A Dream That Never Dies — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 49:29–50:26 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, November 24, 2024 · *Living The Dream*

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If you have your Bible, you can open it to Genesis chapter 49 and 50, that's where we're going to be this morning, and we are finally finished with the book of Genesis. So you can all pat yourselves on the back. You survived the two years of one of the bigger books of the Bible. I said a couple of weeks ago I was going to grieve a little bit when the book of Genesis came to a conclusion.

And this is me grieving. Okay, I'm not an emotionally expressive person. This is about as much as I get. But I am indeed sad that it's over. And it's fitting that the last sermon in the book of Genesis is the last chapter of most of our lives that we will one day approach. The Bible says it's appointed unto man to die once, and then comes judgment. That means death is something that none of us get to avoid. It's something all of us will experience sooner or later, whether we like it or not.

And I don't know if you've ever been dead, but it's a very disruptive process. It kind of ends your plans for life and not just disruptive when it happens to you, it's disruptive when it happens to the people that you love and in some ways making light of it as most Westerners do because we are uncomfortable with it. We don't like to talk about it. We don't like to think about it. Even when people die, sometimes we don't even like to grieve about it very long. We want to move along and pretend. Especially as Christian people sometimes, oh, it's not that bad, they're in heaven.

But is that the right way to approach death? I don't know that Genesis would give that answer. And in fact, the way that Christians approach death historically has been really significant. It's one of the reasons that Christianity spread over the Roman Empire the first couple of hundred years that after the resurrection of Jesus, Christianity basically took over the known world of the time because of the way they approached death. A lot of cool quotes from the church fathers like Irenaeus and Polycarp and the martyrs of Lyons. They all face

death with courage and boldness and proclaiming the truth of Jesus and the resurrection all the way to the end, whether they were burned at the stake or eaten alive by lions.

In the words of Tertullian, one of the more famous church fathers. He said, death can kill us, but it cannot harm us. And what a powerful way for Christian people to think about death. You may kill me. You may end my life, but you will not harm me, for the Christian death is a beginning, not an end. It is a friend, not an enemy. It is the beginning of something greater, something more, not the cessation of something that once was. And so that's what Genesis looks at. That's how Genesis, I think, is going to present death to us this morning.

As we close out the story of Joseph. If you're new to the book of Genesis, and some of you are who are visiting with us today, I think of Genesis as a book of origins. I'm more of a DC guy than a Marvel guy. To me, Marvel cheeses it up a little too much. It's good for the kids though. But I personally like DC. But whether you're a Marvel fan or a DC fan, and we won't take inventory today. Every good superhero universe has what are called origin stories, correct? You got the origin story of Captain America or the origin story I think Batman's had like twenty-five origin stories to be honest.

But every good superhero has an origin story. And Genesis is an origin story. It's a story of origin stories. It's the origin story of God's good creation, how it came to be, the origin story of marriage. The origin story of how the world broke bad, how it got messed up, and really the origin story of God's plan how to fix it. And if Genesis was a Netflix series, every couple of chapters is a new reiteration of God's progress for taking that redemptive promise in Genesis 3:15 and saying, okay, here's how it's going to work now, here's how it's going to work here.

And he chooses different people like Noah or Abraham and works through those people to mediate his covenant promise and fulfill his ultimate promise of sending a serpent crusher who would reverse the curse and restore the paradise that was lost. Now that's what we've been looking at the last couple of months with Abraham. We saw the covenant promise go from Abraham to Isaac, from Isaac to Jacob. And from Jacob, now it's going to pass on to Joseph and Judah. Jacob has been living in Egypt for 17 plus years. He thought his favorite son Joseph had died, being torn apart by an animal.

But it wasn't true because his other sons were just lying about it, because his other sons really sold Joseph into slavery. Joseph went from slavery to prison, from prison to the right hand of Pharaoh. Quite a turn of events and he was used by God to save Egypt from a worldwide famine that literally saved not only every Egyptian but all the people in Canaan. And the surrounding regions as well. And that's how Joseph got reunited with his brothers. That's how Joseph got reunited with his dad. And they've been hanging out in Egypt in a land called Goshen over the last seventeen years.

But as is the case with many old men. There comes a day where they don't live no more, and he's facing his death. He's called all his sons in around him. He said what he needed to say. He's done what he needed to do, and now he's going to give them instructions. About his death. And he's going to teach them a final lesson of faith. A lesson that every person in this room, if you're a believer, can teach your family as well. And that lesson is that in Jesus we can face our death with faith instead of fear.

Death is not something we have to avoid. It's not something we have to fear. Death is something that we can face with great courage and faith. And Genesis 49 and 50 is going to show us how. It's going to show us the things that we can do so that death is faced with faith instead of fear. So let's pick it up chapter 49, starting in verse 29. Jacob is again on his deathbed. He commanded his twelve sons, I'm about to be gathered to my people. In other words, that's I'm about to die.

And I want you to bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite. The cave is in the field of Machpelah near Mamre in the land of Canaan. This is the field that Abraham purchased from Ephron the Hittite as burial property. Abraham and his wife Sarah are buried there. Isaac and his wife Rebekah are buried there, and then I buried Leah there as well. The field and the cave in it were purchased from the Hittites. And then when he finished giving those charges, he drew his feet into the bed and then he died.

Now I know in some ways that feels like a very odd text. Because he's just giving his kids instructions about where to bury me, how to find it, when it was purchased. But I think it's really instructive as you think about how to confront death with faith instead of fear. What Jacob shows us is he was prepared to die. And he did a lot of things to prepare to die. He adopted his two grandchildren, he gave a blessing or a prophecy to all of his twelve sons.

But now as he approaches death, he tells them where he wants to be buried and why. And he mentions this cave in the field of Machpelah, which if you're new to Genesis, means nothing to you. But if you are keeping track of the story, what happened is when God appeared to Abraham in Genesis 12, He said, I'm going to give you a land. I'm going to give you the promised land. And he actually tells Abraham in Genesis 13, I want you to look far north as you can and far south as you can and far west as you can and as far east as you can, and all the land's going to be yours, Abraham.

And he believed the Lord and walked in obedience to God, but he got really really old, and his wife got really really old, and they still didn't have any land. They had a promised child, but they didn't have the land. And so in the death of his wife, the darkest night of his soul, Abraham acts in faith for God to deliver on his promise. And he approaches the people of the region he was at in the Hebron Valley about buying property. He said, listen guys, my wife is dead. I need to bury her, and I'm not going to use Uncle Ted's burial plot.

I want to own land for myself. And they're like, well, well Ted loves you, Abraham, and we'd be happy to honor you. And he says, no, I need my own stuff. I need my own place. And so he talks to a guy named Ephron the Hittite, and for 400 shekels of silver he purchases some land. It does seem very expensive, but you know with inflation these days you need to get in as soon as you can. So he bought it for 400 shekels of silver. He was super rich anyway, it didn't matter.

And he buries his wife there. And then after he buries his wife, he's buried there. And after he's buried there, Rebekah is buried there. And after Rebekah is buried there Jacob says, I buried Leah there, which was his first wife. The wife he really loved, he buried near Bethlehem because she died on the way. Long story, don't have time to tell it. But in all of these ways, he's preparing for his death because he's instructing his family: here's what you need to do. Which is the best thing you can do for your family if you want to help them.

If you want to prepare for death and help your family, you need to leave them a plan. You need to leave your family a plan. Before you die. And I know it sounds kind of morbid and it may feel like an upsell when the funeral director's like, well you can pre-plan your funeral for only five easy payments of five thousand dollars or whatever they say. That's not really a joke, but you may think to yourself, wow, I'm only thirty-eight years old, but it's actually really smart thing for you to do because you have no idea the tornado your death puts on your family and they're going to be confronted with decisions about obituaries and caskets and funeral homes and burial plots and life insurance and on and on and on and they're going to be trying to make those decisions sometimes without very much information, with a tremendous amount of grief in their heart and a lack of certainty about whether or not that's really what you would want them to do.

So one of the best things you could do is leave your family with a plan. I'll never forget a friend of mine, John Powell, in 2020, one of the darker years of my life. He got ran over by a semi-truck on Interstate 40 at 38 years old trying to rescue a passenger, a stranded passenger. From a flaming vehicle. I mean you can't make this up. Pulling her out of the flaming vehicle. When he gets her out, he sees this semi-truck bearing down on them in Interstate 40 and he pushes her out of the way and bam gets run over, leaves behind his wife of how many years were they married?

Like five? No, more than five years. They were married a long time. They had four kids and they were all young and it was a devastating loss. And the way that all transpired taught me a lot of things, but one of the things that I'll never forget is John is the only 38-year-old man I've ever met. Who had a file on his desktop computer that said when I die or if I die or something like that. And when you opened up the file, it had the pre-planning for his funeral, it had instructions about what to do, it had the things as simple as the passwords for paying the water bill, you know, on online bill pay.

And on and on and on. And it was such a tremendous gift to his wife and to his children that most 39-year-old men are not even in the realm of thinking about that, but you don't know when you will die. You don't know when it's coming. You can presume, you can assume all you want. But you should prepare for your death, which means say the things that need to be said today. Take care of business, put your house in order so that you can help your family when you go. But it's not just leaving them with a plan.

The other thing he does is he leaves the world. If you look at verse 33, when Jacob finished giving charges to his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and he took his last breath. And was gathered to his people. I know it sounds kind of funny, he drew his feet into the bed, but that's just an idiom as a way of saying he left the world in peace. It was Jacob's way of saying I've done what needs to be done, I've said what needs to be said. I am good, I can die.

Let's go, Lord, I'm ready. And imagine the blessing that was to his family to say, okay, dad's not got any regrets. He's not scared about where he's going. He's not approaching death with a lot of uncertainty. And imagine the confidence that would have given to them as they watched their dad die in peace. One of the best things you can do is to show your family confidence in the eyes of the Lord when you face death. And so he leaves the world in peace and he leaves his family with a plan.

One of the pastors I like to listen to every now and then, or I like to listen to him when I first started preaching. I don't listen to him as much anymore, but he's a tremendous pastor. His name is John Piper up in Minnesota. I think he's retired now. But I remember something he said a long time ago and the first time I heard it, it was really morbid. Because he said, in the way that only John Piper can I'm no John Piper, trust me.

But he said one of my favorite things in all of the world is watching the saints when they die. And I thought he's saying that to his church like that's weird to me because those people are going to die one day. You're going to be sitting at their bedside and they're going to be thinking to themselves, John, you're really getting off on this, aren't you? Watching me die. But what he meant by that, and something I bear testimony as true, because I've done it now many, many times, is watching the saints die.

There's nothing else like it. The confidence with which a genuine believer confronts death is so powerful. When they have a supernatural peace that surpasses human understanding, not only does it kind of pay tribute to them and their faith and the things that a proper preparation for death will give. It also is a tremendous resource for their family. It gives them confidence and security. And to nurses and the watching world, when a believer is able to die in peace because they are properly prepared, it is a great gift.

And it's one of the ways that Christians stand out and confront their death with faith instead of fear. So Jacob dies, breathes his last, and then Joseph responds. And Joseph's response to

his dad's death teaches us a second principle. So Joseph, leaning over his father's face, he wept and he kissed him. I know some people think it's weird to kiss a dead corpse. You just wait till your dad dies and you'll probably do the same. He commanded his servants, who were physicians, to embalm his father, and so they embalmed Israel and they took forty days to complete this for the embalming takes that long and the Egyptians mourned for him for seventy days.

Now seventy days is a tremendously long time to grieve someone's death. The Pharaoh who died, he got 72 days, and so Jacob, Joseph's dad, gets two short of the most important man in Egypt. So this was a tremendous tribute to Jacob and the way that Joseph goes about it, both in his embalming of his father and the tremendous grieving that he displays and the affection that he shows for his dad, it shows us that when Christians face death, they need to grieve it. And there's a lot of well-meaning Christians who say things like, well, you shouldn't be sad for Ted or Sally.

I don't know why I keep saying Ted. Are there any Teds in the house? I'm not trying to kill you, brother. You know, you shouldn't be sad for brother Wes. You know, he's with the Lord now and he's happy and he wouldn't want us to be sad. And if I die, that's a lie. I want you to be sad. Because grieving is a way for you to honor the deceased and not just honor the deceased, but it's a way of recognizing that death is wrong.

Death is a disruption, death is an intruder, it is against God's will, it's a violation of God's design that as Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 3, God's put eternity in the heart of man. We spend our whole lives aware that there is this glory we are destined for. Pascal called them deposed royalty. Human beings are deposed royalty because they recognize that we are kings and queens and that we had a glory in Eden. That we have lost and we spend our whole lives chasing that glory. And what death does, death is like a rude collision into that intuition that it is wrong.

Death is not right. It is the opposite of what should be. We are supposed to live forever. We're supposed to get glory. And so when you grieve, you're expressing that, and that's a good thing. You should grieve death because it is a violation of God's design, but it also honors the person that you love or the person that you've lost. Because the degree of your grief is really proportional to the love that you had. I've often said in funerals, when you lose somebody truly great, it leaves a tremendously deep hole in your heart, and that hole is going to create grief in your life, and that grief needs to be expressed.

It's an honor to the deceased. To grieve in that way. When I do funerals for people I don't know, which happens on occasion because people don't have pastors and so the funeral home will call me or Pastor David or whoever. And I don't know these people, they don't know me, and I don't know the deceased, but by the way that they grieve, it tells me

everything I need to know. It's not just the stories that they share, it's the way they share the stories. It's the impact that the stories have.

It honors the people that they love. And that's what Joseph is doing. He is honoring his dad. Egypt is honoring his dad by this grieving. And then when the days of mourning were over, verse 4, Joseph said to Pharaoh's household, if I found favor with you, please tell Pharaoh that my father made me make an oath, saying, I'm about to die, and so you need to bury me in the tomb that I made for myself in the land of Canaan. Now let me go bury my father and then I'm going to come back and return.

So Pharaoh said, go ahead and bury your father in keeping with your oath. And so Joseph went to bury his father. Notice these phrases here with all of Pharaoh's servants, the elders of his household, all of the elders of the land of Egypt went with him, along with all of Joseph's family. And Joseph's brothers and his father's family, only their dependents, their flocks, and their herds were left in the land of Goshen. Now there are a lot of things to note in there. The first of which is that phrase, when the days of grieving were over.

So they were grieving for seventy days, and after those seventy days, Joseph says, okay, now is the next thing. And the next thing was a trip literally from the land of Goshen 250 miles. However you measure it. Probably about 250, maybe 300 miles. Depending on the route, whether they went through the King's Highway, which is here through the desert, or the, I forgot the name of this road, but it's the one by the sea, the coastal road. They would have come up here to Mamre, Hebron to bury Jacob.

And he didn't go alone, right? He went with this tremendously large entourage of elders and people and camels. If you look in verse 9. It says that horses and chariots went up with him. It was a very impressive procession. When they reached the threshing floor of Atad. which is across the Jordan, they lamented and wept loudly. And look at this. And Joseph mourned seven days for his father. So did Joseph mourn seventy days or seven days? 77 days? What about the days between the 70 and the 7? The point is, the days of grieving weren't over.

That's what Moses is saying. The official grieving was over, but the grieving wasn't over. Because death is a process. I'm sorry, grieving is a process. And if you don't know that grieving is a process, you just simply haven't grieved. You don't get a choice whether you grieve, how you grieve. Grieving works differently for different people. When you grieve, it will be a process, which is why you need to be surrounded by people. That's why you had all those people because in the short term, what people do is they kind of give you their faith for a while so that you can borrow their faith in the Lord and their confidence and it's going to be okay because you don't feel it when you lose somebody, you struggle to hold on to those promises.

And so you surround yourself with a household of faith and they keep you believing. But you also need those people 70 days later or seven months later, 70 months or seven years later to remind you that it's okay that you're still grieving. You know it's a process. You don't have to just get over it. You're never going to get over it. I mean let's be honest. Grieving honors the people that you love. The Bible never says, never not once does it ever say don't grieve. It's full of grief. And you let it be its process and you allow it into your life.

But you also need to allow or recognize another thing. And that is because grieving is a process, it's also its own kind of platform. And you're going to see that in verse 11 and 12 when the Canaanite inhabitants of the land, remember these are pagan people. But they see the way they are grieving for Jacob, who used to be very prestigious in that region, when they saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, They said, this is a solemn mourning on the part of the Egyptians, therefore the place is named Abel-mizraim.

It is against or across the Jordan. Now there are scholars who debate the exact location of this place. It's obviously across the Jordan. They just don't know if it's east of the Jordan or west of the Jordan. And in some ways it doesn't really matter, but the point is that the procession was so large and the grieving was so intense that onlookers, when they saw it, they thought to themselves, that must have been one tremendous person. He must have been a true prince. The way that they're grieving. And that is a tribute to the fact that grieving is a platform.

Whether you want it to be or not, the way that you grieve the death of your loved ones is saying something about you and about them. As I said, as a person who does funerals for strangers sometimes, the way that they grieve is a platform for who that person was, for better or for worse. And it's a platform for the faith that person possessed and the faith that they transferred to their family. Which is why when Paul talks about grieving, he never says don't grieve. 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 he says, I don't want you to be grieving like other people do who have no hope.

I want you to grieve in a way that is informed of the truth about Christ and the truth about his resurrection. And the truth about his second coming. And I want you to take those truths and encourage one another in your grief. And so it's not a matter of grieving or not grieving, it's a matter of grieving differently. Knowing it's a process and that it is a platform. And so Jacob shows us how to prepare for death. Joseph shows us how to grieve death. And then Joseph's brothers show something in their response to their dad's death.

It says in verse twelve, Jacob's sons did for him what he had commanded them, and they carried him to the land of Canaan, and they buried him in the cave of Machpelah in the field near Mamre, which Abraham had purchased his burial property from Ephron the Hittite. And then after Joseph buried his father, he returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone with him to bury his father. So all the brothers were with him, all the brothers

came home. Then when Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said to one another, if Joseph is holding a grudge against us, he will certainly repay us for all the suffering we caused him.

Now this phrase when they saw their father was dead was interesting to me because did this realization happen before the funeral procession or after? Because it's written after, but it's almost described as something that happened before the funeral. And sometimes the Bible does that. Sometimes the Bible doesn't address things chronologically as much as it does logically to make a point or to emphasize the theological truth. Whether it was before or after, I guess in some ways it doesn't matter. But the reality is these brothers are gripped by fear because with Jacob dead, Joseph could make their life miserable.

And he had every right to make their lives miserable because they threw Joseph into a well and then sold Joseph into Egyptian slavery. And lied about his fate to their father. For decades he grieved as someone who'd rather be dead than alive. And if Joseph was giving them what they deserved, he would have never let them back in Egypt in the first place. And so they're thinking to themselves, maybe he's been so generous for dad's sake. I mean if you think about it, when Esau swore to kill his brother Jacob, he said, as soon as dad dies, I'm going to kill you.

There's something about the presence of the patriarch that with it kind of restrains people's baser instincts towards violence. Now that Jacob is dead, the violence can come. Now was Joseph going to do that? Well I don't know. Probably not. To address death with faith instead of fear, you need to use death. You need to prepare for death, you need to grieve death, and then you need to use death. And I know this sounds kind of cold, but there's nothing like death. To put you in a position to act on things like you never could have acted before.

Because what death does is death sobers you up. Death minimizes things that you thought were really big but aren't. Death maximizes things that you thought were really insignificant but aren't. Death will often create scenarios of reconciliation that nothing else in the world would have created because the person with which you are at enmity has the same level of affection for the deceased as you do. And because you mutually share that love for that person, that unity brings you to an opportunity to make things right. So you should use death as a way of healing wounds that have been left to linger.

And that's exactly what they do. And they do it in some really insightful ways. First. They send a message, verse 16. They sent this message to Joseph before dad died. He gave us a command. I love that. He didn't tell you, Joseph. He just told us. Say this to Joseph, please forgive your brothers' transgressions and their sin, the suffering that they caused you. Therefore, please forgive the transgressions of the servants of the God of your father. Joseph

wept when their message came to him. And his brothers also came to him and they bowed down before him, and they said, we are your slaves.

Now take the fact that they might have been lying. Set that aside for a minute. You know, it's possible they were telling the truth. I doubt it. But let's believe the best about these brothers. Maybe dad hinted at it, sort of kind of, and they magnified it. The fact that these brothers take the initiative, both in sending the message and within the message, confessing their guilt. That said, forgive us, we really did you wrong. And we're asking your forgiveness on behalf of God's mercy, would you forgive us?

And then not only do they write the message, they show up at Joseph's house. And they bowed down before him and say, we don't deserve your forgiveness. We are your slaves. It is a posture of submission and humility. And that's how you heal a wound from the past. You've got to address it proactively. You can't wait on that other person to come to you. You've got to go to them. I think it was Mark Twain who said that it's not the parts of the Bible I don't understand that bother me.

It's the parts of the Bible I do understand that give me the most trouble. And there's an inconvenient truth in Jesus' most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount where he says. If you are at church and you're worshiping the Lord and you remember in that moment that you have a brother or a sister who's mad at you. In other words, your brother or sister has a grievance against you, leave your gift at the front of the altar. First go be reconciled with your brother or sister and then come and offer your gift.

The reason that's so inconvenient is because you're not having to wait until they say they have a grievance with you. All that's necessary is for you to recognize they have a grievance with me. Things are a little bit off between us. And I've got to go make that right before I come and offer my gift to the Lord. Jesus is saying your vertical relationship with God is absolutely interlinked with your horizontal relationship with other people. And when you recognize there is a grievance, there is a tension in a relationship, it's your responsibility to be proactive.

And go and make it right. So pull out the pen and paper and write the letter. Take the initiative and be proactive. And I commend these brothers for being proactive, both in the letter and in the bowing. But they don't just proactively respond to the wrong, they also personally own the wrong. They own their part of the problem personally. Now, again, they do it through the dad. Dad gave a command for you to forgive us, but they also acknowledge their guilt and they say, on behalf of the servants of your father's God, forgive us for our wrongdoing.

They owned their wrongdoing personally. Now they weren't exhaustive. Forgive us for the pit and then the prison and all. They didn't name all the things. But I will take a fully sincere

apology over a complete apology any day. An apology can be incomplete if it's coming from a place of total sincerity. Then you should forgive it. Because they're owning their part of the problem. And I think Joseph does. He begins to weep. And it's an interesting question. Why does Joseph weep, Genesis chapter 50, verse 17, Joseph wept when their message came to him.

People debate, why did Joseph cry? Was it because he was frustrated with his brothers? How can you think I'm going to hurt you? I mean, did you not see the mercy with which I've treated you all of these years or maybe Joseph was crying because he was just kind of a crybaby. He cried a lot. They say real men don't cry. I guess that's not true. Joseph is about as real a man I can imagine, but he cried a lot. He cried when he saw Benjamin. He cried when his brothers confessed.

He cried when he revealed his identity to his brothers. He cried when Dad came home. Now he's crying when Dad died. Maybe he's just an emotional guy. Again, I don't think it's that. Maybe he was just, you know, when you're grieving and there's lots of bad stuff happening to you, it doesn't take a lot to send you over the edge. But I don't think that's it either. I think Joseph wept because his brothers are confessing their sin personally for the first time. The only other time that they semi-sort of confess their sin is when they're in prison in Egypt.

They think Joseph is an Egyptian who doesn't speak Hebrew and they talk to one another that they're being punished for the wrong that they did against their brother. Joseph received that as genuine contrition on their part, but they weren't apologizing to Joseph. They were just talking amongst themselves. This is the first time they've ever actually owned up to the genuine fact, we wronged you brother and we're sorry. We shouldn't have done that. And I think there's something about hearing and seeing genuine contrition in the life of another person where you are moved by it.

And you are liberated to be able to forgive them, which is what Joseph does in verse 19. Joseph said to them, don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? Interesting question. You planned evil against me, but God planned it for good to bring about the present result, the survival of many people. Therefore, don't be afraid. I will take care of you and your children. And he comforted them and he spoke kindly to them. Now this question is so funny because if you were an Egyptian person under the rule of Joseph and he said, am I in the place of God?

Your answer probably would have been, yes, sir. Yes you are because Pharaoh is Ra, he's God, or he's God's representative on earth, and you're at the right hand of Ra, which means all rule and authority and power has been given to you. And so are you in the place of God? Yes, you are. Does vengeance belong to God? Yes, it does. You're God. Have your vengeance. But Joseph raises the question, and even though culturally he could have said, I have the

reasons to hurt you, I have the resources to hurt you, and I have the right to hurt you, he recognizes I am not in the place of God.

Tim Keller says, forgiveness flounders when you take your enemy out of the community of humans and you take yourself out of the community of sinners. In other words, when you boil that enemy down to their sin and you say you're just a cheater, you're just a liar, you're just a whatever, you become blind to the fact that they are just themselves sinners. They are weak, they are prone. To doing things that are wrong and you would have done the same thing had you been in the same position, had the same opportunity and a couple of other factors maybe been a certain way.

But when you get angry and bitter sometimes you remove yourself from that community of sinners and you say, I would never do that. It's impossible that I could ever treat someone like that. And that's why you can't forgive them because you don't know your place. You're not in the place of God. They're not what you think they are, they're not just what you say they are. And you're not nearly as holy as you think you are. There's one God, he's seated on a throne, and vengeance belongs to him.

That's why Paul says in Romans 12, do everything you can as far as it depends on you to live at peace with all people. Know your place. You're not in the place of God. God is in the place of God, and you are on level ground with those who sin against you. And because you're on level ground, and because God is so kind and merciful and wise and sovereignly used even your pain and suffering for his divine purposes to save many people, because of that gospel-rich grace and mercy of God, it ought to put you in a position where you can release your enemy from the wrongs that they've committed against you.

And so that's what he does. He treats them with kindness and compassion. And so they show us how to heal a hurt. Or how to use death to heal wounds that have lingered in the past. And then Joseph's response to his death teaches the last thing, and then we're done. Joseph and his father's family remained in Egypt. Joseph lived 110 years. He saw Ephraim's son, that's his second born, to the third generation. And then he saw the sons of Manasseh's son Machir, that's his firstborn, they were recognized by Joseph. You might circle the word recognized.

Joseph said to his brothers, I'm about to die, but God will certainly come to your aid and bring you up from this land to the land he swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Notice that phrase, God will certainly come to your aid. And then Joseph made the sons of Israel take an oath. When God comes to your aid, you're to carry my bones up from here. And then Joseph died. He died at the age of 110. They embalmed him and placed him in a coffin in Egypt. So we prepare for death to help the ones we leave.

We grieve death to honor the ones we love. We use death to heal hurts from the past. Our hurts that linger, and then we face death with hope in the promised land. We face death with hope in the promised land. And Joseph is a beautiful picture of just that. For a couple of reasons we don't have time to dig into them. One of them is the fact that it says that he recognized his great-grandsons from Ephraim and Manasseh. I don't know if you look at your footnote, there's a little footnote that says literally born on his knees, and that's what the Hebrew literally means.

And it doesn't mean that when the babies were born, Joseph was like, sit here on my knee, little booger. That would be obviously weird to do. You're supposed to like wrap em up and smack em on the back and make sure they breathe, not put em on your knee. So that's not what it's saying. It's an idiom. It's another ancient Near Eastern idiom, it's a way of saying formal recognition. He's formally recognizing these Egyptian, probably very fully Egyptian grandchildren. It's Joseph's way of saying, even though they're born in Egypt, raised in Egypt, influenced by Egypt, they don't belong in Egypt.

They belong in the covenant of God. They belong in the land of the covenant. Because these are my children, these are my grandchildren, and so I'm bringing them into the covenant of grace. And the second way he dies in hope is that when he tells his brothers I'm about to die, he makes them swear an oath. He says, when God delivers you from this place, I want you to bring my bones with you. It's Joseph's way of saying, just like Jacob said, I may not see the promise fulfilled in my lifetime, but that by no means implies that God will not fulfill the promise.

God will fulfill his promise and when he does, take me home. Put me in the land of promise and let me rest there. And guess what happens 480 years later, the Israelites become slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. God hears the cries of the Israelites. He raises up a man named Moses. Moses goes to Pharaoh, let my people go. Pharaoh says, no. Moses says, you sure? They argue a little bit. He finally lets them go, and guess whose bones go out of Egypt with Moses on the way. Joseph's bones. And they eventually bury Joseph's bones in a place called Shechem, the same exact place Jacob said, I'm going to give you this mountain, as a fulfillment of God's prophetic words.

So he died with hope in the promised land. But here's what it means for you and me. Our promised land is not a piece of real estate in the Middle East. That was for Abraham's descendants, the Jewish people, and God honored that promise. And I think will eternally honor that promise. I think I don't have time to get into all that. But that's not the extent of it. The extent of the promised land isn't some piece of real estate in the Middle East, it's the entirety of the whole world. The whole world belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ and someday he will come and the kingdom of this world will be swallowed up by the kingdom of our God.

That's the city that Abraham was looking towards. Hebrews chapter 11, verse 10, he was looking forward to a city whose builder and architect was the Lord, a city that was prepared not by human hands, but by the Lord God. And that city is the city that comes down out of heaven, not at the end of Revelation, I'm sorry, not at the end of Genesis, but at the end of Revelation. In Revelation chapter twenty one, John says, I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more, and I saw the holy city.

The new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice. God's dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. As we sang this morning, I know how the story ends. He will be with us in the end. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. Grief, crying, and pain will be no more.

Because the previous things have passed away. And the one seated on the throne said, look, I'm making everything new. That's our promised land. And when we die, we can face our death in hope that promised land will come. Not just that to be absent from the body, it's to be present with the Lord. But that the Lord will one day at the sound of the trumpet of God, the Lord will descend. And the dead in Christ will rise, and then those who are alive will be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air, and they will always be with the Lord in a redeemed creation, new heaven, new earth.

In Jesus' death has been destroyed. And the reason we can face death with faith instead of fear is because Jesus has destroyed death through his death and resurrection. It's so crazy. I don't have time to get into it. But I just want you to take those four things and ask yourself, did Jesus face death with faith or fear? Jesus prepared for his death better than any other person, constantly told his disciples, I'm going to die, here's when, here's why, here's what you need to do. He grieved death, even on the cross, saying to John, Behold your mother; woman, behold your son, at the tomb of Lazarus, weeping because death had become an invasion into God's original good design, but he also platformed his own power to destroy death by calling Lazarus from the grave and giving him life again.

And he, more than any other person, used death to heal the wounds that have lingered. Your sin and my sin, which has separated us from a God who created us and loved us. But with whom we have violated our covenant and gone our own way and rebelled against Him. The Bible says while we were still weak. When we didn't deserve it, he proactively pursued us. He died for the unrighteous. He who knew no sin became sin so that we could become the righteousness of God. We could have our enmity with the Father absorbed and instead experienced reconciliation and love, unconditional love that will never pass away.

And it was for the joy that was set before him, Hebrews 12 says, that Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame, and he's now seated at the right hand of God. It was his promised land, not just geography, but a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation who would one day gather around the throne and sing salvation belongs to our God and to the Lamb. And if you are not ready to face your death because you don't have a relationship with that Jesus, then you have everything to fear. But you don't have to be afraid because he has made atonement for you through his death on the cross and his resurrection from the grave.

And if you don't have a relationship with Jesus, you can have confidence before you die by repenting of sin and putting your faith in him. And as we enter into a time of response, I'll be happy to talk with you through that decision. You may have something heavy on your heart that you want to pray about or maybe even in thinking about your own death, the Lord just says there's some things we need to talk about. And you would let the Lord do that as we respond to His word this morning.

Heavenly Father, we do thank you for this time and your word. We thank you for the book of Genesis and how it has been such a tremendous gift to us and an origin story of what's to come. And so we pray we would live as people who are ready to die. Even if you came today, would you help us to be reminded death is but a shadow for God's people? Just as in the case of my friend John, Jesus took the semi-truck so that we could be pushed out of the way and death pass over us like a shadow.

Jesus, we thank you that you absorb the substance of death so that death is no longer something we have to fear, but death is something that you can use in our life to glorify yourself. And to give us mercy instead of punishment. And give us grace that is greater than all of our sin. And so as we respond, we pray that you would give us wisdom and discernment to know what obedience to this word looks like. And that you would fill our hearts with courage and faith to act on what needs to happen.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.