

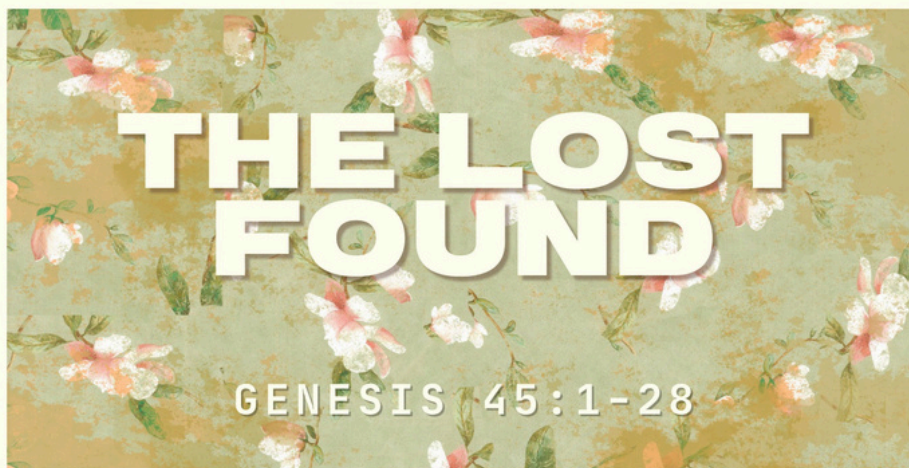
CCLEB SERMON

NOTES

SUNDAY APRIL 12, 2026
GENESIS 45:1-28

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THE LOST FOUND



Have you ever encountered someone you wish you hadn't? Maybe it is someone from the past you'd been hiding from, maybe someone you wish you didn't have to see, or someone who meant something to you when you saw them? Maybe with the tax deadline looming this week, I picked the wrong intro.

As a chaplain in a hospital in Johnson City, TN, believe it or not, people did not want to see me. Several times, I would come to the ER, the family would see me coming and burst into tears. I remember one particular time, a woman and her daughter came into the ER because her son was whisked to the hospital in an ambulance. As soon as she saw me, she raised her hand in a—wait right there—kind of way and screamed, “No, no, why are you here?” I didn't know her, she didn't know me, but the very presence of a chaplain meant something, and she did not want to see me.

Well, our passage today is surely one of those that caused Jacob's 11 other children to say what the mother told me that day in the ER: “No, no, why are you here?”

Genesis 45:1-28

On its face, this passage looks like good news, no great news. The long lost beloved son is now found, like the reverse prodigal, the son who didn't want to leave, but was forced out is returned. But what does Joseph's presence mean to his brothers who sold him into slavery because of envy? I can just imagine the brothers thinking, “Not only is he the favored brother, not only is he still alive, but now he is the 2nd most powerful person in the whole world!” What would they think this meant for them?

Verses 1-2: Hebrew says that Joseph wept so loudly that Pharaoh heard it in his house. The Hebrew phrase for “Could stand it no longer,” literally means that Joseph was not able to control the emotion he was feeling. There comes a time that you just have to let it out. If you don't, you end up making some funny noise that you have to explain yourself for. Men, you know what I mean, not that this doesn't happen with women, but we are men, we are supposed to be tough, or at least, look tough.

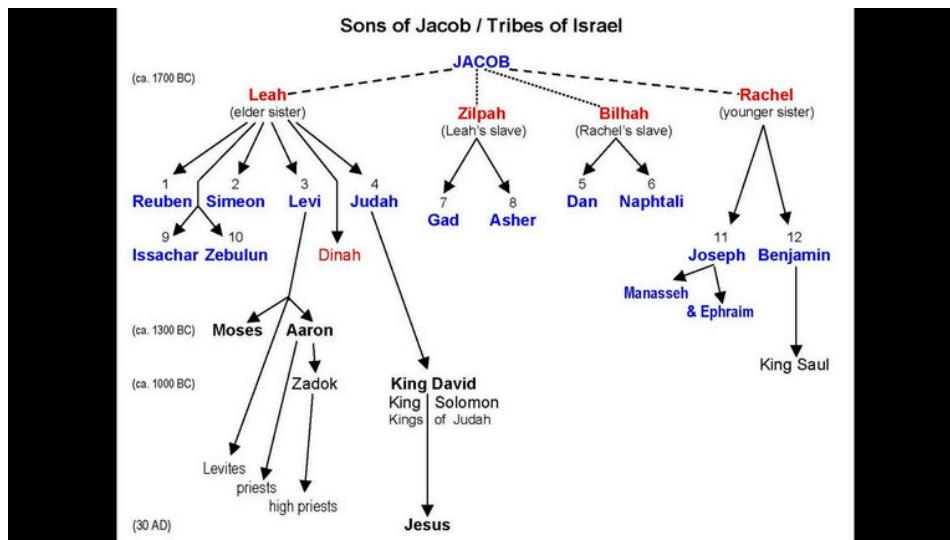
But there you are, maybe your daughter's graduation or wedding (in my case, preschool graduation), you see your daughter come up, and trying to be the man, your not gonna cry, your not gonna cry, then, some strange irk is forced out of you, and now they got that on camera. You should have just let it out.

Something similar seems to be going on with Joseph right here. He has played this trick, tested his brothers, and had to keep a straight face, until now. Well, his brothers were surely wondering what in the world was going on, so Joseph finally let them in on his secret.

Verses 3-4: The brothers were speechless, Hebrew says that they were speechless because they were terrified because it was Joseph (you know, the one they planned to kill, but instead decided to sell him into slavery). I imagine Reuben was thinking, "I need to tell Joseph that I was trying to buy time so they couldn't kill him, but when I turned my back Judah had the bright idea to sell you into slavery, I tried my best, but I couldn't save you." Judah is probably thinking, "Me and my big mouth." It's been several weeks since we read about Joseph being sold into slavery, so let's revisit that now **Genesis 37:18-35**



So, the brothers had made plans to kill Joseph, all except Benjamin, who was too young to act, and Reuben, who was probably trying to reclaim his firstborn blessing, certainly lost by having slept with his father's concubine, but the plan backfires. Judah, who is actually the 4th born, acts as the firstborn in this encounter with Joseph in Egypt. Reuben was first but lost his blessing by sleeping with his father's concubine. When Shechem raped their sister Dinah, Simeon and Levi (the 2nd and 3rd born) lost the firstborn rights by killing all the Canaanites in Shechem, and so that leaves us with Judah, who does indeed have a checkered past, but, I know it has been a few weeks since pastor Duane taught this, but it was Judah's speech that moved Joseph to lose his composure and finally tell them who he was. Just the chapter before ours, Judah says **Genesis 44:18-34**



So, Judah, acting as the firstborn, shows the self-sacrificing commitment to protect his family, as he failed to do with Joseph, and Joseph is ready to reconcile their relationship. Reconciliation takes owning the responsibility. As we reread Judah's statement, he makes an admission to Joseph that his father believed that he was killed by wild animals. While Judah did not say they lied to Jacob about that, this is likely the first time Joseph hears what they told his father had happened to him. Then, for the sake of Benjamin, Judah is ready to become a slave. First, he wanted to make his brother Joseph a slave, now he will become a slave for the sake of his brother Benjamin.

But this moment when Joseph tells them to come closer. I am sure they moved at a snail's pace, unsure what he wanted them to come closer for. Perhaps they were thinking, "Maybe he forgot," then Joseph says, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt." "Nope, he remembers, we're in trouble." And by all rights, by justice, they deserve to die, and they deserve to die at the hand of their brother Joseph. But what does he say?

Verses 5-8: "Don't be upset, don't be angry, God sent me here." Some of you have already learned this, some of us are on our way to learning it, but it takes great maturity to see all of your suffering, all the winding roads, all the dead ends as God molding you into His image. Joseph got it. I think it is also important to note that maturity is something that happens to us, not something that we decide to have. My New Year's resolution this year, "Mature." Well, whether that is your resolution or not, that is going to happen. The great hymn, "Amazing Grace" picks up on this when it says, "Through many dangers toils and snares, I have already come—a New Year's resolution brought me safe thus far—no, this grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."

God's grace is just that, grace. Grace, by definition, is a gift. The Old Testament word for it is Hanan favor. When someone is favored, like Joseph was favored by his father Jacob, they receive gifts—like a multi-colored robe. When someone is favored by God, like Joseph, they receive good standing with the people around them. How does that come about? By being reconciled to God, and being conformed to His image. Joseph matured in character: faithfulness, kindness, and forgiveness to name a few. How did he develop these qualities? The Holy Spirit moving him through suffering. I hate to think of it this way, and in no way wish to minimize any suffering of any kind, but faithfulness, kindness, and forgiveness cannot happen in a perfect world. What is faithfulness when there are no alternatives? How hard would it be to be faithful to your husband or wife if you were the only two people in the world? What is kindness when no one is rude? What is forgiveness when no one does wrong? Only in a fallen world can someone stand out with these qualities, and these qualities are gifts from God developed through circumstances we have no control over. 22 years had passed since Joseph's brothers sold him until this point, and he had been second to pharaoh for 9 years. That means 13 years of suffering with no good outlook, no hope, no future.



Now, surely no one here, but I am the type of stubborn person that needs every good thing to be ripped from me to find that the only good thing I have is God. With or without the stuff. The crazy thing is, when God rips everything from you, and you see that He is the good thing, then even though you have lost everything, you have gained much more. Jesus says it this way **Matthew 16:24-26**

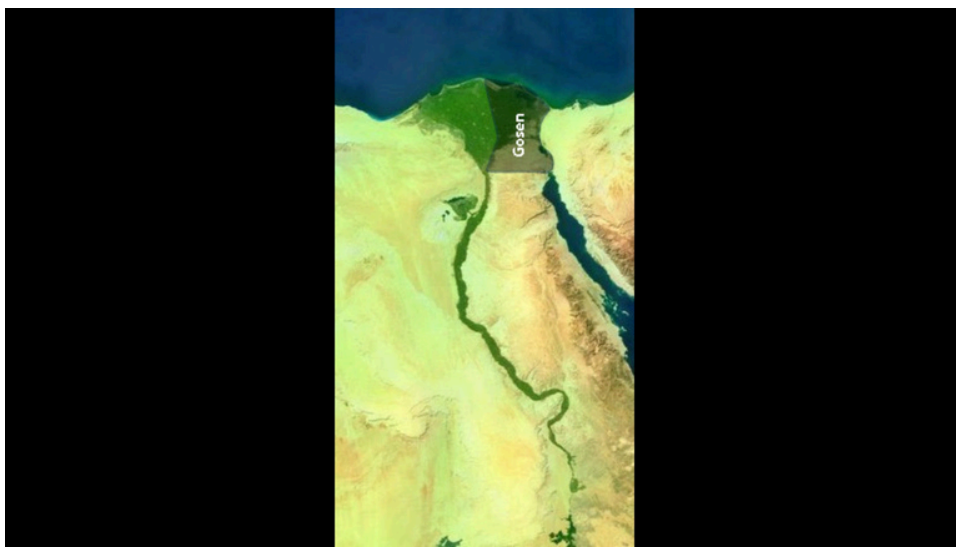
I believe that is where Joseph is at this point. He may have lost everything, but in God, he already had all things. Since he had reached that maturity, he could look back and see his whole life, thus far, bringing him to the very point he was, and that God had reconciled his past, worked it all out for good, and that allows Joseph to forgive. Seeing God's hand in your life allows you to trust what's going on in your life. Allows you to keep going through the difficult times, knowing that God is using every circumstance in your life for good.



verses 9-15: So, his brothers forgiven, Joseph is ready to see his dad. You have to wonder why Joseph doesn't go along with his brothers to bring his father back. Is he still technically a slave, only this time to Pharaoh? Was his job so important in the day to day that he was not able to leave? Had he not put in enough time to accrue PTO? Whatever the reason, Joseph remains and sends the brothers with wagons and donkeys to receive his father, and leaves his brothers to give their father the good news that Joseph, who in his mind was dead, is not dead, but is alive. The father and the son would be reconciled. Can you imagine the joy on his face. Wouldn't Joseph want to be the one to deliver the news and see that? Isn't he worried that such amazing news would cause his father to have a heart attack? Isn't he worried that the journey may be too much for an old man? Maybe he was worried that his presence would cause him a heart attack, and knew he needed to hear the news slowly.



Of course, Pharaoh heard what was going on and added his joy and weight to the conversation, and to top it off, they weren't just coming to Egypt, they were coming to the best of the land of Egypt, in luxury cars, and an all expenses paid vacation! Some parents settle for a trophy. The large grassy area on this slide is Goshen, where the Israelites were going to be settling. The rest is desert.



Verse 16-25: Almost as though Joseph could have read his brothers' minds, he stops to tell them not to quarrel on the way. Even though they are forgiven by Joseph, he just knows that as soon as they leave, they are going to be blaming one another. They are forgiven, but they still feel guilty. Isn't it the way of man to try to shift the blame for our guilt on to someone else? It isn't when someone tells us that we are forgiven that we feel released from guilt, but when we find a way in our own minds to remove ourselves from the action that causes us guilt. But is it for me to decide when someone else really forgives me? Am I allowed to hold on to self-blame when someone has released me from it? Joseph knew the human condition and told them not to quarrel on the way.

Finally, having arrived home, they inform their father of what happened.

Verse 26-28: What good news! Your son who was dead is now alive! What good news! We can leave this parched land and go to Egypt, a land flowing with milk and honey! What great news, we get the best of the land for free.

Anyone with a phone knows that anything advertised as free is not free. Pastor Duane likes to point out, and how importantly so, that the first audience, the first hearers of Genesis were the Israelites who just spent 400 years in slavery in Egypt. What would this news mean to them? As they slogged through the mud, making bricks for Pharaoh's pointless projects, being whipped, beaten, treated as the very mud they churned, what would they have thought of Joseph? The so-called hero who saved the world and sold them into slavery? What about the God, who for 400 years remained silent as they cried out under the whips of the Egyptians?

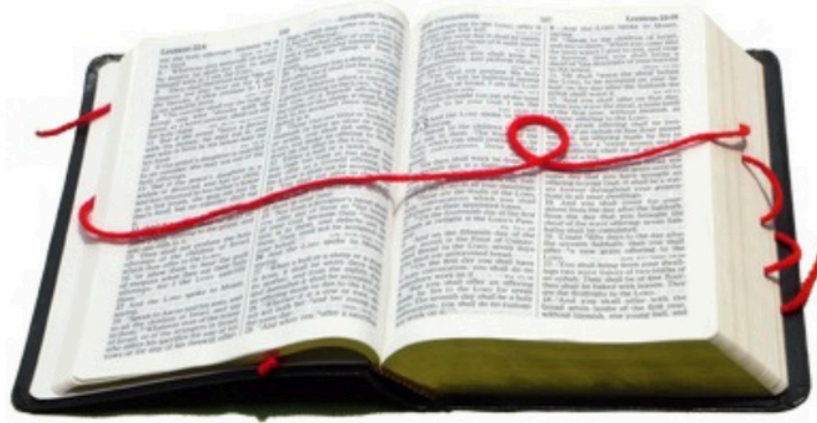


Well, I am sure this was not good news to them, but to those standing at the foot of Mount Sinai with the same lashes on their backs, the same bruises on their bodies, malnourished, barely a people, I imagine the story of Joseph was their very own story, the innocent sold into slavery, the favored child rejected by his own. Joseph was the hero who blazed the trail they would now follow, and God was giving them the answer to their suffering.

Standing at the foot of the mountain, hearing these words would have provided comfort to their aching bodies, purpose to their wounds **verses 4-8a**

In Hebrew, **verse 7** says, “And God sent me before you to appoint for you a remnant on the earth, and to save lives for you by a great deliverance.” Who is the remnant? It is those standing at the foot of Mount Sinai, what is the great deliverance? Preservation from famine—in Joseph’s day, yes. The plagues on Egypt—for the original audience, yes. For us here today—but the beginning of Divine reconciliation.

One question to ask yourself as you read any story, any passage in the Bible is: How does this story move the narrative of Salvation history along? Ever strike you that the Bible in its 1,189 chapters takes only one to describe the creation of the whole universe, then takes 14 chapters to talk about just Abraham? God fast forwards through the stuff that people in our age spend most of our time trying to understand, then slooooooows down, when he begins to unfold His plan for salvation/reconciliation with man.



Salvation history begins in the Garden of Eden. God tells the serpent **Genesis 3:15**

From that point, the serpent is trying to stop God’s plan, by defeating the Seed of the woman. The “Sons of God” in Genesis 6 are an attempt to eliminate the Seed of the woman, by intermingling it with demonic blood. The flood comes to destroy this intermingled web, and revive the Seed of the woman. God narrows the line in **Genesis 12**, when He says to Abraham **Genesis 12:1-3**

Once again, the serpent strikes the heel by raising up a Pharaoh that did not know Joseph, attempting to strike the Seed of the woman once again. Then, with a mighty hand and outstretched arm, God delivers the Israelites from the hard hearted Pharaoh.



That wasn’t the end of the serpent. Throughout Israel’s history, their kingdom is divided, taken into exile, brought back to their land under the rule of others. But Israel kept their hope, that they were chosen, the children of Abraham.

The Israelites became proud that they were chosen, they were a special possession in God's eyes, but what many of them failed to see, was that they were chosen, because the Chosen one would come from them.

Well, when it all came to a head, 1AD, the Seed of the woman (but not of man), the snake Crusher finally came. At His very presence, even the mention of His Name, the demons run and flee. Until eventually, the slithering snake struck again, but this time, he did not realize that his bite was his own death.

There, rejected by the chosen ones, the Chosen one hung on a cross. The innocent brother sold into the hands of foreigners by the others. The snake was wriggling in joy that the snake Crusher had an Achilles heel. As He hung His head, all hell rejoiced, because the serpent's bite had hit its mark. In the words of a once famous sermon, "it's Friday, but Sunday is coming." At His resurrection, Jesus rose to the right hand of the Father, second in command over all His brothers, the remnant He had delivered.

Oh to see the expression on Satan's face when he saw the empty tomb. He was present in Joseph's day, surely trying to use Joseph to destroy his brother's, namely Judah, through whom the snake Crusher would come. But because of what God had done in Joseph, through his suffering, through his poverty, he had rejected the calls for vengeance, and took up the call of forgiveness and reconciliation, rejected the serpent's hate, his anger, his call to murder.

In the same way, the Chosen one, rejected by His chosen brothers, hanging from the cross could have called myriads of angels to bring Him down from the cross, and execute vengeance, justice on those who hung Him there. But, through a cracked voice, taking His last few breaths He cried out, "Forgive them Father, they know not what they do," and the Lion of the tribe of Judah crushed the serpent, and made reconciliation between God and man possible.



How does this message apply to me?

- Reconciliation takes ownership. If you have a loved one, or anyone you wish to reconcile with, sorry is not good enough. You have to take responsibility for the wrong you have done, even if it is less than the wrong the one you wish to reconcile has done.
- Reconciliation with God takes ownership, owning that we are, in fact, sinners who need to repent, and need His grace to be reconciled.
- Reconciliation costs. It cost Joseph's brothers fear and humiliation, it cost Joseph pride, it cost Jesus His life on earth. But it is worth it in the end. Life is not about stuff, it's about relationship. The two greatest commandments are to love God and love others. This means we need to be good at reconciling.
- Guilt is removed by the one giving forgiveness. **Isaiah 53:10 ESV** The problem with the Old Testament sacrifices were that they covered sin, atoned for sin, but could never remove guilt. Isaiah shows us that Jesus' sacrifice was an offering for guilt, the Hebrew word is Asham, and it means guilt or shame. If you struggle to forgive yourself before God, I encourage you to look deeper into the price that the perfect/sinless/infinite Son of God paid for you on the cross.

- God works in all situations in our lives, all circumstances, for the good of His people and His Gospel **Romans 8:28**
- Finally, in Christ, and Christ alone, we have full reconciliation with the Father **2 Corinthians 5:17-21**

If you are here this morning, and you are struggling to see how the situations, circumstances in your life could possibly be used for God's glory and your good, I encourage you to reach out to someone, we will have people up front here who are willing to pray with you, that could be a good place to start. And, if you are here this morning and have never made the decision to follow Christ and receive the grace given through Him, I want to give you a chance to do that as we pray to close.

Father, thank you for giving us the teacher of Your word. Though that is not enough, we need Your Holy Spirit to understand Your word and Your message of salvation. We thank You for providing a way that Your Spirit can dwell with us forever through Christ. Help us live out the way of love that You have shown us in Your word. For those of you here who would like to pray to receive Christ, repeat these words silently after me God, I confess that I am a sinner. I have made so many mistakes, and deserve Your wrath. I ask that You apply Jesus' sacrifice to my life, so that I can have a restored relationship with You. It is in Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.