

**Genesis 45:16 – 47:31**  
**Life Takes a Radical Turn**

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro  
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God has the ability to turn our lives around completely, often in ways and at times when we least expect it.

I learned an interesting bit of military history this week that illustrates what I'm talking about. Many of you know the name Pershing. General "Black Jack" Pershing. Well, he was a very competent officer in the Army back in the late eighteen and early nineteen hundreds but the Army promotion system was messed up royally and even though he had performed well in garrison and on deployment to places like the Philippines, there was no way for him to get promoted. He spent nine years as a second lieutenant, six years as a first lieutenant, and at the age of 42, (he did get a late start on his commissioning), was still stuck at the rank of captain.

Fortunately, his case had gained the attention of President Theodore Roosevelt who had been impressed by his service and performance. So the President, frustrated by the way the military's promotion system was functioning, went ahead and promoted Pershing himself. But the President can't promote captains to major. He can only promote generals. So he did. And Captain Pershing overnight became Brigadier General Pershing – skipping over the ranks of major, lieutenant colonel and colonel. He then went on to eventually become the second highest-ranking military officer in US History; second to George Washington.

This morning we will see how the life of Jacob, also known as Israel, was suddenly and radically changed as God led him out of the Promised Land and down into Egypt where his family would eventually grow into a nation. *The take away point for us all is to remember that our God is the God of transformation – he takes bad situations and makes them good.*

If you remember, Jacob's son Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt by his own brothers. But while there, God watched over Joseph and through a series of events he wound up being asked to interpret a dream that Pharaoh had. When he provided the interpretation, which he insisted came from God, and which was a warning of an upcoming famine, Pharaoh appointed him as the man to do something about it.

That famine came seven years later, and it affected the entire region, including the land of Canaan where Joseph's dad and brothers still lived. Word got out that there was still food available in Egypt though, so the brothers came down to buy some and in a dramatic turn of events they crossed paths with Joseph, that little brother, now Egyptian big-wig, that they had mistreated. Fortunately, Joseph was willing to be forgiving because he saw God's hand at work in everything and he told them to go back home, get dad and bring him over to Egypt.

[16](#) Now the report of it was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, "Joseph's brothers have come." So it pleased Pharaoh and his servants well. [17](#) And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and depart; go to the land of Canaan. [18](#) Bring your father and your households and come to me; I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land. [19](#) Now you are commanded—do this: Take carts out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and your wives; bring your father and come. [20](#) Also do not be concerned about your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"

[21](#) Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them carts, according to the command of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey. [22](#) He gave to all of them, to each man, changes of garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred *pieces* of silver and five changes of garments. [23](#) And he sent to his father these *things*: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and food for his father for the journey. [24](#) So he sent his brothers away, and they departed; and he said to them, "See that you do not become troubled along the way."

[25](#) Then they went up out of Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father. [26](#) And they told him, saying, "Joseph *is* still alive, and he *is* governor over all the land of Egypt." And Jacob's heart stood still, because he did not believe them.

Now you have to remember, this is the son Joseph who was his favorite son, Daddy's Boy. The firstborn son of his deeply loved wife Rachel, the one who he sent out to go check on his brothers twenty two years ago and who never came back home. The brothers brought dad their brother's blood soaked "Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" and let dad assume he had been killed by a wild animal.

And now they come in the door telling dad that he is alive!?! For twenty-two years Jacob has been bearing this grief. And now for the past two years there has been this famine in the land that is so bad he has to send his sons off to another country to buy grain so the family can eat. Wasn't this supposed to be the Promised Land, the place where God told him to live – the place God was giving to give him as an inheritance forever, the place where God was going to bless him? It sure didn't feel too blessed lately.

Have you ever noticed that the longer a bad situation drags on the more difficult it is to keep a firm grip on hope? We really do have to walk by faith, trusting and believing that God is working things together for good, for His glory. Now that might mean that we go through some rough valleys, but they are never our final destination, *sooner or later, on this earth or in eternity, God is going to send His wagons to come and get you out of that miserable spot.*

Remember the song, "Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me home."

Well, Jacob steps outside his tent and see the chariots Joseph sent.

[27](#) But when they told him all the words which Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.

[28](#) Then Israel said, "*It is* enough. Joseph my son *is* still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

[1](#) So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. [2](#) Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!"

And he said, "Here I am."

[3](#) So He said, "I *am* God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. [4](#) I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up *again*; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes."

So Jacob and the family load up everyone and everything into the royal U-Hauls that had been sent by Joseph, but before they get fully underway, Jacob has one very important stop to make. He comes to Beersheba, and here he offers a sacrifice to God.

Now interestingly, if you have been with us long enough, you may remember that God also spoke to Jacob the last time he left the Promised Land, back in chapter 28. That was decades ago now when he was a young man running away from home after tricking his dad and brother. That was when God first barged into his life and promised to show him grace and blessings that he didn't deserve.

Now, before he leaves the Land, God shows up once again and tells him, yes, it's OK to go, and once again promises to bring him back to this special place of geography which will one day be called Israel after him.

So here's the important take away for you and me – even if your bad situation takes a sudden break and it seems like a door has been flung wide open in front of you, *don't go automatically rushing through it*. Still take the time to go and present it to God and make sure this turn of events really is from Him and really has His blessing.

Most of the time, the answer is yes, but there will be times when He will say, "My child, I know that *looks* like the answer to you, but trust Me, it isn't. Let it go, and wait a little longer." And you need to be willing to accept that, because if it comes down to a choice between deliverance from your tight spot or continued fellowship with God, choosing God will be difficult, but it will be worth it every time.

[5](#) Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. [6](#) So they took their livestock and their goods, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him. [7](#) His sons and his sons' sons, his daughters and his sons' daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

[8](#) Now these *were* the names of the children of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt...

[26](#) All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob's sons' wives, *were* sixty-six persons in all. [27](#) And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt *were* two persons. All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy.

[28](#) Then he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out before him *the way* to Goshen. And they came to the land of Goshen. [29](#) So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; and he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.

Men, it's OK to cry, as long as you cry about the right things. He hasn't seen his dad in twenty-two years; it's OK to have a little sob fest. You don't always have to keep a stiff upper lip – that's an old Victorianism that we inherited from the Brits. We declared our independence from them! Jesus wept, Joseph wept, and it's OK for you to cry every now and then too, so long as you're crying about the right things.

[30](#) And Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you *are* still alive."

[31](#) Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and say to him, 'My brothers and those of my father's house, who *were* in the land of Canaan, have come to me. [32](#) And the men *are* shepherds, for their occupation has been to feed livestock; and they have brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have.'

[33](#) So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' [34](#) that you shall say, 'Your servants' occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we *and* also our fathers,' that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd *is* an abomination to the Egyptians."

Sometimes when people look down on you, it actually turns out to be for your benefit. That's true here for this family – being shepherds will ensure they don't get asked to come and live near the palace but instead they can keep their own lives and identities as descendants of Abraham.

[1](#) Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, and said, "My father and my brothers, their flocks and their herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan; and indeed they *are* in the land of Goshen." [2](#) And he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh. [3](#) Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What *is* your occupation?"

And they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants *are* shepherds, both we *and* also our fathers."

[4](#) And they said to Pharaoh, "We have come to dwell in the land, because your servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine *is* severe in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen."

[5](#) Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, “Your father and your brothers have come to you. [6](#) The land of Egypt *is* before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know *any* competent men among them, then make them chief herdsman over my livestock.” [7](#) Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. [8](#) Pharaoh said to Jacob, “How old *are* you?” [9](#) And Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The days of the years of my pilgrimage *are* one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.” [10](#) So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

Now this is interesting, because it shows us where our true identity is to be found. It says here that Jacob blessed Pharaoh, which is kind of a breach of political protocol, right? This wrinkly old foreigner comes in before the most powerful man in this most powerful nation and he blesses the Pharaoh?

Yes. And the Bible says in Hebrews 7:7, “Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.” Pharaoh had the higher position when we look at things on an earthly or political plane, but when we take into account the eternal dimension we see that Jacob is actually far greater.

We need to remember that, especially in this city. Now, you need to remember your customs and courtesies and we need to remember to show respect to men and women who have been appointed or promoted to high office, but we also need to remember that there is a spiritual dimension to this life and just because you have to salute somebody or stand up when they walk into the room doesn't mean they are *better* than you. In fact, they may be in a much *worse* condition than you and maybe God has placed you in that man or woman's path to be a blessing to them. And that blessing could take the form of your performance, perhaps even something you say, but it can definitely take the form of prayer.

Take the time to ask God to bless the men and women you serve under and remember that the greatest blessing of all would be their salvation.

[11](#) And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. [12](#) Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with bread, according to the number in *their* families.

They've gone from wondering where their next meal will come from to having a royal stipend. Life has definitely turned around. But there is still a way to go through this famine and Joseph has a responsibility to provide for an entire nation of Egyptians too.

[13](#) Now *there was* no bread in all the land; for the famine *was* very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. [14](#) And Joseph gathered

up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.

[15](#) So when the money failed in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For the money has failed."

[16](#) Then Joseph said, "Give your livestock, and I will give you *bread* for your livestock, if the money is gone." [17](#) So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread *in exchange* for the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herds, and for the donkeys. Thus he fed them with bread *in exchange* for all their livestock that year.

[18](#) When that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, "We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. [19](#) Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh; give *us* seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate."

[20](#) Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh's.

[21](#) And as for the people, he moved them into the cities, from *one* end of the borders of Egypt to the *other* end. [22](#) Only the land of the priests he did not buy; for the priests had rations *allotted to them* by Pharaoh, and they ate their rations which Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their lands.

[23](#) Then Joseph said to the people, "Indeed I have bought you and your land this day for Pharaoh. Look, *here is* seed for you, and you shall sow the land. [24](#) And it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh. Four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and for your food, for those of your households and as food for your little ones."

So life gets tougher and tougher but Joseph, by using the wisdom he received from God, is able to lead them all through it. And the tax rate that he imposes is actually no greater than what they were paying a few years back during the seven years of surplus – it's 20%, and those taxes they paid *then* are what Joseph is using to help them survive *now*. Taxes are not a bad thing, if wisely saved and wisely spent. In fact, look at the attitude of the people:

[25](#) So they said, "You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants." [26](#) And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt to this day, *that* Pharaoh should have one-fifth, except for the land of the priests only, *which* did not become Pharaoh's.

[27](#) So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly. [28](#) And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years.

[29](#) When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, [30](#) but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place."

And he said, "I will do as you have said."

[31](#) Then he said, "Swear to me." And he swore to him. So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed.

Jacob's life has radically changed – he went from barely surviving in Canaan to having a ration of supplies regularly delivered to his doorstep in this shepherd's paradise called Goshen.

But what is he most concerned about? It's not the sudden prosperity. It's not the chance to eat the delicacies of the Egyptian food scene in the capital. It's not the chance to meet and greet with the president – he's just thrilled to be able to see his son again. And as thankful as he surely is for the food to eat each day, he makes his son promise him: when I die, take me back where I belong – to the place that God promised me- *more than anything else, Jacob wanted to be close to his family and close to God.*

In light of that, it's also interesting to note *how* his life and the lives of his sons, turned around. We've talked before about the similarities between Joseph and Jesus, I'd like to point out a few more for you this morning. Consider this:

In order to be in the place to provide salvation for his brothers, Joseph had to go ahead of them and suffer and be mistreated – in order to provide our salvation, Jesus was put to death though He was innocent of every crime.

Joseph's brother's lives were changed because Joseph forgave them; our lives are changed because God is willing, through Christ's death on the cross, to forgive us - they were saved from starvation, Christians are saved from damnation.

Joseph used his position to help his family and secured a home for them. Jesus has provided a place for Christians – He told the disciples in John 14:2-3 "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

Once they came under his authority Joseph provided for all of his family's needs. Paul says in Philippians 4:19 "my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." That's not a carte blanche wish list authority, but it's saying that Jesus Himself is sufficient for what you need.

And finally, Jacob entrusted his body to Joseph when he died – just like we should trust Jesus to oversee our bodies and souls in both life and death.

We're going to celebrate communion this morning, and as the ushers and worship team come forward, I encourage to take some time to think about how God has turned your life around and to tell Him thank you. Or to talk with Him about the deliverance that you need – deliverance from your life of sin if you are not a Christian, or deliverance from the famine you're facing if you've already come to Him.

Tell Him thank you or ask Him please, whichever one is appropriate, but know this: He wants to be with you, He offers Himself to you, the question is, will you come to Him?