

“The Rescue” (Genesis: In The Beginning – Pt. 6)

(Genesis 50:18-20)

- **Tragedy or Comedy?**

- This has been an *incredible* journey through Genesis, and we might’ve saved the best for last with Joseph’s story. Remember our theme this whole time? It’s coming in full-strength today: ***This story is our story, and it’s all connected.*** Joseph’s story is the climax of Genesis, and we’re going to see more than ever how the Gospel shows up here. Before we dig in, *let’s pray.*
- So, if *this story is our story*, the question is—*what kind of story?* I remember in high school English learning about the difference between a *comedy* and a *tragedy*: in classic literature, “comedy” isn’t about humor, like we use the word today—the fundamental difference is *how the story ends*. In a classic “comedy,” no matter how much chaos and struggle comes along the way, it finishes with a *happy ending*—the conflict is resolved, victory is achieved, peace is restored. In a tragedy, no matter how many wonderful and beautiful moments it contains, the story ends with despair, with death. Think *Romeo and Juliet*—sorry if I spoiled it!
- There’s a prevailing worldview today that says all existence is a *random Tragedy*. Lots of glory and beauty—but it will end in darkness and death, meaningless. That’s one way to look at things. If there’s no Author, that is undoubtedly how this story ends—a massive Tragedy. But others say that’s not the case: this world is indeed full of chaos, darkness, struggle—but through it all, there *is* a bigger purpose, and a Purpose-giver, who’s bringing everything together so that one day, *the ending will be good*. This is the Gospel, this is the story of the Bible, and this is the story of Genesis: ***A perfect beginning. A tragic fall. An even more beautiful redemption.***
- Have you ever used this strategy to make it through a stressful movie? Sometimes, we use this “hack” with our kids: watching some adventure movie, it gets intense, the characters face a *crazy* situation, it looks like it could be over, the kids are a little freaked out. But we tell them, *guys, remember this is a good story—the main character has to win in the end, you already know they’re going to make it, you just don’t know how! Hang on!* Do you ever do this?
- Here’s the thing: the message of Genesis makes this a *life hack* for us. Genesis gives us the first glimpse of how the Gospel works itself out in the world. It tells us God can and does work through broken situations to bring about good—and that story comes to fullness in Jesus, in His life, death and resurrection. If you can grab on to this perspective that no matter what happens, *we are living in a good story with a good God, you can face anything! Because you know, somehow, this story has a good ending, you just don’t know how you’ll get there yet.*

- **Joseph’s Story**

- When it comes to the story of Joseph, *nothing feels farther away than a happy ending*. It sure looks like a tragedy most of the time! The bitterness and betrayal woven throughout his father Jacob's story continues with Joseph and his siblings. The familiar cycles of deception, jealousy, and favoritism start all over again with the 12 children of Jacob, or Israel as we now know him.
- When Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel, finally conceives, she gives birth to Joseph and Benjamin, and although he has 10 other sons and a daughter, Joseph quickly rises as the favorite: **"Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him." (Genesis 37:3)** Maybe it was the way his father treated him, or his "coat of many colors," or his knack for blabbing about special dreams the foretold his brothers serving him, or all the above—but just like Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, sibling rivalry is back again: **"When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him." (Gen. 37:4)** God's chosen family looks *anything but* a blessing right now.
- The brothers hatch a terrible plan: they lure him into the fields, strip his beautiful coat, throw him into a pit. Can you imagine the desperation and trauma of this scene? The brothers gleefully arguing whether to murder him or traffic him; Joseph's cries for mercy echoing off the walls of the cistern, far away from any help. The older brothers convince the others to sell him into slavery instead of murdering him. For 20 shekels of silver, he's taken down to Egypt. *He's only 17*.
- Now the brother's need a plan to explain Joseph's absence. So, a lot like Jacob did long ago to his own father and brother, they trick him: they bring back the special robe, torn and covered in animal blood, and tell him Joseph got killed by a while animal while tending the flocks. Jacob is overwhelmed with grief and announces he will mourn until he "joins Joseph in the grave," more evidence of the favoritism that had been wounding the family all these years.
- Meanwhile, Joseph's story isn't over. He ends up in the house of Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's high-ranking officials. Although he's a slave and a foreigner, far from home, his family, and everything he's ever known, God goes with him: **"The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned." (39:2-5)**
- Then comes another curveball! He's falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, and he ends up thrown in jail for something he didn't do. *How bad can this get?* And yet: **"...while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden...the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in**

whatever he did.” (39:20-21, 23) With each pit Joseph finds himself in, he finds God down there with him. God isn’t just with him in the depths, *He blesses him in the depths*.

- While in prison, the warden elevates Joseph to leadership. Through a series of unexpected events, Pharaoh eventually hears of Joseph’s special gift of discernment from God, and calls for him to come and interpret a troubling dream. Joseph sees the meaning clearly, and it’s a doozy: a terrible famine will last for 7 years, but they’ve got 7 years to prepare. Pharaoh leaps into action, and once again, Joseph is elevated against all odds: **“Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.” (41:39-40)**
- Who would’ve seen this coming? *From the pit to the palace!* But the plot twists aren’t over: Joseph leads incredibly well. By the time famine hits, they have more than enough stored up to survive. It’s so bad that not only Egypt, but all the surrounding lands have to come for help. And who should come to buy grain but *Jacob’s sons, Joseph’s brothers*, from the land of Canaan. The same ones who threw him in the pit are begging at his feet, just like he dreamed, but it’s been 20 years, and they don’t recognize him now that he’s a ruler in Egypt.
- Joseph is faced with an incredible test: now that the roles are reversed, what will he do? These final chapters are some of the most dramatic in all the Bible! Joseph does some tricking and testing of his own, to see if his brothers have any remorse at all. It turns out *they have changed*. The desperate situation Joseph puts them in reveals their failures and their remorse, and finally he can’t hold back anymore: he reveals his true identity, and just like Jacob and his brother all those years ago fell upon one another, weeping and forgiving, Joseph and all 11 brothers are a blubbering mess of brotherly reconciliation. *Can you imagine when they had to tell their dad?*
- Jacob and the whole family move to Egypt to join Joseph in his blessing and favor. Jacob dies there, and that’s when the brothers worry if they’ll finally get what’s coming to them. Instead, Joseph speaks these words to his brothers—words that echo back over the entire story of Genesis from the beginning, and forward all the way to Jesus: **“Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.” (50:19-20)**
- Notice in Genesis how *the rescue comes with reconciliation*. So it is with the Gospel.
- **All Things Work Together**
 - Consider the parallels between Joseph’s story and Jesus: Joseph was a beloved son. Jesus is *the Beloved Son*. Joseph was betrayed by his own brothers. Jesus was betrayed by His own

disciples and fellow Israelites. Both of them were betrayed for pieces of silver. Joseph is stripped of his robe as he's sold into slavery. Jesus is stripped of His robes as the soldiers cast lots. Joseph is falsely accused and thrown into prison. Jesus is falsely accused and sentenced to death. Joseph is thrown into a pit, and a dungeon. Jesus descends into the pit of death. Joseph is raised up from the pit to the palace. Jesus is raised up from death to life, and He ascends from earth to heaven. Joseph forgives and reconciles with the brothers who betrayed him. Jesus forgiveness of His killers and brings reconciliation through His sacrifice. All in all: both Genesis and the Gospel culminate with the story a beloved son who becomes a suffering servant, who is brought down, and raised up, in order to rescue the world. *It's all connected—because of Jesus. This story is our story—because of Jesus.*

- Genesis says: ***“You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good...” (Gen. 50:20)*** In Jesus, God's redemption comes to everyone: ***“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose...in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:28-39)***
 - It started so *beautifully in the beginning*: a Paradise Garden, face-to-face with God. It looked so *bad* when humans turned away, when brother murdered brother, when God flooded the earth, when God's chosen Family screwed up *again and again and again*. We kept thinking *it was all over! But God kept working, through it all, under it all, to bring good out of evil*. Even when the author of Life was murdered on a cross! 3 days later we saw *God's true plan!*
- You're going to come to times in your story when you wonder, *is this the end? How are we going to make it through this? Is it all for nothing? Is it all meaningless?* In that broken relationship. In that failure. In that betrayal. In that disappointment. In that injustice. In that unexpected diagnosis. In that unexpected loss. If you reject the Author, the story can only end in tragedy. But if you trust the Author, you will see, sooner or later, how your tragedies get woven into a bigger story that *ends with Resurrection Glory! You will see how what the Enemy meant for evil, God meant for good! You will see how nothing can ever separate you from His love! You will see how the Serpent Crusher comes to crush the Serpents head!*
 - There was a woman named *Julian of Norwich*, a spiritual giant, who lived through one of the darkest times of history: the 100 Years War between France and England, the Black Plague ravaging Europe. At 30, she was sick and near death—priests came to give her Last Rites. But at the edge of death, God came to her and spoke. One thing she held onto and wrote about for

the rest of her life were these words she heard from the Lord in that dark hour: **"All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."** Her writings were lost for centuries, but later recovered, and now this quote has echoed through Christian history, from a saint who met God in the pit and reminded us all that *even in the darkest moment*, God is good and His plan will win! When Joseph was in the pit, when everything was lost—because God was with Him, *all shall be well*. When Jesus was on the cross, and in the tomb—*all shall be well*. When you're at the lowest moment of your life—*all shall be well*. *Trust the Author*.

- This is what we mean when we say **this story is our story**. The God of Abraham, the God of Jacob, the God of Joseph, the God of Jesus Christ, the God of Resurrection *is writing your story*. So, go forth, and live for His glory! In Christ, all things in your life will work together for good. **This story, our story, has a good ending. And it's all connected. Will you trust Him with everything?** Will you put your faith in Him today and receive His salvation into every part of your life, past, present, and future? The choice is not for tomorrow, the choice is now. Turn to Him. *Let's pray*.