

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups Aug 17th 2008

'Joseph...son, servant, prisoner, prime minister!

Genesis 40: 23 -41:40



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Joseph – the prisoner Joseph's life can be seen as something of a roller coaster ride! A journey of extreme highs as favoured son and Prime Minister of Egypt and extreme lows, as slave and prisoner. In the passage for this week Joseph finds himself in prison after being set up by Potiphar's wife who as a result of Joseph resisting her seductive powers had him imprisoned in a fit of pique. Here he encounters Pharaoh's chief baker and cup bearer, he interprets their dreams and is eventually remembered to Pharaoh after Pharaoh is troubled by dreams he could not understand. During the years in prison Joseph no doubt had plenty of time to reflect on his life and faith in God - several spiritual truths are encapsulated for us in the narrative of the passage.

1 Remember - you are not forgotten! In the roller coaster experiences of life some of us are down at the bottom of the dip and 'up there' can seem a long way off! We may feel that the dreams and ambitions we have had for our lives, for our families, for our friends, for our church, for God's kingdom, have not been fulfilled. Joseph must have often felt forgotten. Abandoned by his family and discarded in a pit. Falsely accused and left languishing in prison he must have felt that the dreams he had as a young boy were shattered and yet the truth of God's plans and purposes, the reality of his kingdom is that in the roller coaster circumstances of life God is always there working his purposes out – read Gen 39:20 -21. God was equally with Joseph in the 'ups' when things seemed to be working out as well as in the 'downs' when the circumstances of his life seemed to be nothing short of catastrophic! And so it is with us...in our successes and in our failures in our health and in our sicknesses, when we are clothed in a coat of many colours and when we are naked at the bottom of a pit, we are not forgotten by God, God is with us.

2 Don't give up – live the dream! Despite the 'downs' of Joseph's life he continued to 'live the dream,' he kept close to God and lived out faith such that God's kingdom, God's plans and purposes came into being. It was through Joseph and his predicaments that a train of events was set in motion that was to lead Israel into Egypt, the Exodus with Moses taking the people out to the land that God had promised Abraham, the land of Jesus of Nazareth, God's Son and our Saviour! The reality of faith is that it must be lived out 24/7 whatever the circumstances. God's plans and purposes for his creation demand a human counterpoint. "the drama of God's future must be embodied and implemented by human imagination. The transcendent purposes of God is tied to concrete historical actions" Walter Brueggemann. In other words God really does need you for his kingdom to come on earth as it does in heaven.

3 Be renewed – by the Spirit of God! Read 41:33 and 37 -40. What a transformation through the pit and prison God had been at work shaping and molding Joseph into someone characterized by wisdom and discernment and filled with the Spirit of God himself. Rather than boasting of his own talents and gifts, Joseph gives God the honour. –read 40:8 and 41:16. Throughout our passage today Joseph continually points to God – read v25, v28 and v32. When people meet you and I what will they say, Who will they see? As we open our lives more and more to the filling of God's Holy Spirit may they see something of the reality of God's love and wisdom, may they see Jesus.



Witness: questions to discuss:

1. What is your dream, ambition, hope: for yourself, for our church, for God?
2. **Remember - you are not forgotten!** Have you ever felt forgotten – by God, those close to you, your small group/church? What do you think you should do about this?
3. **Don't give up – live the dream!** Ever felt like giving up – with God, your small group/ church? Share your thoughts.
4. **Be renewed – by the Spirit of God!** Spend time with God – ask him to forgive, refresh, renew you. Pray for new heart and vision. Pray that Christ may dwell in you and that he may be seen in you.