

## Lenten Devotional March 1, 2018

### Scripture

#### Genesis 42:29-38

<sup>29</sup>When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, <sup>30</sup>“The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly to us, and charged us with spying on the land. <sup>31</sup>But we said to him, ‘We are honest men, we are not spies. <sup>32</sup>We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in the land of Canaan.’ <sup>33</sup>Then the man, the lord of the land, said to us, ‘By this I shall know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me, take grain for the famine of your households, and go your way. <sup>34</sup>Bring your youngest brother to me, and I shall know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will release your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.’” <sup>35</sup>As they were emptying their sacks, there in each one’s sack was his bag of money. When they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were dismayed. <sup>36</sup>And their father Jacob said to them, “I am the one you have bereaved of children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin. All this has happened to me!” <sup>37</sup>Then Reuben said to his father, “You may kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you.” <sup>38</sup>But he said, “My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should come to him on the journey that you are to make, you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol.”

### Devotional

#### The Rev. Walt Pietschmann '90, Pastor, Bethesda and Olivet Presbyterian Churches, Elizabeth, Pa. / Field Education Supervisor

The long story between Joseph and his brothers is one that is full of jealousy, hatred, and backstabbing, but also one that is ultimately about forgiveness and redemption. In this section of the story, Joseph has given his brothers food to return to Canaan and has requested that the youngest brother, Benjamin, be brought back to Egypt when the brothers return. Even though the brothers brought money to pay for the food, Joseph has secretly given it back to them. Upon returning to Canaan the brothers tell their father, Jacob, all that has happened. Jacob is beside himself with grief. He doesn't want to let go of Benjamin and thinks he's already lost Joseph and perhaps now Simeon, who has been bound and held for ransom in Egypt.

There is an old saying that “blood is thicker than water,” meaning that relationships and loyalties within a family are the strongest and most important ones. Since the beginning of time, however, those ties have served as some of our most difficult and toxic relationships as well. During this Lenten season, perhaps we need to examine our closest relationships and see how we can turn any difficulty we might have with a brother or sister, mother or father, son or daughter, into a more nourishing relationship. With hope and expectation, we can perhaps allow God to make all things new by turning jealousy and hatred into forgiveness and redemption.

### Prayer

Redemptive God, my relationship with (*friend or relative*) hasn't always been a reflection of Your love for me. Fill my heart with a new spirit of grace and allow opportunities for us to heal our relationship. Forgive me any arrogance or contempt and replace it with hope and joy. Amen.