

## Lenten Devotional February 26, 2024

### Scriptures

#### Genesis 41:46-57

46 Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went through all the land of Egypt. 47 During the seven plenteous years the earth produced abundantly. 48 He gathered up all the food of the seven years when there was plenty in the land of Egypt, and stored up food in the cities; he stored up in every city the food from the fields around it. 49 So Joseph stored up grain in such abundance - like the sand of the sea - that he stopped measuring it; it was beyond measure.

50 Before the years of famine came, Joseph had two sons, whom Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him. 51 Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house." 52 The second he named Ephraim, "For God has made me fruitful in the land of my misfortunes."

53 The seven years of plenty that prevailed in the land of Egypt came to an end; 54 and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in every country, but throughout the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do." 56 And since the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. 57 Moreover, all the world came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine became severe throughout the world.

#### Mark 3:7-19a

7 Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed him; 8 hearing all that he was doing, they came to him in great numbers from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon. 9 He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him; 10 for he had cured many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him. 11 Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, "You are the Son of God!" 12 But he sternly ordered them not to make him known.

13 He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, 15 and to have authority to cast out demons. 16 So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); 18 and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

### Devotion

#### The Rev. Trevor Jamison '01

"Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely . . . there is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it." (John Dahlberg-Action, 1834-1902)

How do you respond to that statement? A hearty "Amen"? Or do you feel it's unnecessarily pessimistic?

Both Bible readings feature people appointed to an office. Joseph, after many trials and tribulations, is now Pharaoh's right hand man, preparing for a famine in Egypt. In the second reading, Jesus

appoints twelve men as apostles—messengers with authority to cast out demons. How will Joseph and the Twelve behave now that power is in their hands?

Joseph uses his power to organise a nationwide food collection in the good years. Then when the bad times come, he opens up the storehouses and *sells* that food to the hungry Egyptians from whom he had collected it in the first place! Clever? Yes. Honourable? Not so sure.

As for the Twelve, it's a mixed picture. Peter used the authority of his office to ask Jesus questions, but had trouble listening to the answers. James and John came to Jesus seeking to be promoted above the others. And as for Judas . . .

If Joseph, who was aware of being accompanied by God during his life, and the Twelve, who accompanied Jesus throughout his ministry on earth, underperformed in such fashion, what hope is there for us?

Politicians or church leaders, teachers or social influencers, and all others appointed to positions of power: don't put ultimate trust in them, even the good ones. Instead, look to Jesus, who was not corrupted by power, but used it to teach, to heal, and to set people free, including from our sinful human tendency to be corrupted by office and power.

### **Prayer**

Gracious God,  
We thank you for the gifts of office and power.  
We pray for all who hold office,  
and for all who wield power,  
including ourselves.  
May all of us look to follow the example of Jesus,  
who wielded power for the sake of others, not self.  
Amen.