

Lent Devotional March 15, 2020

Scripture

Genesis 44:1-17

1 Then he commanded the steward of his house, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the top of his sack. 2 Put my cup, the silver cup, in the top of the sack of the youngest, with his money for the grain." And he did as Joseph told him. 3 As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away with their donkeys. 4 When they had gone only a short distance from the city, Joseph said to his steward, "Go, follow after the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you returned evil for good? Why have you stolen my silver cup? 5 Is it not from this that my lord drinks? Does he not indeed use it for divination? You have done wrong in doing this.'" 6 When he overtook them, he repeated these words to them. 7 They said to him, "Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants that they should do such a thing! 8 Look, the money that we found at the top of our sacks, we brought back to you from the land of Canaan; why then would we steal silver or gold from your lord's house? 9 Should it be found with any one of your servants, let him die; moreover the rest of us will become my lord's slaves." 10 He said, "Even so; in accordance with your words, let it be: he with whom it is found shall become my slave, but the rest of you shall go free." 11 Then each one quickly lowered his sack to the ground, and each opened his sack. 12 He searched, beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. 13 At this they tore their clothes. Then each one loaded his donkey, and they returned to the city. 14 Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house while he was still there; and they fell to the ground before him. 15 Joseph said to them, "What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that one such as I can practice divination?" 16 And Judah said, "What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? How can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants; here we are then, my lord's slaves, both we and also the one in whose possession the cup has been found." 17 But he said, "Far be it from me that I should do so! Only the one in whose possession the cup was found shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father."

Devotional

Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, Board Member

Joseph's story is one of the many Old Testament accounts of sibling rivalry. It is a story of transformation, redemption, and forgiveness. Genesis 44:1-17 recounts one of the tests Joseph gave his brothers in order to discern whether his brothers' hearts had been transformed since that fateful day when they sold him into slavery for 20 pieces of silver.

Their hearts had, in fact, been transformed by their father Jacob's profound grief resulting from their plot "to disappear" Joseph. They had been transformed from a group that did not want to bear with a brother who had fanciful dreams to a group that wanted to bear the punishment of a brother—Joseph's only full brother—now, ironically, accused of stealing silver. They wanted to spare the heart of their father, who undoubtedly would have been devastated by the loss of yet another child of his beloved wife Rachel. Later, we see that Joseph responded to the transformation of his brothers with great joy and lavish forgiveness.

Jesus, for the sake of his heavenly parent, willingly bore the punishment for our sins. But Jesus' willingness was not the result of his guilt or desire to right a previous wrong. He who was without any sin freely gave himself for your sin and my sin.

During Lent we are called to reflect on how we respond to these actions of our savior, redeemer, and brother. Are you being called to respond to the sanctifying movement of the Holy Spirit with a greater

spirit of joy, forgiveness, and hope? Are you being called to stand in the gap for the Benjamins in our culture who, by systems and institutions, are set up to fail? Are you being called to rectify a past wrong you committed?

Prayer

God, I thank you for the gift of transformation and redemption. Help me to accept the transformation you have worked in others and in me. Help me to respond to transformation with joy, not skepticism. Help me to respond to you today by surrendering myself to stand in the gap for someone falsely accused or in need of redemption. I pray in the name of my brother, Jesus. Amen.