

# MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9 2026

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## "O, What A Family!"

Based on Genesis 37:1-4; 12-28

Jacob finally had his son. Truth was, Jacob had many sons, ten in fact at this point; six from his first wife Leah, and four from women servants (here we go again ladies!), and countless, mostly nameless daughters. But Joseph, son number eleven was his favourite, because he was the first son born of Jacob's beloved second wife, Rachel.

Scholars like to say that Joseph was a celebrated servant of YHWH as a young child, obviously chosen by the Creator for his truthfulness and faithfulness. I don't buy it. Joseph was a spoiled brat and a tattle tale. It's no wonder his older brothers were fed up with him, spilling the beans to Dad on their shenanigans:

- A sip of home brew behind the barn
- A stolen kiss around the olive tree,
- A brawl in town with the village folk.

We had lots of fun at Bible Study this week, speculating on what those boys were up

to while tending the sheep. Perhaps that is why Jacob wanted Joseph to go find his brothers that day: his eyes and ears in the desert. But at seventeen, the age our scripture lesson today shared (v3) one would hope that Joseph's tattling days were over. Perhaps not.

When Joseph arrived near the place he expected to find his brothers and the sheep, there was no one to be found, except a weary traveller who suggested the boys had taken the sheep further afield. Perhaps the plot to rid themselves of Joseph had already begun to take shape, luring him further from home so there would be less evidence and speculation about his suspicious disappearance.

But I think there was a bigger issue at hand, a clue to why there was great tension in Jacob's family, that gets lost in the drama of the story of the man with the colourful coat.

*So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan (v12)*

When Joseph finally found his brothers, they were camped at a place known for its two wells. The word "Dothan" means "two wells." One well in the desert was a good find, but a place with two sources of fresh water must have been doubly important.

So, if the boys were not plotting to kill Joseph at this point (which might be a big 'if' for some of you)...but if the boys were not plotting yet, there was only one other reason they would have travelled so far afield, and away from their usual grazing grounds. Water.

The nomadic life depended on many things, but the essential priority was water.

- No water, no grass.
- No water, no food.
- No water, no trade.

We know, later in Joseph's story (cue the 'technicolour dreamcoat' here) that drought was what brought his family to Egypt, but I think the indicators were already hidden inside the story.

- There was no water for the sheep, so the boys

had to move them to a place known for much water, in hopes of finding a little.

- Joseph was dumped into a dry well by his brothers, presumably to die in the desert heat. But note, the well was dry. It shouldn't have been.

And there was the hidden stress in the family.

- No water, no sheep.
- No sheep, no money.
- No money, no power.
- No power, no status.

No status...then you're just like everyone else out there struggling to make ends meet. A most humbling proposition for the descendants of Abraham.

At this point, we find ourselves shaking our head at all the family drama.

- The favourite son of Jacob's thrown into a pit to die by his jealous brothers.
- Grown men lying to their aged father about the death of his cherished boy.
- Eleven men with a secret on their conscious; a weight that could not be lifted.

And yet, if all this had not happened, then Joseph would never have made his way into the court life of the palace of Egypt, now would he?

- Joseph's visions would never have gained the attention of Pharaoh.
- Pharaoh would never have stored enough food to save his people during the time of famine.
- He is likely to never have considered helping the refugees who would come his way; refugees that would include the very brothers of Joseph that had tried to kill him.

Sometimes, when we are caught in the middle of our own family drama, work drama, or personal drama, we fail to realize that even our chaotic moments are part of God's plan. The path with YHWH is not always straightforward, as we know, and sometimes will even have the neighbours shaking their heads, thinking you daft in the hot summer sun!

Once again, it comes down to trust.

- So easy to trust God when things are going well.
- Not so easy to trust when things are not.
- Almost impossible to trust, when life gets beyond our understanding, as it can on occasion.

- It is in these darkest moments, we must learn to stop, to be still,

and let God catch up with us.

- It is in these darkest moments, we must trust that there is an answer, even if we can't see it at present.
- It is in these darkest moments, we must remember that we are part of a bigger plan, a plan that leads to victory and eternity; that perhaps we must journey through this time, to get to the glory of the other side.

I do not think that Joseph began his story as a truthful and faithful disciple of YHWH, as the scholars would like us to believe. But I do think that sitting in a dark pit awaiting death, being sold as a slave to traders and treated as such, and chained in the dungeons of a foreign palace gave a man time:

- To think,
- To ponder,
- To pray,
- And then...to trust.

Maybe all this had to happen, so that Joseph would become the hero his family needed him to be.

Don't give up on Joseph, his story isn't finished yet.

Don't give up on yourself, because your story isn't finished yet either.

Amen.

