

Reconciliation

We often ask questions like, “Why do things happen to me?” or “Why do bad things happen to good people?” We tend to ask these questions when tragedy or accidents occur.

It seems that question has no answer, or it has been asked by many people for generations.

I am sure many people have left the church or struggled because they couldn’t find an answer to that question.

We have the story of Joseph; you might see the same question arise in this story. In this story, the question is asked and answered through two themes: providence and reconciliation.

The story of Joseph is quite long, and it is a long journey for Joseph and his brothers toward reconciliation.

This story begins in chapters 37 to 50, where Joseph’s own brothers sell him into slavery in Egypt. He lives as a servant in Egypt, rises to a successful career, and dies an old man after a rich and adventurous life.

Of course, much happened in between, and our reading is just a brief snapshot of how their brotherly relationship was restored.

Our story begins when Joseph generously offers forgiveness to his brothers after enduring so many years of hardship in a foreign country.

He was remarkably calm in forgiving the very brothers who had once tried to kill him and had taken everything from him.

It is surprising to see Joseph forgive them so easily—perhaps that is just our perspective. From his perspective, it was probably not easy at all.

Joseph explains to his brothers why he is able to forgive them so readily.

He simply said that it was all part of God’s plan—something God had prepared long before.

He believed that God had sent him to Egypt so that, years later, he would be able to fulfill God’s purpose for the chosen people, whose survival would be threatened by famine.

In the end, he thanked God that everything turned out well.

So, he celebrates this wonderful family reunion. He says, “Bring Father and Mother and all the brothers here, and let’s celebrate.”

It seems Joseph’s generosity, compassion, and joy have no bounds.

In this story, we appreciate Joseph’s deep and positive faith. We also see Joseph’s willingness to recognize the hidden purpose of God for his life, which is beyond his control.

Joseph’s positive faith led him to trust God and His purpose for his life, which is larger than his own vision.

Through his life in a foreign country and his encounters with God in various places, he experienced the hidden God at work.

He trusted God when he couldn’t understand the things happening to him.

Sometimes, we can’t predict or discern the purpose of God in various situations.

Sometimes, we don’t understand why things are happening, and sometimes we don’t know what is really going on around us. But if we see the big picture, it is easier to say that God allowed these things to happen.

When we look back, we clearly see God’s guidance and His blessings in the past—how God provided for us.

This story allows us to see God as the provider, the God who works wondrously and mysteriously in our lives.

And we realize we cannot fathom His divine will or fully understand what God is doing in our lives. So, we ask, “What is Your will for us, for our family and for our church?”

Joseph’s new understanding of God in his life is that God is at work, and His gift is far more wonderful, larger, and greater than Joseph had imagined.

God's gifts to Joseph in his family are the bond of love through reconciliation with his brothers and the joy of providing food for his family while witnessing God's work in his life.

Joseph's story reveals to us the bond of love as a new ideal of family through his relationship with his brothers. God shows us that they become united in the bond of His love.

During all those years in a foreign country, Joseph had a dream. Of course, he likely thought about revenge and about paying back his brothers hundreds of times. But his ultimate dream was about family reunion, reconciliation, and seeing his father and youngest brother.

Joseph was willing to embrace God's purpose for his life, and he freely chose to forgive and accept his brothers.

Joseph's story shows that there are no boundaries in forgiveness; all are welcomed, and all are forgiven.

Paul writes in Romans 11:29–32 that there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, for all are children of God.

In Matthew 15:21–28, a Gentile woman, who regarded herself as a dog before Jesus, desired to be treated as a child of God and included in God's kingdom.

She dared to ask Jesus to include her in the family of God. She had the lowest status as a Canaanite, and she was hated as the Canaanites had been throughout the history of Israel.

Jesus embraced her and regarded her as a daughter of God, healing her daughter from sickness. For Jesus, this act was reconciliation—restoring a relationship that history had torn apart. This woman was welcomed and forgiven.

Similarly, Joseph kissed his brothers, accepted them, and proclaimed that everything was part of God's plan. He forgave and blessed them.

In the kingdom of God, there are no boundaries, no divisions, no factions, and no bullies.

Reconciliation is the norm in the kingdom of God.

I think, throughout the ages, our human inclination has been to draw toward others for support, encouragement, inspiration, and accountability.

We share our stories, break bread together, grieve together, and rejoice together because there is a deep desire at the root of our spiritual community lives.

The call to nurture the possibility of reconciliation—whether that is between brothers and sisters, generations, nations, or all humanity—is probably the primary reason we seek to practice forgiveness and humility.

I am sure that forgiveness is what makes us who we are, and we are called to live these kinds of lives.

I think we need to trust that God is at work in our lives, no matter the circumstances, and that God will give us the power to deal with crises. In those crises, God wants us to use that power.

For Joseph, he used his power for good, to save and to reconcile. Where will we use our power? For revenge, or for the good of all?

By the love of God, we are accepted. Now we are the children of God. We belong to each other by the grace of God.

The psalmist writes in Psalm 133:1:
“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!”

Amen.