

Guest Preacher - Rev. Florian Weicken (Zurich Presbyterian Church)

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Preacher: Rev. Florian Weicken

[0 : 00] Genesis 37, verses 12 to 36. This is our sermon text tonight. Now we know the story of Joseph,¹ and we know that when he was a young boy,¹ 17 years old, he had two amazing dreams.

And in these amazing dreams, he was promised that one day he would rule over his brothers, yes, even over his parents. But then in the text we read together, we saw that these dreams, these promises, very quickly became nightmares to Joseph.

We see that his brothers wanted to kill him, that they conspired to kill him, and then in the end, they sold him into slavery to the Midianites, Ishmaelites, and then eventually he ends up in Egypt, in Potiphar's house.

And this happened despite the glorious promises he had in his dreams. Despite these promises he had. He was thrown into terrible circumstances.

Yes, he had amazing promises in the dreams, but he was thrown into terrible circumstances. And once more, we hear in the scriptures how the promises and the circumstances of our lives do not match, somehow.

[1 : 33] We have maybe glorious promises, but then the circumstances of our lives are difficult and dark, and sometimes we cannot really bear them.

They are so difficult. And that's exactly what we see here in Joseph's life. And because the scriptures speak so often of it, we need to hear it very often, evidently, because we are so often tempted when we have the promises of God, and then the circumstances of life come in, and the circumstances are difficult, they seem to contradict the promises of God, that we look to the circumstances and believe the circumstances of life more than the promises of God.

that happens all the time in our own experiences. It happens to me all the time. And that's why we have to hear again and again that God's word is true, even though the circumstances may contradict God's word.

The promises of God will be fulfilled. And even if the whole world stands against it, even if the whole world stands against it, they cannot make the promises of God null and void.

And yes, the difficult circumstances in life, yes, the nightmares in our life, they are not only there also to test us so that we would persevere and the Lord would keep us, but they are also often there to then bring about the promises of God.

[3 : 12] That's exactly what happened in Joseph's life. Because of these difficult circumstances he had to go through, in the end, he became vice-regent of Egypt.

It would not have happened if he had not been sold into slavery into Egypt. And here we see that God often uses the difficult nightmares in our life to also bring about his promises.

And that is exactly what we see in this story. And therefore, even the nightmares, even the difficult circumstances of our life are good to us, are good to us and are from God for our best.

And that's why I've given the sermon the title Joseph's Nightmare. And we have three points. Obedient, Joseph, that's the first point. Second point, murderous brothers.

Third point, glimpses of waking up after the nightmare. Let's look at the first point. Obedient, Joseph.

[4 : 22] We see here the situation in verse 12 how his dad, Jacob, sends him to look after his brothers. In verse 12, it says, now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem.

Often in these days, you had to wander quite far away to find pasture land for your flock. And that's exactly what they were doing. They went away from, as Jacob and we see here Joseph were in the valley of Hebron, they went away about 50 miles away to Shechem.

That's quite a journey to make. And they were away and now we see how the father of Joseph sends him to check after the well-being of the brothers.

Now it's interesting that here twice it is mentioned in the Hebrew text he has to see whether they are shalom, whether they are well, and then also he asks Joseph to bring a word how they are.

And it could even be that Jacob wants Joseph to check on his brothers as well. Because one indication for that is that with, that's why in the reading of this text I said that the robe that we often see as a colorful robe could also be translated as a robe with long sleeves.

[5 : 49] Because the word that is describing this robe is only twice found in the scriptures. The other time it is found in the scriptures is when it describes Tamar, not the Tamar we saw this morning, but the Tamar Absalom's sister.

And she had a robe with long sleeves. And what that meant in this time is when you had long sleeves that you were actually not working but you were supervising others.

You were not working in the field. So it could very well be that, and it was the folly of the dad, that he put Joseph as a supervisor over his other sons.

And he sends them out to Shechem to check on them. And it's not a very wise request of the father, but what does Joseph do?

What is his reaction here? Well, we see it in verse 13 at the end. He says, here I am. And we may wonder now and think, was he just a little bit naive?

[6 : 53] Because he knew already certainly something about the hatred the brother's had for him. Was he just naive? Well, perhaps he was a little bit naive.

But what is shown to us here is that Joseph was an obedient son. Because the here I am we hear often in scriptures.

When Abraham heard the voice coming from the angel in chapter 22, he said, here I am. And he said, Abraham.

Or then Jacob, when he heard the angel of the Lord, he said also, here I am. And quite often Joseph is described to us in his young years as someone who was maybe a little bit of a spoiled brat.

But I don't think Joseph was a spoiled brat. A spoiled brat is not ready to walk 50 miles, two or three days to check after his brothers.

[7 : 56] And just to say, here I am. I'm ready to do whatever you want me to do. Joseph was an obedient son. He had really the attitude of Christ when he heard his father saying, go and check on your brothers.

See whether it is well with them and bring me a report. He said, here, I am. And we see that also that he wasn't a spoiled brat.

And later on, when he actually comes to Shechem, he couldn't find them. He couldn't find them. And what would a spoiled brat do? He would go back and say, well, I haven't found them.

I've wasted about a week of my life trying to find them. No, he goes and looks for them. And then he hears here from this strange man that they actually moved on and they went to Dothan, another 13 miles.

And he goes there and tries to find his brothers. And eventually he finds them. Now, after such obedience and seeing here, Joseph was an obedient son.

[9 : 03] And I do also believe the verses before these verses we read, we see an obedient son and not just a spoiled brat. We would actually expect from someone who is obedient that blessings would follow and that he would be blessed.

And don't we hear that often in scriptures? Psalm 1, for instance, says, the righteous is like a tree planted by streams of water. It will be well with him.

The one who is obedient, the one who is righteous, but that is not always immediately the case. Yes, it is the case in eternity in Christ, but not immediately in this life.

And now the next thing what we see is that because of his obedience, Joseph is thrown into trouble. That's exactly what we see next.

He's thrown into a nightmare and he comes into the hands of his murderous brothers. brothers. And that's our second point tonight. Murderous brothers.

[10 : 07] Look at the shocking hate the brothers had. First, and we didn't read the first 11 verses here, but in the first 11 verses of this chapter, their hate for Joseph is three times mentioned.

We know when biblical authors repeat something three times, they want to emphasize something. And three times it is mentioned they hated him.

They hated him because they were jealous of him. And this hate breaks out in a horrific manner in our text. In verse 18 to 20, we see how they saw him from afar coming and they made a plan to kill him first at least.

And that plan changed them, but they made a plan to kill him first. What has Joseph done to them? What has Joseph done to them? Nothing. Absolutely nothing he has done to them.

They were just jealous because Jacob of course favored him, which was a mistake of Jacob, but they were just jealous of Joseph.

[11 : 18] But the main reason here is really given to us in verses 19 and also 20, why they hated him. They are not speaking about the favoritism of their dad towards Joseph, but they speak of the dreams.

Verse 19, they said to one another, here comes this dreamer. And the end of verse 20, and we will see what will become of his dreams.

Now, that's interesting. That's the thing that bothered them the most, these dreams. What was the matter with these dreams? Now, we know he had dreams of the sheaves, the sheaves that bowed down before him, or his sheave was there and the other sheaves bowed down before him, and then the dream with the stars and the moon and the sun, and they bowed down before him.

And in these dreams what was promised to Joseph is that one day he shall be a ruler, that God anointed him to be one day a king and a ruler even over his brothers.

And these dreams were promises from God for Joseph. They were promises from God. Yes, God spoke in these days through dreams.

[12 : 47] He doesn't do that today anymore, but in those days he spoke through dreams. And the word of God came to Joseph in these dreams. And God promised him you shall be a ruler over your brothers.

But the brothers refused to accept this. They refused to accept this. It's interesting that somehow the father, although he rebuked him for the dreams, he seemed to have believed in these dreams somehow.

Look at verse 11 at the very end. Isn't that interesting?

That sounds very similar to Mary when she heard things about the Lord Jesus Christ and she kept these things in her heart. The same thing Jacob did. Somehow he believed, yes, maybe there's more to these dreams.

Maybe these dreams are the very word of God, but what do the brothers do? They say, let us kill the anointed one of the Lord. That's exactly what they said.

[13 : 58] They said to themselves, let's fight against the word of God. Let's fight against the word of God. We want to fight so that the word of God would not be fulfilled.

And that revealed in their hearts that first and foremost they were not fighting against Joseph, they were fighting against God. They didn't want Joseph as their ruler.

As it is said in Psalm 2, of course, about the Lord Jesus Christ and the nations, it is said there, let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their courts from us.

They didn't want to have the anointed one of the Lord over them. They were angry at God. Why not me? I don't want him to rule over me.

Exactly what they said with the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore they plotted for us to kill him. And then we see, of course, here the interaction between Reuben and them, how Reuben suddenly thinks I should save this Joseph.

[15 : 09] Why? Well, probably one of the reasons could have been because he was already not in favor with his dad because he took early on the concubine of his dad.

And of course, he was the oldest one. He was responsible for everyone. So he didn't want to be blamed for this, what they had planned together. And they listened to him.

They first listened to him and he says, well, let's not kill him but throw him here into this pit. The pit is empty. And his plan was, of course, to save him.

But the brothers didn't know that. The only thing the brothers heard was, ah, that means we don't have to kill him ourselves. We can just throw him into the pit and he will die of thirst. It's much easier, much cleaner.

Do you see the heart of the brothers? It's shocking. And in the morning we heard how God later on changed Judah. Isn't it amazing?

[16 : 07] He was one of them. them. And God changed by his grace all of them eventually. But here their wickedness comes through.

And then they throw him into the pit. There was no water in it. And then we see another shocking glimpse into their cold hearts. Look at verse 25 in the beginning.

So he was crying in the pit. That is said to us in chapter 42. He was begging them. He was begging them to let him out.

But what were they doing? Just probably on top of the pit, just at the rim of it. Then they sat down to eat, hearing him cry in the pit.

And then the next thing happens. And they sat down to eat. They looked up and they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. And then Judah, his greed was ignited.

[17 : 09] We said that already in the morning. And he wanted to sell him because we can make profit of this young man. We can make profit of Joseph.

And they acted then, of course, according to the plan of Judah. And then we see that they had as a next step to take the robe from Joseph, whether it was a colorful robe or just one with long sleeves, it doesn't matter.

And they killed the goat and dipped the robe in the blood. So to say to their dad, look, a wild animal has killed him. And that part of the plan, of course, worked very well.

And we see the robe was brought to Jacob. He saw the robe, identified it as the robe of Joseph. And we see then his grief, as he was saying, then Jacob tore, it's said here, then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son for many days.

We see here the dark heart of these murderous brothers, how they wanted to kill him and then sold him into Egypt.

[18 : 24] And what we see then is that the nightmare for Joseph continued. For many, many years afterwards, the nightmare continued. With about 17 years old, he was sent into slavery.

And many years he was in slavery. With 30, he became then vice regent. But many years he was in slavery. But what we also see in our text is that Joseph would have had glimpses of waking up after the nightmare.

Yes, he remained in the nightmare for many, many years. But he had glimpses of waking up after the nightmare. And that's our last point tonight.

And the first glimpse and the first glimmer he would have had was the word of God, which he had, of course, by his upbringing, some of the word of God, but then chiefly also through the dreams.

Jesus. And I find it so amazing to observe the whole life of Joseph, and is he not a wonderful type for our Lord Jesus Christ. In the life of Joseph, he had so little.

[19 : 39] He had to go to Egypt, learn the language. He was a slave. And yet he was so faithful, just with these glimmers of hope, with the little bit of the word of God he had, and he clung unto it.

God gave me promises in these dreams. One day it will be better. And I trust God. And I trust God.

Can we certain that he thought often about these dreams? As it were the word of God to him. But we today have even more.

We have even more. And the word of God speaks to us and into our nightmares of our life. And it says whatever sorrow you go through, whatever nightmare you go through, one day all this will pass away.

There won't be any tears anymore. There won't be any sorrow anymore. There won't be any difficulties and darkness anymore. All will be gone.

[20 : 54] We have the same glimmer. Yeah, we have not only a glimmer of hope. We have so much more. One day all will be gone.

And it is sad to see that Jacob, although he had actually the word of God in these dreams as well, because we read in verse 11, but his father kept the saying in his mind that he somehow believed that these dreams were from God, and he kept them in his mind.

But then when he came to the bad news or the deception, and he saw, well, my son is dead. He's dead. He's dead. He's a bit like David, who was always saying, Absalom is dead.

Absalom is dead. My son. My son. My son. And it's specifically said that he refused to be comforted. But we can understand that, surely.

But still, it wasn't right. He had actually the word of God. And he should have trusted the word of God. And sometimes this is even, and I say that as gently as possible, but sometimes it is even the case in our lives that we have the word of God and we have comfort in the word of God, but we refuse to be comforted.

[22 : 17] We are unwilling to look to the word. Is that not often the case in our lives, in my life, that we react the same way, understandably, as Jacob?

But he had actually the word of God. And he could have looked to the word of God. Because the word of God is really, for us, hope and light and glimpses that we wake up one day after the nightmare.

There are another glimpse of hope in this story we see, and that is actually God's providence. God's providence, I believe, in our text, is also a glimmer or glimpse of hope.

We know, of course, the Westminster Catechism. And it asks the question, what are God's works of providence? God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful, preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions.

And that we see here in this chapter in a wonderful way. First, we see God's providence in Joseph's wandering at Shechem.

[23 : 36] He was looking for his brothers, and he was wandering about, wasting time. He wasn't wasting any time. God waited to exact the moment until he met this man, so that then later on, this caravan of the Midianites would be at the right place in the right time.

Isn't that wonderful? God's providence. There's no wasted time in God's providence. He may have thought, why am I wandering in the wilderness now?

But God had a plan in his providence. Or then, of course, even meeting this man who told him where they are, that they are in Dothan, that this man coincidentally knew the brothers, coincidentally knew where they went.

And he met this man coincidentally. That's God's providence. Wonderful providence of God. Or then, Reuben spat conscience, whatever it was, self-preservation before his dad.

Whatever it was, God used it. And he suggested another plan. Or then, Judah's greed. He used it in his providence.

[24 : 55] God didn't sin. Judah sinned, but God used it, so that Joseph would be sold to Egypt. And then the caravan, as we said, came at the exact right time.

And passed by. And it's interesting. It's not said to us. Actually, it's quite the opposite said to us. They weren't slave traders. They were just normal traders.

But they nevertheless took him, bought him, and sold him again. And everything was led by God. And isn't it wonderful to see there are no accidents in God's providence.

There are no accidents in the nightmares of this life. Absolutely none. No accidents in God's providence. All is in God's plan, and everything is for our best.

Although, we very often do not understand why, Lord? Why? It may not feel like it, and we can be sure it didn't feel like it for Joseph.

[26 : 04] Not at all. Again, in Genesis, chapter 42, it is actually said how Joseph felt in this moment. In the words of his brothers, verse 21, it is said, 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.

The distress of his soul. He did not feel that the promises of God are working out. Not at all. The exact opposite was true.

He thought everything is going out of control. And he was in distress. But then eventually, what said Joseph in Genesis 50?

We all know these words very, very well. From the lips of Joseph, As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today.

Even in God's providence in this story, there are glimpses of waking up after the nightmare. And then eventually, what we see in Joseph, and I think in Joseph in particular, we see a glorious type of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[27 : 33] We mentioned already the obedience of Joseph. And how much more obedient was the Lord Jesus Christ? Joseph said, Here I am. The Lord Jesus Christ said, Even more, Here I am.

I do whatever you want me to do. Then we see in our story we have before us how the brothers were saying in verse 20, and we will see what will become of his dreams.

It's very similar to what the men were saying at the bottom of the cross. Isn't it? In Luke 23, 35, it is said, And the people stood by watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, He saved others.

Let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his chosen one. If he is the Christ, if he's the chosen one.

It's very similar that they were fighting against the word of God in that very instance. Then we know that the garments of Christ were divided, and the lot was cast for the garment.

[28 : 52] And here we see that a lot of the story is going around the rope, and the rope is something important, and they took the rope away from him, and they dipped it in goat's blood.

Well, then the brothers sold him for 20 silver pieces. Judas sold the Lord Jesus Christ for 30 silver pieces. We have a parallel here. And then even after Christ died, we saw in the disciples, or we see in the disciples, hopelessness.

And they thought, all is over. They refused to be comforted, forgetting that the Lord Jesus Christ went through the nightmare of death and the wrath of God so that we would have a waking up after every nightmare, and we'd have eternal life.

therefore be encouraged that God is able that God is able to even change the worst nightmares and work them out for your best.

We need to be reminded of that again and again. That's why the Bible is full of it. And He even uses the nightmares to bring about the promises of God. God believe this, trust in God.

[30 : 21] And also remember that it is folly to fight against God's Word. Maybe young people are sometimes particularly falling to that temptation in their early years that they want to fight against God, but older people do it as well.

It's folly to fight against God's Word. He always wins. He always wins. Is it not much better to bow yourself willingly rather than one day He will come to judge?

And then lastly, another remark I want to bring or application. Do not complain, but trust God. Now this is of course easier said than done.

And yes, there is also a right complaining before God as we see it in the Psalms. But what I find amazing in Joseph's story, how much unrighteousness was done to him and we don't hear of any word of complaining ever from Joseph.

The same thing is true of the Lord Jesus Christ even more. Both the Lord Jesus Christ of course perfectly, Joseph never perfectly, trusted the Lord.

[31 : 39] They trusted the Lord. And not just passively, but also actively. We see later in the story how there are some fellow prisoners of Joseph and Joseph in the prison had a concern for them.

Isn't that unbelievable? Rather than complaining, he had a concern for them. That's only possible in Christ. Let's pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Father in heaven, we thank you for your whole scripture.

We thank you, Lord, how you worked powerfully in the fathers of our faith, that you worked powerfully the grace which we see even in these pages we just looked at and read together and considered.

We thank you so much, Lord, that you kept Joseph, even through this bitter nightmare of being sold into slavery and for years not seeing your promises coming to pass.

[33 : 00] Jesus, thank you that you preserved him and that you preserved even our Lord Jesus Christ when he went through death for us and through the wrath of God.

You sustained him, you kept him, you preserved him, and he rose again on the third day and we know because of that life, that resurrection, we also, Lord, will one day be an eternal bliss and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And please, Lord, help us in all our circumstances we are in, that you would enable us in the power and the strength of the Holy Spirit to trust you, not only passively but also actively, doing your word, trusting your word, and knowing that you have even brought these difficult things about so that they are for our best.

Help us to believe this. You know how weak we are to believe these things. Help us, O Lord. Amen. Then we sing Psalm 3, our portion of Psalm 3 together.

Psalm 3, sing Psalms, page 3, verses 1 to 6. O Lord, how many are my foes, how many up against me rise, they all are saying now of me, in vain he on his God relies, but you are my protector, Lord, you are a shield around me spread.

[34 : 50] my glory comes from you alone, the one who raises up my head. Psalm 3, verses 1 to 6, and we stand to sing. O Lord, how many are my foes, how many up against me rise, may all are saved, know of me, in many honest audrey lies, but you are my protector, Lord, you are a shield around me spread, my glory comes from you alone, the one who raises up my head.

When to the Lord, I lift my eyes, in face of those who hate me still, the Lord will hear my cry to him, and answer from his holy hell.

I settle down and sleep in peace, I wake in God's love, holy hand, I will not hear turn from house the force, who should be thrown against me, son.

the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen.