

May 4, 2024
The Sixth Sunday after Easter
Pastor Matt Duerr

God's Narrative: In Technicolor

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. As we continue with God's narrative, I'd like to remind you where we left off. Jacob returned back to his homeland. It was on the way that he was met by God. He wrestled with God all night long and God changed his name from Jacob to Israel. And then he met Esau. Esau, who Jacob said when he saw him, that it was like seeing the face of God. Why? Because Esau came as a brother in love, showing mercy, grace and forgiveness. We ended last week's sermon with that challenge. Do people see God in you? In us? Do they see that like Jacob saw it in Esau?

But today we pick back up with the account. We see that Rachel becomes pregnant. She gives birth to Benjamin, but in the process, she also dies, and she was buried in the area around Bethlehem. Meanwhile, Jacob journeyed on and met with his father, Isaac at Mamrie or Hebron. We read that at the age of 180, Isaac died. And that Jacob and Esau together buried him. Again, I guess we could say they truly had also buried the hatchet and were getting along together.

In Genesis chapter 36, we read of Esau's lineage and there's two names that jump out there, Elifaz and Temon. And when we go to the book of Job, we read that one of Job's friends was Eliphaz, the Temonite. So, in other words, a descendant of Esau.

But now we get back to Joseph with Genesis 37, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. At least that's the title of a production by Tim Rice, who wrote the lyrics and Andrew Lloyd Webber, who's wrote the music? It might sound familiar to some of you in terms of those two individuals. They're the ones who came out with Jesus Christ Superstar, But Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat was written before Superstar. But it was Jesus Christ Superstar's popularity that led people

to look back to their first, shall we say, biblical work, “Joseph and the amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.” It really is quite good. Because it really walks us through what happened with Joseph.

When we go to Genesis 37, we read that Joseph was a boy. He was 17 years old, and he was tending to the sheep, along with the sons of Zilpah and Bilhah, the two handmaids. So, he was pasturing the sheep with Dan and Naftali, Asher and Gad. And we read, I quote, “Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.” And drum roll please... we're back to the soap opera and a really big mess. We read; Now Israel (remember, that's Jacob's new name.) “Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his sons because he was the son of his old age.” And this influenced Israel, (Jacob) and he I quote, “made him (Joseph,) a robe of many colors.”

Now that translation comes from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew, done about 200. BC. When we look at the actual Hebrew, it could mean multicolored which would be a robe for someone that was of royalty because it would be very expensive. Dyes were very expensive back then. It could also be a robe with long sleeves which would denote someone in a position of authority over another. We only find it one other place in the Bible and that's in Second Samuel 13:18, when it talks about the robe that Tamar, David's daughter was wearing.

But whether it was multicolored or long sleeves? The brothers saw it and they saw (listen carefully now) that their father loved him, Joseph more than all his brothers. All of them. Not more than each one of them. No, Israel loved Joseph more than all of them. And the result was the brothers could not speak peacefully to him. Yes, we've really got a mess here, a real soap opera starting.

But wait, there's more. I guess we could say. Let's go to the next episode. Joseph then has two dreams which leads to name calling, calling him, you know, the dreamer by his brothers. But those dreams are important. The first dream he shares with his brothers. And he says, you know, I dreamt that we were out in the field, and we were all putting

together sheaves, you know building sheaves in the field. And my sheaves stood upright. And yours, well, your sheaves came and gathered around my sheaf, and they all bowed down to my sheaf. And the brothers are just flabbergasted. 'Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you going to rule over us? Is that what you're saying?' And we read, 'they hated him even more.'

And then comes the second dream, and this time he tells it to his father and his brothers and it's a very short dream. Behold, the sun, moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me. And this father rebuked him, 'Shall I and your mother and brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?' The brothers response. Well, they were angry after the first dream and after the coat now, they're also jealous. We have jealousy and anger showing up here. The Father. Israel (Jacob) we read 'He kept the saying in his mind.'

It's like Mary in our gospel reading this morning. When the shepherds come after Jesus is born, and they tell Mary and Joseph everything that happened and all that the angels had said, we read that Mary pondered and treasured these things in her heart, or in her mind. When you look at our reading from Proverbs this morning again, it is so important, this concept of the heart or the mind. Keep your hearts with all vigilance. Why? Because that is what controls. Controls where you look, controls how you speak, controls how you act and keeps your feet on the straight and narrow way. So, Israel (Jacob), keeping this in mind, he's taking this to heart. What in the world is going on here? But that also then leads to the next episode, shall we say.

We find that now, the brothers; all of them, with the exception of Joseph, now are all pasturing the sheep. Israel calls the favorite son Joseph and who's wearing his multicolored coat, or his long-sleeved robe, and tells him, 'go out, check on your brothers, check on the flocks. Come back and give me a report.' Notice what's happened? Joseph was promoted. He is in charge. That robe was meant to be a robe of ruling that set him apart so the brothers would know he's in charge. And as he goes, we read that the brothers see him coming from afar. And they say,

'here comes this dreamer, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits.'

Now in Israel at that time what they would do is make pits in the ground, holes in the ground so that when the rains came, the water would come and would fill up these pits or cisterns. Then they could draw water from them later on for the flocks. So, they would put these at the bottom of the foothills, at the end of the ravines, where in the rains, the water would come down with, you know, seasonal creeks and things like that, much like we have here in California in our own foothills. Let's throw him in one of them now. They're dry and by the time next spring comes, he's gone, the body will be decayed, animals would have gotten in. We will have nothing to worry about. Why? Why do that? It seems harsh, doesn't it? But again, it's emotional dysfunction. They are acting on their anger. They're acting on their jealousy. And might I add, they're acting on their fear. Their worst nightmares coming true. The dreamer, with his long sleeved or technicolor coat is in a position of authority. They dare not bow down to him. No, not to our own brother. So better to kill him.

We do read that, Ruben, the oldest of the brothers, said to them. 'Wait, wait, wait, no, let's not take his life. Let's not shed his blood yet. Let's throw him in a cistern, and we'll deal with him tomorrow.' And we read that it was Rubens intent at night then to go and get Joseph out, to save him and send him back to his dad. And they did listen to their older brother, and they did throw Joseph into that cistern, and then they sat down to eat. I could just imagine that they're eating and Joseph is down in this pit. 'Come on guys, come on, let me out. Come on!' And what happens? Oh, a caravan of Ishmaelites? Yeah, that name will probably sound familiar. That's Abraham's son through Hagar the handmaid.

So, the offspring of Ishmael, they come in a caravan, they've got goods they're going to take down to Egypt and sell on the Egypt and Judah, ironically that part of the lineage of the twelve sons of Israel, the one through whom the Messiah will come. Judah is the one who speaks up and goes, 'hey, what profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? We get rid of him, sure. But these Ishmaelites, they'll pay money for him. Let's sell him. Let's fake his death. And then let's take one of our

sheep, slaughter it, take the blood, dip Joseph's robe in it, take it back to dad and say, 'oh dad look what we found the robe. It's got blood on it. Poor Joseph must have been attacked by a pack of wolves or something.' We will lie to dad and that'll take all of the pressure off of us. And we will get some money out of this.

It's kind of interesting, isn't it? That the one through whom Jesus would come, the one who would actually shed his blood to pay the price of our sins, to redeem us and bring us back into the family of God; it's his predecessor that talks about getting rid of part of the family and faking a death and everything. But what's it really boil down to? What Judah and the brothers were saying is simply this. We are not going to give Joseph our honor. We're not going to bow down to you. We are not going to honor what he says. We have no respect for him.

And that is certainly a major problem today. As we look at society and I could list off a whole series of sins, grievances and what all, that I myself feel and I know many of you feel in many different areas. If you really stop and think about it. What it boils down to modern life and this. I will not bow to anyone or anything. I certainly am not going to bow down to God. And let that God be over me. I am not going to bow down to His Word. I am not going to bow down and accept the Law that is in that Word. I am not going to bow down and accept the gospel of Jesus Christ because I've got to be me. And it's all about me. And I've got this. I'm in charge of my life and I'm in charge of my future, and I don't need a God messing up my life.

And my hope and my prayer; thinking back to Jacob and Esau and Jacob saw the face of God, in Esau. It is my prayer that when it comes to bowing down, when it comes to our relationship with God, not just individually, but as Zion, which means ruled by God. It is my hope and prayer that people look at Zion and they say, "That at the name of Jesus, every knee of Zion bows, and every tongue of Zion's confesses that Jesus Christ is LORD to the glory of God the Father. And may we all together bow our heads before Him and say, "Amen."

In Jesus Name, Amen.