

This Lent series looks at the story of Joseph from Genesis and pairs parts of it with Jesus (parallel or contrasting) and with our own lives. It could be flexible in use (as a sermon series, youth group lessons, Bible study, devotional, or whatever), and flexible in what is included (from Joseph's story and/or what Gospel lessons might be paired with it).

We start with Joseph's dream (Ash Wednesday and First Sunday in Lent) and connect that to Jesus starting his ministry, and we too might have dreams and/or expectations. Through Lent we explore some of the ups and downs of that dream and how at times it might seem like it can't come true or won't live up to the expectation (Joseph/Jesus/ourselves). Then on Palm Sunday (brothers come to Egypt to bow before Joseph & Triumphal Entry) it seemed like that dream finally came true, but it wasn't satisfying. Finally, on Easter Sunday (the brothers hug it out & the Resurrection) "The Family Restored" is the true happy ending.

Ash Wednesday Genesis 37:1-11

Joseph and his dreams

I paired the passage with II Corinthians 6:3-13. **My sermon title was: "Open Wide Your Hearts."**

- For Ash Wednesday I spoke about humility, vulnerability, and compassion—all lacking in young Joseph.
- Open wide your hearts.
- Follow those who open wide their hearts, like Jesus.
- Open hearts, love, compassion: this is the path to righteousness, to Christ.

First Sunday in Lent Genesis 37:1-11

Joseph and his dreams

I did this passage again because it is an important foundation for where I was taking the series, and not everyone attends Ash Wednesday. It was similar but also different enough for those who do attend both. I paired the passage with Luke 4:1-13. **My sermon title was: "Passing the Test."**

- Joseph shows us being special without humility. Jesus shows us being special with humility.
- You are special and God does love you. You are not God and God is not your servant.
- Know that you are loved, *and* love God and love others.

Second Sunday in Lent Genesis 37:23-28, 31-34

The brothers betray Joseph

I paired the passage with Luke 22:1-6. **My sermon title was: "What Will We Gain?"**

- We see many examples in Scripture, history, and today that sin leads to the harm and death of others.
- The season of Lent invites us to reflect, to be honest, to confess, to repent.
- Sin leads to destruction and death, but God can and does work goodness and rescues us.
- Psalm 27 was used as the call to worship that morning and was referenced in the sermon and benediction. Psalm 27:13 "I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

Third Sunday in Lent Genesis 39:1-6a and Genesis 39:20-40:7

Potiphar's house & the cupbearer and the baker

I didn't pair with a New Testament passage this time because I wanted to cover more of Joseph's story before Lent was over. **My sermon title was: "Love Your Neighbors."**

- Lent can represent a journey, a season of preparation, and Joseph learns some lessons along the way to seeing his dream fulfilled.
- First story: Joseph is alone, literally and figuratively, as no one stands up for him. It's understandable that he would isolate himself after being betrayed by his brothers, and this story ends with him going to prison.
- Second story: Joseph is making friends and being a friend. "Why do you look so sad today?"
- Joseph is becoming a man who cares about others!
- Ecclesiastes 4:12; Galatians 5:22: Love one another. Love your enemies.

Fourth Sunday in Lent Genesis 40:20-41:1a

Joseph in prison

I paired the passage with II Peter 3:5-15. **My sermon title was: "When One Day Feels Like a Thousand Years."**

- Suffering, betrayed, imprisoned. Forgotten? Two years pass between Genesis 40:23 and 41:1 (it may have felt like a thousand!), but Genesis 39:2 and 39:21 say, "The Lord was with Joseph."

- II Peter 3:5: “By God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water.” To many at the time, water was an image of chaos.
- May not always be able to see it, but God is working for good, saving many lives, beauty from the chaos and suffering. II Peter 3:15: “our Lord’s patience means salvation.”

Fifth Sunday in Lent Genesis 41:28-40

God gives Pharaoh a dream

I paired the passage with Luke 12:13-21. **My sermon title was: “A Not-So-Rainy Day.”**

- These readings force us to think about not just what we do, but why we do it.
 - Luke: do not store up things; vs. Genesis: collect all the food and store it up. Which is it?!?!?
- Luke actually says “do not store up things for yourself” and Genesis says “this food should be held in reserve for the country” (the community, everyone).
- What do we store up, and why?
- Work hard and store up for the community.

Palm Sunday Genesis 42:1-9a

Brothers bow before Joseph

I paired the passage with Luke 19:28-42. **My sermon title was: “Not What Was Expected.”**

- This is it! The moment we’ve all been waiting for: Joseph’s brothers bow before him like the sheaves of grain in Genesis 37:7, and the Messiah, born of the line of King David, come to set his people free, processes into Jerusalem as a returned conquering king!
- But there is something missing. Why is there sadness in this triumph?
- Many of us have experienced this.
- God has created you, loved you, blessed you, saved you for something more.

Easter Sunday Genesis 44:30-45:15

Joseph reunites with his brothers in hugs and tears

I paired the passage with Luke 24:1-8, 36-43. **My sermon title was: “Family Restored.”**

- Something more!
- Money, fame, power, influence is not the end.

- Death is not the end.
- Joseph reunited with brothers, down from his throne, with hugs and tears and talking.
- Jesus/God reunited with disciples/humanity.
- Happy Easter. He is risen! The relationship is restored. "Peace be with you."