GOD'S LOVE

HE SAID, "'SO THEN, DON'T BE AFRAID. I WILL PROVIDE FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN.' AND HE REASSURED THEM AND SPOKE KINDLY TO THEM." HE IS LOVING HIS ENEMIES. HOW CAN HE DO THAT? THIS IS INCREDIBLY HARD. A LOT OF YOU ARE SAYING, "I CAN'T DO THAT." WELL HERE'S HOW HE CAN

DO IT. THE FIRST TWO POINTS ARE THE PREREQUISITES FOR THE THIRD POINT.

THE REASON HE'S ABLE TO LOVE HIS ENEMIES IS, FIRST, HE DOES NOT PUT HIMSELF IN GOD'S PLACE. HE'S THAT HUMBLE. SECOND, HE DOES HAVE GOD'S VIEW. HE'S THAT CONFIDENT. SEE, HE HAS THE HUMILITY YOU NEED TO LOVE YOUR ENEMIES (HE DOESN'T FEEL SUPERIOR TO THEM), BUT HE HAS THE CONFIDENCE TO KNOW GOD IS ALWAYS WORKING FOR GOOD, THAT NOBODY CAN REALLY TOUCH AND SINK HIM. IF YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, YOU HAVE TO HAVE ENORMOUS HUMILITY AND ENORMOUS CONFIDENCE. YOU PUT THOSE TOGETHER ...

OF COURSE, THE REASON HE HAD THESE WAS HE KNEW GOD HAD LOVED HIM THOUGH HE DIDN'T DESERVE IT. HE KNEW GOD HAD TAKEN CARE OF HIM EVEN THOUGH HE HAD BEEN A SPOILED BRAT. HE KNEW SOMETHING OF THE UNMERITED, UNDESERVED GRACE OF GOD. IT'S WHEN AND ONLY WHEN YOU SEE YOU DON'T TRY TO SAVE YOURSELF THROUGH GOOD WORKS BUT YOU HAVE RECEIVED UNMERITED GRACE OF GOD THAT, ON THE ONE HAND, IT HUMBLER YOU AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, IT ASSURES YOU.

JOSEPH DID NOT PUT HIMSELF IN THE PLACE OF GOD. HE RESISTED THE TEMPTATION. GOOD. AFTER ALL, HE WASN'T GOD. BUT JESUS WAS ALSO BETRAYED, AND JESUS WAS ALSO GIVEN A CUP OF SUFFERING, BUT JESUS CHRIST, THOUGH HE DESERVED TO BE IN THE PLACE OF GOD, DIDN'T DO IT. WHY? FOR YOU. YOU SEE, JOSEPH WAS GIVEN A CUP BY HIS BROTHERS BUT SAID, "THIS ISN'T SOMETHING MY BROTHERS REALLY GAVE ME; IT'S SOMETHING GOD GAVE ME." HE EMBRACED IT, AND AS A RESULT HE COULD FORGIVE THEM.

BUT JESUS CHRIST WAS GIVEN A CUP. THEY WERE BETRAYING HIM, THEY WERE KILLING HIM, BUT HE CALLED IT THE CUP OF THE FATHER. JESUS IS THE ULTIMATE JOSEPH. JESUS IS THE ULTIMATE EXAMPLE OF GOOD BEING BROUGHT OUT OF EVIL. JESUS IS THE ULTIMATE EXAMPLE OF PEOPLE MEANING IT FOR EVIL BUT GOD BRINGING GOOD OUT OF IT. JESUS SAYS,

“HERE’S THE GOOD. I DIED FOR YOU. I WAS IN THE PLACE OF GOD, BUT I DIDN’T PUT MYSELF IN THE PLACE OF GOD; I BECAME A SERVANT. I BECAME POOR. I DIED FOR YOU.”

THE CROSS, THE ULTIMATE EXAMPLE OF GOD BRINGING GOOD OUT OF EVIL, WILL MAKE YOU MUCH HUMBLER THAN JOSEPH WAS, BECAUSE YOU SEE MORE THAN JOSEPH JUST HOW SINFUL WE ARE. JOSEPH DIDN’T REALIZE GOD WOULD ACTUALLY HAVE TO DIE TO SAVE HIM. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT’LL MAKE YOU MORE CONFIDENT THAN JOSEPH WAS. WHEN YOU SEE WHAT JESUS CHRIST WAS WILLING TO DO FOR YOU, HOW MUCH MORE ASSURANCE DO YOU WANT THAT GOD MEANS EVERYTHING FOR YOUR GOOD?