



e - Votion

Wednesday, August 6, 2014

Dear Friends,

Today I am reading Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28:

Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan. This is the story of the family of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than another other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers they hate him, and could not speak peaceably to him. Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come I will send you to them." He answered, "Here I am." So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock; and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron.

He came to Shechem, and a man found him wandering in the fields; the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" "I am seeking my brothers," he said: "tell me please where they are pasturing the flock." The man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So, Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. they saw I'm from a distance and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him"---that he might rescue him out of their hands and restore him to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him

of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; and they took him and threw him in a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

Then they sat down to eat; and looking up, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels



carrying gum, balm, and resin, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother and our own flesh." And his brothers agreed. When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out to the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

Stories of conflict, brother against brother, are as old as time itself, and continue today. In Gaza, battles continue after a breakdown of a proposed ceasefire and dreams of lasting peace fade once again. There is hope that peace talks in Cairo will secure a permanent ceasefire. At this point, ceasefire or no, Hamas and Israel are extremely wary and distrustful of one another, with each side rejecting the other's legitimacy and continuing to call for complete destruction. HEARTBREAKING. We pray for peace.

Joseph's story with his brothers is not much better--he landed in a deep and desolate pit, after telling his brothers he dreamed they were bowing down before him. And as if that wasn't enough, he told them he had seen the sun, moon and stars worshiping him also. Poor Joseph probably brought some of this on himself.

Achieving peace was not a priority for that family. And that coat... it made things worse. It was most likely a sign of how favored Joseph was in his family, royalty perhaps... but it was a royal pain to his brothers. Joseph was the favored son, a privilege that incited the envy of his brothers. And envy plows a fertile field for conflict.

When we are embroiled in some conflict or another, it is really difficult to imagine the way out of such a deep pit. As God's people we are called to listen to dreams and move forward in faith. Not always easy. The story of Joseph shows us the presence of God in Joseph's life. Through time, Joseph comes to understand (and hopefully we do too) what it means to trust God through crisis. Joseph's life shows us the remarkable way that God acts to work "good from evil." (Remember that Scripture, "For all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose.")

Joseph remained faithful when the odds were stacked against him. There are no guarantees to a life of faith--except the promise of God to be with us when we step out in faith. Faith is an activity that pushes us beyond our comfort zones. It is risky business, but well worth the risks when transformation occurs.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "Faith is only real when there is obedience, is never without it, and faith only becomes faith in the act of obedience." As the violence in Gaza continues along with a bunch of other places in the world, being obedient to God's desire for reconciliation is a risky endeavor. One of the most important aspects of faith is acknowledging our own contribution to the conflict. Joseph's brothers were not able to speak peaceably about him, but Joseph wasn't innocent either. All of them contributed to the family's dysfunction. Perhaps when we find ourselves in intransigent situations, we might look in the mirror and think about our participation.

The beautiful part of this story is God's providential care of Joseph which leads to eventual reconciliation with his brothers. The family conflict is resolved and gives witness to the way the twelve tribes of Israel bring God's promise into the future. God's steadying hand preserves Joseph's life and assures new life for the future.

Wherever we might be, may we be reassured that God is not far away. :)

PRAISES AND PRAYER CONCERNS:

- Praises for a new grandchild for Karen and Chuck Short!
- Please pray for
- Mildred Boyd (released from JCMC)
- Belle Crowder, (Fell and broke both arms--at home)
- Avril and Jackie Bookout (Serena Crowder's parents)
- Jane Eddy
- Carrie Denny
- Martha Hauff
- Mitch Robinson and family in the death of Mitch's mother
- Lou Falls in the death of her sister
- Rev. Ginger Isom (Christ UMC Greeneville) in the death of her husband, Greg
- The homeless, military at home and abroad, world peace

CALENDAR:

- 8/7 5 pm UMW Exec Committee
- 6 pm UMW General Meeting
- 6:30 pm CHURCH Finance Committee
- 8/12 7 pm Pillar Chairs
- 8/15 Melting Pot
- 8/18 7 pm Southside Neighborhood Organization
- 7 pm Communications Pillar
- 8/23 Monthly Food Distribution, Food Pantry

"Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words."
St Francis of Assisi

Blessings,

Jane Taylor
First United Methodist Church
Johnson City TN