Coming Home — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 44–46 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, November 3, 2024 · *Living The Dream*

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If you have your Bible, we're going to be in Genesis chapter 44.

You can turn there. And I just need to make a couple of, you might call them, pastoral confessions. I do this from time to time. The Bible says to confess your sins to one another and you'll be healed. So this last Thursday Audra came home from Brazil after being gone for over a week and it was during that week that I was Mr. Mom and the first couple of days were actually pretty nice because my mom took the kids to Roby, all three kids.

And so Friday night was awesome because I like went out and worked on the farm and I built a big fire and I like fire. I shouldn't say that, but I watched the sticks burn and I was like wrestling with the sheep a little bit and life was good and went to bed and the next day got up and went to Broadview West and passed out flyers for the fall festival and it was a good long productive day. Went to bed Saturday night. I was kind of missing Audra. The bed was empty, you know, kids were still gone to Roby, but I had a sermon, you know, to occupy my mind, so I was fine. Sunday night the kids come home from Roby and Sunday night was the same night of the fall festival for Broadview West.

So we had to do costumes and this was my first Halloween to like find the costumes and put them on the kids and make it all work and I'm not good with clothespins and so I was getting really frustrated with stuff. And we did the fall festival and Audra's the responsible parent. I'm the yes parent. So when they were asking for candy I was like, let's just get as much candy as we can. And sure, it's no problem for you to eat as much candy as you want. So we went home Sunday night and one of the kids was like kind of sick and the other two were staying up super late, which meant Monday, which was a school day for us.

We do homeschool Monday, Friday, and we do Abilene Classical School on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. But they stayed up too late and then they got up early and they were grumpy and I was grumpy and it just set the trajectory for not a great week. And then Tuesday we were late for school. I hate being late and so Wednesday I got them there on

time but emotionally scarred them probably a little bit. And Thursday was the last day Audra's going to come back home. And it was a rough morning, man.

I was overly motivational, you might say. And we had to do costumes again because it was Reformation Day at Abilene Classical. They do Halloween, called Reformation Day where they dress up like Reformation characters, bow and arrow, archer. Queen, all the stuff. It's pretty fun. But you had to get new costumes for Reformation Day that were all different. Had to do the whole thing again. And I'm not going to lie, Thursday as I was driving to school I did get them there on time but barely and I was frazzled. I was upset.

They were upset. I think two of them were crying. The cat who we got while Audra was in Brazil, even the cat was like, what is wrong with you? The ram, I have a ram and four ewes. The ram looked at me with this disappointed scowl on his face like you're not a real man. And then the four ewes, I swear, as I looked at them, I could hear them say, ma. You know, everybody wanted mom to come back home. And so when Audra came home Thursday, I dropped the truck off at the airport and because she had some people she had to take and drop them off at their house.

And so I didn't anticipate seeing her when I did see her. She came into the office and I was turned the other direction. She came in and I turned around and she was there and she gave me this big old hug and man it just felt so good to have her back home in my arms, this feeling of like joy and gratitude and contentment and I don't know all the words I could use. There's not a lot of words to describe it, but it's just really, really special. And before I say anything else, I just want to publicly recognize that I'm very grateful for my wife and for a lot of you moms who go over and above and beyond, a lot of that stuff doesn't get recognized or appreciated, especially those of you who have like a lot of stuff on top of being a mom.

You've got other responsibilities. So kudos to you for that and it should not go unacknowledged. But as I was reflecting on that reunion in relationship to our text this morning, it really came home to me that longing that I had for her is an echo, I think it's given to us by God to point us to an even deeper longing and even deeper, greater satisfaction. And that satisfaction is our longing for home in the arms of love, in the arms of our Heavenly Father, who is love. God is love.

We long for love as a husband to a wife or a spouse to another spouse. A parent to a child, there's that longing that we have. But again, those are just echoes of the deepest longing that we have, which is the longing for God's love. St. Augustine, a brilliant theologian and philosopher, talked about this that our hearts are restless until they rest in the Lord. And there's such a close relationship between that dynamic and the passage that we're looking at this morning in Genesis 44, except the relationship isn't between a husband and a wife, it's between a father and a son.

Specifically Jacob and his beloved son Joseph, who he thought had died, gotten torn to pieces by an animal, but in truth had been sold into slavery by his other sons. They sold Joseph into slavery because they were so jealous of Joseph for being the beloved son, for having the special robe, for not having to work like the other people worked and for having this dream that one day he would grow up and be ruler over them. And so if you've been following with us in the journey through the book of Genesis, you've seen the last we left Joseph, he was second in command in Egypt.

He had gone from the bottom of the prison to the top of the palace. He was Pharaoh's right-hand man, and that because he had successfully interpreted a dream for Pharaoh. He was held responsible for distributing grain to all of Egypt and everything around Egypt during these seven years of famine. And it was a great responsibility that he was nailing it. He was saving, literally saving the world through his wise stewardship of the grain during the harvest or the good years, and now he was wisely distributing it to Egypt and the rest of the communities in the bad years.

So because of that, last we left Joseph's brothers, they had been suffering from the famine in Canaan. Jacob, the dad, tells them, go to Egypt and get us some food. And it's as they get to Egypt that they encounter Joseph. Now they didn't know it was Joseph. Joseph did know it was them. And so what we saw last week is God used Joseph strategically in the lives of his brothers to discipline, basically God disciplined the brothers through Joseph's testing of the brothers because they didn't know his identity. So he tested them by accusing them of something they didn't do.

He threw them into prison. He did all these different things. And in each of the tests, they pass them. They basically demonstrate that they're not the same wicked men that they used to be, that they're actually grieving their sin, that they recognize what they did was wrong. And that God was actually transforming their character through Joseph's testing of the brothers. Now, so I say all that to say. This week we're going to see the final test. And this week's really illustrative. As you think about coming home to God, one of the things you've got to understand as a person who's created by God in his image with that longing for him is that invitation from God for you to come home is a universal invitation.

Theologically I am of a persuasion that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. That God so loved the world that he sent Jesus into the world to die on the cross and pay the penalty for our sins. But even though that's true, we recognize not the whole world isn't saved. There will be people who spend eternity separated from God, not because Jesus didn't die for their sins, but because they didn't respond to the invitation for that redemption to be applied. And so if you want to come home to God this morning, you need to know that the invitation is universal, but the grace of God is only experienced, or you might say it's narrowly restricted to those who are willing to come.

And what I think we'll see in Genesis 44 and 45 and 46 is the requirements that are on us if we want to come home to God. And then in coming home to God, how the Holy Spirit of God uniquely enables us to do what's necessary so that we can be at rest and at home in the love of God. It's a really powerful couple of chapters. They really should be three different sermons, but they technically just belong together. So we're going to have to move quickly and listen quickly and I hope that you can see the gospel in the book of Genesis through these brothers reconciling with Joseph and a dad reconciling with his son.

So let's pick it up in chapter 44, starting in verse 1. It says that Joseph commanded his steward. Again, Joseph had been testing his brothers, so this is the final test. I want you to fill the men's bags with as much food as they can carry. I want you to put each one's silver at the top of the bag. In other words, we're not going to charge them for the grain that we've given them. We're going to give them extra grain, not charge them for the grain that we did give them.

And then I want you to put my cup, the silver one, at the top of the youngest one's bag. In other words, I want you to plant evidence of a crime in Benjamin's bag, even though he didn't take it. Put it along with the silver for his grain. So the steward does it, and then at morning light the men were sent off with their donkeys. They hadn't got very far from the city when Joseph said to the steward, okay, now get up and go and get them. And when you overtake them I want you to say, why have you repaid evil for good?

Isn't this the cup that my master drinks from and uses for divination? What you've done is wrong. Now he's accusing them of something they did not do. It's a false accusation, just like Joseph had received a false accusation from Potiphar's wife, and I think he wants to see how they respond. So the steward does it when he overtook them. He said, this is wrong. Why did you repay evil for good? But then the brothers respond, why are you saying this?

There's no way we could possibly do such a thing. We, if you remember, brought back the silver that you had given to us and then we paid for the grain that we did take. How could we steal silver or gold from your master's house? It's just it's not true. And if it is true then the person who took it is going to die and the rest of us will become our lord's slaves. Now they're talking big because they think they're innocent. What they don't know is that evidence was planted in Benjamin's bag.

So the steward says, well, okay, if that's what you want to do, then let's do it. So the one who is found will be my slave and the rest of you will be blameless. In other words, I'm not going to kill anybody. Whoever's guilty is going to become the slave and the rest of you are going to go free. So each one quickly lowered his sack to the ground, they opened it, the steward searched, beginning with the oldest, ended with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

When they found that out, they tore their clothes. Each one loaded his donkey, and they all returned to the city. And when Judah and his brothers reached Joseph's house, he was still there, and they fell to the ground before him. And Joseph says, what have you done? Did you not know that a man like me could uncover the truth by divination? And then this is the phrase that's really important here. Judah replies, what can we say, my lord? How can we plead? How can we, you might underline this phrase, how can we justify ourselves?

God has exposed your servants' iniquity. And we are now my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup was found. Now, yes or no, did Judah or any of his brothers actually steal the silver cup? The answer is no. And yet Judah standing before Joseph says, God has exposed the iniquity of your servants. So he's confessing to a sin, he's confessing to some kind of a crime, but he's not confessing to the crime that he didn't commit. So if he's not confessing to that crime, what crime would he be confessing to?

He's confessing to the original crime, the great crime, of throwing Joseph into a pit in the first place. If you remember, it was Judah's idea to sell Joseph into slavery. So they could make money off of Joseph. And Judah initially was a very evil man in Genesis 38. He had run from God. And God used that life of rebellion and misery to break him, to bring him to a point of repentance and transformation. And Judah has slowly been getting the picture. He's slowly begun to reorient his heart towards God and now here he is rightfully recognizing what I did to my brother was wrong and now God has found it out.

And he's just to do so, but he's chosen to punish me for that wrong by making me guilty of this thing that I didn't do. And that's an incredible illustration of genuine repentance. Genuine repentance, if you want to come home to God, it starts with owning up to your guilt before God. And what makes his owning up to guilt so unique is he doesn't do what a lot of people do. Some people when they own up to their guilt. Well, they don't own up to their guilt.

Some people just refuse to acknowledge I've done any wrong. They point the finger, they hide, they blame shift, they pretend like good and evil don't exist. People have all kinds of ways to say I'm not wrong or I'm not a sinner. But those who do acknowledge that they're sinners, a lot of times what they'll do is they'll acknowledge their guilt to manage their situation. I see this all the time as a pastor doing counseling with people, especially marriage counseling, where someone will do a wrong. They'll cheat, commit adultery, abuse, some kind of big, grievous wrong that is so bad the marriage is about to end.

And so both people will come into the office and the person who committed the wrong will be genuinely sorry. There will be tears, there will be remorse. It'll be very believable. And in that moment, I really don't cast judgment. Is this legit or not legit? But what ends up proving that it wasn't legit. What proves that they were just trying to manage their situation is that as

soon as things get back to normal and the spouse begins to trust them again, they'll go right back to doing the same old things.

The same old way and maybe even commit the same crime again. There wasn't genuine remorse because they weren't confessing to God. They were confessing to their spouse. And godly repentance, genuine repentance, confesses to both God and your spouse, and you recognize the deepest offense wasn't to them, it's to God. He's always the most offended party in any sin because I violated his design and I sinned against a person created in his image. And that's what Judah is recognizing in his repentance. He's saying, my sin is not just against Joseph.

But I have sinned against God, and because I'm guilty before God, I'm willing to embrace my punishment because it is rightly deserved. And when you come to that place as a person, you're ready to come home to the Lord because you're genuinely sorry for the guilt in your life against God. Jesus talked about this in his most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, where he said, blessed are the poor in spirit. Those are the ones who have the kingdom of heaven. In other words, they recognize even on their best day, their righteousness isn't sufficient.

He says in the very next verse, blessed are those who mourn. In other words, there's a godly sorrow over their sin. Those are the ones who are going to be comforted. And so the first step to coming home is owning up to your guilt before God, and it is the Holy Spirit of God that enables that kind of sorrow. The Holy Spirit enables a humble sorrow over sin. And that's what enabled Judah to say what he said. Now, Joseph is going to hear that and he's going to give him an out

to really test, do you mean what you say? So Joseph said, I'm not going to do that. I swear I will not do this. The man in whose possession the cup was found, he will be my slave. In other words, you can go free. Just leave Benjamin here. The rest of you can go in peace to your father. And I promise you, Genesis 37 Judah would have taken Joseph up on that offer because he was not a great man. He was very wicked, and he tried to hurt others to advance his own interests.

But this is not Genesis 37, Judah. This isn't even Genesis 38, Judah. This is a new Judah. He's a new man. And so what he does is he basically rejects Joseph's offer and asks Joseph to put him in Benjamin's place. Okay, if Benjamin is who you want, I want you to allow me to serve his sentence. I want you to allow me to take on his punishment. We don't have time to go through all the verses because we've got to cover so much ground, but in the next verses he explains to Joseph, listen, the only reason we're here is because my dad allowed Benjamin to come with us.

He didn't want to do that because my dad is like super wrapped up in Benjamin. He's the only kid that he really loves left. And I promised my dad, in fact, the only reason my dad released Benjamin is because I swore to him I would take responsibility. So you can understand that if I go back home and Benjamin doesn't come with me, I'm basically going to be killing my father because his heart is wrapped up with this child. And so I need you to let me pay for his crime. If you'll pick it back up in verse 30, he says, if I come to your servant, my father, and the boy is not with us, then his life is wrapped up with the boy, and when he sees the boy not with us, he's going to die.

So that your servants will have brought the gray hairs of your servant our father down to Sheol and sorrow. Your servant, me, I've become accountable to my dad for the boy, saying, if I do not return him to you, I will always bear the guilt for sinning against you, my father. And so since that's true, I'm already going to be guilty in front of him if I don't let him come home. I want you to let me, your servant, remain here as my lord's slave in the place of the boy.

Let him go back to his brothers or with his brothers, for how can I go back to my father without the boy? I could not bear to see the grief that would overwhelm my father. Now I don't know if you're seeing all this connection, but there's a deep connection between what Judah is doing here and what Jesus does at the cross. If you want to come home to God, it begins with owning up to your guilt. But after you own up to your guilt before God, there needs to be an offering of your life

to serve God or to surrender to God, if you want to use that language. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, right after he says, blessed are the poor in spirit, and blessed are those who mourn, the very next beatitude is blessed are the meek. I love that word meek because it means submitting your will to the will of another. And so that's what Judah's doing here. He's saying, I want to submit myself to you, Egyptian king. I'll become your slave, but I want to do it in the place of my brother.

And that's exactly what Jesus does in our salvation. He submits his will to the will of the Father, his heavenly father. And he says, even though these people are guilty, Father, I want you to forgive them as I submit myself to your will to die on this cross in their place for their sins so that they can be forgiven and I can be condemned in their place. And when you begin to see that as a Christian, or not even as a Christian, as you begin to understand as a non-Christian that the gospel story is that we are far worse off than we could have imagined.

But God in his great love for us sent Jesus to stand in our place for our sin on the cross. What it does is it motivates within you this heart of surrender. The way I put it in your notes is that the Holy Spirit will enable a willful submission of self. As the old hymn puts it, you'll say, love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. If God is this loving, if he's

this kind, if he's this gracious. And he has demonstrated his love to this degree, then who am I to withhold anything from him?

And that's what Judah is doing. He's offering up his life to serve God. He's owning up to his sin before God. The Holy Spirit had enabled him to a humble sorrow over sin and a willful submission of himself. And Joseph sees this in chapter 45 and he is so overwhelmed by this act of love and sacrifice that he can't hold in the secret any longer. So chapter 45, verse 1 says Joseph could no longer keep his composure in front of all of his attendants, and those of the servants that he had.

And so he called out, everybody get out of the room, send everyone away from me. No one was with Joseph when he revealed his identity to his brothers. So everybody gets out of the room and he comes to his brothers and he says, I'm Joseph. But he was weeping so loudly as he was explaining this that the Egyptians heard it and also Pharaoh's household heard it. Joseph said, I am Joseph. I'm Joseph. Is my father still living? But they could not answer him because they were terrified in his presence. Now why do you think they were terrified?

They still don't believe him, I don't think. This guy's been crazy. He's cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs since the day that we met him. He was trying to throw us into prison for something we didn't even do wrong. And then he makes this crazy rule that we can't get any more grain unless we come back and prove that we're not spies. He had no reason to think we were spies in the first place, and now he's weeping inconsolably, professing to be our brother. This man is obviously not very well.

I think that's why they were terrified. And so he, I think he recognizes that they're terrified. And so he says, I've got to prove this. And so he asks them, come, come here. Verse 4, Joseph said to the brothers, please come near me. And they came nearer. And he says again, I am Joseph, your brother. And then he tells them something that only he would have known. I'm the one you sold into Egypt. Now I guess it could be true that there was a dossier out there and the Egyptian guy read it and he has dirt on them, but they probably recognize in that moment this guy knows about our secret.

And nobody else would know our secret except Joseph because we haven't told another soul. We haven't even told our own father what's happened. Now some say it's that, some say that Joseph showed them something when they were really close that they had to see up close. Some say it was a birthmark. I'm kind of persuaded by the idea that he showed them his circumcision, the sign of the covenant. Look, I'm not an Egyptian. I don't worship Ra. You know, dropped his britches and showed the proof. He wouldn't want to be doing that in front of everyone, obviously, so he had them come close.

Whatever he did, whatever he said, they believed it, and their immediate reaction was one of anger and grief. Now what does that have to do with coming home to the Father? If you're

going to come home and rest in the arms of love, you've also, like Joseph's brothers, you've got to open up your eyes and see. And sometimes you can't see until you come really, really close. A lot of people will reject the gospel because they look at it from afar and they'll say that's a crutch, that's a weakness, that's for people who aren't strong, they're mentally unhealthy.

But if you will take the time to get close and actually examine the scriptures and examine the claims of Christ for what they are and if you'll actually seriously entertain the historical evidence for the resurrection and the reliability of the gospels and the reality of your own sin and brokenness before God and the coherence and consistency of the Christian worldview to deal with your guilt and to deal with the problem of evil and suffering and the desire that we have for hope and purpose. When you begin to see how the Christian story makes sense, the aha moment comes on, you'll see what Joseph's brothers saw and you'll be able to come home.

But what happened for a lot of people, and what happens for people and keeps them from really responding, is that when they get close to the cross, what happened to Joseph's brothers happens, they got angry and they got grieved. They were angry and sad. And when people draw near to God, those are two very common emotions. A lot of people feel anger because God, you didn't come through for me. God, I hold this against you. I hold that against you. If you're a good God, why this? Why that? That's a very common reaction and then other people will be afraid and they'll say, well if I submit to God or if I accept Christ, I'm going to lose this, I'm going to have to stop working here, I'm going to have to change this thing about my life, I'm going to have to become public with this grievous sin and a lot of people because of fear or anger will push back against the invitation of Jesus to come and to see.

But those who don't push back, those who open their eyes and they draw near and they look, the Holy Spirit enables you to see the truth. The Bible in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 talks about how spiritual truths are spiritually understood, that it's not just that the natural man doesn't receive the things of God, but it's the natural man cannot receive the things of God, and that the Holy Spirit graciously, supernaturally enables us to see what we need to see. So coming home requires you to open your eyes to see God and to overcome those two emotions.

So Joseph says don't be grieved or angry with yourselves for selling me here because God sent me ahead of you to preserve life. For the famine has been the famine has been in the land these two years, and there will be five more years without plowing or harvesting. That's why God sent me ahead of you to establish you as a remnant within the land and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Therefore it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household, and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

So if you're taking notes, the Holy Spirit enables new sight for the blind. What does the Holy Spirit enable them to see? The first thing it enables them to see is it's true that you are the reason I'm here. You were very wrong to sell me into slavery. But I don't want you to focus on your shame and your guilt and your sin. I want you to focus on the wisdom and the goodness and the sovereignty of God to use your sin and your brokenness and your anger and rage.

Somehow he took it and wisely orchestrated events around it so that what you intended for evil, he intended for good. So you begin to see, and this happens when you become a Christian, when you look at the cross, you don't see foolishness, you don't see weakness, you see the wisdom of God and the sovereignty of God. To take the worst elements of human nature and the sin that we have to reject God and use that very thing to bring about salvation for the whole world. And that's exactly what Joseph says.

He says, look, you intended it for evil, but God has used it so that I was in prison at the right time, interpreted a dream in the right way, to get put in front of Pharaoh at the right time, and successfully interpret his dream so that he put me in charge of all the grain. And I harvested all the grain in the seven years of plenty, and now I'm wisely distributing the grain in the seven years of famine. And literally, God's sovereignty is the reason why everybody's not dead right now. It's the reason why people have life because of the wisdom and the sovereignty of God.

So don't be too hard on yourself. Look up. And then after he points them to God's sovereign grace or God's sovereign wisdom, he points them to his sustaining grace. And again, I think he's a symbol for the Lord, he says in verse 9, return quickly to my father and say to him, this is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord over all of Egypt. I've got all the authority. So come down without delay. You can settle in the land of Goshen and be near me. You, your children, your grandchildren, your flocks, your herds, all that you have.

Underline this phrase. There, in Goshen, I will sustain you. For there will be five more years of famine. You think it's bad now? It's going to get way worse. Otherwise you, your household, and everything you have will become destitute. And look at verse 12. Your eyes, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, you can see that I'm the one speaking to you. So since you see, I want you to tell my father about all of my glory in Egypt and about all that you've seen. And I want you to bring my father here quickly.

Then Joseph threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and he wept, and Benjamin wept on his shoulder, and Joseph kissed each of his brothers as he wept, and afterwards the brothers talked with him. So when you open your eyes, when God opens your eyes, when the Holy Spirit enables you to see, you will see the wisdom of God's sovereign plan. You'll see secondly the sufficiency or the glory of God's sustaining grace. He says, I'm going to sustain you. In fact, if you don't take me up on my offer, you will die.

You and your family and all of your belongings will be destroyed. And it's the same word that Jesus gives to those who draw near to the cross. He says, I have grace that is sufficient for you. I will give you green pastures, still waters. I'll restore your soul. But if you reject me, if you refuse this invitation, you will find yourself in a dry and weary land. You will be parched and destitute. And so see the wisdom of God's sovereign plan and see the glory of my sustaining grace. And they do.

I think they see it. They buy into it. And so they sign up. Verse 16, the final thing is to convince the father. So when news reached Pharaoh's palace, Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh, oddly enough, and his servants were pleased. And so Pharaoh said to Joseph, Listen, tell your brothers to load the animals, go back to the land of Canaan, and get your father and your families, and come back to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt. And you can eat from the richness of the land.

Again, remember, this is in the middle of a famine where everybody's starving, and Pharaoh is graciously saying to Joseph, I'm going to bless your family. With more than enough. Everyone else may starve, but they are going to feast on the best richness of the land. Then also you're commanded to say, do this, take wagons from the land of Egypt for your dependents, your wives, bring your father here. Underline this phrase, do not be concerned about your belongings, for the best of the land of Egypt is yours. And they do it.

The sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them wagons, as Pharaoh commanded, he gave them provisions. Each of the brothers had changes of clothes. He gave Benjamin three hundred pieces of silver. He gave him five changes of clothes. He sent his father ten donkeys carrying the best products of Egypt, and then ten female donkeys, carrying grain, food, and provisions. And then Joseph sent the brothers on their way. And again, as they were leaving, he said, don't argue on the way. I quoted that verse a lot this week because they were arguing.

But the word doesn't mean argue. Well, I mean it can mean argue, but does anyone have a footnote in their Bible on this word argue? What does it really mean, literally? Or be anxious? Or be anxious. Don't be anxious. It's the same thing he said in verse 20 when he said, don't be concerned about your belongings. And it's just like human nature when you draw near to Jesus and you hear his invitation, I can sustain you, I can save you, I will forgive you, I'll give you a hope, I'll give you a future.

What a lot of people do in response to that is say, yeah, but what about what about this? What about that? What if I have to give up this thing? What if I have to change the way I do X, Y, or Z? And what Joseph is saying and what Jesus is saying through Joseph is saying don't worry about your life. Don't worry about what you're going to wear and what you're going to eat and where you're going to live and how this or that's going to pan out. I just want you to trust me.

Jesus said in the Gospels, look at the grass, look at the lilies, look at the birds of the air. God cares for them enough to feed them every day. How much more so will he care for you? So you need to see the wisdom of his sovereign plan, you need to see the glory of his sufficient grace, and then you need to see the promise or the blessing of his sufficient provision. I'm sorry, you need to see the assurance of God's sufficient provision. And when you see those things, you are ready to respond to Jesus.

You're ready to respond to the invitation. You own up to your guilt before God. I'm not just a sinner against people, I'm a sinner against God first and foremost. And he has every right to punish me forever in a place called hell. But I also believe he loved me so much that he sent his son into the world to stand in my place, to be my substitute. And so I'm going to offer up my life to him as an act of worship and service to God. And when you do that, he begins to open your eyes to see.

It's a funny thing. The Holy Spirit takes sermons like this and all of a sudden you used to kind of dismiss it or never even hear it, but then today you'd be like, wow, it really makes sense to me. And maybe there really is a God and maybe He really does love me and maybe I really can have forgiveness and maybe my life doesn't have to be what it's always been and the Holy Spirit opens your eyes to God's grace and his wisdom and his power and his provision.

And the response that you have, if that happens in your life and you're enabled by the Holy Spirit to respond to the invitation of grace, the last thing you have to do is believe. You have to exercise faith or trust in the Lord. And that's exactly what happens in the narrative. They go back home. Joseph says, convince dad that this is true. And so they do. In verse twenty five, they went up from Egypt, and they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, and they told him the truth.

Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt. And it says that Jacob was stunned, for he did not believe them. Now why do you think he was stunned? In fact, this word, if you look at your footnote, this word doesn't mean stunned like, oh no way. It means, what a cruel joke, you loser sons of mine. How could you say that? It says it's literally his heart was numb. That's a beautiful picture of an unbelieving heart. Hard, parched, unbelieving, rejecting any potential good news that could come its way.

And he was so stunned because he had spent years grieving. If you go back to Genesis 37 when he found out Joseph had died and been torn in half by a wild animal, again a lie from his other sons. It says that his daughters tried to console him, his other sons tried to console him, and that he would not be consoled. And every day he lived from that place of anger and grief. And you know what happens to bitter old men? You know a couple bitter old men in your life. He made life miserable, I'm sure, for his other sons.

You can see he's a selfish old man. When the sons come back and don't tell him what he wants to hear, he goes immediately into himself. He's hard-hearted, he's selfish, he's bitter, he's hurt, he's angry, and those are all the same reasons why people reject Jesus today. It can't be true. God doesn't exist. It can't be real. It's a joke. It's a crutch for the masses. And it wasn't until Joseph heard. It wasn't until Jacob heard what Joseph said and saw what Joseph did that his heart began to change.

When they told Jacob all that Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to transport him, that's when the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And then Israel said, enough, my son Joseph is still alive, and I will go down to see him before I die. So if you want to come home, you've got to orient your heart away from bitterness and hardness and unbelief, and you've got to orient your heart back towards a place of receptivity, openness, and faith in what he has revealed.

And it may require you to see something you've not been willing to look at before, or to listen to the gospel in a way you've previously been unwilling to listen. But if you will have ears to hear, and eyes to see what the Holy Spirit is saying about your relationship with your creator and your need for his grace through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross for your sins and promises to give you hope and future and redemption and restoration. If you will have eyes to see and ears to hear that message and you will orient yourself towards God and believe, then you will be able to come home.

But what happens to most people when they do that is there's a little check in their spirit. There's a little fear, crippling fear that keeps them from going all the way. Maybe you've been here four, five, six Sundays in a row, and every Sunday you hear God say come home. And every Sunday when that invitation happens, you say, yeah, but what if? And that's exactly what Jacob does. Chapter 46, he sets out with all that he had. He came to Beersheba. He offered sacrifices to God, the God of his father Isaac.

And that night God spoke to Israel in a vision and he said, Jacob. And Jacob replied, here I am. And God, I think, addresses his fears and concerns with four promises. God said, I am God, the God of your father, do not be afraid to go down to Egypt. I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt. I will bring you back. And Joseph will close your eyes when you die. Four things were driving Jacob's fear. Number one, is this really from God?

Is God really going to be with me? Number two, if God is with me, is he going to stay with me? And God says, yes, I'm going to bring you back. And then number three, if I go, is am I going to really be able to see my son I'm making this decision on the assumption Joseph is still alive, and if I go, is God really going to let me see him? And he says yes, yes, yes, yes to all four of those concerns. I will take you down, I will bring you back, I will make you into a great nation, and I will, you can trust me with your death.

In a similar way, I think the Lord would say to those of you who are wrestling with faith in Jesus, number one, He is God, that Jesus is the Savior of the world, and that if you respond to him, he will be with you. That the presence of Jesus invades the life of someone who repents of their sins and invites him into their heart. And that he has a hope and a future for you. He made Jacob into a great nation. That nation was always meant to point to Jesus. And when you receive Jesus into your life, he has a hope and a future for you as well. Jesus said, I came to give life and life abundantly.

The enemy wants to steal, kill, and destroy. I want to give you my joy. He also promises to bring us home, that we can trust him with every step of the way in our journey, and that when you receive him into your heart, you can trust him even with your death. Even with the worst enemy that we all face one day, you don't have to be afraid because I'm with you. And so it was effective for Jacob. He leaves Beersheba. We don't have time to read it, but the rest of 46 is a big long story about him and all of his grandkids and their grandkids and cousins and all the crazy names.

And then it ends in verse 28. Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to prepare for his arrival at Goshen. And when they came to the land of Goshen, Joseph, his son, hitched the horses to the chariot. He goes up to Goshen to meet his father Israel. Joseph presented himself to him. He threw his arms around him, and he wept for a long time. And then Israel said to Joseph, I am ready to die now, because I have seen your face, and you are still alive. That's kind of how I felt when I held Audra.

I am ready to die, you know. But all joking aside, Jacob is essentially saying, I can't believe it. God kept his promise. I got here. I've seen my son. I'm ready to go. It's what any bitter old man would say once he finally had the thing he wanted most. And I think the similar kind of thing will happen to you. The Holy Spirit will enable you, if you will respond with orienting your heart towards the Lord, he will enable steadfast endurance to get all the way where God wants you to go until you've come all the way home and God brings you to Himself.

And so I don't know what that looks like for you. I think there's two ways we can respond this morning as we enter into our invitation. I really sensed in my spirit as I was developing this sermon that there may be people in our church who come week in and week out and if you were honest with yourself you would say, I'm in church but I haven't come home. I keep coming to church thinking God will get off my back or God won't give up on me, but I haven't really surrendered my life to Jesus.

I haven't come home. And if that's true of you, that you think God is calling you home this morning, I want to give you a chance to respond. So that can happen. At least respond in a way so that you can tell me, and there won't be anybody else looking, but you can at least verbally confess to me, I feel like God's calling me home. Now whether you come down this

morning and make a personal decision to surrender your life to Jesus, that's a second step. I think that's a step you should take.

But we're going to begin with just the acknowledgement. I need to come home. And it's not just for people who have never trusted in Christ. This is an invitation for every person, believer or unbeliever, who has found themselves drifted off to a place where they're not owning their guilt, they're not surrendering their life to Jesus, they're not able to see with spiritual eyes of faith, and they're not oriented towards trusting and obeying the Lord. If you would say, you know, I made a decision years ago, but I'm not home.

I'm not resting in the arms of love, maybe you this morning would need to raise your hand and say, I need to come home. And if you raise your hand this morning and say I need to come home, there's going to be an opportunity for you to respond. I'm going to be here at the front. I'm going to ask one of our lay pastors, Jace, and then anybody else from over here? Let's see, does anybody want to volunteer to stand over there in the back corner? All right, Andrew will be back there.

Andrew's right back here. Jace is over here, Mike's back there. If you don't want to come up to the front, I get that. But I know when you respond to the Lord, sometimes there's something about getting up out of your seat and physically moving that makes that decision meaningful and I invite you to do that. I'll be happy to pray with you about anything. Maybe you have someone in your life who needs to come home and you've been praying and praying and praying and today you say, I want you to join me in praying for this brother or this sister or this son or this daughter to come home.

Maybe you need to respond in some other kind of way. But let's take a few moments as Taylor leads us to respond to the Lord's word in a way that would surrender to him and respond to him...