

Dear Friends,

Genesis 45: 1-15

The distance between Joseph and his brothers is beginning to break down. Judah has drawn near to Joseph and has spoken peaceably to him. Will this open Joseph to do the same?

Joseph cries out. The Hebrew says, "He gives his voice in weeping". He sends everyone away except his brothers. Then, he makes himself known to them. He has been a stranger to himself and to them. Now he is ready to tell the truth. He too will speak peaceably.

He says, "I am Joseph". He tells them to come closer to him, which they do. Then he says again, "I am Joseph" and he adds "Whom you sold into slavery". He comes clean about his trauma. This is the terrible truth that he has been carrying for years, that he has been pretending he has forgotten, but which has constantly gnawed away inside of him. "I am Joseph whom you sold into slavery. I am Joseph. You rejected me. You didn't want me. You got rid of me".

Joseph can immediately see the panic that this creates in his brothers. They must be thinking "It's Joseph. We did all that to him. Now we're for it". But Joseph does not want them to be afraid. He tells them not to be distressed or angry with themselves. He tells them how everything has been in God's hands and has been guided and directed by God. Bad things have happened, but God has been there working for the good. There's the point of this story. That's what you really need to remember. Bad things happen, but don't lose heart, don't stop trusting God, God is always with you making all things new. All these good words about God and God's providence, however, do not get these characters all the way to where they need to be. Something remains that is holding them back. The speech of the brothers is still not unlocked. They are not yet able to say anything to Joseph.

Then, when Joseph has finished talking, when his words have run out, he embraces Benjamin and he weeps and Benjamin weeps as well. Then he turns to all of his other brothers and he kisses them, each one in turn and he weeps upon them, each one in turn. And I think it's that that unlocks the brothers. It's not all the good words, important though they be. It's when each one is treated as an individual, when each one receives attention, when each one is accepted just as they are, then they can open up. It says that after that his brothers talked with him.

It's only a beginning. They have a long way to go. But they have drawn close to each other and begun to speak peaceably to each other, now they may begin to find healing.

And for you, I invite you to hear the good words of Joseph; do not lose heart, bad things happen, but God is still working and will make all things well. But don't just hear the words, receive the experience. God comes close to you, gives you attention, accepts you just as you are.

God bless you,

Tony

PS. I've heard from a couple of you that you would like us to shift our focus to New Testament themes. Next week, however, the set readings give us the beginning of the Moses story. I cannot resist that, so that's where we are going next. For beyond that however, I would like to know what you would find helpful. So, either way, continuing with our journey through the early books of the Bible or turning our attention to the New Testament? Let me know if you have any thoughts or feelings.