Guest Speaker

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Crossroads Church

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***“Frozen Dreams and Crazy Things”***

Text: Genesis 42:9a

 Introduction: We are in the season that Americans gather together to remember things, places, events, and people to be thankful for. We have our traditions for celebrating. It is generally a happy time that we look forward to. But it is not happy for everyone. Have you ever been in a situation in your life that caused you to forget about the goodness and faithfulness of God? Have you ever waited so long for an answer to prayer that you forgot what you prayed? Has a vision in your life ever been so delayed that dust has collected as it sits on life’s proverbial bookshelf, obscuring that vision from your sight?

Our main character for today's text could probably relate to our world now. Maybe it is better said that we can relate to his world then. Joseph was dealing with a global disruption that was changing the very way of life for all of humanity. We call our disruption Covid 19. The Bible calls his disruption a famine. Regardless of what you call it, it is, and it was a disruption. Here is the thing about disruptions. Disruptions always disrupt our plans, but they always seem to set the stage for God’s plans. Let me say that again. Disruptions always disrupt our plans, but they always seem to set the stage for God’s plans.

At some point we all have dreams, visions, imaginations of what could be, should be, or what we desire to be. I remember as a young boy having dreams the size of the universe. I wanted to be a fighter pilot, the first NBA player from my town, a high-powered lawyer and businessman. I also remember having dreams of getting married to the perfect woman and having a family. I'm sure that may sound odd to some people. A little boy dreaming of a family. I guess that is a testament to the type of family I grew up in. In my eyes, I had the perfect upbringing. Little did I know that my parents came to faith just before I was born and while I was an infant. Those decisions have made all the difference in the world to me. I will come back to that story in just a moment.

I want to paint a picture for you of a utopian experience. It is a thing of Hollywood aspirations. I lived a life where most of the struggles I experienced were related to my own choices. What I mean by that is most of the adversity I faced in my life came through my pursuit of athletics or other extracurricular activities. Hardship in my life came from having to run line drills or get up at 5 am to go to strength and conditioning. I didn't have to worry about where food was going to come from nor was I ever concerned about my safety leaving and returning to my home. I lived in what I will call a Holy Ghost induced bubble. It was like the Lord placed me in my own little thatched basket and sent me down the river with an amazing village to row, row, row my boat gently down the stream. While the predator of racism lurked in the waters like crocodiles in the Nile River, my village kept them at bay for me to only experience them in a minor way for most of my life.

As I grew up, I began to excel. Leadership came natural to me and while my athletic career did not reach the level I wanted it to, I mostly experienced success in life. This seemed to follow me to college where God met me in a profound way at Hampton university. I joined a ministry and quickly rose through the ranks of leadership. My wife and I would eventually become the first couple from our church to be sent out as church planters and missionaries. We traveled to Africa to represent the international Youth directors of an organization that had hundreds of churches across Africa. We spoke at the Annual training conference ministering to thousands of people. We traveled across Kenya preaching to and praying for Kenyan youth, some of whom are now influencing the future of sustainable energy on the continent of Africa.

We inspired doctors to start clinics, encouraged people experiencing infertility, prayed for the sick to recover and much, much more. In many ways we experienced a life of favor and blessing. Time would fail me to speak of the illustrious athlete career of my wife who was a junior All American and was recruited by every major Division track program in America. She went on to help build a dynasty at Hampton University setting 11 school records and experiencing team Championships between indoor and outdoor track. She was an MVP and could have pursued the Olympics immediately out of college like many of her teammates who did and actually become Olympians and won medals. To top of all of that, she was encouraged to pursue graduate studies after nearly converting several of her English literature professors with her senior thesis about the divine logos who literally brought freedom to African American Slaves. I don't have time to tell you all about our adventures, but what I want to do is let you know that my wife and I in many ways can relate to the main character of our text today.

Like Joseph, I had lived a privileged life of favor and blessing. I had not known hardness in my life. I seemingly only knew how to win, well except for our basketball team. We experienced our share of losses. This is the story of Joseph. The favorite son of Jacob. Now we know Jacob had encountered and conjured up enough drama for his ancestors and descendants in one lifetime. Joseph, however, was given the royal treatment. He did not have to partake in the rugged chores of tending the flock like his brothers. He was shielded from the temptations of being far from home. He was always close to his father being trained for a purpose not yet known to him. The path of his life was crafted by Yahweh, and I am sure neither his parents nor his siblings had any idea how significant their actions would play in his formation.

I want to take a pause for a moment to encourage some of you all. Let me finish the story I began earlier in our message. Two providential events occurred after the last time we were together. First, I was blessed to speak with someone about sharing the faith with the next generation and they asked the question, “What do you do when you have done all of that and the young people in your life still don't find their way in Christ?” I was gripped by this question because I knew it came from an intimate place. A place of experience. This person had lived a life of faithfulness to God and yet was not seeing the answers to prayers for the next generation. They were experiencing a disruption. Frozen dreams. So, what do you do then? Have you ever been at that place? The place where it seems like you have done everything required of you. You have passed every test and kept a good attitude. You have lived upright before the Lord. Yet still, you are not seeing the fruit of your faithfulness in the next generations. What do we do then? I will come back to this question before we leave today.

The second providential event that occurred was I received a call from an Elder at this church who connected me with a ministry that I am now working for as a trainer to equip families to pass their faith to the next generation. This ministry has developed a plan to help families trace their spiritual lineage, preserve it, and pass it to the next generation. I truly believe that this opportunity came as a result of sharing with you all the last time I was here. These two events caused me to think deeply about how to respond to the question: “what do we do when we have done all we can? What do we do when we have done all that we are supposed to do? These thoughts led me to Joseph. A young man with the favor of Yahweh on his life. He had the affection of his father. He received the finest training in the land. He was more than likely going to end up running the family business. Then all of a sudden something happened. Joseph experienced what my wife preached about a few weeks ago, Divine disruption. Joseph was ascending the proverbial ladder of success in life. He had two dreams of glory and elevation. He saw himself raised above all of his kinfolks. He could feel greatness rising inside of him. He was sure of the brightness of his future. He knew Yahweh was going to hear and answer his prayers. Suddenly, without warning, life violently snatched Joseph off Jacob's ladder and cast him into a pit. This was the beginning of a 13-year journey in the shadows. His life shattered. His dreams frozen.

It is in the shadowy tundra of life that God forges faith in us. We are presented with many choices. Too many to name. But they all come down to a few basic decisions. We can give up on God and abandon our dreams. Or we can trust God as he leads through life’s craziest things.

Look at Joseph. God sends him two amazing dreams. Then his brothers decide to kill him for dreams he didn't chose to have. Now grant it, he probably should not have shared those dreams with those guys. I'm just saying, he should have known his family was a little thrown off. So, they plot murder. Ruben saves him. Then he gets sold into slavery. That’s crazy.

The favor of God is on his life, so he ends up prospering as a slave in Potiphar’s house. Then more crazy shows up. Potiphar’s fine wife starts hitting on Joseph and trying to get him in bed with her. I mean this is a Netflix level drama. I guess he inherited his father’s ability to find or create trouble. We all know the story. Joseph does the right thing, she lies. He gets locked up!! Crazy!!!! But the favor of God is still on his life. He prospers in the dungeon and eventually is joined by the King’s cup bearer and the baker.

Now let's just stop there. Here is this kid, from literally the middle of nowhere who has been sold into slavery. He is living in the world's superpower at the time. He becomes a slave in Potiphar’s house- a man who is a powerful leader in Egypt. This powerful man's wife lies, causing Joseph to go to jail and now he is on cell block six with Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker.

I can imagine the conversation between these three guys. So, what are you in for? The baker replies, pharaoh didn't like my pie. They all nod, the cup bearer says, pharaoh had a bad day so here I am. Again, they all nod, as if to say we could see this happening. Then Joseph tells his story of being sold by his brothers, purchased by Potiphar, and then how his wife hit on him and tried to sleep with him, but Joseph ran away and was falsely accused. He looks at them and says the famous words of every criminal ever, it wasn't me! I can then see the cupbearer and baker looking at each other silently for a moment then bursting into laughter. “Man, that was a good one, but really what are you in for?”

 Now we stand thousands of years removed from Joseph’s situation and say, that was some crazy stuff Joseph went through. We rarely recognize that the same kind of crazy has moved in next door to us. It has visited our lives on occasion. Maybe you haven't been sold into slavery and you are not in Pharaoh’s dungeon, but still disruption has occurred, craziness has arrived, and you have found some of your hopes and dreams frozen. Maybe like Joseph they have been frozen for many years.

I want to encourage someone today that Romans 8:28 is still true, alive, and well. Our God causes all things to work together for our God for those who love him and who are called according to his purposes.

You see the reality is, Joseph’s situation was only a temporary place of preparation for his dreams. At the moment those dreams were frozen, but the distribution was setting the stage for those dreams to come into fruition at God’s appointed time. There is an appointed time for everything in our lives. That appointed time is rarely synchronized with our dreams and plans. Often God must freeze our dreams temporarily, allow crazy to come by and pay us a visit, in order to prepare us and the world for the dreams God himself had planted in our hearts.

Sometimes your dreams are not frozen because you are not ready, sometimes your dreams are frozen because the world is not ready for the gift of God in your life. The world doesn't see the gift of God in your life. So the Lord has to freeze things for a moment. The lord has to allow things around you to get a little bit crazy so that when it is time for your dreams to mature, both you and the people are ready to receive them.

Meanwhile, in the in between, God is working some things into your life and other things out. At the same time, he is working things into and out of your friends, your family, your children, your boss, your cousin, or whoever it is you have big dreams for so that he can unfreeze your dreams and they really become dreams and not nightmares. I am convinced that if things worked out according to our own plans and our own timelines, the dreams of God’s heart, placed in our hands, would become nightmares great enough to scare Stephen King.

What I am trying to tell someone today is that while you are in the place of frozen dreams and crazy things, remember that God holds all things in his hands. In the fullness of time God will make beauty out of your ashes.

As I prepare to close for today, I have to look back at our text for because our text finds Joseph 20 plus years removed from his dreams. He is now the governor of all of Egypt, second only to Pharoah. He is married and has experienced levels of restoration. Yet it was another divine disruption that brought Joseph’s dreams to pass. As the Pharaoh's dream foretold, a great famine came upon the world and was consuming all the plenty from the previous 7 years. Because of Joseph’s training at home with his father, in Potiphar’s house, and in the dungeon, Joseph had acquired skill and wisdom. Combined with the leading of the Spirit, he devised a plan to prepare Egypt for this great calamity.

Again, brothers and sisters, you may not understand your journey or the journey of your loved ones, but I am of the opinion that God knows where we are going and what we need to get where we are going. We must learn to trust God when we can't trace God as one of my previous mentors and spiritual grandfather used to say. We are a people of faith. Therefore, we must anticipate faith challenges coming our way. This includes frozen dreams and crazy things.

Back to Joseph, he is this powerful man in Egypt managing a massive humanitarian crisis when all of a sudden, he hears a familiar voice and sees some familiar faces. All of a sudden, he sees the people who orchestrated his exile to Egypt. He is now in a position of power and could have easily exacted vengeance on his brothers. Instead, something else happens to Joseph. This is what our text says:

Gen 42:6-9 *“Now Joseph was governor over the land; it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph’s brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground. 7 When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke harshly to them. “Where do you come from?” he said. They said, “From the land of Canaan, to buy food.” 8 Although Joseph had recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. 9 Joseph also remembered the dreams that he had dreamed about them. 8 In all of this Joseph remembered the dreams he had dreamed.”*

 Beloved, this is the key. This is what we do when our dreams are frozen when craziness comes to visit. When disruption alters our plans. We must remember the faithfulness of our God. Like my mother used to tell me, “Son, always remember who you are and whose you are.” In that moment Joseph’s dreams went from frozen to realized in his mind. All of a sudden, all of the crazy in Joseph's life made sense. All of the obstacles and downfalls he had experienced were no longer seen as stumbling blocks. They were now seen as steppingstones. Alternate rungs on God’s ladder for Joseph’s success.

My brothers and sisters, I am here to tell you that wherever dreams have been frozen in your life, wherever crazy has shown up, God knows how to defrost your dreams and make sense out of crazy things. So much so that you and I can come to the revelation and place of hope and healing that Joseph did. After his brothers finally realize who Joseph is and stand in terror of what he could do to them, he makes one of the most profound statements in the Bible and one of the keys to overcoming frozen dreams and crazy things.

Years have passed by his family has been reunited, his Father has died, and he is still governing Egypt when Joseph makes this statement to his brother’s: “Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today.”

Friends, the devil has intended to do harm to you, to your family, to your dreams. But I am so glad that our plans are not determined by Satan. Rather, our lives are in the Hands of the one who has all power. The one who knows the end from the beginning and is with us in the in between.

I feel like preaching like some of my ancestors up in here today. They used to say, “We serve a God who sits high and looks low.” But I am so glad that he didn't just sit high and look low. I am glad that one day, as John’s gospel says, the word became flesh and dwelt among us. I am so glad that he walks with me, and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own. I am so glad church, that when my dreams get frozen, when crazy is knocking on the front door and calamity at the back door. When destruction is peeking through my window and pain is in my heart. I am glad that Jesus promised he would never leave us nor forsake us. I am here to tell someone who is living in frozen dreams today that the Son is shining and the ice is melting. Not the SUN but the SON. Son of Man.

Today I am here on an assignment to help someone remember the dreams of yesterday. I want to remind somebody that our God is faithful. That he is not slack concerning his promises as some count slackness. But he is faithful to do exceedingly abundantly far above what you can ask or imagine.

So, my brother and sister, today is a day to respond in faith. Today I want to do something a little different. I want to invite some people whose dreams have been frozen to come and encounter in a fresh way the giver of your dreams. He still holds them in his hands. He wants to encounter you today. He wants to remind you that he is in control. He has seen your faithfulness; he has heard your cries. He will do what he said he will do.

Jesus left Heaven, lived on this earth, died a shameful and painful death so that you and I could be united with him and the Father for all of eternity and to dream kingdom dreams on the earth. His kingdom is coming, and his will is being done. I am convinced that if you love God, and are called according to his purposes, that the dreams of your heart are the dreams of his! He will bring those dreams to pass!

So, like Billy Graham used to say at his crusades: Won't you come? Will you encounter the God of dreams in a fresh way? I realize this may not be your tradition, but I believe in this time we need some people to stand in the gap for our communities. I believe you coming and standing is not just about you and your dreams but it is about the dreams of others as well. Let's pray together that God will help us to see our dreams realized for his glory.