

**The Mercy of God to Egypt**  
Genesis 41:1-57  
*Halifax: 27 November 2016, 10:30 AM*

**Introduction**

Truly “God’s mercies are over all His works.” as we just sang in Psalm 145.

- We need to understand that God is deeply good and kind and loving—that is who He is in Himself.
  - From all eternity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have dwelt in perfect love, delighting in one another and giving to each other in ways that are far beyond our comprehension.
  - God is in Himself love and He gives and gives.
    - Jesus constantly speaks of the how the Father loves and gives—His mercies are over all His works.

Sometimes, in our fallen estate, we do not see the intrinsic goodness and love of God.

- We do not see it in part because we are blinded by sin—it causes us to distort and twist what is true about God...
  - but also because we are under God’s holy wrath and displeasure because we are under the frown of God because of our sin—it has brought upon us God’s curse.
- God’s natural disposition is goodness and kindness, that is toward those who are what He created them to be—
  - not those who have grossly twisted and distorted themselves so that they have become rebellious toward Him...
    - those who have left their place to usurp His, with what, if it were given to them, would be a very cruel and oppressive reign...a dominion of hatred and selfishness...so contrary to what He made them be...
    - It is not in God, being good and gracious, kind and loving, to in the least tolerate such creatures that have become so opposite to what He created them to be.
- In our rebellion, we do not like to face what we really are.
  - We are so wicked that we would rather blame God than accept the truth that we have sunk into such wickedness that it would in fact be unloving and unkind and certainly most unjust for God to accept us as we are.

Yet, His unfathomable mercy toward us is still seen—in two ways...

- That He has held out to the whole human race His gracious offer of salvation—of complete forgiveness and restoration to the life that He gave us in the first place...
  - It is an offer that through Jesus Christ, His Son, whom He sent to pay the penalty of man’s sin and to restore us to what we were created to be, we may be saved!
  - It is an offer that we again and again spurn, being so wicked...
- And the second way His mercy is seen goes even beyond that...
  - that, He actually takes some of us and converts us, giving us a new heart by His Holy Spirit, so that we receive His free offer of salvation and come to Christ for forgiveness and new life!
    - As Jesus told us, not one of us would come to Him if the Father did not draw us and not one of us would continue if He did not keep us.

As we continue our Genesis sermon series today, we come to chapter 41.

- In this chapter, we are going to focus especially on the first way that God’s mercy is seen—in continually holding out His gracious offer of salvation to the world.
  - Egypt represents the world.
- And today I want to draw your attention to the great mercy of God to the people of Egypt that is beautifully revealed in this chapter!
  - The Lord is so very gracious and kind to them, even though they are a land that was filled with rebellious idolatry and were not subject to God...
    - Even though it had not been all that long since the LORD had restored the earth at the flood—and started over with the family of Noah who had God’s salvation,
      - already nations like Egypt had departed from that hope...
      - Yet, we see God, as He so often does, reaching out to them anyway.
        - It may be that some of them, at this time, truly did come to the Lord in a saving way—perhaps we will see the pharaoh in Genesis 41 in glory.
    - But whatever the case, the Lord was graciously reaching out to them here, and it will be good for us (for each of you) to behold the mercy of God that is revealed here...
      - to rejoice in how kind He is and to consider how He has shown mercy to you and how you ought to respond to it.
    - We will focus on this today, and then next week we will look at this passage again and focus in particular on how God raises up Joseph...
      - So I will preach at least two sermons from Genesis 41.
      - It would be too much and too confusing for us to look at all of this today.

So let’s read the passage—Genesis 41—and then we can consider the great mercy of God as it is shown to the Egyptians.

- Give attention because this is God’s holy and infallible Word:

**Genesis 41:1-57:** Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood by the river. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly there came up out of the river seven cows, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. <sup>3</sup> Then behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ugly and gaunt, and stood by the *other* cows on the bank of the river. <sup>4</sup> And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows. So Pharaoh awoke. <sup>5</sup> He slept and dreamed a second time; and suddenly seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, plump and good. <sup>6</sup> Then behold, seven thin heads, blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. <sup>7</sup> And the seven thin heads devoured the seven plump and full heads. So Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, *it was* a dream. <sup>8</sup> Now it came

to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but *there was* no one who could interpret them for Pharaoh. <sup>9</sup> Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: “I remember my faults this day. <sup>10</sup> When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, *both* me and the chief baker, <sup>11</sup> we each had a dream in one night, he and I. Each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his *own* dream. <sup>12</sup> Now *there was* a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his *own* dream. <sup>13</sup> And it came to pass, just as he

interpreted for us, so it happened. He restored me to my office, and he hanged him.”<sup>14</sup> Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh.<sup>15</sup> And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, and *there is* no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you *that* you can understand a dream, to interpret it.”<sup>16</sup> So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, “*It is* not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.”<sup>17</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: “Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river.<sup>18</sup> Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow.<sup>19</sup> Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt.<sup>20</sup> And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows.<sup>21</sup> When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they *were* just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke.<sup>22</sup> Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good.<sup>23</sup> Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them.<sup>24</sup> And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads. So I told *this* to the magicians, but *there was* no one who could explain *it* to me.”<sup>25</sup> Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh *are* one; God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do:<sup>26</sup> The seven good cows *are* seven years, and the seven good heads *are* seven years; the dreams *are* one.<sup>27</sup> And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them *are* seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine.<sup>28</sup> *This is* the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do.<sup>29</sup> Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt;<sup>30</sup> but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land.<sup>31</sup> So the plenty will not be known

in the land because of the famine following, for it *will be* very severe.<sup>32</sup> And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing *is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.<sup>33</sup> Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt.<sup>34</sup> Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth *of the produce* of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years.<sup>35</sup> And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.<sup>36</sup> Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.”<sup>37</sup> So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants.<sup>38</sup> And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find *such a one* as this, a man in whom *is* the Spirit of God?”<sup>39</sup> Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, *there is* no one as discerning and wise as you.<sup>40</sup> You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.”<sup>41</sup> And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”<sup>42</sup> Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.<sup>43</sup> And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, “Bow the knee!” So he set him over all the land of Egypt.<sup>44</sup> Pharaoh also said to Joseph, “*I am* Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.”<sup>45</sup> And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over *all* the land of Egypt.<sup>46</sup> Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.<sup>47</sup> Now in the seven plentiful years the ground

brought forth abundantly. <sup>48</sup> So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them. <sup>49</sup> Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for *it was* immeasurable. <sup>50</sup> And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. <sup>51</sup> Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: “For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.” <sup>52</sup> And the name of the second he called Ephraim: “For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.” <sup>53</sup>

Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended, <sup>54</sup> and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. <sup>55</sup> So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.” <sup>56</sup> The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt. <sup>57</sup> So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy *grain*, because the famine was severe in all lands.

May the LORD richly bless to us the reading of His holy Word.

- Now let us consider how God reaches out to Egypt—Egypt which represents the unbelieving nations—in mercy!

**I. First, what a great mercy it is that He humbles us and causes us to be troubled.**

A. You can see in the first eight verses that Pharaoh is troubled by God’s doing.

1. He is troubled because he has had a very disturbing dream—a pair of dreams that the Lord has given him.

- As it says in v. 8: **Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled.**

- These dreams would be disturbing to anybody, but especially to a king.

a. They were troubling because of their ominous content.

1) In the first dream, he dreamed of seven cows that came up out of the Nile River (where cows in Egypt often go to get away from the heat and the flies).

- He describes them in verse 18 as fine looking at fat...

- But then he dreams of seven very ugly cows that also came—when he tells the dream in v. 19 he describes them as poor and very ugly, such ugliness, he says, “as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt.”

- He adds that comment about how ugly they were.

- And then the ugly cows eat up the fat cows and are still just as ugly and gaunt as they were to begin with!

➤ It is no wonder that Pharaoh woke up after dreaming this—but then he goes to sleep only to dream the same dream but with different imagery.

2) This time, it is corn that comes up...

- First, there are seven ears of corn on one stalk—which in itself is quite remarkable...

- and the ears are plump and healthy looking.

- But then, as with the cows, seven heads, that are (as Pharaoh puts it in verse 23) withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind—all of three of those defects are present,
    - and once again, these devour the good ears of corn.
- b. These dreams were especially disturbing because...
- 1) They ended in such a horrible way—where the bad swallowed up the good so that the good was completely erased.
  - 2) And besides that, the dreams were so similar—they both seemed to be pointing to the same trouble...
  - 3) And as I told you last week, the Egyptians were quite into dreams and their interpretations—
    - they very much believed that dreams were given for signs and they had a whole array of magicians and wise men who devoted themselves to the study of dreams and their interpretation.
    - And *these* dreams had the special something about them that caused Pharaoh to be especially convinced that they were given as signs that he needed to understand and pay attention to.
  - 4) And to make his agitation all the greater, Pharaoh's experts were not able to satisfy him with their interpretations.
    - They may have tried—the language does not indicate that they did not try to interpret them—only that they were not able to do so Pharaoh's satisfaction.
    - It is also possible that they admitted that they could not interpret them.
      - All we know is that as far as Pharaoh was concerned, no satisfactory interpretation was given.
2. It is quite a thing for a pharaoh to be troubled, to admit that he is out of his league.
- a. The pharaohs of Egypt were very proud and self-sufficient.
    - They were even seen to be gods.
    - They were powerful and wealthy and very much on top of things.
  - b. But here you see that both he and his wise men are out of their depth.
    - They do not know how to interpret these dreams. They cannot do it.
    - Pharaoh has exhausted all his resources and he has no answers.
- B. Our gracious God sends trouble into the world as a mercy to all of us!
1. If everything went along just as we wanted it to, we would never seek the Lord.
    - We would suppose that we can get along just fine following our own way.
      - That we are indeed, as Satan led us to suppose, like God.
    - We would think that we were upholding and perfectly maintaining and governing our own life without God.
      - In other words, we would be completely deluded—in much the way that men like Pharaoh who have great success and who have people under their command, have illusions of grandeur.
  2. But now that God has troubled him, you can see that he is ready to listen to God.

- The trouble has knocked him off his high horse of self-sufficiency and made him teachable.
    - People know deep down that they need God.
    - They know that the things they rely on are not really sufficient...
    - But they want to delude themselves because they do not want to submit to God and follow Him—they want to live as they please.
  - But what a great mercy it is when God strips them of their delusions and makes them ready to listen to His Word by sending affliction to them!
    - It is impossible to imagine how awful the world would be without troubles—and how hardened people would be toward God.
      - We can see it to a certain degree in our prosperous nation, but our prosperity is still mixed with many troubles.
3. Even believers benefit from the troubles that God brings upon us.
- Sometimes, they have even more than He brings upon unbelievers...
  - a. David admits in Psalm 119:67 that he went astray before he was afflicted, but that now he has been afflicted, he keeps God's word.
    - And in verse 71, he says to God: **“It was good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.”**
  - b. People often ask why there is so much trouble in the world—well here is the answer—it is to humble us that we might be ready to listen to God—
    - None of us would ever do that if there were no troubles in this world
    - Be thankful for them—don't be bitter about a hard past—be thankful for it.
      - It is God's mercy to you.
      - How kind He has been to send them to you.
- C. Now you may say to me, “well yes, but is it not true that there are many people who are not benefitted at all, but rather hardened by their troubles?”
1. That is certainly true.
- a. Many of today's atheists, if you really get to the bottom of their rejection of God,
    - It is not so much that they cannot see the inescapable logic that God is our creator,
      - but rather that they cannot accept the fact that our creator should send so much affliction in the world that He has made.
  - b. Instead of being humbled by this, they are angered so that instead of turning to God for answers, they deny Him.
    - They do not want to accept the reality that we all are to blame—that calamity has come not because God is not good, but because He is good.
    - It is the right response of God to that which has become unacceptably evil and wicked—so wicked that we have sought to take God's throne from Him.
      - It is very foolish to deny God when in mercy and justice He afflicts us.
2. So no one has to become bitter about their troubles...
- a. You can be humbled and become teachable instead.

- When you experience pain and suffering—it is time to seek the Lord.
- Even if you are a child and you are troubled because your parents quarrel or because you are afraid of dying or that your mother or father might die...
  - It is God's invitation to you to turn to Him.
- b. That is what this Pharaoh did when he was troubled.
  - He became willing to hear from God, to listen to a true prophet of God.
  - And that is exactly what he does.

TRANS> This brings us to the second way that God shows mercy to the world...

- Not only does He afflict us so that we are ready to listen to Him, but...

## **II. Once we are ready to listen to Him, He in mercy sends us His Word.**

### **A. Sometimes He sends His Word to us in very remarkable ways!**

1. Consider how He brings His word to Pharaoh...
  - a. Unknown to Pharaoh, there is a true prophet of the Most High God shut up in an Egyptian prison—a young Hebrew man—our beloved Joseph.
    - In God's providence, this young man has been prepared for this hour—that he might be brought before Pharaoh.
    - Last week, in chapter 40, we saw how Joseph was manifested as a true prophet to Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker.
    - He was shown to be one who was able to give them God's interpretation of their dreams.
  - b. Now that this moment has come when Pharaoh is troubled by his dreams and is desperate for answers,
    - Pharaoh's chief butler comes forward to tell his troubled king about Joseph.
      - It has been two years, but Pharaoh was not ready to listen before, nor was the butler ready to speak to Pharaoh about Joseph.
    - Now he says, "I remember my faults," and reminds Pharaoh of how he had been imprisoned, and tells Pharaoh of how Joseph had interpreted his dream and told him rightly that he would be pardoned and the baker would be executed.
      - Immediately, eagerly, Pharaoh calls for Joseph to be brought to him, and Joseph is cleaned up, given a change of garments, and groomed.
      - Everything is done in great haste.
    - What preacher of God's precious truth would not be delighted to have such an audience—those who are eager to hear from God's Word!
      - I am very thankful for those of you who show such eagerness.
  - c. What a great mercy that over all these years, God had prepared Joseph to speak His Word to Pharaoh!
2. Think of some of the other marvellous ways that God has given His Word to people.
  - a. He brought it through dreams, at a burning bush, through angels, by visions, and through prophets that received these.

- b. Once, He even brought a prophet to Nineveh by means of a fish—the fish carried the prophet Jonah to Nineveh and spit him out on the shore.
  - c. He delivered His Word to Philippi by sending a vision to Paul of a man who pleaded and said, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”
  - d. There are stories today of people who found a Bible or who had a neighbour show up and speak to them at just the time they were ready to hear...or who had missionary show up on their shores after a dream.
  - e. And many of you have had the privilege of being born into a home where the Word of God was spoken to you from your earliest days so that you have never been without it. That is the greatest blessing of all!
  - f. And just think of it—God even sent Jesus Christ His only Son all the way from heaven to declare His truth to us in the fullness of time...
    - And then He took disciples to Himself which He called apostles, and they have given us the Holy Scriptures which have been taken into the whole world.
3. How good and how kind our Lord is to give us His Word!
- I exhorted you last week to be very thankful and to show your gratitude by reading it and cherishing the promises and obeying the commandments!
- B. Notice how Joseph makes it clear that God is telling Pharaoh what He is about to do!
1. That is what he says to Pharaoh in verse 25 where he says, **“The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do...”**
    - a. Do you see?
      - This dream is God telling Pharaoh what He is about to do!
      - In His great mercy, He is revealing to Pharaoh the future!
    - b. Joseph makes it clear that it is God, not him who is doing this.
      - He is very bold when Pharaoh addresses him and tells him that he has heard that he is able to understand dreams and interpret them!
        - Joseph immediately corrects Pharaoh...
        - In verse 16, he says very abruptly, **“not in me!”**
          - **“God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace,”** that is, an answer that will satisfy Pharaoh in his quest to know the truth.
          - He is saying, “Pharaoh, what you hear from me will not be my own interpretation of your dreams—it will be an answer from God.
            - In His great mercy, He wants you to know the truth! He is giving you the truth!”
      - Do you realise this about God’s Word?
        - Do you tell other people this when you speak to them from God’s Word?
          - “God wants you to know the truth! God is being kind to you. I am not telling you my own opinion; I am giving you the Word of God.”
        - And do you also receive the Word of God as the Word of God?
          - It is not the word of men, it is in truth the word of God that is able to make you wise for salvation and that effectively works in you who believe.



2. But I want you to notice something else...
  - a. Joseph not only tells Pharaoh that God is revealing to him what is going to happen in the future...
    - but also that God is the one who *controls* the future.
    - God is not just a weatherman who predicts what the weather will be—who in this case gives the crop forecast for the next 14 years...
      - He is the one who sends the weather—who determines the crops!
      - He is the LORD who will give Egypt and the surrounding world a bountiful harvest for seven years and the One who will then give them a severe famine for seven years.
    - You have probably heard of people getting mad at the weatherman when he predicts more snow in a time when we have already had one snow after another—as we did a couple of years ago...
      - It is irrational to get angry with the weatherman because he does not control the weather...
        - But God *does* control the weather—He controls the future.
        - The Lord speaks through Isaiah in Isaiah 45:7 and says: **“I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these things.”**
          - That is why Joseph does not just say that God is telling Pharaoh what will happen; but he tells Pharaoh that God is telling Pharaoh what He is about to do!
  - b. God mercifully reveals to unbelievers that He is in control of the future!
    - 1) When we tell people that all who trust in Christ will be saved, but that those who reject Him will be cast into the Lake of Fire,
      - We are telling them not just what is going to happen, but what God is going to do—that He will save all who come to Christ and that He will send the rest to hell...
        - This is not just what happens; this is what God is going to do.
          - It is not mere fate—it is an act of God.
    - 2) And so it is with every calamity.
      - It doesn't matter if it is a gunman who shoots people in a mall or a devastating tsunami that wipes out hundreds of cities and villages,
        - It is, in every case, that hand of God.
      - Not that He does not approve of the gunman's deeds—indeed He will judge him for what he has done...
        - but still, it is something that is ultimately from God's hand—a calamity that is sent by Him to chasten man for his sin and to make it clear to us that we are not Lord—
          - that it is not our place to run our own lives, but that it is ours to submit to Him.
          - that we need to be teachable and listen to God.

- 3) But above all, He mercifully shows us what He is going to do with us so that we can respond appropriately!
  - What if you did not know that He sends unbelievers to hell and that He saves all who come to Christ?
  - Then you would not know how important it is to come to Christ.
    - But you see, in mercy, God makes this known to people.
    - He has made it known to you in His mercy.
    - He has made it known so that you can come to Christ and be saved.
3. And of course we have seen in reading this account what God said He was going to do to Egypt. It is not nice at all...
  - a. First there will be the seven years of prosperity—seven years of bountiful harvests...
    - but then there will be seven years of such famine that the years of bounty will be completely forgotten.
    - In the history of the world, Egypt which was watered by the flooding of the Nile for three months, sometimes had famines,
      - but when they did, Palestine, which was watered by rain, often had their harvests—and vice versa,
        - but in this famine, both Egypt and Palestine will be in famine.
    - We are told of times in both places when famines were so severe that people began to even eat their own children in their desperation.
  - b. God was going to send this terrible famine to Egypt and the surrounding countries, but in mercy, He is letting Pharaoh know in advance.
    - He is letting him know so that he can take measures that will keep his people and the surrounding nations from being wiped out!
      - It is a great mercy you see, that God brings His prophet Joseph to inform Pharaoh about what God is going to do—that God brings His Word!
  - c. And note well—Pharaoh does not get angry at God.
    - He seems to recognise that God is being merciful to him to show him these things.
    - He is not like a selfish little child how demands his own way, but he humbly accepts that God is on the throne...and that God has told him what He is going to do to mercifully inform him so that he might take action.

TRANS> And now we that God does more...

**III. In mercy, He not only tells us what He is going to do, but He also tells us what we ought to do in response.**

- A. You see that Joseph does not stop with interpreting Pharaoh's dream.
  1. In verses 33-36 he lays out a plan of action for Egypt to take so that they might not perish.
    - a. He says that Pharaoh must appoint a discerning man of wisdom, and officers to help him to lay up grain during the seven years of plenty.

- This is very important because if no one is appointed to oversee this task, it will never be done.
    - As Matthew Henry says, “that which is everybody’s work commonly proves to be nobody’s work.”
      - If no one is appointed to store up the grain, no one will bother to store up grain.
  - b. At first, it might seem that there would be resistance to this 20% taxation, but in fact it would be *helpful* for the farmers.
    - When there are bumper crops, it drives prices down such that the farmers sometimes agree to burn part of their crops so they won’t end up selling grain for less than it costs them to produce and harvest it!
    - And as they were giving Pharaoh this tax, knowing of the prophecy and seeing that what was spoken of the first seven years was being fulfilled,
      - they would also be more inclined to store up grain on their own farms.
      - In any case, we are told that so much grain was stored in the years of plenty that they could not even keep track of it all—and Egyptians are careful record keepers!
2. Understand that this council that Joseph gives is also from the LORD.
- a. Joseph was only asked to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh, but he goes on speaking with the same authority with which he spoke when he interpreted the dream in telling Pharaoh what he must do to prepare for the coming famine.
    - He continues to speak, not as one sharing his own opinion, but as one declaring the oracles of God.
  - b. It is truly the mercy of God not only to tell us what He is going to do, but also how we ought to respond!
    - What trouble we would be in if we knew that God was going to send some to heaven and some to hell, but if He did not tell us what we must do to be saved!
      - But in His great mercy, He tells us both!
- B. And the wonderful thing is that Pharaoh receives this council!
1. There are so many that hear the word of God and that hear His call, but then do not do what He says to do to be saved!
- They perish, even though God graciously told them what they must do to be saved.
  - But not this Pharaoh.
    - We see in the account that he immediately takes action and puts Joseph in charge.
      - In verse 38 & 39, we read: **And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?” Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.”**
    - He appoints Joseph to this position because he recognises that Joseph had the Spirit of God by which he has spoken.

2. Pharaoh is actually submitting to God and to His Word here, and because he does, the land of Egypt is saved!
    - a. As the rest of the account shows, Egypt is saved from the famine that would otherwise have wiped them out.
      - They are saved because they received the Word of God and they obeyed the Word of God when He told them how to be saved.
    - b. In exactly the same way, anyone who obeys the gospel will also be saved.
      - Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ will not perish but will have everlasting life.
    - c. And what is more, Egypt also has the privilege of becoming the cradle of the church during the famine...
      - The church at this time was the family of Jacob who is also called Israel,
        - and we will see in future sermons how God used Egypt to provide bread to these ones who had the oracles of God and the promises of God and from whom the Messiah was to come!
        - Egypt had the privilege of being the nation that took care of them during the famine.
- C. And having those who have the promises of God in your midst is a great blessing to any nation!
1. Egypt was given a marvellous opportunity.
    - With Israel in their care, they had access to the oracles of God...
      - Through Joseph, they had access to the Word of God and the promises of God.
      - We shall surely see some of these Egyptians in heaven!
  2. Many nations in our day have the elect people of God in their midst—they have members of the true church of Jesus Christ.
    - And these nations are given precious access to the gospel through the church.
    - They have the Word of God near to them, in their heart and in their mouth, that whoever confesses that Jesus is Lord and believes in His heart that God raised Him from the dead will be saved.
      - Let us live out the truth in our land!
      - Let us speak the truth whenever we have opportunity, not as a private opinion of our own, but as the truth of God almighty... that many may be saved.
  3. If only these nations would continue in the Word of God!
    - The Egyptians began well, but some generations later, we are told of a Pharaoh who arose in Egypt that did not remember Joseph.
      - This is what so often happens in nations that cradle the elect of God for a time.
      - They listen to them, they are influenced by them, they know that they have the Word of God...

- But then, a generation arises that begins to doubt the Word; and then another that rejects the Word; and then another that begins to persecute those who believe.
- How much better if the nations would continue in the Word!

**Conclusion:** This account in Genesis 41 of God's mercy to Egypt shows us a picture of how God brings His salvation to the nations.

- Israel gave us our Joseph, Jesus Christ, who has the bread that the whole world needs...Jesus whom they had rejected...
  - and Egypt, in Genesis 41, shows how even when Israel has rejected the Word of God, the nations of the world are brought near to God though their Messiah, for He is the Saviour of the world.
  - And now we are in a situation in world history where one nation after another becomes the people of God until they harden themselves...
    - And yet a remnant remains and soon the gospel is welcomed in other nations and then still in others.
- It is freely offered to all.
  - It is the Word of God, that comes to us when we see that we are wrong to live independently of our creator and can only perish if we go on that way...
  - And it is the Word of God that not only tells us of the judgment to come, but also of the way of salvation if only we will receive it.
- How merciful and gracious is our God—How incredibly kind!