

Genesis 40-41
Psalm 105/42
Luke 1:1-25

“Clothed with Power”

December 13, 2009

Psalm 105 is useful for reminding us of our story thus far.

It retells the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
with an emphasis on the story of Joseph
as a prelude to the Exodus.

Because while we are trying to keep our focus on the story as it goes forward,
we need to remember that Israel only hears this story in the context of the Exodus.

Whether in the days of Moses, or later throughout Israel’s history,
the story of Joseph was always heard through the memory of slavery.

What happened to Joseph – being thrown into a pit in Egypt –
is what happened to all Israel.

And of course, this is also what has happened to our Lord Jesus Christ –
the one who endured exile and death for us.

And so let us sing Psalm 105 as those who give thanks to the LORD
for all his wondrous works in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sing Psalm 105

There are lots of doubles in the Joseph narrative:

Joseph has two dreams,
Joseph interprets two dreams in prison,
and then Pharaoh has two dreams.
Joseph is confined twice in a pit –
his brothers threw him in a cistern, and Potiphar threw him in the prison –
but both are called “pits.”

Both Potiphar and the prison keeper leave everything in Joseph’s hands.

Potiphar’s wife tries to seduce Joseph twice.

Next time we’ll see that the brothers make two trips to Egypt,
have two audiences with Joseph each time,
twice find money in their grain bags,
make two attempts to gain Jacob’s permission to send Benjamin to Egypt.

Joseph accuses his brothers of spying twice,
places money in their sacks twice –
among other doublings!

What is the point of all these doubles?

41:32 - *And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God,
and God will shortly bring it about.*

God only needs to say something once,
so when God says something twice it should make us sit up and take notice!

This may well be the sort of reason for the doubles in the opening chapters of Luke's gospel where we hear the story of the birth of John the Baptist and the story of the birth of Jesus. Elizabeth and Mary,
John and Jesus,
Zechariah and Joseph,
and for that matter, Simeon and Anna (the two elderly saints in the temple).

Read Luke 1:1-25

Genesis 40 functions as something of an introduction to chapter 41,
setting the stage for Joseph's introduction to Pharaoh.

In chapter 37 it was dreams that wound up getting Joseph thrown in a pit.
Now in chapter 40 it will be dreams that raise Joseph out of the pit.

1. Interpretations Belong to God: Joseph in Prison (40:1-23)

40:1 Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. 2 And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, 3 and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. 4 The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.

We start in chapter 40 with Joseph in prison –
and we hear that the cupbearer and baker join Joseph.

Cupbearer and baker are both very important positions:
if you want to poison the king, you have to get past these men.
So these are not “mere” servants.

These are royal officials who are the king's most trusted advisors.
Often these officials were foreigners – since someone from a powerful local family
would be more likely to tend toward assassination.

And we hear first that the cupbearer and the baker “sinned” against Pharaoh.
We are not told the nature of their offenses,
but the contrast with Joseph is clear.
They are in the prison because they deserve it.
Joseph suffers unjustly.
We were told at the end of chapter 39 that the LORD was with Joseph.

5 And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation. 6 When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. 7 So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, “Why are your faces downcast today?” 8 They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.”

Throughout the Joseph narrative we see the importance of dreams.

Both officials have dreams in the same night.

In the ancient world, the interpretation of dreams was an official function –
but here in Pharaoh’s dungeon, there is no one to interpret.

Joseph here is claiming a prophetic authority here.

“Do not interpretations belong to God?”

Joseph is claiming to be God’s messenger – the servant of God –
and he has great confidence that God will give him the wisdom to interpret them.

9 So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him, “In my dream there was a vine before me, 10 and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes. 11 Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.”

The chief cupbearer’s dream is all about threes:

three branches – with three verbs: “budded, shot forth, ripened”

and also three actions: “I took, pressed, and placed”

12 Then Joseph said to him, “This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days. 13 In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer. 14 Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house. 15 For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit.”

Joseph says that in three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to office.

And Joseph asks the cupbearer to “Remember me...”

That as God has shown favor to the cupbearer,

so also the cupbearer should show favor to the suffering servant

who has endured his afflictions – even though he did not deserve them.

Notice what Joseph calls the prison.

He calls it a “pit” – or cistern – the same word used in Genesis 37
when his brothers threw him in a pit.

The Psalms frequently refer to the pit

as a synonym for Sheol – the grave.

He did not deserve to be thrown into the pit

(even as our Lord Jesus Christ did not deserve death!).

16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable,

The baker now takes courage and asks for an interpretation as well!

he said to Joseph, “I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head, 17 and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head.” 18 And Joseph answered and said, “This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days. 19 In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you.”

And Joseph says that even as Pharaoh would lift up the head of the cupbearer,
so also he will lift up the head of the baker –

only in this case, “lifting up the head” has a slightly different meaning!

20 On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. 21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. 22 But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.

We are not told what the cupbearer and baker had done.
We do not know if either (or both) of them deserved death.
After all, what *they* did is irrelevant!
What matters is what Joseph did.

We are not the center of the universe.
The Seed of Abraham – he is the center of the universe!

And we are called to remember him.

23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Remembering and forgetting are not just intellectual things.
There is a moral aspect to this.
The cupbearer owed Joseph a debt.
And the cupbearer forgot.

There is a bit of foreshadowing here.
Just as the cupbearer will “forget” Joseph –
so also all Egypt will “forget” Joseph,
and a Pharaoh will arise who will oppress Joseph’s people.

But even as Joseph lies in the pit, forgotten by the Egyptians,
the LORD does not forget his own.

The LORD remembers!

But even so, it takes two whole years.

2. The Thing Is Fixed by God: Joseph before Pharaoh (41:1-45)

a. Pharaoh's Dream (41:1-8)

41:1 After two whole years,

Two whole years.

Compared to the 400 years that Abraham's descendents would be enslaved,
two years in prison sounds like nothing!

But have you ever had to wait two years for something?

It can be hard to wait patiently –
especially when you have been forgotten and neglected
by one who should have remembered you!

But one of the central points of Genesis
is that the timing of God's promises
is not designed for our convenience and enjoyment.

In the life of the people of God,
there is no one saying over the loudspeaker,
"Make sure that your seatbelt is firmly fastened,
and the tray tables in the upright, locked position,
and just sit back and enjoy the flight!"

But now,

Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, 2 and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. 3 And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. 4 And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke. 5 And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. 6 And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. 7 And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.

The key word in Pharaoh's dreams is the word "behold,"
which is repeated six times in the first seven verses,
uniting the whole dream sequence.

The number seven is very important in the chapter.

It is repeated 28 times (which is 4x7)
also the word "famine" is repeated 12 times.

The careful literary structure of the chapter should convince us that the author
is carefully crafting this narrative to show us that this famine is very important.

Also we need to understand the geography of the dreams.

The Nile River is the source of life for Egypt.

Besides the Nile, Egypt is a desert.

Without the annual flooding, there would be no agriculture in Egypt.

So the fact that the cows come up out of the Nile

indicates the centrality of the Nile in feast and famine.
Likewise, the east wind is also an important geographical feature.
The east wind blows off the desert.
It is usually hot and dry –
as long as the east wind is blowing,
there will be no rain.

And Pharaoh can tell that something is wrong here.

*8 So in the morning his spirit was troubled,
and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men.*

And Pharaoh's "spirit" was troubled.

The word for spirit is the same as the word for wind –
so when it says that Pharaoh's spirit was troubled,
it also says that Pharaoh's wind was troubled.
(We will also see that a different wind blows in Joseph!
Because Joseph has the ruach – the spirit of God!)

Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

Literally it says that he told them his "dream" (singular)
but no one could interpret "them" (plural),
suggesting that Pharaoh understands that these dreams are at root "one,"
but he cannot find anyone who can provide a unified interpretation.

b. Joseph Delivered from the Pit and Given New Clothes (41:9-14)

9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "I remember my offenses today.

Note the plural.

The cupbearer now remembers his first offense, the sin that landed him in prison,
and now his offense against Joseph
for leaving his benefactor behind bars.

*10 When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, 11 we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation. 12 A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. 13 And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged."
14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh.*

From an Egyptian perspective this is necessary for a prisoner to be brought before Pharaoh.

They are rushing him before Pharaoh –
but they still must make him presentable to the king.

As Joseph is raised up out of the pit,
he is also clothed in new garments.

As we have seen, when Joseph changes his clothes,
something new is happening in the story.

c. Joseph's Interpretation (41:15-36)

15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." 16 Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

Literally, "God will answer the peace of Pharaoh."

Joseph has confidence that God's answer will be "peace" for Pharaoh.

Why is he so sure of this?

Because Joseph believes the promises of God.

God had said to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his Seed.

Joseph knows that he is the Seed of Abraham.

Therefore, if Pharaoh blesses him,

Pharaoh will be blessed.

Obviously, Pharaoh has not brought Joseph before him to kill him!

Joseph is standing before Pharaoh because Pharaoh wants to hear what he will say.

Pharaoh wants to listen to the proclamation of the gospel.

And so Joseph knows that he is here to bring about the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham.

(By the way – you need to have the same confidence!

You are here in order that the nations might be blessed through the Seed of Abraham.

And because Jesus Christ *is* the Seed of Abraham,

and he has united you to himself, so that you might be Abraham's seed by faith,

therefore, you are here in order that the nations might be blessed through Jesus!)

17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Behold, in my dream I was standing on the banks of the Nile. 18 Seven cows, plump and attractive, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass. 19 Seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and thin, such as I had never seen in all the land of Egypt. 20 And the thin, ugly cows ate up the first seven plump cows, 21 but when they had eaten them no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were still as ugly as at the beginning. Then I awoke. 22 I also saw in my dream seven ears growing on one stalk, full and good. 23 Seven ears, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprouted after them, 24 and the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. And I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me."

Note that Pharaoh emphasizes the 'ugliness' of the cows –
literally the 'evil' of the cows.

These are “evil” cows – he does not know what they mean –
but he has no doubt that they are evil!

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do.

Joseph tells Pharaoh three times what God is doing:

In v25, Joseph says, “God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do.”

In v28 he adds, “God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do.”

And in v32 he concludes,

“The thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.”

26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. 27 The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine. 28 It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 29 There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, 30 but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land, 31 and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. 32 And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.

Joseph has now given the interpretation.

Why doesn't he shut up?

Joseph seems to understand the blessing of Abraham!

He understands that he is the Seed of Abraham.

Remember that he himself had dreamed

that the sun, moon and stars would bow down to him.

And so he stands before the most powerful king of his day,

and he speaks forth the Word of God without hesitation:

33 Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years.

Joseph goes well beyond “interpretation”
and gives Pharaoh political counsel!

35 And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. 36 That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine.”

Notice how Joseph thinks about God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

The thing is fixed by God – the famine is coming – you cannot stop it!

But the fact that God has determined that the famine will come
does not mean that you should just throw up your hands and die.
Rather, God's sovereignty provides the foundation for a call to action:
because God is going to do this, you had better get moving
and align your actions with God's purposes!

And that is equally true for you:
the fact that God will accomplish his purposes in history
should only embolden you to act in accordance with what God has said!

The kingdom of Christ is on the advance.
You can either submit to it and orient your whole life around it –
or you can perish when he comes in judgment.

And Pharaoh agrees.

d. So Pharaoh Clothed Joseph with Power (41:37-45)

*37 This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants,
“Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?”*

Hold on!

Did Pharaoh just say that?

Did Pharaoh really just say to his servants that the Spirit of God was in Joseph?

But it gets even more remarkable.

Even as Joseph told Pharaoh three times what God was doing,
so now Pharaoh speaks three times to Joseph.

First, he declares that he will make Joseph ruler;
second, he invests Joseph by clothing him with power;
and third, he confirms Joseph's rule by renaming him and establishing his house.

*39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning
and wise as you are. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as
you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.”*

Why did Pharaoh believe Joseph?

After all, there are only two reasons why you might believe Joseph:

- 1) you believe that the dream is of divine origin
- 2) you believe the testimony of the cupbearer that Joseph has a proven track
record of interpreting dreams.

But even with the advice of his cupbearer,
it is *astonishing* that a king would believe a convict;
it is almost unbelievable that he would place him over his kingdom!

(But we do know that Pharaohs liked promoting foreigners to high positions

because they were relatively loyal and unlikely to aid in a rebellion.
After all, their position depended *entirely* on the good will of the Pharaoh.
If someone else came to power, they could be easily disposed of –
which is precisely what happens to the Israelites when a new dynasty took over.)

But ultimately, the only way that Pharaoh believes Joseph
is because Pharaoh has eyes to see that the Spirit of God is with Joseph.
He has no empirical evidence – no rational basis – for accepting Joseph’s interpretation.

But the Spirit of God opens his eyes to see –
unlike that far more infamous Pharaoh of the Exodus,
this Pharaoh’s heart is soft –
and he hands over his whole kingdom to the Seed of Abraham.

In the same way, you cannot expect rational proofs or empirical evidence
to convince you of the truth of God’s word.

As John Calvin put it,

“For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word,
so also the Word will not find acceptance in men’s hearts
before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit.
The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets
must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaim
what had been divinely commanded.” (Calvin, Inst. I.vii.4).

And so Pharaoh spoke to Joseph a second time:

41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”

The Egyptian title is “Chief of the Entire Land” (the grand vizier or prime minister),
but you can see from what he *does* that his official responsibilities
appear to have been limited to food collection, storage, and later distribution.

And note that once again, if you want to see what is going on,
look at what Joseph is wearing:

*42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him
in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. 43 And he made him ride in his
second chariot. And they called out before him, “Bow the knee!” Thus he set him over all the
land of Egypt.*

Whenever Joseph changes his clothes, he changes his status –

he was the heir of Jacob, but when he lost his many-colored coat,
he was thrown into the pit of slavery;

he was the steward of Potiphar, but when he lost his garment to his master wife,
he was thrown into the pit of prison;

here he first changed his clothes so that he might come into the presence of Pharaoh,
and now Joseph is clothed with the authority of Pharaoh.

And what is more,
 whereas Judah gave away his seal and cord to Tamar,
 Joseph is given the very signet ring of Egypt.
 He wields the authority of Pharaoh!
And he is given a gold chain –
 which in Egyptian culture was one of the highest honors the king could bestow.

The story of Joseph sets the paradigm for Israel:
 from slave to vicegerent,
 from humiliation and to exaltation,
 from the depths of the pit to the right hand of the king.

This is the story of Israel from the Exodus to the enthronement of Solomon.
And remember what is at the heart of this story:
 the LORD was with Joseph.

 God with us – Immanuel – is at the heart of the gospel,
 as our Lord Jesus Christ is raised from the shame and suffering of the cross
 to sit at the right hand of the Father in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords.

And so for a third time, Pharaoh speaks:

44 Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

By renaming Joseph, Pharaoh is demonstrating that he has authority over Joseph.
By giving him a wife from a priestly family, he is joining Joseph to the nobility of Egypt,
 and binding Joseph to himself in bonds of obligation.

His new name means “God speaks and lives” –
 and while he is joined to a pagan family,
 it appears that Joseph rears his children in the Abrahamic faith.

3. All the Earth Came to Joseph: Joseph in the Service of Pharaoh (41:46-57)

46 Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. 47 During the seven plentiful years the earth produced abundantly, 48 and he gathered up all the food of these seven years, which occurred in the land of Egypt, and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it. 49 And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured.

What we are seeing here is the resurrection of Joseph.
 It is no accident that Joseph was thirty years old –

nor that Luke will tell us that Jesus began his ministry
when he was “about thirty.”
Nor should we be surprised to here that Joseph gathered grain
“like the sand of the sea” –
the very phrase that was used to describe the seed of Abraham.
Because when the Seed of Abraham rules over the nations,
even Egypt becomes a land of life and abundance.
The blessing of Abraham comes to Egypt when Egypt bows the knee to Abraham’s Seed.

When Joseph goes down into the land of death, Egypt suddenly turns into a land of life.
It is the rule of Joseph over Egypt which gives Egypt life.
One righteous man is in Egypt, but he is the ruler, and so it is the land of life.

Remember who is listening to this story:

Israelites who had once been slaves in Egypt –
and their descendents throughout the generations.
People who know well *the rest of the story*:
namely, that there would arise a Pharaoh who did not know Joseph.
And when Egypt curses the Seed of Abraham,
then judgment will fall upon Egypt.

Israel must never forget that God’s purposes with Abraham’s Seed
include all nations.
In the same way, we must never forget that God’s purposes with *us* – with his church –
include all nations as well.
We should never be so foolish as to think that God is for “us” and *not* for “them”!

You cannot find an “us” that was not once a “them”!
God’s purpose is that “all nations” would be blessed through Abraham’s Seed.
When you have found the most wicked, godless people on earth,
you have only found yet another people for whom Abraham’s Seed has come.

What will you do with the Seed of Abraham?

Those who humble themselves before Abraham’s Seed,
and set the heir of the promise over all their house,
will be blessed.
But those who reject Abraham’s Seed will be cursed.

50 Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore them to him. 51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house.” 52 The name of the second he called Ephraim, “For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

Joseph’s sons are named “forgetful” and “fruitful.”

It would be easy to say that Joseph has accommodated to Egypt –

that he has sold out and abandoned his heritage.
After all, “God has made me forget all my hardship *and* all my father’s house”!
And “God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

Has Joseph abandoned the promises of God?

But Joseph gives his sons Hebrew names.
And he speaks of God’s blessings upon him – even in the “land of my affliction.”
He has forgotten his father’s house.
He has not forgotten the promises of God!

And further there is an ambiguity in the meaning of Ephraim.
In the ESV it is translated, “God *has* made me fruitful in the land of my affliction,”
but it could also be translated,
“God *will* make me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”
Which is the land of his affliction?
Yes, he surely suffered in Egypt!
But the root of all his suffering was found in the land of Canaan.

I suspect the ambiguity is intentional.
God has made Joseph fruitful in Egypt.
But God will make Joseph fruitful in Canaan as well.

Joseph remembers the promises of God.

53 The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end, 54 and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do.” 56 So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses [8] and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. 57 Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.

God has raised up Joseph, his suffering servant, from the pit and exalted him as ruler of Egypt
in order to save the world from famine.
This clearly should be seen as a template for what God would do
when he raised up Jesus from the pit and seated him at his right hand
in order to save the world from sin and death.

Because, as verse 57 suggests:
“all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph.”
Even Joseph’s brothers will come to Egypt,
as we will hear next week.

Because while Joseph is “forgetful” of his father’s house,
we, at least, should not forget Judah.

We saw last time in Genesis 38 that the stories of Judah and Joseph run in parallel.
In the 22 or so years that it takes Judah to marry, have three sons
and marry his two elder sons to Tamar,
Joseph has been a slave, a prisoner, and now a ruler of Egypt.

During the seven years of plenty Joseph has two sons.
It is precisely at the end of the years of plenty when Judah's sons die childless.
As famine comes upon Egypt – and upon all the earth –
Judah's line is in danger of being wiped off the face of the earth.

If it were not for Tamar's faithful deception,
there might have been no future – no fruitfulness – for Judah.
Judah would have been forgotten.

And if it were not for *Joseph*, the very brother that he sold into slavery,
there would have been no future for Judah,
as Judah and his brethren would have starved to death in the famine.
As we look forward to the coming of the king from Bethlehem in Judah,
we must remember the story that preserved the line of Judah.

And remember the robe:
because it is not only true for Joseph –
it is also true for you!
If you would know who Joseph is,
look at what he is wearing.
Likewise, if you would know who you are,
inquire as to your garments as well!

Baptismal exhortation