

God Brings Everything Together For Good

Tom Yacomeni | Genesis 50:15-24

10th August 2025

Well today is the last one of our sermon series which we've been following - Living the Dream, based on the life of Joseph. I hope you have found it as inspiring as I have. You know, over the last 12 weeks we've journeyed with Joseph through the ups and downs of his extraordinary life, from the rejection and cruelty of his family, through slavery and unjust imprisonment, and finally being catapulted into government and leadership just at a time of national crisis. And it is just such a wonderful story of a dysfunctional family being redeemed by God's grace.

And yet it also mirrors the story of God's people all down the centuries. The human condition means we were once alienated ourselves from God's family. We were enslaved by sin, by the kingdom of darkness. But through Christ's coming and his self-sacrifice for us, we're offered the chance of new life. And by accepting his invitation and coming to him in repentance, we can be reconciled to God and joined back together with his family, the church.

So, our story mirrors that of Joseph's.

And I don't know what has really stuck out for you and struck you during this series, whether it's the need for sort of patient perseverance, or whether you've been struck by the way that God steers and guides us through dreams and visions, or whether it is hope for yourselves, perhaps family restoration and restored relationships. But for me, one of the key things that has come through and emerged through this story as we've studied it, is a renewed awareness of God's sovereignty and his timing - his *perfect timing*. Joseph had spent years in prison, probably feeling lonely and forgotten and hopeless at times.

But then, in a moment of God's perfect design and his sovereign timing, everything changed. Pharaoh was given that prophetic dream which presented Joseph with an amazing divine appointment, a *kairos*¹ moment of divine opportunity. And the wonderful thing is that Joseph was spiritually alert. Despite the injustice and hardship of his situation, he hadn't lost faith. He had maintained his integrity; he had trained himself to listen to God's voice. And so, when that *kairos* moment came, that moment of divine destiny, he was alert. He was awake enough to respond and think, "Yes, this is the Lord's hand at work." And so, he was able to interpret Pharaoh's dream. He was able to bring God's Word into that situation for such a time as that. And he was catapulted, because it was so self-evidently obvious that it was the right thing, it was God's will. Pharaoh saw it and others responded to it. He was catapulted from prisoner to prime minister in one day. How would you like that?

The challenge for us is that: “are we awake enough?”

Are we alert enough to be able to respond to God's voice and to see God move in power? Are we alert enough to recognise a *kairos* moment, a moment of divine destiny? You know, even when things might appear dark and desperate, as though there's not much going on in our nation, perhaps a moment of spiritual darkness, actually we know that God can step in and change things in a day. He can come and change the destiny of his people. And so, the question for us is, are we ready? Are we ready? Are we alert, listening out, awake?

And that's one of the things about the summer festival season, because the same message goes out really to many festivals. And this year there's been great encouragement about the new wave of awakening happening in the UK. Do we perceive it? Are we ready? It's particularly happening amongst the younger generations. We've heard over the last few weeks here of people that have been touched and coming awake. And the fact is that the old tropes of atheism and materialism are really looking tired and lacklustre. That's the thing. And people are looking for hope and meaning and purpose in their lives. And they are turning again to seek spiritual truth, and deeper meaning and purpose. So, they are coming awake.

¹ Greek - καιρός, “appointed time or season” -

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2540/niv/lxx/0-1/>

But I find it fascinating that this story of Joseph that we've been studying over these last 12 weeks does also highlight many of our contemporary concerns. There are many parallels. We are concerned aren't we about family breakdown and the issues of dysfunctional family in our own circumstances. Then there's all sorts of things about the misuse of power, how that's abused. There's a lot about sexual immorality. There's the clash of cultures and how different people are treated. We are concerned about modern-day slavery and refugees. There is the environmental crisis. There's famine and issues resulting from that. And then there's economic challenge. How is government supposed to lead wisely facing all these crises at multiple times?

The story of Joseph speaks into all of those. And yet it was at the moment when Joseph was at his lowest point personally...I don't know how you would feel to be lost unjustly imprisoned and left forgotten for years perhaps. You'd think "Well, God where are you in all this?" And it was as the nation was heading towards famine (certainly the prisoners wouldn't have lasted long in a season of famine)... But it was then, at that moment, that God stepped in and brought about national change for such a time as this. He selected Joseph to be pulled out. And so, I am excited about this year ahead. I tend to think in academic years rather than calendar years. I don't know if anybody else is with me. I think you know September feels like the start of the year. I think that the Lord is doing a new thing in our nation, in our church and in the city. I think we should expect him to do wonderful things over the coming year. And I think as we head towards 2026 the Lord is preparing us for a year of blessing (we are focusing on that next year). This is our year of discipleship, where we're really pressing in to seeing how we can respond daily with our life of discipleship and devotion to the Lord. And next year a year of blessing. How can we bless our community with the blessings that we've received from God? How can we experience more of that blessing so that we've got so much more to give away, our generosity as a church? And so, I am looking forward to next year and seeing what God is going to do.

But one of the things I'm really pleased about is that we're going to start all of that off with a week of prayer. In the first week of September, the first week of the next academic year, we're going to pray. We're going to pray and usher in all that God is doing. We're going to seek him for his wisdom. Where does he want our priority and our emphasis to actually pan out this year? So do join us Monday the 1st of September, for half an hour, any time between 7:30am 7:30pm, for free. Come along and we'll just be praying for the Lord to pour out his Spirit in such a time of this. So do join us if you're free to pray.

And in this wonderful last chapter of the story of Joseph, he recognises God's hand at work in his life, despite all the suffering and hardship he's been going through. And he reassures his brothers with this most amazing line, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So don't be afraid." What a wonderful sentence of grace that is! What a wonderful reassurance for his brothers. You know, when I'm having a tough time or facing particularly difficult challenges, I've had to learn to apply faith to the problem and try to see the bigger picture, in some sense reflecting what Joseph did here. We have to see the bigger picture of what God is bringing about. And for me, that often means naming my concerns before the Lord, (numerous as they are) my anxieties that I write down. But actually, it's a good discipline to write them down, to name them before the Lord. I write them in my journal and I say, "Sorry Lord, here's a bunch load of concerns again, but I'm handing them over to you. I'm writing them down and I'm placing them at the foot of your cross." And often I might write, you know, "Over to you Lord, thank you, it's yours to deal with. I can't handle this on my own."

But actually, we know that in the bigger picture, you can. Praying for the Lord to intervene, praying for him to bring deliverance. But also giving thanks, giving thanks in that moment. Paul encourages us to give thanks in all circumstances, whatever challenges we face. And I have to give thanks that he's heard my prayer, and his response is coming. We have to have faith that his response will come in his good timing. We have to leave his timing up to the Lord. I want it *now*, of course, like we all do. "Now, please. In fact, yesterday would have been handy...but I'm leaving it up to you Lord. When is your perfect timing?" I often describe this last step of faith as living in the joy of future retrospect. I know that's contradictory, but it is, I think, the right way to approach it. Sometimes I have to imagine myself in the future giving thanks for answered prayer that I've been doing right now.

And that is a good discipline to say thank you Lord, because you've answered the prayers that I've put before you now. Sometimes it's even as far as writing an entry in my diary next year to look back and give thanks for what God has done. I'll be writing it in my diary now for August 2026. "Thank you Lord for all that you have done among us in the past 12 months. It's amazing. The ways that you've moved Lord, thank you." (I should do that right after this service).

Discipleship isn't easy, but the key is to know whom we follow, and trust that he will lead us to the promised land. Just like you may be feeling you're in the wilderness at the moment, but have faith. God will lead you to the promised land. It's in his timing. You know sometimes it might be days, it might be months, it could be years, but God will lead you home to him. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:12, "I know whom I've believed and I've convinced that he's able to guard with that what I've entrusted to him until that day." "I know whom I've believed" ...I'm convinced he's able to guard what I've entrusted to him till that day. And trusting everything to him also means trusting him with our control. Our control of all that lies ahead, the knowledge of what's coming next. One day on the Day of the Lord, on the day of the Lord's choosing, all will be revealed. Our trust of him will be vindicated, and like Joseph's story, God's sovereign handiwork will finally be made plain for all to see.

But actually, if you think about it, when Joseph was in prison, as he was going through his life, did he anticipate exactly how this outcome would be when he would be finally reconciled with his brothers, when his whole family would be joined back together, that all would be healed, that there would be salvation for the entire nation because of all that God had done. I don't think he would have anticipated everything. But here it is, on that Day of the Lord, where everything came into plain view. And he saw it and gave thanks. He wept, he was so pleased. He wept with joy.

Now the Hebrew word that we read earlier in verse 20 for “intended”, where it says “you *intended* to harm me but God intended it for good” (to accomplish what's now being done), is a fascinating word in the Hebrew. It's "hasab"², the root of which is to weave. So, for example, in Exodus when we read about all the instructions about the tabernacle, and making the curtain and the garments for the tabernacle, often that word "hasab" is used for “weave these things together.” And so I love that image. In other words, Joseph actually says in verse 20, "What you were weaving for evil, God was weaving for good." It's the saving of many lives. I love that picture, weaving. And the understanding of this really helps us unlock something of the mystery of God's will for our lives. You know that NIV translation of that verse implies so much more about an explicit intention, “what you intended for harm, God intended for good.” But I love to see that imagery actually of him weaving together the threads of our lives. And when you see that Joseph understood God like a master weaver, all the things and the experiences that he had been through begin to make much more sense.

God wants to weave the threads of our lives into his beautiful workmanship, his beautiful tapestry, rather than a corrupted composition marred by the world or the flesh or the devil. So, we just have to imagine our lives are like a whole bunch of threads, the things that are coming together in our lives, a whole bunch of threads of all sorts of colours and textures. And will you let the Lord weave them into something beautiful? Or is there some reworking to do? Perhaps that's a way of seeing repentance and what that's like, as unpicking some of the damaged or disfigured parts and sections of our story in order that God may reweave them into something more beautiful.

You know one of my favourite verses in the Bible is Romans 8:28. You may know this verse. It picks up I think on these words from Joseph. “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.” I think the Apostle Paul was thinking of this story and this verse when he was writing that to the Roman Church.

² Hebrew – חָשַׁב, *ḥāšab* <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h2803/niv/wlc/0-1/>

Our lives might look messy at times and a jumble of threads. We might make foolish decisions. We might not get it right all the time. We might speak words we regret just like Joseph did in some ways or find ourselves at odds with friends or family. But the promise of this whole story of Joseph, the promise here in Romans, is that nothing is impossible for God. Nothing is impossible for him. If we seek him and we forsake our wicked ways he will redeem even the most dire situation, the most dire circumstances, He can turn anything for our good.

That is the good news of the gospel, that nothing is beyond his reach. The good news of the gospel of Jesus is that Jesus can take any situation as we hand it to him and that he can make something good from it because we're in his presence, because he is with us. You know it's darkest just before the dawn. God can break in to the most unexpected places, to the most unexpected of people. He took a slave stuck in a gloomy dungeon and he turned him into the national leader for a time of crisis. And actually it's in those most unexpected places and those most darkest moments we need to be expectant. We need to be expectant for the Lord to move. Actually if you think about it as we come towards Christmas that's what the angel did for the shepherds on the hillside. They thought they were pretty downtrodden, just shepherds looking after sheep and yet to them the angel appeared, said don't be afraid, don't be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy for you and all the people. Amen.