

Vision

Series: Rising Up

January 9, 2022 – Brad Bailey

Intro

Last week we **were away in San Diego**... following our youngest son's basketball tournament... and **joined Sunday** by way of livestream.

So this morning I want to express my personal new year's cheer.

Goes without saying.... few of us were expecting to be in **another swirl of pandemic commotion as we began this year.**

Apparently **2022 didn't get the memo that we expected a NEW year.**

It may feel like the set back and slump is still with us.

And rather than ignore that challenge...I want us to face that challenge today.

For some...this pandemic has brought some really hard losses.

And in varying degrees... perhaps each of us have found that the pandemic has been **stealing some vitality**... it's made **life feel a little smaller**... made **dreams a little dimmer.**

There is a spiritual impact this can have.

So I'd like to start by taking a moment to pray for us.

PRAY

Father...for nearly two years... we've processing the drama of this particular virus... it's had a nearly constant place in our psyches... a constant change to our patterns and plans.

We NEED YOU... ..to center us in that which is unchanging...

Fill our lives afresh with purpose.

Some of us sense that we have stepped back... and we ask you to help us step forward into this day...and this year.

Amen.

Pandemic is one of the ways that life can take strange turns... and leave us in strange places.

As I have said before...I have found that nearly every life will find that by the age of 40 or 50...if not before... life will take a strange curve we had never been prepared for...and we will find ourselves in a strange place... a place that can be disorienting.

It may come with a difficult dynamic with family... or a divorce... or the untimely death of a loved one.

It could be financial set-back... health setback.

Life is not the same.

We can think everything has changed... nothing is the same.

Our dreams can dim

Our faith can seem to go into hibernation.

And now **the pandemic has brought a strange turn for everyone.**

And to this, God provides a life we can learn from... which is the life of Joseph.

The accounts of the life of Joseph are **found in the Book of Genesis**...the first book of the Bible. The first half is about the beginnings of humanity and it's relationship with God...and the second half...on the blessing God begins as he calls a people to himself. The second half of the

book of Genesis **tells the history of one family**, beginning with **Abraham**, and following down to his great-grandchildren - the sons of Jacob.

And the life of one of those sons...Joseph...is given more space in the opening book of the Bible than any other single individual – more than Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac or Jacob.

His life is **defined by strange turns...** that leave him in strange places.

And **through his life God teaches us** about **rising up from set backs...** from the pits and prisons of life.

So over these next four weeks as we start the new year... each week we will focus on **one of four key qualities** that **allowed this life to rise up** from **striking difficulties** to ultimately **fulfill his destiny**.

We'll let God speak to us about four qualities that couldn't be visited at a better time in our lives.

Now I know that some of us may recall the events of this life well. Some may recall a little... and some may have never heard anything about the life of Joseph.

So let me refamiliarize us.

Joseph is the great grandson of Abraham. (Abraham > Isaac > Jacob > Joseph)

Joseph was the son of a man named Jacob, who had his own backstory. Jacob was one of the three great patriarchs of the people of Israel.

In fact, Jacob's other name was "Israel" – that's where the people of Israel get their name. They are literally the people of Israel or the people of Jacob.

Jacob is **one of the great Patriarchs of the Bible...**which simply refers to the **great fathers of faith** in the history of God's people given in the Old Testament.

Jacob had 12 sons, and they became the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel.

He was the 11th son of Jacob...and the firstborn and favored son of Jacob and Rachel. [1]

Because he was the first son Jacob had from his wife Rachel... there was a favoritism for Joseph. And his brothers knew it. And they hated him for it. And Jacob, as the father, didn't help. [2]

When Joseph was 17 years old Jacob gave him a special ornate robe of many colors.

It was a long robe with long sleeves ... and many note that it was very different than the short sleeved working robe his brothers had.....and it upset his working-class brothers because it put Joseph above them as his father's right-hand man.

At 17, he has two dreams which imply he will be raised up over his brothers...which he shares with them.

Genesis 37:5-11 (NLT)

One night Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever. ⁶ "Listen to this dream," he said. ⁷ "We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!" ⁸ His brothers responded, "So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them. ⁹ Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it. "Listen, I have had another

dream,” he said. “The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!”¹⁰ This time he told the dream to his father as well as to his brothers, but his father scolded him. “What kind of dream is that?” he asked. “Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow to the ground before you?”¹¹ But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father wondered what the dreams meant.

Well, you can only imagine **how confusing this must have been** for Joseph. **Why was he being given these dreams**, and why did they have **his whole family honoring him that way**?

All he could have known was that it **seemed like something from God**, and that it **boded well for his future**, but what kind of future would ever have that type of scene taking place? What could he ever do, what kind of position could he ever hold, to evoke that?

In envy, his brothers plot to kill him...but then beat him and sell him merchants as a slave.

His brothers had had enough.

So one day, when they were out in the fields and Joseph came to them with a message from their father, they seized him and stripped him of his robe.

Then they threw him into an empty cistern, and when a large caravan came by on their way to Egypt, they sold him into slavery.

They then took his coat and ripped it and dipped it in goat’s blood so that it would look like he had been attacked and killed by an animal of some kind.

Then they took the robe to their father and said they had found it on their way home. And from that point on, Jacob grieved the supposed death of his beloved son.

Joseph was sold to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard

(Genesis 37:36, Genesis 39:1).

He’s been sold as a slave... but in time he rises up in the trust that is given to him

He became Potiphar's personal household's administrator.

Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Joseph. When he refuses her, in anger and fear she makes false accusation of his and he is imprisoned. (Genesis 39:1–20).

Joseph is put in charge of the other prisoners, and when Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer and chief baker are thrown into the prison, Joseph, interprets their dramatic dreams.

He is in prison for the unjust claims against Potiphar.... but is later joined by two of Pharaoh’s own servants. Both men had dreams, and Joseph, being able to interpret dreams asked to hear.

When Pharaoh, king of all of Egypt, has a dream, he hears of Joseph’s gifting of interpretation, and calls upon him. Joseph rightly interprets a coming famine, to which Pharaoh makes Joseph his highest overseer.

Pharaoh had a dream that no one could interpret, but because of some dreams God allowed Joseph to interpret while in prison, word got to Pharaoh that Joseph could. And he did.

The interpretation of Pharaoh's dream was that there was going to be seven years of plenty, and then seven years of famine, and Egypt needed to get ready.

The king was impressed by the man's mature wisdom, at once adopted his suggestions, and appointed him, then aged 30 (41:46), to be in charge of their practical application (41:37–40).

And then it all came true. The seven years of plenty followed by the seven years of famine.

When the famine came, it was so severe that people from surrounding nations came to Egypt to buy bread.

And so...in the second year of famine, Joseph's older brothers were sent to Egypt to buy goods.

We read...

Genesis 42:5-6 (NLT)

So Jacob's sons arrived in Egypt along with others to buy food, for the famine was in Canaan as well. ⁶ Since Joseph was governor of all Egypt and in charge of selling grain to all the people, it was to him that his brothers came. When they arrived, they bowed before him with their faces to the ground.

Joseph does not initially disclose his identity as their brother and requires that they bring their whole family. Jacob (also known as Israel) and his entire house of seventy gathered up with all their livestock and make their journey to Egypt. And in a dramatic fashion...we will engage in the weeks ahead...this leads to the shocking discovery of Joseph...now in his 30s... being the brother and son they thought was dead... and his forgiveness, restoration, and provision for the family.

And he declares...

Genesis 50:20-21

"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.

There is so much to learn from the life of Joseph... about how God is able to work good from evil...and how we as finite human lives can rise up amidst the circumstances we face.

He started out going to visit his brothers....and found they had their own hands to play... and he was left in slavery.

I think of how his special robe that represented his father's favor... was torn up and used to make him dead in his father's eyes. I wonder of some of us... may have had that which was a source of blessing... taken away ...and used in shameful ways to dismiss us. Maybe it was a dream you had.

I think of how his life that looked so wide open... became confined...imprisoned. I wonder of some of us can relate to feeling that our lives have become confined.

I think about how his life took strange turns...and left him in strange places.

But he rose up... through every set back.

And the first lesson from his life... the one that is our focus today...is that of vision. He had a divine vision... about his life.

He found himself in strange places... in which he had two sources of what defined his life... a divine vision and dismaying circumstances.

Throughout every situation that declared him to be a victim... he lived out of vision.

He never lost site of the vision of what his life could be and was meant to be.

Somehow, somehow, he knew he wanted to earn the honor of his family. To fulfill his destiny. To become all that God wanted him to become.

So in every situation...every setback.... he was determined to live out the vision for his life. A life that would honor God and result in the honor of his family.

You may not receive a divinely inspired dream like Joseph, but God has a vision for your life that He wants you to chase after and fulfill. [3]

He wants you to have that vision so seared into your psyche that no matter what you go through, you'll always have it as the target on the wall. We can all take hold of different form of divine revelation... enlightened understanding... that will not change. Here are a few truths about such vision... divine vision....

Divine Vision is not that which denies reality...but rather expands reality.

Sometimes faith is deemed to be that which simply denies reality. But in truth, faith.. divine vision... is not that which denies reality...but rather that which sees a larger reality.

Divine Vision is the power of a larger perspective

He may have been staring at prison walls...but he was also able to see there was more.

He saw a coming famine...but he also saw the potential of how there would be the potential to prepare and provide for it.

Jesus was so pointedly clear to his followers...that they WOULD See troubles...but that they could take heart... because he would overcome.

> There is so much more at hand.

I don't know if you caught the story of the James Webb Space Telescope. The planning for this telescope began in 1989...and has been in process for over 3 decades.

The final outcome is a huge floating station...that if all goes well... will travel to a gravitationally orbit nearly 1 million miles from earth....and function at an operating temperature around minus 370 degrees Fahrenheit.

It launched on Christmas morning... and if all goes according to plan, the telescope will detect cosmic objects 10 billion times fainter than the dimmest star you can see in the night sky without a telescope. That's 10 to 100 times fainter than anything that it's predecessor, the Hubble telescope, can pick up.

The goal... is to peer into the far past of our universe. [4]

It really is an amazing venture.

For all that we may discover...**it cannot compare** to that which is **revealed from the very source** that is **behind the whole universe**.

This amazing device that will peer into the distance... cannot be compared to the vision that comes from the source behind it all.

That which God reveals is the truly larger perspective that defines everything.

Many of us have just discovered that **God has a lot more in store than we have ever imagined.**

Many of us **have just a glimpse...** like looking at the stars through an old **set of binoculars.** We've seen something of the life that exists with God... but only dimly. Yet it's the larger perspective that enlightens everything.

The more we look...**we see an astounding picture of God bringing everything in heaven and on earth under the authority of Jesus.** We see **every knee bowing before him,** and every tongue confessing his name as supreme over everything.

That is the divine vision.

And it challenges us to **stop looking through the wrong end of the telescope...** seeing **only ourselves instead of God's big picture.** We spend a lot of time and energy, and money on trying to create our own little versions of success.

As one man wrote,

We need to clear our primitive, parochial lenses, and say, "Okay, God, my minuscule program is all yours. I want to get in step with that. I want to see my place in the world through the bigger picture you have made known...through your divine vision." [5]

Divine Vision is more a source of reference points than a map.

As Joseph experienced, Divine vision is not simply a plan we develop out of our own preferred ideas.

If we have a plan for our lives...that has everything figured out... it's probably our personal plan more than a divine vision.

Divine vision more like the lights that guide us entering a harbor under the night sky.

There is so much you can't see...and the lights may not fit the contours that are visible.

Joseph - life took turns that didn't appear to align

When Jesus the Messiah was born...Mary and Joseph... know who he is... yet find themselves fleeing as refugees.

Jesus spoke of that which would prevail... he did so against the backdrop of the oppressive powers of the Roman Empire and the religious establishment of his day.

They weren't relying in a map... they were trusting the lights that guided them.

I have had to go back to lights more than the plans I presumed.

There will be forces that seem defining... dominating... intimidating.

Trust the lights.

Some may **recall the story** that was shared in a **Naval magazine.**

While on maneuvers, a battleship lookout noted a light in the dark, foggy night. After noting the light's coordinates, the captain recognized his ship was on a collision course with that other vessel. "Signal the ship: We are on a collision course, advise you change course 20 degrees." The return signal came, "Advisable for you to change course 20 degrees." The captain said, "Send, I'm a captain, change course 20 degrees." "I'm a seaman second class," came the reply. "You had better change course 20 degrees." By this time the captain was furious. He yelled, "Send, I'm a battleship. Change course 20 degrees." The reply..."I'm a lighthouse." Suggest you change course now. [6]

There will be forces that seem defining... dominating... intimidating... telling us we need to change course... but the light of God is the unchanging and unmoving reality. A lot of pseudo forces are claiming to be all powerful... we have to rise up and hold the ground which God has given.

Divine Vision is seized and sustained in the depths of our spirit. [7]

We see that in the life of Joseph ... as well as with Jesus.... they were tuned into the end more than when... and so they worked to keep hold of one truth... that God was with them.

> That is vital for each of us.

I like taking in a breadth of perspectives... and as such... my soul is hammered with the worries and walls of changes.

> I have found it has been the most important time to refocus my inner life upon God's vision.

I have found I need to realize how easy it is to begin to drift... to slowly let the cultural current pull me along. I have needed to get out of the drift... and center myself in the vision... the calling that I have known. [8]

I cannot think of a better year to read through the Bible... join a Life Group.

Divine Vision is that which no one can take away.

Joseph's brothers had the intention of destroying him along with his dreams saying: "Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits Their scoffing had no authority over God's plans. No matter how adversarial the world may become... no one can stop your destiny.

The lesson for us from Joseph is of a life that started out with a sense of vision, only to experience setback after setback, but never having those setbacks be the final word or be allowed to diminish the vision.

The lesson is no matter what happens along the way, to never lose sight of the vision itself.

I want to encourage us to reverse the focus we have for change... from waiting for the circumstances around us to change.... to changing within... by reclaiming the vision God has given us.

Let the fulfillment of that vision be the ultimate determinant and driving force of our life.

If we lost our vision ... or lost faith in what we felt God was clearly leading us to do and to be, then it's time to get it back in place.

Life will bring circumstances that challenge the God-given dreams that we have found life in.

- The disappointments in a marriage can convince us that the kind of love we once believed in... is foolish. Take back the vision for love that you have been given.

- For some... you may have found in Christ a kindness and grace...but in time you are inflicted with conflicts... with a hostilities....and the dream of kindness is being stolen. Take back the vision for kindness that you Christ has given you.
- For some... the pandemic has brought so many changes...that you don't sense there is anything that is solid.... and it has been stealing the greater goodness of God. Take back the vision of the power of God's kingdom... of His reign to prevail.

And if you've been visionless for a while, then start asking God to stir one within you.

Here's the truth: **God has a purpose for your life – it's why you were birthed into existence.** You can know about if you'll stop long enough to think about it, listen for it, let Him impress it on you.

Each of can pray something like this: "God I don't have a clear sense of vision for my life. Please help me. Give it to me."

Allow God to show you what your life can be about... it may be a vision of how you **serve others... of radical generosity ...of sharing hope with others.... breaking the cycle of generational patterns.**

"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream." — C.S. Lewis

Closing: God is calling us to rise up... to choose to embrace 2022... with the power of divine vision. [9]

Resources: The general approach to using the life of Joseph as a means for a short series of lessons for rising up amidst pandemic effects drew from James Emery White's "The Rising" series.

Notes:

1. About Joseph's Family (Drawing from BS Tools - [here](#)):

After Jacob arrived at his Uncle Laban's, he fell in love with Rachel when he met her at the shepherd's well ([Genesis 29:9-14](#)). Jacob offered to serve Laban seven years in exchange for Rachel's hand in [marriage](#). Laban, craftier than Jacob, promised him Rachel, but because tradition dictated the younger was not given before the eldest daughter, he tricked Jacob and sent Leah to him on his wedding night. When confronted about his trickery, Laban agreed to give Rachel to Jacob after the first week of his marriage to Leah. This was based on the condition Jacob would work another seven years for Rachel also. So began a game of wills between the two sisters to "win" Jacob's love.

The sons of Jacob in order of birth (and to whom) are as follows:

Leah gives birth to (1) Reuben, (2) Simeon, (3) Levi, and (4) Judah. Then Rachel gives Bilhah, her servant girl to Jacob, "so that she may give birth on my behalf" ([Genesis 30:3](#)). Bilhah bore (5) Dan and (6) Naphtali. When Leah realized she ceased bearing Jacob's sons (for the moment), she gave her servant, Zilpah to Jacob and she bore him (7) Gad and (8) Asher. After this, Leah again conceived (twice) and gave birth to (9) Issachar and (10) Zebulun. Rachel finally received the blessing of conception (*God has taken away my reproach*—[Genesis 30:23](#)) and gave birth to (11) Joseph and (12) Benjamin, whom she bore as she died.

2. Many have noted that there appears to be a combining of dysfunctional favoritism by Jacob the father...with a lack of maturity Joseph when younger. As Marvin Yoder notes ([here](#))

1. Joseph brought a bad report to his father about his brothers (37:2). He seemed prompt in his disapproval of evil and scandalous conduct of his brothers. Yet the fact that he was a tattler put him in disfavor with his brothers.
2. Joseph was a favored child of Jacob, and as a result he could easily have developed an entitlement mentality. He was more loved by Jacob than the others (37:3). Jacob made Joseph a special tunic or coat, which certainly indicated favored status and probably signified birthright privileges (37:3). Joseph did not have to go to the fields to take care of the sheep all the time, as his brothers did (37:12-13).
3. Jacob was an immature teenager when he received his dreams from the Lord. He rashly related his dreams to his brothers and his father, even when he knew that his brothers hated him (37:6-10). Perhaps Joseph tried to lord over his brothers with his dreams because of their hatred of him.

3. As Todd Stiles notes, ([here](#)), the Bible does not focus lives on dreams and visions, but it does validate the potential significant way in which God can use them.

“Dreams happened while someone was asleep and visions while someone was awake. In fact, “dreams” are mentioned about 122 times in the Bible and “visions” about 101 times. Examples would be Joseph son of Jacob (Genesis 37:5-10), Joseph the husband of Mary (Matthew 2:12-22), Solomon (1 Kings 3:5-15), and several others (Daniel 2:1; 7:1; Matthew 27:19). There is also a prophesy of the Prophet Joel (Joel 2:28), quoted by the Apostle Peter in Acts 2:17, that mentions God using dreams.

4. From - <https://www.space.com/nasa-james-webb-space-telescope-launch-success>

5. Adapted from Jim Reapsome, 1996, "Final Analysis"

6. From the magazine of the Naval Institute, Proceedings, cited in The Seven Habits Of Highly Effective People, Stephen R. Covey, 1989, pgs. 32-33

7. The Bible testifies that there are things hidden that God makes known by His Spirit.

Of the Messiah, God said through the prophet Isaiah...

Isaiah 52:15

He will sprinkle many nations. Kings will shut their mouths because of Him. For they will see what they have not been told, and they will understand what they have not heard.

1 Corinthians 2:10

But God has revealed it to us by the Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

Simeon as describes in Luke 2:26,27

“And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ...”

Simeon is an example of a faithful man that walked with God. He believed the words of Psalm 25:14, that "the secrets of the Lord are with those who fear Him," and in some wonderful way the Holy Spirit of God had communicated a wonderful truth to this dear man - that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah of Israel - the Word made flesh.

Ephesians 3:4-6 (NLT2)

⁴ As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ. ⁵ God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by his Spirit he has

revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets. ⁶ And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus.

8. It reminds of something the great Russian novelist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote of his own imprisonment. He said:

"Bless you prison, bless you for being in my life. For there, lying upon the rotting prison straw, I came to realize that the object of life is not prosperity as we are made to believe, but the maturity of the human soul." - Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn

Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* 1918–1956

9. It can be noteworthy that this whole story also finds a parallel to Christ and the Gospel. And see in the life of Joseph... that it parallels the life of Jesus that was to come.

For when Jesus came... he was loved by his father... but rejected by his own.

He was sent by his father to visit his brethren, ,,and they conspire his death

They reject the truth of what God revealed... of one rising up...even as they become the instruments of accomplishing it.

And in the end... he would offer forgiveness.