

Alina Kanaski, Senior M.Div. Student at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Scripture

Genesis 44:18-34

¹⁸ Then Judah stepped up to him and said, “O my lord, let your servant please speak a word in my lord’s ears, and do not be angry with your servant; for you are like Pharaoh himself. ¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, saying, ‘Have you a father or a brother?’ ²⁰ And we said to my lord, ‘We have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age. His brother is dead; he alone is left of his mother’s children, and his father loves him.’ ²¹ Then you said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me, so that I may set my eyes on him.’ ²² We said to my lord, ‘The boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.’ ²³ Then you said to your servants, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.’ ²⁴ When we went back to your servant my father we told him the words of my lord. ²⁵ And when our father said, ‘Go again, buy us a little food,’ ²⁶ we said, ‘We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother goes with us, will we go down; for we cannot see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.’ ²⁷ Then your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons; ²⁸ one left me, and I said, Surely he has been torn to pieces; and I have never seen him since. ²⁹ If you take this one also from me, and harm comes to him, you will bring down my gray hairs in sorrow to Sheol.’ ³⁰ Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father and the boy is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the boy’s life, ³¹ when he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die; and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. ³² For your servant became surety for the boy to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I will bear the blame in the sight of my father all my life.’ ³³ Now therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord in place of the boy; and let the boy go back with his brothers. ³⁴ For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the suffering that would come upon my father.”

Devotional

This passage is from the middle of a story, one that is about Joseph but also about so many others. Take Judah, the speaker here: he was one of Joseph’s older brothers—a son of Leah and the brother who suggested selling Joseph into slavery.

Yet here he is, offering himself as Joseph’s slave to save his younger brother Benjamin from the same fate. Benjamin is Rachel’s other son, so beloved by their father that Jacob didn’t want to let Benjamin go to Egypt. He’s not too different from Joseph, but still Judah offers his life in exchange for Benjamin’s. Joseph isn’t the only one who’s changed as this story has unfolded.

Judah has offered himself as a *surety* for his brother Benjamin. Judah is responsible for Benjamin in their father’s eyes.

As I read this passage, I remember another Son—a “son” of Judah and one who also offered Himself for another. He also took on the responsibility for not just one, but for many, by giving His life in order to save them. He offered Himself not into slavery but into death. There is no sordid history behind Jesus’ sacrifice—not on God’s end. Yet there is the same love, the same desperate desire to save. God’s love, enacted in and through Jesus, is powerful, proven, and acted out through His life, His death, and His resurrection. As we sit in this period of waiting, of remembering the pain and the darkness, let us also

remember God's love, which Jesus enacted and which is the source of our hope.

Prayer

God, thank You for Your love, made visible and physical in Jesus Christ. Help us to see its echoes all around us, whether in the Bible, in the people around us, or in the small moments of life. In Your name we pray, Amen.