

Speaker 1:

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Pastor Mark:

Never forget what a pastor said. He's a godly guy. I really love and appreciate him. I got on a plane, flew to another state before we planted the Trinity Church. Just ask him, "Any advice? Any wisdom as you've been praying for us? Anything you would like to share?" And he looked at me over a meal, he said, "Yeah." I said, "Okay, what is that?" And he said, "The quality of your relationships determines the quality of your life." He said, "So, make sure as you plant the Trinity Church, that there is an emphasis, a focus, on healthy relationship between the people and God and the people and one another, as well as the other relationships they have."

Pastor Mark:

And I grabbed my notebook and I wrote that down, and I felt like that was a tremendous insight. And I've been thinking about that conversation ever since. There's a lot of things that we count. We get up in the morning. We step on a scale and we count our weight. We look at our bank balance and we count our money. We look at our watch or calendar and we count our time. But it's hard to count, to measure, to quantify, the quality of the relationships in our life. But we know when the relationships are not going well, because we pay a price for them. And I like to say that there's three kinds of relationships. There's positive, there is neutral, and there is negative.

Pastor Mark:

The positive relationships, these are people that make deposits into your life. They're a great blessing. They add value. You could probably even think of some people right now that if they weren't in your life, your life would be worse for it and you would suffer because of it. Because those people, they are givers, not takers. They're blessings, they are burden lifters, they are a tremendous gift to your life. Neutral is the category of, I would say perhaps even most of our relationships. Don't give a lot, don't take a lot, just not a lot there. It's okay. It's functional. But these are not the closest, most healthy, helpful relationships, but they're okay and they're fine.

Pastor Mark:

And then there are the negative relationships. These are the painful, hurtful relationships that we have. These are the people who make a lot of withdrawals. These are the people who cause a lot of pain. These are the people that sometimes we even live a bit in fear of because they're not safe, they're not healthy, they're not well. And as a result, these are people that tend to take, but they do not give. These are people that tend to bring a burden, not lift a burden. These negative, hurtful, perhaps even harmful relationships.

Pastor Mark:

Well, as we have relationships throughout the course of life, we're going to have all three. We're going to have those that are positive, those that are neutral, those that are negative. And as we look at the

story of the life of Joseph, it's the testimony of one man and his relationship with God and how that affects his relationship with others. He has some positive relationships. One is with his dad who loves him. His dad's not a perfect man, but his dad does love him. He has a lot of neutral relationships with coworkers and peers, and he has some very negative, hurtful, painful relationships. His brothers, he's one of 12 sons, they sell him into slavery and off he goes to Egypt, and he doesn't see his family for 20 years.

Pastor Mark:

Some of you are like, "Lord, make it so." But for him it was a brutal pain for him. He didn't see his family for 20 years. He's a slave. He's falsely accused by a horrible woman, his boss' wife, of being a rapist. Off he goes to prison. Another very negative, painful, hurtful relationship. Add to that there's a cupbearer to the king, part of the inner circle for the Pharaoh who runs Egypt, the most powerful nation on the earth. He has a dream. Joseph interprets it and asks a favor. "When you get out, please help me get out." And the guy forgets about him. Another negative relationship. He has this whole long legacy of negative, painful, hurtful relationships.

Pastor Mark:

How does he respond to those? How do we respond to those? And the truth be told, a lot of his most painful relationships are with family members. How many of you, don't raise your hand, especially if you brought your family, but the most hurtful, painful relationships in your life are with people who are part of your family or extended family. That's the story of the life of Joseph. And so today the question that we are going to seek to answer is how do you heal up from hurtful relationships? How do you become an emotionally healthy person that can have relational health and integrity with God and others?

Pastor Mark:

And we start in Genesis chapter 44. So, if you've got a Bible, go to Genesis chapter 44. And you start with forgiveness. That's where health, hope and healing begins. You start with forgiveness. So, here is the story. Joseph has not seen his brothers, let me catch you up, for 20 years. They sold him into slavery and his life has been lived in Egypt. They're back in the Promised Land. He was in a pit and then he went ultimately to a prison, and now he's in the palace. And he is the second most powerful man on the most powerful nation on the earth. A famine has hit, and he knew that it was coming because God revealed it.

Pastor Mark:

And as a result, they stored up during the seven years of plenty. Now they're a few years into the seven years of lean, and as starvation and famine hits all of the other nations, they come to Egypt. And Joseph is the one who's overseeing the relief effort, and he runs the only Costco that's still open in the entire Middle East. All of the food is essentially under his jurisdiction. So, his brothers are starving and they come to Egypt and they come face to face with him. He's not seen them in 20 years. Last time he saw them he was 17, they sold them into slavery. Now he's 37. He's a grown man. He's married, he's got kids. His whole life has transitioned. He knows who they are. They don't know who he is.

Pastor Mark:

He's dressed like an Egyptian. He's probably clean shaven. Doesn't have the Duck Dynasty beard like the Hebrew boys, his brothers. In addition, he speaks the Egyptian language and he speaks to them through a translator, but they don't know that he's bilingual, that he knows Egyptian and their language of Hebrew. So, over the course of two years, they make these visits from the Promised Land to Egypt, they

meet with Joseph to get grain. He sends them back. He is overhearing their conversations. He's observing their behavior. He is waiting to see if they're ready for a healthy relationship, and he has not yet disclosed to them who he is. So, we pick up the story in chapter 44.

Pastor Mark:

"Then he commanded the steward of his house...." He's got a huge staff at this point, "Fill them in sacks with food. And as much as they can carry, put each man's money in the mouth of his sack and put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest with his money for the grain. And he did as Joseph told him. As soon as morning was light, the men were sent away with their donkeys. They had gone only a short distance from the city. Now Joseph said to his steward, 'Up, follow after the men, when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good? Is it not from that my Lord drinks and this that he practices divination? You have done evil in doing this.'"

Pastor Mark:

Here's what he's saying. They came for food, I gave them food. I filled up their sacks with food. I also put the money that they paid back in the sacks, because Joseph is generous, but he sets up a test. These brothers previously had betrayed him, disowned him, sold him into slavery. The dad did something that no parents should do, he played favorites. He had four, basically wives, which is a lot. And they had 13 kids, 12 boys, one girl, but there was only one of the four women that dad really loved. And with that woman, he had two sons, Joseph and Benjamin, and he played favorites with them. So, the brothers became jealous of Joseph, sold him into slavery. And now Joseph is having an opportunity to test the brothers to see, are you still going to betray dad's favorite? Are you going to abandon another brother? Have you changed over the course of 20 years or not?

Pastor Mark:

Because I'll tell you this, maturity does not just come with time. Some people say, "When you get older and wiser." I've seen foolish old people. You ever met one? And some of you are older, you would know that just because you get older, doesn't mean you get wiser. You don't get older and wiser unless you learn from your mistakes, repent of your sin, and walk in the spirit of God. And he knows that 20 years has passed, but they were originally evil, and if they have not learned, grown and matured, they will just be more evil. And you don't want a relationship with people that have perfected evil over the course of two decades.

Pastor Mark:

So, he is going to test them in how they treat the little brother, because he, at one point, had been the little brother as well. When he overtook them, he spoke to them these words, they said, "Why does my Lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing." They're going to recount some mystery. "Behold, the money that we found in the mouth of our sacks we brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from our Lord's house? Whichever of your servants is found with it, shall die and we also shall be my Lord's servants." He said, "Let it be as you say, for he who is found with it shall be my servant, and the rest of you shall be innocent."

Pastor Mark:

And each man quickly lowered his sack to the ground. And each man opened his sack and he searched, beginning with the eldest ending with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they tore their clothes and every man loaded his donkey and they returned to the city. So, here they are.

They live in the Promised Land, they're starving to death. They came into town and they stood before Joseph and they got all their grain. And not only did he load their sacks with grain, he also returned their money. On their journey home they realized, uh-oh, we've got the money and the grain, they're going to think we stole it.

Pastor Mark:

So, they go back. They say, "Some mistake was made. We got the grain and the money." Joseph says, "I'm generous. I'll give you the grain and the money," because he's generous. He's giving. He's forgiving and he's giving. That's the key to Joseph's destiny. That's the key to your destiny. Forgiving and giving. And he sends them on their way. They go home, it's a couple of years, they run out of food. Dad tells them to come back. They bring Benjamin with them, as was requested. He gives them grain, gives them their money back, but he tests them. He takes his silver goblet. This is something that's significant for him. This is like his drinking vessel. And he's playing this role of an Egyptian. He says, "This is part of my spirituality and religion."

Pastor Mark:

He puts it in the sack of Benjamin, his biological brother. They share the same mother and father, unlike the other boys. The brother's head home. Joseph sends his steward. A cup is missing. They're like, "We have no idea about this cup. We didn't take it. We didn't touch it. We didn't do it. We didn't do it." They said, "We're sure we didn't do it." He said, "Well, open up your sacks." So, down go all the trick or treat bags. Everybody's looking in. Benjamin, he's got the silver cup. Uh-oh, we've broken the law. Now we're arrested. This is a criminal matter. Oh no. They tear their clothes. This is grieving, mourning, weeping. This is what you do at a funeral. Because they're thinking, "Back home, dad didn't want to send the son, because he already lost one. We've got a really bad habit when we take a road trip, we always come home missing one of the brothers. And it's usually the one that dad like the best. And so this is a real bad situation we find ourselves in."

Pastor Mark:

"When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there. They fell before him to the ground," verse 14. They're begging for their life at this point, they're like, "Please, no. Please don't. Please. We don't know what happened. We don't know how it happened. Please, please, please. Not Benjamin." Joseph said to them, "What deed is this you have done? Do you not know that a man like me can indeed practice divination?" Judah, here's the older brother, Judah said, "What shall we say to my Lord? What shall we speak, or how can we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants. Behold, we are my Lord's servants, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found. But he said, 'Far be it from me that I should do so. Only the man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my servant. But as for you, go up in peace to your father.'"

Pastor Mark:

Joseph continues his role, playing an Egyptian, to test his brothers. Benjamin is now the new favorite little brother, and the brothers are responding differently. When they first betrayed Joseph and threw him in a pit and sold him into slavery, he's at the bottom of this well, and we read earlier that he was crying and screaming. And he's a 17 year old kid. He's a high school kid. He's far away from home. And when his brothers started wrestling with him and grabbing him, he probably thought, "Okay, we're wrestling, because that's what brothers do, right?" And then it starts to get real aggressive. And then

Joseph would be considering, "This is getting violent. We're not playing and wrestling anymore." All of a sudden he's hurting. They're beating him up. They're roughing him up.

Pastor Mark:

Because you don't throw a 17 year old boy in a well without a fight. Amen? How many of you have been that 17 year old guy? You're like, "I'm not going down without a fight." The 11 brother, or 10 rather, brothers would've grabbed him. 11 brothers grabbed him, and they're fighting him, they're wrestling him, they're roughing him up, and they're shoving him into a well. See a 17 year old kid fighting for his life. "Hey guys, this is not funny. Okay. Far enough. Okay." And he realizes, "This is for real. My brothers want me dead. They're going to throw me in a well. Either I'm going to die there, starve to death, dehydrate to death, or somebody's going to come along and take me as a slave." 17 year old kid. As they finally got them down the well, and just imagine that, you're a 17 year old kid dropped down a well. I don't know if you're on your head or what.

Pastor Mark:

Boom. There you are. Bottom of the well. Pitch black, dark, cold, probably somewhat wet. You look up, "Hey guys. Funny. Okay. Enough already. Guys, come on." What did the brothers do at the top of the hole? They said earlier they sat down and had lunch. These are heartless, ruthless men. They're just having lunch. "Tough, Joseph. We're talking about it up here. Plan A, you die. Plan B, you're a slave. We're going to talk about it over lunch. We'll get back to you in a minute." At this point, when they're considering losing Benjamin, they don't respond that way. They're mourning. They're grieving. They're devastated. They're scared. We're seeing that God has done a work in the hearts of these men. It's been 22 years, they're starting to change. Gives us hope, even for our enemies. Gives us hope, even for our families.

Pastor Mark:

And here's what's happening. There's three kinds of people when it comes to relationship. We use this language a lot here at the church. There's wise, foolish, evil. Previously, which category would you put Joseph's brothers in? Evil. I mean evil. Joseph here sees them and tests them. He's not seen them in 20 years. He tests them for two years. If Joseph was evil, he would just seek vengeance. "I was in prison. I was a slave. You have reaped what you've sown. You are now my slaves. You're going to my cell." He could do that. He's not evil. He's also not foolish. "Oh, I love you guys. Family reunion. Let's all hug. Let's pick up where we left off. Come to my house."

Pastor Mark:

That would be very foolish just to entrust yourself to men who previously had proven themselves to be evil. So, what Joseph does is wise. "I'm not going to be evil, I'm not going to be foolish. I'm going to be wise." Some of you, a lot of pain in your life is because you act foolish with evil people. Evil people eat foolish people. Evil people use foolish people. Evil people take advantage of foolish people. Evil people manipulate, use and abuse foolish people. Joseph cannot afford to be foolish. The fate of a whole nation is resting on his leadership. What this means is your ministry and your destiny is more important than your family.

Pastor Mark:

If your family is evil, you need to be wise. If your friends are evil, you need to be wise. If your boyfriend or girlfriend is evil, you need to be wise. You can't afford to be foolish. So, what Joseph does, he tests

them over the course of two years. That's wisdom. Wisdom knows that relationships take time to grow to the place where that person is proven to be safe and healthy for intimacy. And the point here is this, sometimes we give our hearts away too quickly. We do this in romantic relationships. We start with a relationship, rather than allowing a period of testing for trusting. Sometimes we do this in business. Look at this, we could come together and do business. And you get into it and you realize, "I should have taken my time, done my due diligence, done my homework."

Pastor Mark:

Sometimes we can even do this with a friend. I divulge all my information to you, I fully disclose, you don't. Then you gossip and you tell other people my business, and that was devastating. You don't know if someone is wise, foolish or evil until you've spent some time and seen them tested. Joseph is going to give it some time and he's going to allow the test, and that is the better part of wisdom. Now what he's already done is he's already forgiven them. I want to really stress this. The story of Joseph is in large part, a story of forgiveness. And there are three things at play. There is forgiveness and trust and then a close relationship.

Pastor Mark:

Forgiveness is something that you can do, even if they're not involved and they don't know, because forgiveness is largely between you and the Lord. Trust involves them, and that takes time. I had somebody, when the kids were little, came up and said, "I'd love to serve your family. Can I watch your kid, just to babysit your kids?" I said, "No." They said, "What, you don't trust me?" I said, "No, I don't, because I don't know you." They assumed that I would start with trust. No. I don't know you. I just don't hand my children to people and start with trust. You want to watch my babies? You're going to have to earn some trust over time. Some of you start with trusting people. Just I'm reminded of a line of Jesus. It says, "Jesus did not entrust himself to every man, because he knew what was in the heart of every man."

Pastor Mark:

Foolish people trust everybody. Evil people take advantage of that. Wise people know that's not the way to do relationship. Forgiveness is between you and God. Trust is between you and them, and maybe that leads to a close relationship. So, let me tell you a couple of things about forgiveness. First of all, did Joseph have a lot of people he needed to forgive? He had a parade. He had a parade. "My dad played favorites, that was a problem. He had four different women he had kids with, that was a problem. My brother is all abandoned and betrayed me, that's a problem. Potiphar's wife falsely accused me of rape and I was convicted and went to prison as a virgin."

Pastor Mark:

So, Potiphar and his wife. "And then I'm in prison and the cupbearer from the king comes in, has a dream. I interpret it, he goes back, it's delivered. I ask him to help me get out, and he forgets about me for a few years." There's a lot of people that Joseph needed to forgive, and he forgave them. How do we know? Because he doesn't seek vengeance. He's not bitter. He's not broken. He's not hurt. He's healed. When you forgive someone, you don't let them get away with anything. You allow yourself to get away from everything. When you start forgiving, you start healing. God wants you to get out of this game of win/lose. You know what the win/lose game is?

Pastor Mark:

You hurt me, now I'm losing. I'll hurt you, now I'm winning. Then you hurt me again. Well, now you're winning. I'm going to hurt you again. Well, you've got somebody involved, now I've got to go get two people involved. Well, you put it online, now I'm going to put it online. You've got an attorney, now I got an attorney. Win/lose, it's demonic. You know what it ends up as? Lose/lose. Lose/lose. When you've been hurt, harmed, betrayed, abandoned, sinned against, injustice, criminal. That's what Joseph endured. You've got to get out of the win/lose game. God wants you get into the healthy/unhealthy game. You know what, this isn't healthy. I'm out. I'm going to forgive you. I'm going to spend time with the Lord. I'm going to emotionally heal up, because I don't want to win, I want to worship. The win/lose game always ends up as a lose/lose game.

Pastor Mark:

The healthy/unhealthy game is the game that Joseph played. "I'm going to forgive all these people. I'm going to heal up in the presence of God. I'm going to enjoy a healthy relationship with God. Even if my other relationships are a mess, my relationship with God can be blessed." That's what he decides. He has a very healthy relationship with the Lord. He heals up emotionally. He forgives people. And as a result, that unleashes an opportunity for his destiny. Let me say this for you. I don't know what God has in store for your destiny, but you will never see it if you don't forgive the people who did wrong against you and spend time becoming healthy in relationship with God.

Pastor Mark:

And what happens when we forgive people? Let me say a couple of things. We should forgive quickly, trust slowly. Forgive quickly, trust slowly. I see this oftentimes in counseling, let's say there's a couple and there's adultery. "I forgive you." "Okay, great. So, we pick up where we left off." "No, actually we don't because you zeroed out the account." Trust is earned, just like interest is earned. It takes time. Forgive quickly, trust slowly. Forgiveness is free. Love is free. Trust is earned. I can forgive you. I can love you. That's free. Trust, you've got to earn that. You've got to earn that. If you don't trust someone, don't marry them. If you don't trust someone, don't go into business with them. If you don't trust someone, don't divulge any confidential, private information about your life to them.

Pastor Mark:

They'll say, "I thought you love me." "I do love you." "I thought you forgave me." "I do forgive you. I just don't trust you." Because forgiveness and love are free, and trust is earned. You see this with Joseph. He's forgiven them and he's loved them, he's been generous to them, but he doesn't trust them. For two years he doesn't even let them know who he is. That means he does not trust them to even know that he's alive, let alone what position he's in. Forgiveness is a must. Trust is a maybe. You have to forgive. Jesus says to forgive as your heavenly father has forgiven you. Paul says to forgive as your heavenly father has forgiven you. What that means is forgiven people need to be forgiving people. People that God forgives, need to forgive others.

Pastor Mark:

And let me say this, when you forgive someone, all you're doing, you're taking the case and you're saying, "I'm not going to seek vengeance. I'm not going to punish you. I'm not going to carry this burden. I'm going to pass this case onto the higher court." That's what Joseph did. He couldn't do anything to his brothers. He couldn't make pay punish. He'd already forgiven them, then they reenter his life. And you can tell that he's not going to try the case, because he's already left that case in the Lord's hands. When you forgive someone, what you're saying is , "Lord, you try the case. I want to heal up and move on with

my life." I love you. It's an honor to be your pastor, but hear me in this, hurting, broken, bitter, grudge bearing, wounded people, they have reasons for their pain and their hurt and their struggle, but they choose to make the worst day every day for the rest of their life.

Pastor Mark:

God wants you to forgive, heal up and move on. That's what he wants for you. If Joseph hadn't have done that, he would not have been prepared for the position that he holds. I don't know what God has for your destiny, but until this happens, you're not ready. Let me ask you this hard question. Who do you need to forgive? See, Joseph had to forgive people who made it their life's mission to destroy him. He forgave them, and then he blessed them. That's how Jesus treats us. He forgives us and he blesses us. And then he says, "I need you to go out and forgive people and bless them." We're like, "Why Jesus?" "Well, because they need to meet me. And until they meet me, there's no hope for them."

Pastor Mark:

Holy spirit, I pray right on the strong name of Jesus, that for anyone who's here, they're hurt, they wouldn't use the word bitter, maybe it's hurt, disappointed, wounded, frustrated. Lord Jesus, who is it that they need to forgive? Give them a face, give them a name. Is it the person sitting next to them? Is it a family member that they've not talked to, or they've avoided? Maybe somebody that was in their life a long time ago, but the pain remains in the present. Holy spirit, I declare the Trinity Church to be a healing place where people are forgiven and they're forgiving and they're unburdened and they're healed up to move forward with the destiny that you have for them. Lord Jesus, we don't want to just see the example of Joseph, we want to experience the life of Joseph.

Pastor Mark:

Holy spirit, I'm reminded in chapter 39 four times it says that Joseph lived in your presence. It says as well that he was filled with the spirit. Holy spirit, would you please bring to mind someone, if there is someone that they need to forgive, a name, a face. Holy spirit, would you bring your presence to them? Would you fill them? Would you give them the power to do what is not natural, but supernatural. And to right now, lift that burden, break that curse, free that person by forgiving. By forgiving. Lord God, I pray for healing in our people. I thank you for the honor to be their pastor, and Lord God, I want these people to be free for their destiny. And so we ask for them to forgive in Jesus's good name. Amen.

Pastor Mark:

Joseph forgives, he heals, and then he allows an opportunity for trust that eventually allows an opportunity for close relationship. But it starts with forgiving. The second thing is we can retake a failed test. This is good news. How many of you in school, you had a teacher that if you blew a test, they'd let you retake it? So, you had a new covenant teacher. Those of you had an old covenant teacher, you did not get to retake the test. Very sad, very sad. If you had a new covenant teacher, they're like, "I love ya. I'm sure you did your best. Let's try again." Well, what we're going to see here is there's a guy named Judah, he's failed all the tests, and he's going to get to retake a test.

Pastor Mark:

Genesis 44, 18 through 34. "And Judah went up him and said, 'Oh my Lord, please let your servant speak a word in my Lord's ear.'" I want you guys to see he's got a little discretion. He's not going to challenge Joseph in front of the others. This is private. There are times that it needs to be said to the group. There are times like, "Can we have a sidebar conversation? I don't want to be disrespectful. I just want to talk

about something privately, and I don't want to make it public." "Let now your anger burnt against your servant for you or like Pharaoh himself." What he's saying is I'm in a difficult position because it seems like we're criminals and you're God. So , let me just start with the obvious, I'm not here to pick a fight.

Pastor Mark:

Humility literally means to know your place. That's what that root word means. What Judah is saying is, I know my place and I know your place and I want to honor that, but I'd like to talk to you about something. "My Lord," that's a good way to start, "Asked his servant saying, 'Have you a father or brother?' And we said to my Lord, "We have a father, an old man, and a younger brother, the child of his old age," that's Benjamin. How many of you, you're in a blended family, second marriage, first kids? You just keep looking at them like, "I'm sorry. We figured it out though." By the later kids you're like, "That was better." That's kind of where dad is at. His brother is dead. Joseph didn't know what the narrative was in the family. All he knew is he got thrown in a hole and they left and he went off to Egypt. The narrative is starting to get filled in.

Pastor Mark:

How many of you, your life is a narrative and it has holes and gaps? Maybe even in relation to your family. I'm wondering if Joseph didn't have this thought in his mind at some point, "My dad loved me. We were really close. I got taken as a slave and drug off to Egypt. How come my dad didn't come looking for me? It's been 20 years." How many of you, you don't even know who your biological father is? Or maybe you do know who he is, you just don't know where he is. You're like, "How come you didn't come looking for me?" Joseph just learned the narrative. "Ah, they say I'm dead. That might account for why my dad never came looking for me. He thought I was dead." Your story, your life history, it has a lot of gaps in the narrative.

Pastor Mark:

Be careful not to fill in the gaps with what you think the story is. Until you know the facts, don't rush to conclusions even about your own life or your family. There may be some things that you just don't know, and when you learn those things, either in this life or the life to come, all of a sudden you'll have clarity on your history. That just happened for Joseph. His brother is dead and he alone is left and with his mother's children, and his father loves him. You say, "Well, dad loved one son, now he is dead. And he loves the other son." Then he said to your servants, "Bring him down to me that I may set my eyes on him." We said to my Lord, "The boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die."

Pastor Mark:

How many of you, if your kid died, you'd die of sorrow? Nothing worse than having a funeral for your own child. "Then you said to your servants," they're revisiting history, "Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again." We went back to your servant, my father, we told him the words of the Lord. But our father said, "Go again, buy us a little food." So, here we're back for the second trip. We said, "We cannot go down if our youngest brother goes with us, then we will go down for, we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us." The only reason we brought the little guy is because you said if we came back, we needed to bring it him. But my dad's going to die of grief if we don't bring him home.

Pastor Mark:

So, sir, we're in a terrible dilemma. We love our dad, but he's an old man. He's already buried one son. And if he buries another, he's going to bury himself in grief. Then your servant, my father, said to us, "You know that my wife bought me two sons. One left me and I said, 'Surely has has been torn to pieces.'" That was the narrative that was told to dad. And I have never seen him since. If you take this one from me also, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs and evil to shield the grave. You're going to kill me. Now therefore, as soon as I come to your servant, my father, and the boy is not with us then as his life is bound up and the boy's life. As soon as he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die.

Pastor Mark:

And your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant, our father, with sorrow to shield, for your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father saying, "If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life. Now, therefore please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant or a slave to my Lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that has come to my father. Here's the story of Judah. He's the big brother. He's a bad brother. Here's his resume. Came up with a plot to sell Joseph into slavery, came up with a plot to take the blood of an animal and smear it all over the coat of many colors to take it back to fool the father into thinking that Joseph was dead.

Pastor Mark:

Was present at the false funeral for his own brother. When's the last time you went to a funeral? Imagine it was a funeral where the parents are crying and grieving and the oldest brother gets up. "I'm so sorry. We loved our brother. We miss him," wink, wink to the other brothers. "Dad, I'm so sorry you lost Joseph. We miss him too." He is at the funeral lying to his dad. His brother's not dead. Those who endure trauma, they have something called complex grief. What he's saying is, "I want to help my dad avoid complex grief. He's already got grief from the loss of one son. He'll have grief from the loss of a second son." This is a guy who's changed. He didn't care about causing grief, and now he does.

Pastor Mark:

What happens as well when tragedy befalls your life, sometimes people create things called negative anniversaries. Counselors will talk about this. The day that your child died, the day that you found out that your spouse was committing adultery, the day that you realized that your dad wasn't really your dad and your mom was running around with somebody else and they never told you the family secret. His dad would've lived with negative anniversaries. This is Joseph's birthday and he is dead. This is the day we had his funeral, he is dead. And those negative anniversaries, the boys would come around and they would comfort their dad over something they knew was a lie. Judah was the oldest. He was the leader of all of this evil. He married an ungodly woman. He raised ungodly kids that God allowed to die. Then he thinks, "Well, there's a prostitute. I'll sleep with her."

Pastor Mark:

He does, gets her pregnant, finds out it's his daughter-in-law. I know if you grew up in a Baptist church, they had a flannelgraph and they're showing you, "Ooh, let's talk about the Old Testament. Here's the 12 tribes of Israel." They didn't put all this on the flannelgraph. Amen. You're like, "I didn't know all that. I didn't know all that." They skipped that. They don't put this in the kids' movies. They don't put any of this in the kids' movies. But this is who Judah is here. He would take a test, fail it, take a test, fail it, take

a test, fail it, take a test, fail it. And he is one of God's people. Some of you are God's people and your life is not good and you failed all the tests.

Pastor Mark:

And you're sitting here now and you're saying, "Okay, what hope is there for me?" Judah gets to retake the test. He failed the will I protect my little brother test with Joseph. Joseph sets it up so that now Benjamin is the little brother and Judah is taking the test. Does Judah pass the test? He does. What he says is, "I love my dad. He's lived a painful life. He's already lost one son. I know that my dad loves Benjamin more than me." Let me just say, no child should ever, ever, ever be able to say that. None of you, especially fathers, should ever play favorites. But what Judah is saying, "Dad loves Benjamin more than me. So, if you're going to take one of us as a slave, take me, let's send Benjamin home to dad."

Pastor Mark:

What Judah is doing here is what theologians will call substitution. Benjamin had the cup in his sack. He's the one who should be a slave. Judah says, "Let me substitute myself for Benjamin." Now what's crazy is not only through this family line, because it's Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, that's their dad, who's the next family member that's part of the family line of Jesus? Judah. Oh my gosh. How many of you, if you're God, you're like, "Rock, paper, scissors. I pick Joseph, not Judah." Judah's the bad guy. Joseph's the good guy. Joseph walks with the Lord. Judah is a disaster, but here he changes.

Pastor Mark:

And the whole point of this family is to bring Jesus into human history. And you could see the family resemblance, because when Judah practices substitution, it's a little picture of his descendant, Jesus, coming to substitute himself for us. That Jesus is our big brother and that he comes and he says, "They should die. They should go to hell. They should be crucified. They should endure the wrath of God." And Jesus says, "I'll stand in their place and substitute myself so that they can be free." And that's the story of all of the children of God, that Jesus is our substitute and he takes our place. So, what we're starting to see here is a change in Judah. Let me ask you this. Ready? Ready? Ready? Can God change people?

Congregation:

Yes.

Pastor Mark:

Okay. Can God change your enemy?

Congregation:

Yes.

Pastor Mark:

Not quite as enthusiastic. What we like to think is, "God changed me. Them? I don't know. There's not a lot to work with, with them. I feel like they're just broken. I have potential. They... you know." Here's how we see him changing. He's honoring authority. He was not a man who honored authority. "I made my dad a promise and I need to honor that authority." God does not bless people, he blesses places. So, if you obey God or you start obeying God, you move over to the place that God blesses by honoring his authority and the authority that he puts over you. And see, we're a nation birth in rebellion, people

birthed in rebellion, generational rebellion. It's rebellion, rebellion, rebellion. It's not going well. God honors authority. God works through authority.

Pastor Mark:

Some of you say, "But I'm accountable to God." Well, then you're a rebel, because the rebel is the person who just says, "Me and God are fine and I don't have anyone between me and God." Judah is a guy who's been a law unto himself. He's not obeyed or honored any authority, and now he's honoring and obeying his dad's authority. And as a result, he's going to pivot to a place that God can bless. Because God's not going to bless his ungodly family. God's not going to bless him sleeping with a gal that he thinks is a prostitute. God is not going to bless him telling a lie to his father for 20 years. God doesn't bless people, he blesses places. And what you're seeing with Judah, he's changing places.

Pastor Mark:

He goes from being a liar to telling the truth, from doing what's in his best interest, to the best interests of his dad and his brothers, from dishonoring authority to honoring authority, to making others pay for his sin, to him being willing to substitute himself and stand in their place. This is a little picture of Jesus. Is there anywhere in your life that you need to change like Judah? You may even be one of God's people, but where you're living is not the place that God is blessing. And sometimes we stand in the wrong place. We're like, "God, how come you don't bless me?" He's like, "Blessing is over there. You need to move. You need to relocate. You're sleeping with your girlfriend. I tend not to hand out treats for that. You've got to stop that."

Pastor Mark:

Just something to pray about. How's Joseph going to respond? At this point Judah doesn't know he's talking to Joseph and he doesn't know that Joseph is bilingual. So, Joseph's been working through a translator, because he knows Egyptian and Hebrew and he's eaves dropping on all their conversations. Here's the big reveal. Chapter 45. "Then Joseph could not control himself." That's it? He's done. When people see people act like Jesus, emotionally it absolutely wrecks them and heals them at the same time. When he sees God's work in his brother, his enemy, he can't handle it anymore. He cried. This is good crying. This is emotional processing. This is the reality television show. "It's your brother. Oh my gosh."

Pastor Mark:

This is it. They're crying and the music is playing and the butterflies are swinging by. This is it. This is the great revelation. Make everyone go out for me, clears the room. This is a private family moment. So, no one stayed with him. "When Joseph made himself known to the brothers and he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it and the house of Pharaoh heard it." So, all the guys are like, "Outside the door." They're outside the door and all they hear is Joseph. They're just like, "Really? What's going on in there?" Have a big family reunion. Lots of emotion. Italian family right here. There's a lot of volume.

Pastor Mark:

Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph." He says it in Hebrew. They're like, "What the... He knows Hebrew? He was listening the whole time." Checkmate. This is it. "I am Joseph." First question, "Is dad alive? Is dad alive?" 22 years he's not seen his dad. 17 to 39 years of age, not seen his dad. I've got five kids. I could not even fathom 22 days not seeing my kids. 22 months would kill me. 22 years, wreck me. Joseph, "How's dad?" Loves his dad. He went through his teens without his dad, went through his

twenties without his dad. He's almost finished with his thirties without his dad. He got married and had kids, no input from his dad. That's tough to forgive, amen? You've got a dad who loves you and your brothers keep you away from your dad for 22 years and tell your dad that you're dead. That's a lot of forgiveness.

Pastor Mark:

So, Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him for they were dismayed at his presence. This is shock and awe. You just see all the guys like... And they're all waiting for the other guy to talk, and nobody knows what to say. So, Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near me, please." Now, if you've watched the Godfather, this is a dangerous move. "Come here. Come close." "How close?" "This close." "I'm good. Send me a text. I'll be over here. Whatever you've got to say, keep it at a distance." And they came here and he said, "I'm your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves."

Pastor Mark:

You know that you are healed when you can help unburden the people who destroyed you. Joseph has seen God heal him, and he wants to be an agent of healing. You know that God has healed you when you want to be an agent of healing, even to those who hurt you. That's Joseph. "Don't be distressed, don't be anxious, and don't be angry at yourselves. Don't beat yourself up. You know what? I've already forgiven you. This is all taken care of." There are two kinds of people in this world, burden givers and burden takers. These guys have been carrying a burden. They keep talking about Joseph and God is out to get us. And, "Oh my gosh, what have we done?" Joseph is not burdened, he's unburdened. You know you've forgiven someone, you know that you've healed, you know that you're walking in the spirit when you're not carrying the burden.

Pastor Mark:

And he looks at them and he doesn't give them a burden. Could he have given them a burden? "I haven't seen my dad in 22 years. I am convicted as a rapist. I am registered as a sex offender. Do you know what it's like to be the Vice President in Egypt when every news story includes, 'convicted rapist?' I married an unbelieving woman. My father-in-law is a pagan priest. The holidays are awkward. Do you guys have any idea what you've done to me? I had to learn Egyptian. Nobody here knows God. I haven't been to church in 22 years. I didn't even know if my dad was dead or alive. I got a brother, just said hi to him." He could have been a burden giver, amen? He could have backed up the truck, boop, boop, boop, drop a load.

Pastor Mark:

He doesn't. He comes with an empty truck and says, "I know you got a lot of burdens, let me load those up for you and take those away. Because I'll take those burdens to the Lord and I've learned how to dump all my burdens on him so that I don't have to carry them. And I don't want you to carry them either." There are burden givers, there are burden takers. He's a burden taker. That's incredibly godly. That's incredibly mature. That's incredibly healthy. You know what? We all want to meet Joseph, very few of us want to be him. True? I mean you're like, "Yeah, I wish people treat me like that." Other people are saying, "I wish you'd treat me like that." There's a lot of people who want to meet Joseph. There's not as many people that want to be Joseph.

Pastor Mark:

He goes on, verse five, "For God." When you're hurt, when you're bitter, when you're frustrated, when you're unhealthy, when your soul is not at peace or rest, you look at life through your pain, your hurt, your disappointment, your fears of it happening again, and you never see God's perspective. Once you forgive, once you heal up, once you're filled with the spirit, you rise above your circumstance and you look down on it from God's perspective and you get a new vantage point. He does that. He says, "God sent me before you to preserve life." Isn't this crazy? God sent me here so that people could have food during a famine and look at all the people that we get to love and serve. For the famine has been in the land these two years and there are five years in which there will neither be planting or harvest. There's five more years to go, guys, a lot of people would die.

Pastor Mark:

But God had a plan to get me here so that I could love and serve them. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to keep you alive for you many survivors. Not only that, God gave me food for our family. You guys don't need to starve. Your kids don't need to starve. Dad's grandkids don't need to starve. This is amazing. All the Costcos are shut down and I've got the only one. Isn't that great for our family? He's looking for ways to bless and to give, because people who are forgiving are also giving. That's the key to his destiny. He's forgiving and giving. And he sees things now from God's perspective. "So, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh." He's like, "I never had a dad. Now I work for a guy who thinks he's God, but he still needs some help. So, I'm kind of like a dad to him."

Pastor Mark:

And lord over his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry, go to my father and say to him, go tell dad, "Thus says your son, Joseph, God has made me Lord over all of Egypt. Come down to me. Do not delay. Go get dad, go get the family. There's nothing for you there. There's five more years of famine. God's blessed me. Let me bless you. I'm running Egypt. I'll take care of the whole family." Thus he says, your son, Joseph, God has made me Lord. Come down. Do not delay. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen. Goshen is Hebrew for paradise valley. It is the premier real estate in Egypt. It is so nice, they're in the desert, but they have grass lawns in Goshen. It's amazing. It's older homes that are fully renovated, large acreage. You don't look at your neighbors in the pool. It's amazing. That's what Goshen means in the Hebrew, it's paradise valley.

Pastor Mark:

And you shall be near me. What he's telling his brothers is, "I'm going to give you guys paradise valley. We're all going to get big fat homes and you can bring your wives and your kids, and they'll all grow up together. I'll buy them all bikes and we can get together for barbecues and we're going to meet at the park and it's going to be awesome. And the holidays will be fantastic. I've got a great plan. Let's all move to paradise valley for free." Make it so, Lord. "There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, and you and your household and all that you have do not come to poverty. And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother, Benjamin, see that it is my mouth who speaks to you."

Pastor Mark:

They never told him the name of their brother. He knows it though, so the fact that he knows Benjamin's name and he speaks Hebrew, it's for sure Joseph. "You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt and all that you've seen. Go tell dad." "We have little news, dad, Joseph is alive, and he rules Egypt, and he gave us paradise valley. Now don't get angry, dad. It's a good ending, right?" "Hurry and

bring my father down here. Then he fell upon his brother, Benjamin's, neck and wept." Reunion. Not seeing your brother you love in 22 years. And he kissed all his brothers and he wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him. Joseph has to do a lot of forgiving, and when it comes to forgiveness, there's two things I want to note. Number one, it's the size of the offense. How bad was it? Number two. How much did you care for the person who did it?

Pastor Mark:

Sometimes it can be a little thing done by a person that you hold very dear, and as a result, it hurts very much. What they did was horrendous and he cared for them very much. That means that's a deep soul wound and he's forgiven them from the heart. When you're kissing guys who sold you into slavery, you're healed up. Amen? You're healed up. He's healed up. And what this means is relationships are more important than issues. Relationships are more important than issues. He's not going to let the issues destroy the relationship. He's going to forgive the issues and restore the relationship. We have this really bad phrase we use in our culture that time heals all-

Congregation:

Wounds.

Pastor Mark:

That's not true. Only time with God heals any wound. Time without God actually makes things worse, not better. Time with God heals all wounds. Time by itself only exacerbates pain and problems. Joseph didn't just have 22 years, he had 22 years, four times we read in Genesis 39, in the presence of God. 22 years in the presence of God, that'll heal you up. 22 years left to yourself, nursing your hurt, haunting yourself, dragging your worst day into every day, that doesn't heal anything. Lastly, live as a kingdom citizen. Versus 16 through 28 in chapter 45. We like to say here at the Trinity Church, we live kingdom down, not culture up.

Pastor Mark:

Culture doesn't do forgiveness, kingdom does. Culture doesn't do relationship well, kingdom does. Culture has no idea what to do with the family, kingdom does. Culture has vengeance, kingdom has forgiveness. We live kingdom down, not culture up. All of this is a foreshadowing of the kingdom. As this family moves into a kingdom, it's a little parable and an analogy and a story and an illustration about the family of God moving into the kingdom of God, ruled by Jesus, our brother. When the report was heard in Pharaoh's house, Joseph hears this, Joseph's brothers had come, pleased Pharaoh and his servants. Pharaoh said to his Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this, load your beast and go back to the land of Canaan. Take your father and your household and come to me and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt. You shall eat of the fat of the land.'"

Pastor Mark:

If you're starving and Pharaoh says, "Move into my neighborhood and you're going to live in paradise valley and all the restaurants are free. And all of that goes on Pharaoh's tap. Tell them all. Every meal is free. And you, Joseph, are commanded to say, 'Do this, take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones, your wives, bring your father. Come.'" This is first class tickets. You're not walking, you're riding in the chariots and the wagons provided by... This is first class. Pharaoh is going to bless this whole family because Joseph has blessed the Pharaoh.

Pastor Mark:

"Have no concern for your goods, for all the best of the land of Egypt is yours." What he's saying is, "Leave all your stuff, leave your junky Ikea furniture, just leave it. Please don't bring it to Egypt." And that's what it says in the Hebrew. It's the Hebrew word for Ikea. How many of you have that particle board stuff? You're like, "I touched it and exploded." "It's not real furniture." "Yeah, it is. I put it together with a wrench." "That's not a wrench, you're a monkey on an organ grinder trying to put together your Ikea furniture. And if you bump it or sit on it, it will explode, because it's all particle board." Amen? It is. It is. When you go to heaven, you're not taking that stuff.

Pastor Mark:

When the rapture comes, do not grab your Ikea shelf. Do not take it with you. Just like, "You know what? I'm leaving it. I'm sure it's going to be better up there." What he tells them is just leave all... And you know what's so funny is we spend so much time buying our junk. Some of you, you have so much junk you rent a storage locker to hold your other junk. You're like, "These are my possessions." "No, this is junk. This is total junk." And when Jesus comes back, you'll be like, "Ah, leave it." Jesus is like, "I brought stuff too." "I'm sure your stuff is better than mine. Half of my stuff came off of Craigslist, which is a Greek word for demon. And it all smells like cat urine. Why do I fight for this?"

Pastor Mark:

Leave all your junk. Leave all your junk. "The sons of Israel," verse 21, "Did so." Now he's name is transitioning from Judah and Jacob to Israel. Now they're becoming the nation of God's destiny. "The sons of Israel did so. Joseph gave them wagons according to the command of Pharaoh, gave them provisions for the journey. To each of them Teach them he gave a change of clothes." The whole problem was they didn't like the fact that he had nice clothes, so he is going to give them all nice clothes. But to Benjamin he gave 300 shekels of silver, seven and a half pounds. "Love you, little bro. Knuckles." And five changes of clothes. To his father he sent as follows, 10 donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, 10 female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, provisions for his father on the journey. Then he sent his brothers away.

Pastor Mark:

They departed, he said, "Do not quarrel on the way." Here's the key. Sometimes when we get together with our family, we revert back to our old roles. How many of you have done that? How many that's why you hate the holidays? You're like, "Really? We've all changed. But you're the evil one, you're the funny one, you're the cute one, you're the stupid one, and I'm the one who gets a wedgie. I hate this. I hate this. I'm 47, I don't need a wedgie, I've had a lifetime supply of wedgies. I don't need this." How many of you, you get back together with your family you're like, "We're just acting like we did years ago, we're doing the same stupid stuff, we're saying the same stupid stuff. We're back into our old roles."

Pastor Mark:

What he's saying is it's been 22 years, god has changed us. Let's not revert back to the family systems and roles that we held. Let's move forward with who we are today. Sometimes the people who are least likely to see you change are your family, because they'll freeze you in time and only see you in the past, not in the present, not in the future. And Joseph says, "Let's not do this. Guys, I love you, I'm healed, but if we go around the well, I get a little nervous eye twitch and don't joke around. Don't joke around. That's not funny. I got PTSD and I don't like wells. It's just a thing for me." All right. Anyways. So, where was I? No, seriously. Where was I?

Congregation:

25.

Pastor Mark:

25? Thank you. All right. So, they went out of Egypt, came to the land of Canaan to their father, Jacob, and he told him, "Joseph is still alive. He's ruler over the land of Egypt." His heart became numb. "Dad, we have bad news and good news. Bad news, we lied for 22 years. Good news, it's all better. Joseph's alive. He's an Egypt. He runs the Costco and he sent first class tickets. Let's go, dad. Let's not talk about all that stuff. Let's look forward to the future, dad. Pivot." But when they told him all the words of Joseph, which he said to them, he saw the wagons and that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of the father was revived. Joseph is alive. He gets out of his chair. This is the first time dad got out of his chair.

Pastor Mark:

Dad's been in his chair for chapters. Joseph's alive. "Ah, well, welcome dad. Welcome to the land of the living. Nice to see you out of your chair." And he said, "It is enough, Joseph, my son, is alive. I'll go see him before I die." This is not a story of just what happened. This is the story of what always happens for the family of God. For those of you that are here, I have good news for you. If you're like Judah and you come and you say, "I failed my test. I'm guilty. I have been living in rebellion against God and my life is a wreck and my family is a wreck and my legacy is wreck," here's the good news for you. You can retake the test. You can be holy where you were unholy. You can be wise where you were foolish or evil. You can be forgiven where you were guilty. You can be like Judah.

Pastor Mark:

When we read the story of the life of Jesus, it is told that Jesus descends from the line of Judah. The line of Judah. Your past is not necessarily your future if you move to the place of obedience that God blesses. That's the story of Judah. If you're guilty, I have good news for you. When you stand before the Lord Jesus, he is glad to forgive you as Joseph was glad to forgive Judah, and he would look at you and he'd say, "Do not trouble yourself. Do not burden yourself. You are forgiven. I am here to take the burden, not give a burden." If you are Judah, then Joseph serves as a portrait and a picture for Jesus's love for you, his affection for you, his devotion to you. And if you're here and you're someone who's been sinned against, harmed, hurt, betrayed, family, friends, loved one, spouse, children, you're in the position of Joseph.

Pastor Mark:

You may be burdened, but you can be unburdened. You may be broken, but you can be healed. You may be bitter, but you can be forgiving. You can have a healthy relationship with God that heals you up and allows you to pursue healthy relationships. And as you are forgiving and giving, it unleashes whatever destiny God has appointed for you. And here's the good news, the whole family, they're making this great journey to this kingdom. They'll take nothing, but they'll lack nothing. And ruling over that kingdom is one who loves them, one who is gracious, one who is forgiving, one who is generous, and he's a little picture of Jesus. You can see the family resemble. For all the children of God the day is coming when all of our relationships will be reconciled, when forgiveness will flow freely, when God's provision will be present abundantly.

Pastor Mark:

That Jesus is a great king, he has a great kingdom, and it's a kingdom filled with giving and forgiving. So, I don't know about you, I feel like we should sing a little bit and throw a party and celebrate, because this is good news. So, we're going to take communion, remembering the broken body and shed blood of Jesus. He substituted himself, and we will come as people who are forgiven and we're going to come as people who are forgiving, looking forward to the kingdom and the great blessing it will be to be together as God's family, fully healed, fully reconciled, fully enjoying God's gracious, generous kingdom provision forever. Amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Mark:

All right. I'm going to ask you to stand. I'm going to ask the band to lead us in song, and I'm going to pray. Father God, I invite the holy spirit to be here in our midst. Lord, God, Joseph lived in your presence and he was filled with your spirit. God, we want to live in your presence. We want to be filled with your spirit. God, for those of us who are guilty, like Judah, thank you that we can retake our test and pass and position ourselves into the place that you bless. For those of us, Lord God, who have been sinned against, hurt, betrayed, abandoned, lied about, attacked, Lord God, may we respond to you, not them. May we treat them the way you treat us, not the way they have treated us. Lord God, I ask for your presence among your people. Please allow us to enjoy your kingdom. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, starting in our relationships, with you and one another. In Jesus's good name. Amen.