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No Ordinary Joe, Part 17

“A Thin Veil and a Thick Plot”

Text: Genesis 42:5-24

I would love to have been in the room when Joseph, whose brothers wanted him dead and who sold him, like a piece of meat, to nomadic Midianites (37:28), saw those brothers. By now, Joseph is THE MAN. Joseph is large and in charge. The brothers, on the other hand, are in Egypt because there is severe famine in Canaan, where they live.

All ten of the older sons of Jacob— Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Gad, Asher, Dan, and Naphtali—are given a brief audience with the prime minister of Egypt.

Clearly, says the text, the brothers don’t recognize Joseph (42:7-8). Joseph chooses to hide his identity from them. In fact, he speaks rudely to his brothers (42:7) as he baits them and peppers his conversation with a little bit of “So, you need me now, huh?”

Joseph wants to see Benjamin, the youngest, who was left at home.

Joseph is overcome by emotion as he sees his brothers (v. 23-24). Yes, I know they wronged him, but Joseph still *loves* his brothers. People in our families who hurt us are still our family! The plot thickens.

1. Joseph *sees* his brothers (v. 7a)

Veiled emotion. Speaks through interpreter and doesn't reveal himself.

1. Joseph *addresses* his brother (v. 7b-23)

Is not vengeful.

1. Joseph *turns away from* his brothers (v. 24)

Joseph has emotions, as do we all. He is not afraid to cry (42:24; 45:1-2; 50:1)

**Conclusion**

Three lessons:

1. Blessed are those who have the *opportunity* to exact vengeance and do not (50:15). Joseph actually showed grace and mercy to his hungry brothers (v. 25). These brothers have referred to Joseph as a non-person (v. 13). They don't know whether he is living or dead. Joseph is not *trying* to find reasons to hate his brothers. In fact, Joseph names his first son Manasseh, meaning *Making* Forgetful (41.51). God has caused Joseph, as this plot thickens, to not remember all the negative exchanges between him and his brothers.
2. Blessed are those who make an effort to be at peace with family members.

**Illus.**

From [globalnews.ca](http://globalnews.ca):

Joanne Lawrence stopped talking to her parent’s right before she got married.

In 2014, the 28-year-old sent a text message to her father letting him know that he wouldn’t be walking her down the aisle. And as hard as it was, the Toronto woman knew she had to make the decision for her own mental health.

“My parents have always been physically, mentally and financially abusive to my brother, myself and each other,” she told Global News. “Going through diaries from when I was 10, I wrote about the moment I would cut them out and never look back.”

Clearly, Joseph is eager to salvage the broken relationship that exists between him and his brothers. Joseph is *not* advocating family estrangement. In addition to God working on Joseph, Joseph himself makes a conscious decision to not harbor the negativity from his brothers. Joseph is not merely at peace. He is a peace*maker* (Matthew 5:9).

C. Blessed are those who see, and acknowledge, the presence and action of God in their circumstances (50:20).

**Closing**

All of this would be impossible without the aid of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost reminds of the empowering presence of God in the believer, so that we can become who and what we are destined to become. When Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would descend upon the church, He framed that coming in the language of future possibility:

*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and* ***you shall be...*** (Acts 1:8).

We who have longed to be reconnected to our murderous, rude, unkind brothers and sisters, have help from on high. The Spirit of God, sent at Pentecost, will help the Josephs among us, that we might forgive our enemies, even if they have the same last name as we, even if we have the same mother and/or father, even if we were raised in the same house. The same God who was with Joseph and who showed up as Enabling Power at Pentecost is available to us!

Amen