

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Sexagesima Sunday, February 16, 2020**

✠ ✠ ✠

(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 14, 428:1, 353:1-5, 451, 353:6-7.

Lessons: Genesis 45:1-28, 1 Corinthians 15:42-49, Luke 6:27-38.

Sermon Text: Genesis 45:1-8.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

I hope you remember how the descendants of Abraham got to Egypt. Jacob, Abraham's grandson, had twelve sons and the ten older brothers hated Joseph, the eleventh son, who was his father's favorite son and had been given a special coat of many colors. They wanted to kill Joseph but Reuben, the oldest, intervened. They ended up selling Joseph when he was 17 years old to Ishmaelite merchants who sold him into slavery in Egypt. He worked in the household of Potiphar and became a trusted servant. But Potiphar's wife, who isn't even named in Holy Scripture, falsely accused Joseph of rape and he was thrown into prison. He spent several years in prison and interpreted dreams for two fellow prisoners. One of those prisoners was freed and went back to work for Pharaoh.

Events in the first decades of his life lead us today to look at

**GOD'S PLANS IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH**

- 1. Joseph suffered much before he was reunited with his family.**
- 2. Jesus suffered for the entire family of mankind.**
- 3. What plans does God have for you?**

Eventually Joseph was called on to interpret a very puzzling dream of Pharaoh. This dream meant that Egypt would have seven years of abundant crops and then seven years of famine. As a result, Joseph was made second in charge in Egypt at the age of 30. During the seven years of abundant crops, Joseph prepared for seven years of famine and stored up food from the seven prosperous years, which fulfilled the dream of Pharaoh.

The widespread famine even affected Joseph's family in Canaan. His father Jacob sent his other sons on two trips to buy food. Our text joins Joseph and his brothers as they came the second time to buy food.

Joseph knew who they were and he finally identified himself. ***“Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am Joseph! Is my father still living?’ But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Come close to me.’ When they had done so, he said, ‘I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!’”*** His brothers were terrified. Imagine yourself seeing someone years later for whose death you were responsible and guilty for!

Did they fear reprisal, that Joseph would now get even with them for the terrible things they had done to him? Did they think that they'd seen some kind of ghost or spirit? He tells them who he is. ***“He said, ‘I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!’”***

But he doesn't harm them in any way or hold any grudge. He called them close and said ***“do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.”***

They heard that their lives will be saved because this really happened despite the sins they committed against Joseph. God brought this about! He told them that ***“it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by***

**a great deliverance.**” Joseph revealed that the famine will last for five more years. He knew this because God had given him the ability to interpret Pharaoh’s dream. Joseph suffered so that many people would be saved.

He revealed why things happened as they did. **“God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”**

He told them ‘don’t blame yourselves for the bad things that happened.’

We can see a parallel in Jesus. Jesus, too, suffered so that many people might be saved. We know from Scripture that **“God our Savior ... wants all men to be saved.”** 1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NIV) God wants all to be saved, not just from an earthly famine, but saved eternally, saved from the punishments of hell. Joseph suffered in prison for a time. Jesus suffered all the torments of hell once for all mankind. And those who believe this will be saved. Scripture is clear when it tells us **“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.”** Mark 16:16 (NIV)

Joseph is proof of what God assures us in Romans 8: **“we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”** Romans 8:28 (NIV) And now one of God’s great purposes in permitting suffering to come on Joseph has been revealed.

Joseph’s brothers were now told that this had happened for their good and the good of their families. Joseph said **“God sent me ahead”** to preserve you. **“God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God.”**

That’s what Jesus does for us on a much larger scale. He preserves us, he keeps us safe, and he keeps us secure until the joy of heaven shall be revealed in us.

God sent Jesus to earth to live a perfect life foreshadowing our perfect sinless life in heaven.

Joseph’s brothers had to believe him, in the same way we must believe in Jesus so that we receive the benefits of his sufferings. Joseph’s brothers had to believe him that he would not turn on them and seek retribution – getting even – at some point in the future. We must believe that God will not turn against us who believe in Jesus.

There was no sadness or anger in his heart. There was only love. Joseph is not angry but forgiving. God is angry with sin and impenitent sinners. Repenting and turning to God in faith gives us all the benefits Christ wants for us. We have peace with God. God is no longer angry with us because of the work and interceding of his Only-Begotten Son, Jesus.

In Joseph’s life, God had revealed this to Joseph. Now, while we are on earth, we often don’t know why some things happen and often may never know on earth! Joseph didn’t know the end of the bad things that were happening to him – thrown into the pit, sold into slavery, imprisoned unjustly, and even being separated from his family in Egypt.

But God permitted these things to happen for a purpose. Joseph sees now and tells his brothers that **“God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”** Now they had deliverance from famine.

430 years later their descendants would experience a greater deliverance, from their slavery in Egypt. But God did all this so that he could give them the land of Canaan in which the Savior of all mankind would eventually be born.

But Joseph didn’t know all this while all the bad things were happening to him. He endured by faith, trusting in God.

By faith, as the New Testament letter to the Hebrew Christians tells us. **“By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph’s sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.”** Hebrews 11:21-22 (NIV)

Look how God preserved Joseph’s family. At this time they were a small group, only 70 souls who came with Joseph’s father. When Joseph’s people left Egypt, they would be a much larger group. They would still be a small nation among all the pagan nations. But as they conquered the tribes of Canaan, they were not a warrior nation. God gained these victories for them. Just look at the victory God gained at Jericho as they entered the Promised Land!

God did this to preserve his Word for the world. God used Joseph to save lives. When Joseph speaks of saving his brothers' "***lives by a great deliverance***" he is possibly thinking of food right now. But God's chosen people would be delivered from Egypt 430 years later.

We see parallels in Joseph and Jesus. Jesus came to save lives – not just for a lifetime on earth, but to save eternally.

Jesus gave, earned, and won a great deliverance. We confess with Martin Luther that "Jesus Christ ... has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally."

Look at what God has done for you.

Not just materially, but spiritually. When we look at the people of the world, and even people we know personally, we must realize that we are really living in a spiritual desert, aren't we? We may think that there are many Christians around us, but do we see fruits of faith in Jesus? Do we see such behavior as to show they are Christians, believers that Jesus is the only one who can save them from eternal damnation?

Joseph did not know, he could not have known, what God had in store for him years earlier when his brothers threw him in a pit and sold him into slavery.

We don't know all the ways in which God wants us to serve him.

None of us knows what God has in mind for us. I could speak at length about my own life and what God had in mind for me, but will say only that I have done many things and spoken to many people that I never imagined I would do. All I started doing was to prepare to see if there was a way I could serve the Lord. There have been difficult times along the way, but the Lord seems to have used me. Who knows what service the Lord still wants to use me for? My days are in his hand.

What about you?

You have learned from the catechism the fundamentals of Christian doctrine. You have memorized many bible passages. Many of you have had opportunity to bring your children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Do not limit your vision to what you can see in front of you right now.

Despite any difficulties in front of you, God may have great plans for you! Seek his will. Seek his ways. In every situation, the words of the Psalmist apply to us: "***Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.***" Psalm 37:5 (KJV) In every difficulty, "***Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.***" Psalm 55:22 (KJV)

And finally, ask "Lord, how can I serve you?" Amen.