

Lenten Devotional March 6, 2018

Scripture

Genesis 45:1-15

¹Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, “Send everyone away from me.” So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ²And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. ³Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence. ⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come closer to me.” And they came closer. He said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.’ ¹²And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. ¹³You must tell my father how greatly I am honored in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.” ¹⁴Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

Devotional

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Sibling rivalry has been around a long, long time. In fact, it rears its ugly head on page three of my Bible. Many of us have experienced struggles with siblings. I was the middle child of seven; there was always someone who was teasing, tattling, or cheating at Monopoly. Often we outgrow sibling rivalries. But in my work as a chaplain, I sometimes encounter the estrangement of those brothers and sisters who have disagreements over the care of their elderly parent. Family bonds can be stretched thin—even broken.

Our scripture passage tells us the story of Joseph, the braggart, the favorite son, sold into slavery by his brothers. Joseph’s fortunes rise; his brothers come looking for a handout during a famine. Joseph, once powerless at the bottom of a pit, now has all the power. Will the blood that ties these men together now be spilled upon the ground? After some manipulation and testing of his brothers, Joseph forgives them and provides generously for their needs. Then he sends them back to Canaan to fetch their father. Humorously, Joseph cautions, “Do not quarrel along the way.”

Is Joseph a paragon of mercy? Was he able to write off his brothers’ crime as a “boyish prank”? Are the ties to their common ancestor that strong? Or was God the primary agent in this drama? Was Joseph able to extend mercy after he himself experienced God’s mercy? Was Joseph able to extend grace after he himself received God’s grace?

Prayer

Gracious and loving God, Open my eyes to see my sin and the signs of your grace. Teach me to be grace-
full. Open my heart that I might extend mercy. Open my mind that I might seek forgiveness and that I
might give it generously. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.