

Long Lost Family

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this morning with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the book of Genesis, chapter 42.
- Genesis chapter 42, we're going to look at the whole chapter, but if we just read again at verse 6. Genesis 42 and verse 6. Now Joseph was governor over the land.
- He was the one 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. Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them.
- Where do you come from, he said. They said, from the land of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them.
- And he said to them, you are spies, and you have come to see the nakedness of the land. They said to him, no, my Lord, your servants have come to buy food.
- [1 : 0 7] And so on. You know, when it comes to TV, I'm not much of a TV addict, but you know, there's one TV series that I found interesting.
- It's called Long Lost Family. Long Lost Family. Maybe you've watched it before, but if you've never seen it or ever heard of it, it's presented by Davina McCall and Nicky Campbell.
- And they help to track down people or family members where these people have been seeking and searching for their long lost family members for years.
- And it's fascinating that in each case, it's just like detective work. There's often this complex and very emotional process of looking into the past in order to discover why this family became estranged in the first place.
- And for some, it was a teenage mom who fell pregnant and put her child up for adoption. For others, it was because a father left a single woman on her own to bring up children, and she had to put them up for adoption or fostering.
- [2 : 1 4] And in some instances, they were twins that were separated at birth. And in the program, they helped to reunite their long lost family after years and years of separation.
- And you know, as we come to Genesis 42 and continue looking at the life of Joseph, we see that after over 20 years of separation and estrangement, Joseph, he is reunited with his long lost family.
- But the remarkable thing is neither Joseph nor his brothers, they weren't desperately seeking their long lost family. And yet, in the sweet providence of God, Joseph's brothers ended up on Joseph's doorstep looking for food.
- Of all the places to come, they ended up right in front of Joseph asking for food. And it wasn't Joseph or his brothers bringing this long lost family back together.
- It was the Lord. And as always, and as we've seen in our study so far, it was all according to the Lord's perfect plan and purpose.

[3 : 26] And the Lord was working it all together by his grace for their good and to his glory. And so this morning, as we look at chapter 42 of Genesis, I'd like us to consider this chapter under three headings.

Family crisis, family confrontation, and family confusion. So family crisis, family confrontation, and family confusion.

So first of all, we see a family crisis. A family crisis. And we look again at verse one. We're told that when Jacob learned that there was grain for sale in Egypt, he said to his sons, why do you look at one another?

And he said, behold, I have heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down and buy grain for us there that we may live and not die. So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt.

Now, as you know, the story of Joseph has been made into children's books and plays and the well-known musical. Maybe some of you have seen it.

[4 : 32] Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, which was also made into a film in the late 1990s. Now, I haven't watched the film, but I would imagine that as we begin Genesis 42, the scene would shift.

And the scene would shift from that glorious moment of exaltation, where, as we saw last Lord's Day, Joseph, he's brought from rags to riches. He's brought from the pit to the palace.

He's brought from being a prisoner in Egypt to being the prime minister in Egypt. Because having interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, there were going to be this, where there was going to be this seven years of fullness and then seven years of famine.

You remember how Joseph, he had been given Pharaoh's signet ring, and he had been given garments of fine linen, and he was given a gold chain about his neck, and he was told to ride in the second chariot.

He was second in command in Egypt. And then during those years of seven years of fullness, there was great blessing. We read that at the end of chapter 41.

[5 : 38] There was this wholesome harvest each year where the earth produced bountifully. And in that chapter, we also saw that Joseph was given a new name.

He was given a wife. He was given two children. And as per Joseph's 20% tax rise, one-fifth of grain was stored up in every city in Egypt.

In fact, there was so much grain, we're told that none of it, it couldn't be measured. There was too much grain. Things had dramatically changed for Joseph in chapter 41.

Everything had changed for the better in the life of Joseph. But then you come to chapter 42, and we're seeing that things have dramatically changed for the worse in the life of Joseph's family.

Because when the seven years of fullness came to an end, they were followed by the seven years of famine. And there was famine not only in the land of Egypt, it was also in, you could say, the whole of the eastern world.

[6 : 42] And it's as we begin chapter 42 that the scene is shifting from Joseph's exaltation to Jacob's humiliation. The scene is shifting from Joseph's new home in Egypt to Jacob's home back in the land of Canaan with his 11 sons.

And the famine, we're told, it was so severe to the point that there was no food on the table, there was no food in the cupboards, there was no food in the barns to feed the animals. You could say it was a dire dilemma.

It was a miserable matter of life and death. Which is why Jacob says to his sons, he says to them, go down to Egypt and buy grain that we may live and not die.

But you know, it's Jacob's initial question that's worth noting. The question he asks in verse 1. Because with food in short supply, everyone knew that there was a family crisis.

Everyone knew this was a family crisis. Everyone knew that they had to go down to Egypt to buy some grain. Because everyone had heard and everyone knew that Egypt's storehouses were full of grain and it was all for sale.

[7 : 59] And all these brothers, Joseph's brothers, they all knew that their father was going to ask them to go down to Egypt to buy some grain. Which is why Jacob's sons, they're all on edge.

They're all wondering what their father is going to say next. Because none of them want to go down to Egypt. Of course, they would have no issue going to Egypt except for the fact that that's where they sold their brother.

And there was always this fear about what had happened to Joseph. But none of them knew. And yet you can imagine Jacob and his 11 sons, they're all gathered around the kitchen table for this family meeting.

It was the same kitchen table that Joseph had revealed his dreams to his family 20 years earlier. But now as a family, they're all aware that there's a family crisis.

And they're all sitting there. And there's this awkward silence. You could say there's an elephant in the room. Because no one is saying anything to anyone.

[9 : 04] Judah is staring at Reuben. Levi is looking at Simeon. And Issachar, he's glancing over at Gad. They're all looking at one another around the kitchen table.

But none of them are saying anything. It was one of those awkward family moments where everyone is looking at each other. They're not talking. Without speaking. They're all thinking the same thing.

But no one's talking. And Jacob, the father, he walks in and he asks them, Verse 1, Why are you looking at one another? Why do you keep staring at one another?

This is a family meeting. This is a family crisis. And no one's saying anything. Nobody's coming up with a plan. You're just looking at one another. Why are you looking at one another?

And as you know, a family crisis, it can either pull a family together or pull a family apart. But for this family and their family crisis, it was much bigger than famine.

[10 : 03] Famine is always tragic. But there was hope for this family in the face of famine. There was salvation for this family crisis. And their hope and salvation was to be found in Egypt.

But what was holding them back, what was holding this family back from their hope and salvation, was this deep, dark secret.

And its name was Egypt. Because the last time they had seen their long-lost brother was when they seized him, separated him, and sold him into Egypt.

And from that moment, these brothers, they vowed never to speak about Egypt again. We'll talk about everything else. Don't talk about Egypt. But when Jacob comes in and says to this family that their hope and salvation, in the midst of a family crisis and a famine, their hope and salvation is in Egypt, Jacob's sons, they're stunned to silence.

They don't want to talk about this. The last place they want to go is Egypt. They'll go anywhere but Egypt. In fact, the very mention of Egypt, it makes them shudder and stop because of what they did to their brother.

[11 : 24] My friend, in the midst of a famine and a family crisis, their conscience was convicting them. Their guilt was getting the better of them. And their sin was affecting their soul.

And you know, that's often the case, isn't it? That a crisis stuns us. A family crisis shakes us. But sometimes it uncovers more than just the crisis.

Because it reminds us and reaffirms to us that maybe there's something in our lives that we're not dealing with. And for a long time, we've been putting it off. Just like these brothers were putting it off.

We've been ignoring our conscience. We've not been dealing with our guilt. We've been seeking forgiveness elsewhere or trying to forget it altogether.

My friend, when God in His providence brings a family crisis into our lives, it's not to drive us away from Him. No, it's always to drive us to Him.

[12 : 31] And that's how we have to look at it. When God brings a crisis into our lives, it's not to drive us from Him. It's to drive us to Him. But sadly, sometimes we act like these brothers.

We'll go anywhere and we'll do anything so that we don't have to do the very thing we know we need to do. Sadly, sometimes, like these bad brothers or lost brothers will go anywhere or we'll do anything so that we don't have to go to a place of hope and salvation.

Sadly, sometimes we're like these brothers that we don't want to go anywhere near church or have anything to do with the church when we're facing a family crisis.

Sadly, sometimes we'll look for healing and help and happiness everywhere and anywhere else instead of coming to Jesus. But as you know, my friend, Jesus is our only hope in life and in death.

Jesus is our salvation from sin. It's Jesus who will deal with our guilt. It's Jesus who will clear our conscience. It's Jesus who will wash us as white as snow.

[13 : 46] More than that, Jesus is our only comfort in the midst of a family crisis. You know, my friend, when God in His providence brings a family crisis into our lives, it's not to drive us away from Jesus.

It's always to drive us to Him. Because as our Bible reminds us again and again, what we need to be confronted with is Jesus.

Who we need to come to is Jesus. The person we need to call upon is Jesus. Jesus. And you know, that's what we see with this family.

Because with this family crisis, it leads to a family confrontation. Which is what we see secondly. Family confrontation. So there's a family crisis and then a family confrontation.

Family confrontation. Look at verse 6. It says, Now Joseph was governor over the land. He was the one 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.

[14 : 55] Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them. But he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them. Where do you come from? He said. They said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph recognized his brothers.

But they did not recognize him. You know, when ten of Jacob's sons made that 500 mile journey from the land of Canaan down to Egypt, they left Benjamin with their father.

Benjamin was, of course, he was the youngest of the twelve sons. He was the new favorite after Joseph had gone. Benjamin, he was the only son left of Jacob's first love, Rachel.

Jacob always loved Rachel. He had two sons with her, Joseph and Benjamin. And when Joseph went, he loved Benjamin. So he didn't let him leave.

Benjamin had to stay at home while the bad brothers had to seek hope and salvation in Egypt. And in God's sweet providence, this family crisis, it became a family confrontation.

[16 : 01] Where the bad brothers, they come to Joseph, who was at that point the savior of the ancient world. And we're told that they bow down before him with their faces to the ground.

And what's remarkable is that Joseph recognized his brothers. But they didn't recognize him. Joseph immediately identified his brothers, but they didn't identify him.

I mean, why would they? Why would they ever suspect that their little brother, who had been seized, separated, and sold into Egypt as a slave at the age of 17, why would they ever suspect that he had been exalted to this position of prime minister in the land of Egypt and made the savior of the ancient world?

Well, they would never suspect that. Especially because Joseph, he no longer looked like an Israelite. He no longer spoke like an Israelite. As prime minister in Egypt, Joseph would have been clean shaven.

There would have been no beard. His head would have been shaven. He wouldn't have had long hair. He would have been well dressed in his fine linen with all his servants around him, waiting upon him at his very beck and call.

[17 : 16] But more than that, Joseph would have spoken the ancient Egyptian language. Of course, his mother tongue would have been Hebrew, like his brother's. But having lived and worked in Egypt for over 20 years, Joseph would have spoken their language.

Joseph would have looked. He would have sounded. He would have spoken completely different to what his brothers remembered. So it's no wonder they didn't remember him, or didn't recognize their long-lost brother when they were confronted with him.

But he recognized them. And as soon as Joseph recognized his brothers, we're told, he remembered his dream. He remembered that morning.

That morning as a 17-year-old boy, when he came down to the kitchen table and told his brothers at breakfast and said to them, I've had a dream.

We were binding sheaves in the field, and my sheaf arose and stood upright. But your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf. And you know, it must have been, looking at his brothers, it must have been one of those goosebumps moments for Joseph to realize that after 20 years of waiting, his first dream had finally come through.

[18 : 36] Remember, Joseph had two dreams. He had two dreams about his family bowing down to him. And after 20 years of waiting, his first dream had finally come through.

And you know, it's a long time to wait upon the Lord. It's a long time to wait upon the promise of God's Word. It's a long time. Now, I mentioned to you before that, in my mind anyway, this is how my mind works.

I always think somebody needs, you always have to have a favorite psalm. And if Joseph had a favorite psalm, I would like to think that his favorite psalm would be Psalm 130. Because Psalm 130, it describes Joseph's experience, although Psalm 130 was written long after Joseph.

Because Psalm 130, it begins in the depths and it ends in the heights. It begins in humiliation, like Joseph in Egypt. And it ends in exaltation, like Joseph in Egypt.

It begins with a confession, Lord, from the depths to Thee I cried. And it ends with a confession, I wait for God. My soul doth wait.

[19 : 44] My hope is in His Word. And you know, that was Joseph's confession. His hope was in the Word of God. And he had waited for over 20 years.

He had waited upon the promise of God's Word. And you know, I say that Joseph waited for over 20 years because you remember that at the age of 17, he received God's promise.

Just before he was seized, separated, and sold into Egypt. At the age of 20, he was a servant in Potiphar's house. At the age of 28, he had been wrongly imprisoned in Pharaoh's prison after being falsely accused of sexual misconduct.

And it was in prison that he interpreted the dreams of the baker and the butler. Then at the age of 30, we saw that in chapter 41, he rises from rags to riches, from the pit to the palace, from prisoner to prime minister.

Then at the age of 37, Joseph, he has stored up enough grain during those seven years of fullness, which were then followed by the seven years of famine.

[20 : 50] Then at the age of 40, which I believe is the age that Joseph is in chapter 42, Joseph is the big 4-0. He's 40.

And now after 20 years, or over 20 years, of waiting upon God's word and God's will, Joseph's first dream comes true with his brothers bowing down before him.

And you know, it's a reminder to us of the importance of waiting upon the Lord. You know, it's something that's completely alien to us in our super fast, up to the minute, 24-7 world that we live in.

We're always in a hurry. We don't like waiting upon the Lord. We don't like waiting upon his word. We don't like waiting upon his will. We want everything to happen yesterday.

But as we said before, the Lord isn't in a panic. The Lord is never in a hurry. He's not rushing his plan. He's not rushing his purposes.

[21 : 58] No, he's patiently and providentially working out his will according to his word. It's all by his grace for our good and to his glory.

Now, I'm sure that there were times in Joseph's life throughout those 20 years that Joseph, he must have questioned and queried the word of God and God's promises to him. He must have wondered what the Lord was doing.

But like Joseph, we need to learn. And that's what this passage is teaching me. We need to learn to wait upon the word of God and the will of God.

We need to learn to look and love and lean upon the promises of God. And there are many promises. We need to learn to plead and pray and proclaim the promises of God.

There are so many promises in God's word, my friend, that we can cling to and claim for ourselves and even confess before the Lord. And you know, maybe you have a promise from God's word.

[23 : 03] Maybe you have a promise about someone or something or some situation that you're facing. Maybe you're waiting upon the Lord, pleading and praying for your spouse or your children to come to faith in Jesus Christ.

But my friend, what the life of Joseph is teaching us is that we need to keep clinging and keep claiming and keep confessing the promises of God's word.

Because what's been emphasized here is the truth and integrity of God's word. God is faithful to his word. He's faithful to his promises.

It might take 20 years, but he's faithful to his promise. He upholds his promise and he answers prayer in accordance with his will.

And you know, it's the truth and integrity of God's word which is being emphasized here in contrast to the bad brothers who claimed that they were honest men.

[24 : 08] Because we read that Joseph, he accused and asserts three times that his brothers were spies unworthy of death. But as we read, Joseph was testing his brothers.

Joseph knew the honesty and integrity of God's word. And he was testing them. He was testing his brothers and he was testing their honesty and their integrity.

So much so that we're told that he put them in prison for three days. And we read in verse 18, on the third day Joseph said to them, Do this and you will live. For I fear God, if you are honest men, let one of your brothers remain confined where you are in custody and let the rest go and carry grain for the famine of your households.

And bring your youngest brother to me so your words will be verified and you shall not die. And they did so. Joseph knew the honesty and integrity of God's word.

But he was testing his brothers about their honesty and their integrity. But this brings us finally to a family confusion. We've looked at family crisis, a family confrontation, but then there was family confusion.

[25 : 22] Family confusion. And we read that from verse 21. Then they said to one another, In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul when he begged us and we did not listen.

That is why this distress has come upon us. And Reuben answered them, Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood. They did not know that Joseph understood them, for there was an interpreter between them.

Then he turned away from them and wept. And he returned to them and spoke to them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes. Do you remember being told about a young woman who was on a bus in Edinburgh?

And as she sat down on the bus, there were two old women who started gossiping about her appearance in Gaelic. And as Gaelic speakers in the center of Edinburgh, these two old women, they thought that no one would understand what they're saying or what they're talking about.

But unbeknown to them, the young woman whom they were gossiping about in Gaelic was actually fluent in Gaelic. And after two minutes of listening to these women gossiping and gassing about her in Gaelic, the young woman brought them to a stunned silence when she turned around and she said to them that if they had something to say, they should say it to her face.

[26 : 53] And you know, it's a lesson for us to watch what we say because we never know who's listening and who's understanding what we're saying. And you know, that was true of Joseph's brothers because as they spoke to one another in Hebrew, they spoke to one another right in front of Joseph.

They openly discussed what they had done to Joseph right in front of him. And it's remarkable that after 20 years, we see that their conscience was still bothering them because they had despised and rejected their brother.

But Joseph knew that what they were saying about him, Joseph knew it was hard to hear. It's hard to hear what your brothers had done to you 20 years earlier. And it was so hard, we're told that Joseph, he had to turn away from them and we privately.

He had to leave the room for a moment. But you know, you know my unconverted friend, when I read this, I think that there are some of you here and your conscience has been bothering you for over 20 years.

Because for over 20 years, you have despised and rejected the greater than Joseph, Jesus Christ. For over 20 years and more, you've been coming to church, you've been hearing the gospel, you've been reminded that you're a sinner in need of a saviour.

[28 : 22] For over 20 years, you've known that you need to close in with Christ and claim him as your saviour, confess him as your Lord and you need to do it all before death comes and judgment calls.

But for over 20 years, instead of coming to Christ, you've just allowed your conscience to bother you. Like these brothers, you've allowed your conscience to bother you and niggle you and gnaw away at you for all that time.

But you know, after all we've been through in the past year, you don't think it's about time that you considered your conscience and dealt with all its demands by coming, calling, and committing your life to Jesus Christ before you're too late.

Because, my friend, I need not remind you, even in the couple of weeks that we've just had, we have been reminded life is uncertain, death is sure, sin is the cause, but Christ is the cure.

Christ is the cure. So don't ignore your conscience. Deal with it. But after hearing this conversation publicly and turning away to weep privately, Joseph, we're told he had Simeon.

[29 : 42] He chose Simeon. Out of all his brothers, he chose Simeon. He seized him, he separated him, and he securely locked him up in prison. But it was all to ensure that his brothers would come back with Benjamin.

And then Joseph, he tells his servants to fill their sacks with grain, to take no payment for it, to put the money into the sacks, and then send them away, send them back home.

And this is what brought family confusion. When they open their sacks and they see that the money is still there, and they all start saying to one another in verse 28, what is this that God has done to us?

What is this that God has done to us? When Joseph's brothers get home, they then reiterate everything to their father, Jacob, and there's nothing but family confusion. And this family crisis, it's even bigger than it was before.

But you know, my friend, they're missing the point of what's actually happening here. And let's make sure that we don't miss the point of what's happening here as we draw to a conclusion. Because when Jacob hears about the family crisis and the confrontation and the confusion, all Jacob can think about is the grave.

[30 : 53] That's the last verse of this chapter. He's thinking about the grave. All he can think about is the grave. But you know, that's not what he should be thinking about. He should be thinking about grace, not the grave.

He should be thinking about grace, not the grave. Because despite the fact that the bad brothers had sinned against Joseph, Joseph was gracious with them.

Joseph was gracious towards them. They had come to Egypt looking for hope, salvation, and Joseph was gracious with them.

Joseph doesn't take their money. Their money was of no use to them. Joseph graciously gives it back to them. And he gave to them what they do not deserve.

They didn't deserve his mercy. They didn't deserve his grace. Joseph, as a brother who had a lot of power and authority, he could have thrown them into prison or had them killed immediately.

[31 : 56] But he was gracious with them. He gave to them what they didn't deserve. He was so gracious. My friend, Joseph, the Savior of the world, showed grace to his brother.

Those who were bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. And all they could say was, what has God done? Why has God done this to us? But you know, we should be asking the same question.

What is this that God has done to us? What is this that God has done to us? Because, my friend, you look at this passage and what Joseph did to his brothers is what God has done for us.

He has shown us grace. He has shown us grace. When we despised and rejected the greater than Joseph, Jesus Christ, he showed us grace.

When we ignored our conscience and did our own thing and went our own way, he still showed us grace. When we sinned against Jesus Christ, when we sinned against the greater than Joseph, he showed us grace.

[33 : 01] Even the times we tried to earn our salvation by money or works or thinking that we're a great person, God still showed us grace.

You know, my friend, the greater than Joseph, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, he graciously gives to us what we don't deserve. What we don't deserve. And, my friend, that's what God has done for us.

He has declared and he has demonstrated his grace and love towards us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And salvation, the salvation that's on offer to us this morning, it's unmerited.

It's undeserved. It's unearned grace. It's a gift that's been graciously and lovingly held out to you. So the message is, take it.

Take it. Take it. It's unearned grace. Whether you're here or at home. Stop making excuses. Stop trying to earn it.

[34 : 06] Stop trying to be good enough. Because you'll never be good enough. The message of the gospel is just take it. It's a free gift.

God's gracious gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, it's yours for the taking. so take it don't let the gift pass you by just take it it's yours for the taking but may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray O Lord our gracious God we give thanks that thou art one who is gracious and that salvation is all of grace it is a gift that we should not neglect a gift that is graciously and lovingly held out to us and as thy word reminds us that it is by grace that we have been saved through faith and that not of ourselves it is the gift of God not of works lest any man should boast and help us then we pray this morning to be boasting not in self but to be boasting in Jesus to know that he is so good to us so gracious with us and he is working it all together for our good and ultimately for his glory bless us Lord we pray remember us we ask and help us we pray to keep our eyes firmly fixed upon Jesus to know him and to confess him as the author and the finisher of our faith cleanse us we pray for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake

Amen well we are going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing the words of Psalm 40 Psalm 40 it is in the Scottish Psalter page 259 in the blue psalm book Psalm 40 we are singing from the beginning down to the verse marked 4 and Psalm 40 it is a well known psalm you could say it is the Christian's testimony the Christian's testimony of someone who has experienced grace they have experienced grace in their life because they have been brought from a fearful pit and from the mighty clay and given that new song in their mouth so Psalm 40 I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear at length to me he did incline my voice and cry to hear we will sing these verses to God's praise I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear a threat to me he did incline my voice and cry to hear you took me from my fear who bears and from the mighty clay and on the rock he sets my feet establishing my way he brought a new song in my mind

A golden magnified Many shall see it and shall fear And all the Lord remain O blessed is the man whose trust Upon the Lord relies Respecting not the bright or soft

As the Lord has died to life The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all now and forevermore Amen