

Joseph the Dreamer

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[0 : 00] We're going to look back at the story of Joseph a little bit today. It's a very famous story.

The musical Joseph and his Technicolor dreamcoat has made it one that's very famous, even if technically his coat probably wasn't multicolored and technically beautiful, but that's by the way. What we're trying to do in our morning worship is to take a fresh look at these very well-known children's stories that are in the children's Bible story books and what I really encourage you, because I'm and I also ask for your forgiveness, I'm taking a whole lot of things for granted today in terms of your knowledge of the story and if you don't know the story I'm really sorry about that today and I would encourage you to read the story, both maybe the chapter two before about Jacob and also then from 37 to 50 right through to the whole of the story of Joseph. Read it this week in your quiet times or read it when you get a spare moment, take it on your Bible app on your phone, read it with your family, with the children, tell them the story about Joseph. It's a tremendous story, there's so much in it and I simply apologize, I'm not going to be able to say much about the whole story today and you'll be disappointed, but there are lots of huge truths in this story that we have from the Old Testament and one of the most important truths I do believe in all of these stories that we're going to be looking at and I've already looked at is that God, there is a mystery to God that we are, we find it too easy to let go of.

We live in a society where we want to know everything about everyone and we need to and yet at the very heart of worship for us, the only heart of worship is at least at one level is a recognition of mystery, that this God is worth worshiping because He is greater and bigger and more than I am and there is much I don't understand about Him. Isaiah 55 verses 8 and 9 put all very well for us, He says, my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways, my ways declare the Lord, for His heavens is higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts and they're encapsulated as that recognition that we're not going to understand everything about God, there is mystery in this life and in our relationship with Him but there is also simplicity which enables us to trust Him, there is goodness that enables us to lean on Him. There's two things in this story I think that come across, I hope they come across, I'm not convinced that I've done it in such a way that they will but we'll pray for the Spirit to do that as well. One is grace, God's grace, God's love, God's covenant of grace that is being worked through the

Old Testament stories and also darkness and evil, both these threads are in the story of Joseph and indeed in all the stories in the Old Testament and indeed themes of the Bible. Well what we see with God's grace in these Old Testament stories, we remember that God saves, rescues people in the Old Testament the same way as we are rescued as Christians by God's covenant love and grace and by His work on our behalf, the Old Testament looking forward to what Jesus would do even if they couldn't understand His rescue fully and we looking back and what we notice about God's dealings with people in the Old Testament and we see it with Joseph is His outrageous faithfulness and His amazing love towards them and the lesson we take from it throughout the Old Testament is that our hope as Christians is not based on our goodness and on our merit and on our worthiness but grace is when we understand God's grace it's coming to that place where we see He, we are helpless and we are unworthy of His favour and love but He in His love, His perfect love has chosen to pour out grace as we have come to Him seeking salvation. It's not, even our obedience isn't about earning favour with God, our obedience isn't about making us right with God, it's simply about out of gratitude and desire living the way He wants us to live. He loves, His grace is there simply because He chooses perfectly to love and we struggle with that, we struggle with anything that says here, receive that. Can I give you something for that? Please let me write you a check, please, may I, I'll pay it back, I'll do the same to you some other time. We find it so hard in our lives to accept that God freely redeems us by His love. It requires a whole rewiring of our DNA. I

can't earn my favour with God, I can't make myself right with God, it is all of His grace. He needs to change us and that comes through in all His dealings with the Old Testament characters no more so than Joseph but also darkness, that's the second thing, darkness is very much part of this story and all of the stories of the Bible and our stories, isn't it? And what we're taught so often here is that darkness and evil as a source of darkness in a sense is often a mystery to us but it is not to God. We know that evil happens and often we're in the dark, you may be coming today in the dark, you may be broken by your own heart or by experiences externally to you that is an absolute mystery and you're crying out to God, why on earth are you doing what you're doing? The theme and the thread of the Old Testament clearly reminds us and teaches us that God has a purpose, God knows, God permits darkness and evil but also He plans for its ultimate destruction. I know within that there's mystery, I recognise that but until that day when we will see clearly even the darkest realities of our experiences in this life cry out for us to call to God and also to recognise that as believers and we struggle with this He often will take evil that happens and sin in our lives and it will turn it against itself to serve the good and that also is a hugely significant part of this story. So that grace and darkness and evil are very much part of the Bible's, the pattern that has been waved through the Bible and the great challenge for us in all of this is to trust God, isn't that what we are called to do as believers is to have faith, is to trust God to change our hearts, to deal with the darkness that we don't understand and the evil and believe in His promises that He is dealing with it and He's changing things and that the best is still to come and Joseph exemplifies that story. So Joseph, Genesis chapter 37 interestingly, the chapter and this whole account of what happens to Joseph and Egypt and everything else, it starts with this, these are the generations of Jacob. It doesn't say this is now Joseph's story, it says these are the generations of Jacob and the previous chapter says these are the generations of Esau and so what we find in all of the Old Testament stories that are recorded is that God and Genesis and Exodus and so are following family lines. They are following particular family lines that God is working through and as we've seen already, He is following through this, the line, the family lines of those in whom He is in relationship with the covenant lines, those that He is going to bless His people with and eventually bring the person of Jesus Christ.

[8 : 33] Right from Genesis 3 what He promises, the seed of the woman, her family line will be the line through which the Redeemer will come and in many ways the Old Testament is all about that, the protection and the history of these lines that lead us to Jesus Christ and so this is the story of Jacob through his son Joseph. Now what I want to do is I want to apply the two truths of grace and darkness to the story of, very quickly Jacob leading into the story of Joseph because the two are intertwined, father and son and Jacob finds grace really difficult in his life and now if you know the story of Jacob you'll know that because grace we find in the story of Jacob that grace he fights against grace because he wants to control everything, he wants to be in charge and he finds that God's promises and God's grace isn't enough for him. He's a bit of a nasty piece of work to be honest, he's not the nicest character in the Bible, he's not a great guy, he's pretty deceptive right from the beginning and right from the beginning he seems to want to manipulate the promise of God for him on his own terms. He knows that he's the one who is blessed by God even though he's not the firstborn, he's the firstborn and but when it comes to getting the birthright he deceives Esau, remember the story of deceiving Esau for a bowl of mints, he deceives Esau because

Esau is hungry and he sells his birthright and then we find that his life is this constant battle against God's purposes and God's grace and he wants to mould things, he wants to get married to Rachel but then Rachel's father deceives him and he gets married to Leah and then Rachel's barren and he has children by Leah and by his maid servants because they can't wait for God's promises and then he deceives Laban his father-in-law and Esau and him are separated, it's a tremendously disrupted story where God eventually wrestles with him and say, Luke, Jacob he says, just accept my grace and stop fighting against it and stop trying to control everything on your own terms, relinquish that control and see that I have it worked out and I have a purpose and a plan for your good and it takes him till he's an older man to recognise and understand that. For him he comes to the place where he recognises that grace is about handing over control and authority and trust to the living God. So he struggles with grace and with God's favour in his life and also I think that grace that he receives from God is easily misunderstood in his story particularly as it outworks in the life of Joseph. Jacob knows he's blessed by God, he knows he's part of God's favour people and he's in this covenant line but he begins to take that as his right and he begins to be graceless

and take for granted grace in his family, he doesn't treat his sons well, he clearly treats Joseph differently from all of them, Joseph is his pride and joy, Joseph is the firstborn of his beloved Rachel and so he treats Joseph much much better than all the other sons and it seems to be even as we see in the story here that at the age of, by the age of 17 he's given Joseph kind of authority over the other eleven brothers and he's like a foreman as it were over his brothers and the work they do, go and go and find out how your brothers are getting on with the sheep he says to Joseph and bring back a report to me and while you're there wear that beautiful cloak that I've given you, that tremendous sign of my approval, it's almost like he's saying I'm, it's a royal indication that I'm giving you this beautiful coat of, we'll call it a coat of many colors and because you're favored and you're special and you're the one that will receive all of God's favor, Joseph as he receives God's favor in this way I think also abuses and misunderstands it and he is a little bit cocky, probably a bit proud as a young man, did he really need to wear that coat when he went to visit his brothers who he knew it had aggravated them, it only exposed the fact that he was special, that he was treated differently, that he deserved honor and maybe the fact that God spoke to him through dreams gave him that sense of well I am much more important and I should be able to bring a bad report about my brother's back to my father, there's just a lack of understanding isn't there of grace in his life and the way he's thinking there, so there's this grace is fought against in this story because of the control that is to be relinquished in our lives but also so is grace just misunderstood and it's that application in their lives and grace in this story exposes the ugliness of sin in the hearts of humanity because whatever God is present

in his covenant love and his promises in his work among his people it exacerbates and it exposes the negativity towards him and sinfulness and the ugliness of sin in the world in which we live his covenant here is working through broken and divided and hate filled families it's it's it's very it doesn't pull any punches it's not a kind of sugary sweet story you know we think of Joseph and the amazing technicolor dreamcoat as a great and pleasant and lovely story and it comes around to that in many ways but there's ugliness there's jealousy there's sexual violence there's deceit there's pride there's murder and behind it all as I think we've seen already behind it all is the malevolence of Satan seeking to crush the family line crush the seed that God promises in Genesis 3 the pernicious destruction of God's people so that there won't be a savior in the future however he conceives of that savior coming and many of the Old Testament stories follow that line of God protecting against the dark malevolent unseen forces that seek to destroy his work and his promises so more than that in the ugliness of sin we see clearly in this story and many others that what is darkness to us and to the the players in the story Jacob and Joseph and the brothers is not darkness to God and that he super intends what is evil and turns it around and molds it into his purposes for good there's one very if I if I could go old-fashioned and just take one word from this passage that is really important and hope that's not a misunderstanding of the chapter there's one word in this chapter I wonder if you could guess which word is really significant in this chapter it's right at the end meanwhile so that's a really significant word in this chapter meanwhile verse 36 because what that says is Jacob is grieving Jacob is completely broken he's just been given this beautiful quote that he gave to his son covered in blood his beloved son is gone is dead where's the blessing where's the usefulness of belonging to God I've lost everything there's no hope he has nothing left in life he can't understand it he's going to go down to his grave in darkness because he's lost his beloved son isn't that an interesting old testament theme Kori mentioned it last week when we we looked at the story last week of Abraham and if go through the Bible in your thoughts and think of the old testament stories where beloved sons are lost or potentially lost no good can come of it life is not worth living

God says meanwhile the midnights had sold them in Egypt to Potiphar he wasn't dead there's an there's a there's an underlying story here God is at work there's there's a different there's a different layer that Jacob can't see the brothers don't really understand and Joseph doesn't know what's going on but at the end of the story we begin to see how God is working and Joseph understands at the end of the story that God was working even in the evil even in the darkness of the events Genesis 50:20 to 21 when Jacob Joseph meets his brothers again again and forgives him as for you he said you meant evil against me but God meant it for good to bring about that many people should be kept alive as they are today you see it becomes a rescue story you know the whole story I just don't have the time to go through the story but if you don't know it please read it how God uses Joseph to become the superintendent of Egypt to rescue his people and to bless the world do not fear I will provide for you on your little ones thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them these are some

of the greatest words in the Bible when you know what Joseph has been through with his brothers God's intention was different for Joseph is he Joseph think back to the story Joseph was rejected by his eleven brothers he was separated from his beloved father he was flung into a pit he was left for dead he was enslaved then eventually things got a bit better and he was accused of of basically being a rapist and he was put back in prison and it rose up a little bit it's like a chart goes up and down up and down and he dreams the guys that are in prison with him and they get released and he says remember me to the pharaoh and he's forgotten he's forgotten and years he's rotting in a prison cell knock after knock after knock in his life what could what could it have been like for him is this a life of blessing is this a life of covenant where is God in all of this what kind of God is this that would allow these things to happen but as time goes on years and years later in Egypt he sees his family a powerful passage when he weeps he has to go out of the room and he weeps because he sees his brothers and he's all dolled up with all his gear because he's the he's in Egypt he's a prince and he's he's he can't be recognized and then he sees his father and then he brings his people to Goshen fruitful part of the land and they're protected and and all the people of Egypt are given protection and food and provision through the famine because of what happened in Joseph's life till the point where he can come and forgive if somebody pulled him out of that pit on day one do you think he could have said what he said at the end was it would he be able to have forgiven his brothers at that stage yet he saw that God was working very much differently to what he had expected and his misunderstanding of grace I think was molded and changed over these years of suffering and imprisonment and rejection so much so that he also knew that even in his life as an old man there was yet more promises to come Hebrews 11 the verse we read in Hebrews 11 which speaks about the men of faith by faith Joseph at the end of his life made mention of the Exodus this is hundreds of years before the Exodus the Exodus there's a lot and gave directions concerning his bones because he didn't want to remain he knew there was a promised land he knew there was something different he knew God still had purposes and faith was at work it's an outstanding story that speaks both of the pain and the wrestling and the reality it doesn't sugarcoat nor does it minimize the reality of suffering and pain far from it but it speaks about a God who super intends or purposes that we simply often don't understand and that we are asked to trust and it speaks of grace which we have far more privilege of knowing and understanding because we've seen his greatest work of grace so as I close bring it to an end just by dipping into the story we recognize that in the story of Joseph and do do take time if you have time to read it again and there's so much even just as Corrie was reading this chapter again there's so much haven't even begun to look at in the chapter but there's a it's a graphic description it's a pictorial description for us in our Christian lives or if you're not a Christian I hope that you'll be challenged by the picture that is given of the way God deals with humanity first of all what what sin is like you know we often yeah we hate that word and we all just think sin is whatever we think it is and we think we're not really that bad or we think we're really bad or whatever it might be but I think one of the the realities that we see of sin here is even in our Christian lives it's that desire within us to control God even with his promises so that we actually don't really need to trust him we want him on our terms we want still to be the boss we'll take the favors and we'll take the insurance policy at the end of time but we actually we're the boss and when things go wrong we can just stick our fingers up about God and say what kind of God are you when evil comes we think oh well there's no point in believing this God he's untrustworthy he is not doing he's not blessing me for good how often could Jacob or Joseph have made that accusation of God and yet we're given the account of their lives to remind us that there's mystery and things aren't always just as they seem but often we're not believing in his promise that evil will be turned on its head when we entrust our lives to him and that death will have its sting removed from us in life we see in the

[24 : 31] Bible clearly that when we seek to control and be sovereign in our own lives what it brings with the division it brings into families the relationships the jealousies the pride dare I say it sometimes it's worse even in the church than anywhere else where we misunderstand grace where we abuse grace as often it was in God's word and if we look at our own hearts and think of our own lives how often we abuse it so that sometimes you say hey does it matter how we live doesn't matter how I speak to other people God don't forgive me anyway it's okay and when we take it and we use it to become proud or to become self-righteous or to become judgmental or to become unbelieving of him that is the reality of sin in our own hearts we will justify staying away from Jesus Christ and His grace and falling on our knees we will justify our own moral perfection and we will justify not bowing the knee to Jesus Christ as Lord and God that's what sin does and behind it

always this malevolent power of darkness that wants to take us away from the covenant wants us to take us away from grace and from God wants us to argue against him wants us to be self-righteous wants us to be in control is nothing what the battle we face just being in control so that we don't actually trust that sin but I think it's a graphic also description of covenant promise this determination from Genesis to Revelation of God's determination to save us and how in the Old Testament you've got this line of promise coming up to Calvary to Mary giving birth to Jesus and the line of descendant that goes back to Adam and this great reality of the royal line of God being outworked till we come to the greatest son to the greatest prince to Jesus Christ and on the cross where we see all fuse together the darkness and the grace where we see both Satan's greatest moment and his worst moment his birth the darkest moment of humanity and also the brightest moment and the greatest paradox of evil intent involuntary serving the greatest good so that where Satan wanted to kill the son and get rid of the father and his power it becomes the moment of his destruction because the son will not stay dead the son will not be defeated but rises again on the third day so that good is victorious over evil and Jesus is the supreme king before whom we bow even in all the mystery of life and of providence and of God being just so much bigger and his ways not been our ways and his plans not been our plans we need to stop just fitting him into our box and then denying him when he doesn't take all the boxes that we want from him he's far greater than Joseph now there are parallels between Joseph and Jesus he's not he's not set aside as a type of Christ in the Old Testament in the New Testament but he's a beloved son he's a servant king he's rejected by his own it's a royal seed in many ways to whom the others will bow he authors forgiveness and reconciliation within his family so he does point towards the greater Jesus the greater king as does Moses as does David all of them beginning to give us a picture of the Son of God Jesus Christ that were the ultimate grace

and forgiveness and hope and rescue is found the great words of peace the words that Joseph gave to his brothers or the words you and I can experience with our great brother Jesus Christ and our father God with the promise of a future and a homeland and a day when evil will be taken every eye will be wiped clean of the tears that we all experience in our journey here so it speaks about the covenant promise and the Old Testament stories and the story of Joseph clearly does and lastly I think it also begins to make clearer for us the nature of faith that faith is about trusting in what for us trusting in what Jesus has already done what is fulfilled that Joseph could never see but only look forward to but also the promises of what he will still do what he promises to do in our lives because of what he's done already and what he will return to do where every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and the nature of faith doesn't it doesn't involve that relinquishing of control of our lives to the one who knows even when we don't who is good even when we simply can't grasp why he is allowing what he allows to happen personally or in wider world terms it's believing that he has a purpose and that he is good and we can be changed even in our own hearts and sometimes we look in the mirror I don't know about you but I look in the mirror sometimes and see beyond my aging visage and see the darkness of my own heart and think when will I ever change and it's believing that Christ can change us and that can mold us so that we aren't greedy and selfish and lustful and proud and self-righteous and in control and that we see our Christian lives not just as lives to survive but lives of redemption allowing him to redeem us and I mentioned it when I prayed earlier on about confession

I really felt strongly about that when I was walking in this morning that so often what is it we share when we speak when we you know come to church we share we you know we speak to people we sit beside them what is it that we in our lives share is it our distance from one another is it our moans our groans our complaints is it as grace is the joy and peace of salvation evident in our in our interactions with each other in our subsuming hearts of forgiving love when other people fall short of our standards and when we understand how God has dealt in grace with us in our lives and recognizing actually that we might be greatly burdened we might have deep troubles in our hearts but God is good and God knows we're still not home there's better still to come remember if you take nothing from this apart from one word take meanwhile remember in your life there's a meanwhile there's a spiritual work going on that you may there's a spiritual plan being outworked that God may not have revealed to you yet it's a meanwhile that he knows and he's already shown his love he can't show his love more to you than what he's given greater love is no man in this they lay down his life when he's done that for you and so you may have today simply to accept a meanwhile because he is good and because he loves you the nature of faith is radical and it's

important that we learn from the great and glorious God who doesn't try and sugarcoat life but reveals his great purposes and plans that one day we will experience in its fullness and if you don't know him you're living in the shadowlands and you're missing out on the greatest of life and the goodness of God and you're under his hand of judgment and he's willing to take that and lay it on his own son on himself fully as you trust in him let's pray and give thanks to him for his grace father god we ask and pray that you would bless your word to us and bless this great story of jacob give us time to this week maybe today later on or some other times in the week when we can read the whole story when we can see it in the trajectory that you give it in scripture we can understand it in its context around about the covenant families the lines we know it's not a history of the world we know it's not a history of all time we know it's a specific history of of the line from eve through to Jesus a line that malevolently was constantly being attacked to stop the redeemer we rejoice that you've come we pray for your holy spirit to transform our lives and to enable us to see by faith your grace forgive us when we misunderstand or misappropriate it and lord when particularly if any are in real darkness today or downcast or depressed or guilty or struggling with circumstances that they think god can't possibly be because of them may they hear your mean file and may they look to the cross for jesus sake amen