

Genesis (2011) 43B

- Joseph's brothers have returned to Egypt, and this time they've brought Benjamin
 - They need to buy more grain and then there's the issue of Simeon still in prison
 - Of course they don't know the Pharaoh's prime minister is actually Joseph in disguise
 - So they fear his response when they return with the money they found after they returned home from their original visit
 - Joseph has his own plans
 - He is waiting for the brothers to return so he can move them closer to reconciliation
 - At this point we might ask what would Joseph have done if the brothers never returned for Simeon?
 - Jacob was insistent that they wouldn't go back if it meant taking Benjamin
 - But Joseph never considered that option
 - He knows his family will return
 - The dreams the Lord gave him confirmed that one day his family would bow down before him
 - Joseph's faith in God's promises leaves him no doubt that the brothers would return sooner or later
 - And therefore, the Lord prolonged the famine to ensure Jacob would relent
- The brother's return to Egypt means they passed Joseph's second test...they are willing to return for Simeon even though it means they place themselves at risk
 - This is progress, but it doesn't fully address their sinful hearts
 - They are coming back for Simeon, but how can Joseph know if they want to save their brother or because they need grain

- Joseph needs to test them further to yield repentance
 - The next test won't be one of stress and trial, but of kindness, as we'll see today
- Finally, we've been observing that there is a larger story pictured in the account of Joseph
 - As Joseph pictures Christ, the brothers picture the nation of Israel
 - And just as the nation rejected their own Messiah, Joseph's brothers rejected him
 - But in a future day the nation will reconcile with their Messiah
 - And the Lord will work through trial and tribulation to bring about the environment where repentance can take place
 - So as we watch Joseph work his plan, we look for clues of how this story foretells how the Lord will bring Israel back to Himself in the last days

[Gen. 43:16](#) When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to his house steward, "Bring the men into the house, and slay an animal and make ready; for the men are to dine with me at noon."

[Gen. 43:17](#) So the man did as Joseph said, and brought the men to Joseph's house.

[Gen. 43:18](#) Now the men were afraid, because they were brought to Joseph's house; and they said, "It is because of the money that was returned in our sacks the first time that we are being brought in, that he may seek occasion against us and fall upon us, and take us for slaves with our donkeys."

[Gen. 43:19](#) So they came near to Joseph's house steward, and spoke to him at the entrance of the house,

[Gen. 43:20](#) and said, "Oh, my lord, we indeed came down the first time to buy food,

[Gen. 43:21](#) and it came about when we came to the lodging place, that we opened our sacks, and behold, each man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full. So we have brought it back in our hand.

[Gen. 43:22](#) "We have also brought down other money in our hand to buy food; we do not know who put our money in our sacks."

[Gen. 43:23](#) He said, "Be at ease, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them.

[Gen. 43:24](#) Then the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys fodder.

[Gen. 43:25](#) So they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon; for they had heard that they were to eat a meal there.

- As the brothers arrived in Egypt, they stand before Joseph again

- And Joseph sees Benjamin among them and realizes they did as Joseph required
 - So then Joseph begins the next part of his plan
 - Joseph commands that the men be assembled at Joseph's house to prepare for a meal at noon
- The prospect of going to the home of such a powerful man scared the brothers to death
 - Normally, it would be a high honor to receive such an invitation, but since they worry about the money switch, they fear the worst
 - They say to one another that the reason for the invitation is so that Joseph can take them as slaves in his home
 - This is an absurd assumption really
 - If Joseph had wanted to make them slaves, he could have done so with any pretense
 - No need to drag them all to his house and pretend to serve them a meal
 - He would have just ordered them bound in chains
 - Nevertheless, they can't imagine this is a good sign and they are terrified
- As they approach Joseph's house, they see a servant standing outside
 - So they think this must be a chance to plead their case before it's too late
 - Imagining the scene, it's a little comical to me
 - Imagine ten men in a mild panic all speaking quickly over one another pleading with this powerless servant
 - They tell the story of having paid for the grain but then opening their sacks to find the money was returned
 - They say they have brought the money back to prove they were honest men
 - Furthermore, they have brought new money for more grain

- And they have no idea how the original money was returned
- We can sympathize with the brothers' panic
 - We know they are guilty of far greater things than stealing, but in this case they're innocent of any crime
 - Still, they understand that justice is blind and a judge like Joseph would be unforgiving
 - So the fact that they were found with the money would be reason enough to presume their guilt and punish them
 - Because they had no choice but to return, they're hoping they can convince someone of their innocence
- They're seeking mercy from Joseph, and they're hoping the slave will plead their case for them before they are dragged off in chains
 - After they finish telling their story, the slave says something completely unexpected
 - First, he tells them to be at ease
 - The word for ease in Hebrew is *shalom*, which means peace
 - He tells the men to be at peace
 - Or another way to translate shalom is to be complete or to be well
 - He says you are complete
 - Secondly, the slave says do not fear
 - This slave knew his master to be a good and fair man
 - So he could confidently tell these ten men they had no reason to fear Joseph's judgment
 - Third, the slave says the money was returned by their God and the God of their father
 - This is quite a thing for an Egyptian to say
 - This man has obviously been introduced to the God of Israel, probably by Joseph

- We can't be sure if he was God fearing, but he seems to know that Joseph is working in union with the Lord
- But what he says is exactly true
 - The Lord is working in these circumstances
 - The brothers have been viewing the situation from a negative point of view
 - The mysterious return of the money was a terrible thing in their eyes
 - Who knows how many nights they've lost sleep because the money was returned to them
 - Yet from the beginning it was simply God blessing them, albeit to teach them a lesson
 - When we get right down to it, they got their grain for free
 - What a great blessing, yet because they were so far from the heart of the Lord, it never crossed their minds to consider that this was a blessing from God
 - They only considered that it was a curse and a calamity
 - Certainly, Joseph was working to prick their conscience
 - But he also wanted to bless his family by returning the money
- Finally, and most surprisingly, the slave says that he already has the brother's money
 - That phrase in Hebrew doesn't translate very well into English
 - His statement is better translated "I received your money"
 - In other words, someone else had paid the price for their grain
 - The someone was Joseph, obviously
 - Joseph paid the price for them
- With that, the servant brought the men into Joseph's house, brought Simeon to them and refreshed them with water, washed their feet and fed their donkeys

- The brothers aren't recorded as having said anything more, so we must assume they were stunned by what was happening
 - They were being comforted in the house of the second most powerful man on earth
 - They have learned that someone else paid the price for their grain, and they must have assumed it was Joseph who made the payment
 - They are not being treated as honored guests
- And they have learned that a feast has been prepared in their honor
 - In fact, at noon Joseph will appear to eat with them
 - These are a turn events that would have been unimaginable a short time earlier
 - Their heads must have been spinning about now
- Let's take a closer look at the story of Jesus and Israel pictured in this story
 - First, we know the brothers have been brought to this point so far because of great trial and stress
 - The famine alone made Jacob so desperate he was willing to place Benjamin in jeopardy
 - But then the capture of Simeon put added pressure on the brothers
 - This is exactly how the nation of Israel will be brought closer to a reconciliation with Jesus
 - Israel's reconciliation with the Lord begins with calamity and difficulty brought about by a worldwide Tribulation that God brings
 - Then in Tribulation, life for Israel is made even worse by the activity of the lawless one, as Paul calls the Antichrist
 - The Antichrist seeks to destroy Israel as a means of ending Christ's return
 - As we learned in our last lesson, the enemy knows that were Israel to cease to exist on Earth, then the Messiah could not return, according to Luke 13

- And during this time of persecution, the nation will retreat to safety in Jerusalem to prepare for the Antichrist's attack
 - But as the pressure of their ordeal seemed ready to bring the brothers to a breaking point, Joseph's kindness begins to bring them along
 - First, the brother's hear that their debts were paid
 - Then they receive the kind treatment of Joseph's servant
- Similarly, as the pressure of Tribulation reaches its height, the Lord will begin to show His kindness to His people, even before He reveals Himself to them
 - The Antichrist will attack Israel and cause them to retreat to Jerusalem for a final battle
 - But while Israel is under attack, they are supernaturally protected by the Lord in the city of Jerusalem
 - We read this account in Zechariah

[Zech. 12:1](#) The burden of the word of the LORD concerning Israel. Thus declares the LORD who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him,

[Zech. 12:2](#) "Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.

[Zech. 12:3](#) "It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.

[Zech. 12:4](#) "In that day," declares the LORD, "I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.

[Zech. 12:5](#) "Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, 'A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the LORD of hosts, their God.'

[Zech. 12:8](#) "In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD before them.

[Zech. 12:9](#) "And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

- Notice that Israel is living in Jerusalem in this future day
 - The time of Tribulation has drawn the nation back to the city God gave them

- We also know from Revelation that the nation will have opportunity to rebuild the temple during that time
 - So we can say the nation will once again return to God's house in the city of David
- This is pictured by the way the brothers are invited back to Joseph's house
 - Joseph pictures Christ, and therefore his home can be said to be a picture of the temple in Jerusalem
 - The brothers have been brought back to their Lord's house to prepare for a reconciliation
- And their first understanding of Joseph is provided by Joseph's servant
 - The brothers don't know Joseph's identity yet, but through Joseph's servant they're beginning to learn more about his heart
 - They're learning he's kind even to ungrateful men
 - This pictures how the Lord will begin to make Himself known to Israel in a future day
 - He will begin to reveal Himself by means of His servant, the Holy Spirit
 - And the Holy Spirit will testify to Israel that the Lord is a good and gracious Lord
 - As Jesus said

[Luke 6:35](#) "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to **ungrateful** and evil men.

- Because of the servant's testimony, the brothers begin to rethink their assumptions about Joseph
- Furthermore, Zechariah says the nations of the world under direction of the Antichrist attack Jerusalem, putting Israel at great fear
 - Notice that the attack is actually something God is orchestrating for His purposes in Israel
 - It may be the Antichrist leading the nations into battle

- But it is the Lord causing the war
- Then at a point near the end, when Israel is at their breaking point, the Lord begins to show His kindness to the nation from behind the scenes
 - He fights for them, giving them an advantage and causing them to withstand the enemy's attacks
 - But throughout the fighting, they don't see the Lord
 - They can sense He is working to strengthen them
 - They say they recognize that the Lord of host, their God has acted upon their behalf
- Likewise, though Joseph has yet to reveal himself, his brothers are even now experiencing the kindness of Joseph in an unexpected ways
 - They are being treated with honor, an honor they do not deserve
 - They have not earned Joseph's favor
 - If anything, they have earned his judgment
 - Nevertheless, they are receiving grace
 - The servant, who pictures the Holy Spirit, declares to them that the price for their grain was paid already
 - Then he washes their feet, gives them refreshment
 - He takes care of the brothers in Joseph's absence
 - And what is the basis for the brothers receiving grace?
 - We don't see the rest of the world receiving this grace as they come to Joseph for grain
 - No, it is only Joseph's family of Israel that receives this special grace in the time of difficulty
 - Joseph is one of their brothers and he is determined to win them back to himself
- Joseph suffered a penalty because of their sin against him, a penalty of 20 years
 - But now Joseph is determined to turn his suffering into an advantage for his family, as a means of reconciliation

- Likewise, Jesus suffered the penalty of Israel's rejection when He hung on the cross for their betrayal of Him
 - But His penalty also becomes the means for Jesus to forgive Israel's sins
 - And that forgiveness is coming, just as Joseph is preparing to reveal himself to his brothers

Gen. 43:26 When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present which was in their hand and bowed to the ground before him.

Gen. 43:27 Then he asked them about their welfare, and said, "Is your old father well, of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?"

Gen. 43:28 They said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive." They bowed down in homage.

Gen. 43:29 As he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, he said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?" And he said, "May God be gracious to you, my son."

Gen. 43:30 Joseph hurried out for he was deeply stirred over his brother, and he sought a place to weep; and he entered his chamber and wept there.

Gen. 43:31 Then he washed his face and came out; and he controlled himself and said, "Serve the meal."

Gen. 43:32 So they served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is loathsome to the Egyptians.

- Joseph arrives at noon, the brothers bring the present that Jacob had asked them to deliver
 - It must have looked so pathetic to Joseph
 - He had the best of the world at his disposal, and the gift that the brothers bring would have been very meager by comparison
 - Still, the mention of their father's gift leads Joseph to ask of Jacob's welfare
 - Joseph is told that Jacob is well
 - Then Joseph sees Benjamin again and the sight of the entire family gathered before him causes him to leave the room overtaken by emotion
- After composing himself, Joseph returns to eat with the men
 - They are seated for a meal but in a particular manner

- Joseph eats by himself
 - To the brothers, Joseph was an Egyptian, so they wouldn't eat with him
 - And to the Hamite Egyptians, Joseph was a Semite, so they wouldn't eat with him
- So then his brothers sit at another table
- And the Egyptians by themselves
 - The Hyksos rulers were Semites, and the Hamites refused to eat with Semites
- Even in this moment we see another picture of Jesus in the days of Tribulation
 - The world will reject Jesus and are offended by His message
 - So Jesus is not embraced by the world
 - Likewise, Christ's own people, the nation of Israel, don't receive Him until the end of Tribulation, though Christ is one of them
- Nevertheless, Joseph knows these men far better than they could ever imagine
 - And so at the meal, Joseph takes the opportunity to devise yet another test

[Gen. 43:33](#) Now they were seated before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, and the men looked at one another in astonishment. [Gen. 43:34](#) He took portions to them from his own table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

- The men are seated around a table in an order that Joseph assigns
 - The order is based on birth order, so that they are arranged around the table according to age
 - These men are all old enough now that it would have been impossible to discern their birth order by appearance
 - They were all born within a few years of one another
 - And the odds of guessing their birth order correctly was 40 million to one

- They look around at each other and realize that they are seated in a perfect birth order
 - They are amazed because they can't see how Joseph would have known this
 - Yet they know it can't be coincidence...their positions were selected intentionally
- Then the test came...Joseph showed Benjamin much more honor than his brothers
 - Benjamin receives 5x the portion of the brothers
 - A double portion might have been overlooked or dismissed as a sloppy servant
 - But five times was obviously intentional
 - Joseph's test is whether Benjamin's favored position still causes discontent in the brothers
 - Do they resent it or can they accept their brother regardless of how the father treats them all?
 - Do they revert to their old behaviors and attitudes?
- The Lord calls us to leave behind our old nature and old habits and old grudges when we come to dine with Him
 - We have been given an eternal inheritance and forgiveness from all our sins
 - We have been given so much more than we deserve
 - So we are told to leave behind our old nature as a show of thanks and obedience
 - And the Lord may test our hearts from time to time to see if we have moved beyond the old nature
 - The Lord was testing these brothers through Joseph, and we're told they ate and drank freely
 - It would appear the animosity is fading
 - The brothers are acting in love despite favoritism
 - They are willing to forgive and forget injustices

- And this sets the stage for Joseph to forgive them as well