

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups 10th August 2008

Joseph - the Servant

Genesis 39



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

God has ideas and plans beyond our imagination: v1: Joseph sold into slavery as a servant.

He didn't choose to be in this situation, but his spoiled, insensitive and arrogant approach has significantly contributed to where he now finds himself. What's remarkable is that to our natural eye Joseph is completely unfit for the role that he is to play in the plan of God's people. But God has other ideas and He sees beyond what we can see. His call to us is to seek him so that we too might have our Spirits opened to see the immense possibilities that he has for each one of us. Cf. 2 Cor. 5 :17. All of us are like buildings - still under construction - but the beautiful thing is that God sees each one of us as the finished product that we will be when we finally stand before him.

Joseph grew in stature to have a servant heart and attitude – like Jesus: v2: begins with these words which are echoed throughout the chapter ²*The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered* Cf. v3, 21 and 23. Something remarkable has happened to the insensitive, spoilt, arrogant boy. Even though he is now a servant – at the bottom of the human chain - he excels in all that he does so that Joseph finds favour and becomes overseer and is put in charge of all that Potiphar owned. Joseph has become a servant of integrity and honesty, his skills and temperament means that he is a man to be trusted. Joseph is a forerunner and type of Saviour after our Lord Jesus, who himself became a servant, honest, trustworthy, full of integrity and of deep humility. Cf. Phil.2:4 - 11 which puts it succinctly.

Joseph eventually came to live a distinctive life which brought blessing: v9: For Joseph who has found so much blessing in his circumstances, things change and not for the better. Potiphar's wife tries to seduce him, but Joseph has learnt honour and integrity and refuses her advances. Joseph's life has been transformed and he is not prepared to compromise his walk with God. It's costly to live a different sort of life and Joseph experienced this cost in abundance. He was betrayed by his brothers and then wrongly accused and betrayed by Potiphar's wife. But everything that Joseph did brought blessing on Potiphar's house; it's as if the sweet aroma of Christ permeated and touched everything that he did. (2 Cor 2:14,15)

Joseph didn't let his circumstances dictate how he would be and react: v20: rather than giving into his circumstances, Joseph rises above what has been thrown at him. The Lord has so worked in his life that the skills and temperament that he now has enables him to have the full trust of the prison warder. He is lifted out of the pit. Cf.Ps.103. Joseph faced the pit of despair at least 3 times, but the Lord was with him and somehow Joseph is secure in the keeping knowledge of God.

God's plan for us to know and find a place of security above and beyond ourselves: From the time Joseph was sold into slavery the injustice he suffered played its part in preparing him for the position of leadership he was to fill later in life. He had learnt how to submit without resentment. He became a servant with a servant heart and attitude and God honed his skills so that everything he did was blessed by the Lord. The road we are to travel may be easy or it may be strewn with difficulty. Last week Jenny said: *we should not expect church to be safe and predictable – Jesus wasn't, so God isn't either! Let's be open to where He's taking us and lean on Him for all that we need for the journey.* There is one caveat to this. If we can trust in Him, then we can find a place of security that will hold and keep us to the uttermost.

Witness: questions to discuss

1. Use Psalm 103 as a meditation and act of worship
2. Have you ever fought hard with a person close to you, and then experienced reconciliation? What process did you go through?
3. Read Ephesians 3: 14-21. How can we begin to understand the immense possibilities God has planned for us. (See also Jeremiah 29:11)
4. Read Phil.2:4 -11. Discuss together the implications of what it means to have a servant heart.
5. Are our lives indistinguishable from those around us? What do we need to do to change?