



READ: Genesis 37:3-11, 17b-28, 31-33 (ESV)

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him. Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind. (Genesis 37:3-11)

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan. They saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him. They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams." But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it. Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him. Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. (Genesis 37:17b-28)

Then they took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, "This we have found; please identify whether it is your son's robe or not." And he identified it and said, "It is my son's robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces." (Genesis 37:31-33)

ENTER THE STORY:

Jacob had 12 sons, but he loved *ONE* son most of all...Joseph. And to show his love for Joseph, Jacob gave him a special, valuable, and colorful coat. This made Joseph's brothers extremely jealous and angry, which is certainly understandable.

No one likes to feel like they are less valued than someone else—especially when it's your own father, right?

This is the setup for this story...but we don't want to miss God's unseen and providential guidance that will affect the whole outcome of life for this family.

Joseph's brothers were *SO* mad at him that they decided to kill him and throw him in a pit. But when a better deal came by that would put a few silver coins in their pockets, they decided instead to sell him to some travelers passing by. After all...human trafficking at that time was a hot commodity – especially for the wealthy Egyptians, who enjoyed having servants. And that is where Joseph ended up; in the wealthiest civilization around. When the men who bought Joseph took him away, I'm sure his brothers thought they would never see him again. *"Good riddance to that arrogant dreamer!"*

But Joseph's story was only getting started. God had BIG plans for him, and he was orchestrating ALL of this, so that in the midst of Joseph's tragic beginnings, he would wind up exactly where God wanted him to be. First to Potiphar, an official in Pharaoh's court, then to a prison where he would meet former servants who worked very close to Pharaoh, and finally in front of Pharaoh himself, who would promote Joseph to a place of prominence where he would be in a position to save his family.

Even though it took a *LONG TIME* and lots of bad things were going to happen to Joseph along the way, God was right by his side, helping him and protecting him through it all...and Joseph *KNEW* it. This was his **SECRET!** He knew God was up to something big because of the dreams God had given him, so he chose to *TRUST* God and have a good attitude through every setback and discouraging event that came his way. He had the *correct* perspective about his trials!

Eventually, Joseph had a chance to come face to face with his own family, who had betrayed him. It is one thing to be betrayed by someone you don't know very well and to whom you have no allegiance, but when someone is betrayed by their own family, it is a different thing altogether. Let's see how he responds.

READ: Genesis 50:15-21 (ESV)

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you." And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them."

CHRISTMAS CONNECTION:

There is another story in the Bible about a man who was mistreated by his family, betrayed and sold for a few pieces of silver, and falsely accused and arrested even though he was innocent. He too trusted God and had a good attitude despite his circumstances and unfair treatment. But there was **ONE** key difference. Joseph went through bad things and eventually reached a place of power where he could save people from a physical need – a famine. Jesus *left* a place of power and prominence so he could go through horrible things, in order to be in a position to lay down his life in order to save people from a pervasive spiritual problem – sin.

Joseph's story reflects Jesus' story in some ways, but ultimately Jesus does what no one else can do...he reconciles us to his Father. And once Jesus finishes his work, we who were far off are now brought near. That is what we celebrate this Christmas!

PRAY: Heavenly Father, thank you so much for being with us through all of the bad things that happen in our world.

Will you help us to be like Joseph and trust you no matter what? Thank you for sending Jesus to save us from our sins and fill the hunger in our hearts for a Savior. Amen.