

Text: Genesis 45:3-8a, 15 (Epiphany 7, Series C, February 24, 2019)

Theme: Glorious Godsend!

Virtue (basic truth): God often uses surprising blessings to reflect his grace and glory.

Malady (our problem): Frustrated by situations and sinners, we fail to see God's hidden hand.

Telic Note (goal): By means of this sermon, the Spirit of Grace uses the Narrative of Joseph to encourage our lives of faith that get to see, know, and reflect God's grace and glory.

Propositional Statement (aim): It's slipping from our vernacular, but a *blessing* is sometimes called a *godsend*. So fitting – especially as we realize the *glorious Godsend*s he allows to refresh us in his grace, remind us of his promise, and strengthen us to reflect his glory.

Specific Law in Text: implied in our reluctance to reflect God's forgiveness and grace.

Specific Gospel in Text: “God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance” (Genesis 45:7).

Doctrinal Thought: that gospel is true physically, but it finds its greatest fulfillment in Jesus!

Sanctification Thought: *“Lord Jesus, in love you dared to become our Brother and to forgive us fully. Friend, thank you! In the power and grace of your Spirit, keep us mindful of your hidden hand in our lives and of the gracious godsend*s you bring into our lives. *Bless us with a spirit of thanks and with a faith of gratitude that forgives as you forgive, that is merciful as you are merciful. Lord and Savior, bless us with the opportunity to reflect you and the joy to be gracious godsend*s for others. *In your name. Amen!”*

Genesis 45:3-8a, 15

Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still living?” But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! ⁵ And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. ⁶ For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. ⁷ But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

⁸ “So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God.

¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

God in grace promised “Great Deliverance” (Genesis 45:7). And, in that Deliverance sent, in our Savior, we have, experience and live to reflect his grace and peace. Alleluia and Amen!

In Spirit Inspired grace, that Old Testament reading is one of both the most breath-taking and the most inspiring *epiphanies* in the Narrative. God’s glory is evidenced and powerful; his grace is elegant and personal. Egypt’s “second son” makes himself known to Jacob’s eleven sons as “*Joseph, the one they sold into Egypt*” (Genesis 45:3). Glad epiphany of God’s surprising glory!

Remember the history.

Joseph wasn’t innocent in the ordeal; but his punishment didn’t fit the crime. He was his father’s favorite son and shamelessly flaunted that reality before his brothers. Fratricide’s an option; until money’s involved. 20 shekels warrants Ishmaelite shackles. For 8 ounces of silver (\$319) the bragger-brother is removed to Egypt to live in servitude; brothers return home to live a lie.

For nearly 20 years.

For two decades, Joseph’s brothers – Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Gad, Asher, Dan, and Naphtali – stew in their sin, live the lie that lets their dear dad believe his dear son was dead; daily they endure the gut-rot of guilt for what they did. And, for that same amount of time, Joseph bounced from position to prison, from dream-interpreter to second in command. For the brothers, forgiveness appears impossible. For Joseph, revenge would be sweet.

No wonder Broadway ran with that story. Entire account makes for good drama. Betrayed brother works up the ranks and rises to power. Miserable famine forces a family reunion. Sweet justice! *20/20, How to Get Away with Murder, and CSI: LA* have nothing on the story of Joseph!

Let’s admit: we’ve never been wronged like that. Bullied? Somewhere. Betrayed? Probably. Bound and sold by brothers? No. But even though we haven’t, our natural self wants those who’ve wronged us to suffer, and we who have been wronged to be revenged. That’s why we hold grudges, why we fail to forgive, and why we refuse to resolve; that’s why we sit with unreconciled relationships and rationalize: God knows – he saw what they did, he knows they’d do it again in a heartbeat; he knows they’re not truly sorry; he knows I’m right, they’re wrong. So, no, we haven’t been wronged like Joseph; but we have been wronged and our sinful selves want revenge . . . and we’re not afraid to hold a grudge and withhold forgiveness until we get it. And a sinfully strange part of us is even ok festering in bitterness and wallowing with Joseph.

But that’s not what’s reflected in Genesis 45. In fact, we see the polar opposite. For 20 years Joseph bounced from position to prison, between dungeons and dreams; he had two decades to think about how his brothers wronged him and rationalize how a loving God could let it happen.

But, finally, right when we'd chime in, "Let 'em have it! Get justice, Joseph!," there's no guilt trip and no grudge. Instead, he weeps to speak forgiveness and to embrace with reconciliation.

Why?!

Because he was above all that? No. Cause little Joe's life turned out ok? No. Cause Egyptian methods of self-help, moving on, being the bigger person were superior? No. Of course not.

Forgiveness reassured. Family reconciled. Only because Joseph recognized the surprising glory and the hidden hand of God in all of it. Only because Joseph knew God's saving grace.

Look again. The once-betrayed doesn't excuse their wrong; he acknowledges it (Genesis 45:4). But his God-given faith joyed to reflect God's gracious hand and the so-good blessings evident as he watched his life unfold. Certainly not how "the dreamer" would have drawn it out. So much better! Void of blind optimism and naïve narcissism – even as he's confronted with the pitiful sight of his hungry and heart-ached brothers, Joseph rejoiced to recognize God's plan and to see God's purpose. Simply put: in his life, Joseph knew God's *glorious godsend*.

Used that word a few times now; let's clarify it. *Godsend* used to fit into every-day vocabulary and conversation; not so much anymore. Very quickly, *Godsend* is something good God has sent; it's an unexpected blessing which, in definition, acknowledges the Source. *God* sent it.

That's not just a fun word that happens to fit into a Sunday or that happens to be alliterative enough to fit into a Stern sermon theme. *Godsend* is the wonderfully textual truth vibrant in Joseph's life, vivid in ours, and visual in our Foundation from Genesis 45. And the *glorious godsend* displays and celebrates God's hidden had *epiphanied* by all he so wondrously ordaineth.

Far beyond blind optimism, look again at our lesson and consider the *glorious Godsend*s our dear LORD used to display his glory and to reflect his goodness in the lives of Jacob's sons.

- 1) Two decades of misery . . . where God was with Joseph in a strange place every day to bless him, and advance him, to gift him with practical wisdom and skill, with bold foresight and confident faith. 20 hard years, where God let him learn. *Glorious godsend!*
- 2) Miserable famine – 2 years of hard hunger, 5 more come . . . by which God moved a family to re-meet and to reconcile with forgiveness rooted in him. *Glorious godsend!*
- 3) A remnant brought to remember that "great deliverance" isn't about physical farming; but about the focused promise God made to send a world-Savior. *Glorious Godsend!*

- 4) A simple faith to know and reassure God's *sometimes-hidden-hand* is still in beautiful control, that what he ordains and let's happen really is always good. ***Glorious godsend!***

Three times in our quick lesson, Joseph identified God's surprising glory and readily assures that God sent him to Egypt (Genesis 45:5, 7, 8). Three times he reflects the glory of God and the grace of God as he readily recognized all he endured and all he enjoyed because God is glorified.

Inspiringly and breath-taking-ly in that Narrative, God was in sovereign, gracious, and loving control. Broadway misses it. Sin fails to see it. Grudges are too stubborn to realize it.

But see God's glory reflected in Joseph and situation; and see God's grace reflected in him, too! ***Glorious godsend*** was for his brothers. Food rationed. Forgiveness reflected. Faith refreshed.

Clear in Joseph! Evidenced even brighter in Jesus. Brother betrayed and rejected; so we are reconciled to him and in him. The "Great Deliverance" (Genesis 45:7), the ***glorious Godsend*** God sent as promised. In him, by him, because of him, there is no more guilt, no more fear, is no more stewing in our sin or living in a lie. In him, by him, because of him, you are forgiven. Fully. Freely-to-you-ly. For surely! Because, in simple grace and faithful love, the Source of Salvation gave a ***glorious godsend***: the Savior we need . . . and have . . . and in whom we live!

God's hand. God's blessing. God's works. God's ways. God's Word. Joseph knew it; and simply shared it. And we do, too! That's why we get to do what Joseph did: not be sold, exiled, and rise to second in command of all of Egypt. Something far more glorious, far more powerful, far more beautiful. We get to see God's hand and to be assured of his ***glorious godsend***s in all things. That's the message of sufficient grace, even when his hand seems hidden; that's the promise of confidence even when what he ordains and allows to happen doesn't seem *good* right now. That ***glorious Godsend*** is the One we celebrate when Satan's lies confuse, when past guilt rots, when temptations come alluring. All because, come what may, God sent us a Savior.

Truth is ours to know. It's ours to reflect, too! In the joy of being forgiven, we get to experience the joy of forgiving – and we already know those to whom we get to go; don't wait for a famine!

But maybe they don't need forgiveness. Maybe she needs assurance. Maybe he needs clarity of grace. Maybe she needs someone to sit with her. Maybe he needs someone to pray for him. Maybe God uses you to be a ***glorious godsend*** in the life of someone else, to help them see the hidden hand and surprising glory of the Lord's Anointed. Better said: rooted in grace, God does use you to be a ***glorious godsend*** in the life of someone else. Go be it, Christian! God bless it!

Alleluia and Amen!