Pastor Richard Allen Farmer

Crossroads Church

5587 Redan Rd.

Stone Mountain, GA 30088

770.469.9069

No Ordinary Joe, Part 18

“A Ruler Revealed”

Text: Genesis 45:1-28

When I was about eight or nine years old, I went to kiss my grandfather. He redirected me and he shook my hand and said, “Men shake hands”. The message was, “Men don’t kiss”. I later became very European and began to kiss the men I love, because that was more in line with who I was becoming. By the time my grandfather died, when I was in my late thirties, I was greeting my grandfather with a kiss and he was not resisting it.

“Men don’t kiss”. That’s a practice/tradition which should be challenged.

Here’s another one: “Men don't cry”

Joseph is a man who is not ashamed to cry (cf. 42:24; 43:30; 45:2; 45:14-15; 46:29; 50:1; 50:17) both privately and publicly.

“I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt” is both a revelation and an indictment. Listen to his “I’m still here” statement. The one they counted out. The dreamer whom they sold into slavery is now standing, in power. The one they described as a non-person (42:13) is not only alive but is thriving.

Joseph

1. Extends a kindness his brothers do not deserve. Let’s call it **grace** (45:10-11) Joseph could have exacted vengeance on these brothers and brought the hammer down! Instead, he gives them what they do not deserve. That is the very definition of grace. It reminds me of our spiritual state before we got serious about Jesus. Paul writes to a young pastor named Titus:

*For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.* ***4****But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,* ***5****not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*, (Titus 3:3-5, NKJV)

We have done nothing so good that God should rescue us. The brothers of Joseph have done nothing that would warrant Joseph being kind to them. It’s grace.

Note that the text (10-11) has Joseph providing not only food, but a place and Joseph’s presence. It’s sound like the passage in John 14 wherein Jesus says, *I go to prepare a place for you that where I am you may be also.* That’s grace.

It is the lavishing of blessing on the undeserving.

1. Articulates a divine connection the brothers had not seen. Let’s call it **witness or testimony.** In the Pentecostal tradition we have a chorus, *I believe I’ll testify for Jesus while I have this chance. I may not have this chance no more* (pardon the double negatives). Joseph testifies to the clear working of God in this whole drama, this saga. Look at verses 5-7. Note the careful language: You *sold* me...God *sent* me. (5). Note three different ways Joseph frames the commissioning by God: God sent me before you to preserve life (5b); God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth (7); God has made me a father, a lord, a ruler (8). This is Joseph’s dream being fulfilled and fleshed out. There were two different agendas at play, in this drama. The brothers were up to something....So was God!
2. Gives his brothers a mission they can accomplish. Let’s call it **the assignment.**(45:13)

The brothers are not simply to enjoy the generosity of Joseph. No, they are to go back to Canaan and tell their father what they saw. It would have been most inappropriate for the brothers to experience this outrageous kindness, this grace, and not spill the details when they got home to Canaan. They are to tell the glory story (v.13). Every one of us has a spiritual story to tell. Rehearse it. Be prepared to tell it at a moment’s notice. Joseph has a clear story of what God has been doing (v. 5-7). Now the brothers are to tell *their* story of divine intervention; of a way being made out of no way; of provisions in the midst of famine. In the gospels there is story of a demon-possessed man who is delivered from his demons by Jesus. He wants to then travel with Jesus, but Jesus gives him an assignment. Cf. Mark 5:18-19. This newly delivered man, like the brothers in the Joseph saga, is to tell the glory story.

In his book, *Exploring Genesis*, John Phillips draws an analogy between what Joseph’s brothers might say when they returned to their father and what we might say to God about Christ.

*“Father we have come to tell you about your beloved. First, we confess that once we hated him, cast him out, rejected him, and sold him for the price of a slave. We saw his woe and agony, Father, and turned our backs upon him. But we have seen him! He has been raised on high and given a name above every name. The world is at his feet, he controls all things, people are coming to him from the ends of the earth! Father, your beloved is altogether lovely, the chiefest among ten thousand. We did not see beauty in him before, but now we do, such beauty as takes our breath away! And what can we say of his grace? He has forgiven all our sins, he even said God meant it unto good! He has made our very guilt minister both to his glory and to our good. And his desire is that where he is, there we might be also.”* (p. 341)

Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, but not as a vengeful, hateful, bitter man. No, at this point Joseph is what I hope we’ll all aspire to become. He is a dispenser of grace and a representative of a loving Creator God who had a plan for Joe. When we know God is at work in us, we need not spend *any* time trying to get even with those who have wronged us. We don't track our haters; we track our God.

Amen