

The Painful and Perplexing Path from Famine to Feasting

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- [0 : 00] But we're going to turn now to our reading for this morning. And if you don't have a Bible with you, we have Vista Bibles at the side, at the back. Please do grab a Bible and turn with me to Genesis chapter 43.
- And you'll find that on page 36 if you're using one of the Vista Bibles. Genesis 43. And we're picking up the story of Judah and his family.
- And chapter 43, verse 1. Now the famine was severe in the land. And when they had eaten the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, Go again, buy us a little food.
- But Judah said to him, The man solemnly warned us, saying, You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you. If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food.
- But if you will not send him, we will not go down. For the man said to us, You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you. Israel said, Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?
- [1 : 27] They replied, The man questioned us carefully about ourselves and our kindred, saying, Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother? What we told him was in answer to these questions.
- Could we in any way know that he would say, Bring your brother down? And Judah said to Israel his father, Send the boy with me, And we will arise and go, That we may live and not die, Both we and you and also our little ones.
- I will be a pledge of his safety. From my hand, You shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, Then let me bear the blame forever.
- If we had not delayed, We would now have returned twice. Then their father Israel said to them, If it must be so, Then do this.
- Take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, And carry a present down to the man, A little balm and a little honey, Gum, Myrrh, Pistachio nuts and almonds.
- [2 : 35] Take double the money with you. Carry back with you the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks, Perhaps it was an oversight. Take also your brother, And arise, Go again to the man.
- May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, And may he send back your other brother, And Benjamin. And as for me, If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.
- So the men took this presents, And they took double the money with them, And Benjamin. They arose, And went down to Egypt, And stood before Joseph.
- When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, He said to the steward of his house, Bring the men into the house, And slaughter an animal, And make ready, For the men are to dine with me at noon. The man did, As Joseph told him, And brought the men to Joseph's house.

And the men were afraid, Because they were brought to Joseph's house. And they said, Is it because of the money, Which was replaced in our sacks the first time that we are brought in, So that he may assault us and fall upon us, To make us servants and seize our donkeys?

[3 : 46] So they went up, To the steward of Joseph's house, And spoke with him at the door of the house, And said, My lord, We came down the first time to buy food, And when we came to our lodging place, We opened our sacks, And there was each man's money in the mouth of his sack, Our money in full weight.

So we have brought it again with us, And we have brought other money down with us to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks. He replied, Peace to you.

Do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father Has put treasure in your sacks for you. I received your money. Then he brought Simeon out to them.

And when the man had brought the men to Joseph's house, And given them water, And they had washed their feet, And when he had given their donkeys fodder, They prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon, For they heard that they should eat bread there.

When Joseph came home, They brought into the house to him the present That they had had with them, And bowed down to him to the ground. And he inquired about their welfare and said, Is your father well, The old man of whom you spoke, Is he still alive?

[5 : 07] They said, Your servant, Our father as well. He is still alive. And they bowed their heads And prostrated themselves. And he lifted up his eyes And saw his brother Benjamin, His mother's son.

And he said, Is this your youngest brother of whom you spoke to me? God, be gracious to you, my son. Then Joseph hurried out, For his compassion grew warm for his brother, And he sought a place to weep.

And he entered his chamber, And wept there. Then he washed his face, And came out. And controlling himself, He said, Serve the food. They served him by himself, And them by themselves, And the Egyptians who ate with them by themselves, Because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, For that is an abomination in the Egyptians.

And they sat before him, The firstborn according to his birthright, And the youngest according to his youth. And the men looked at one another in amazement.

Portions were taken to them from Joseph's table, But Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. And they drank, And were merry with him.

[6 : 21] Amen. May God bless his word to us this morning. We'll turn up, if you would, Genesis chapter 43.

We've seen that the Bible is very realistic About the household of faith, About God's church. And he chooses some very unpromising material, Doesn't he, to work with.

And these chapters in Genesis unfold The complicated saga of this family in great detail, To show us God's amazing patience, And his power, As he allows extraordinary events to unfold, Even permits grievous sin, And family strife, And fracture to roll on, In order to both further the purpose of his coming kingdom, But also to bless his chosen people along the way.

And even when God seems silent, As he is actually, Through almost all of these chapters, He's anything but absent. He is present, And he is powerful, And he takes all of these complications, And struggles in life, In a fallen world, All the shortcomings, All the disasters wrought, By our fallen natures, And he uses it all, All, For good.

Both to serve the purpose of his kingdom, But also, To save the people of his kingdom. What a comfort that is, Isn't it?

[8 : 07] That amid, Perhaps the greatest mess, A calamity, That we sometimes make for ourselves, In our own lives, Maybe in our families, Perhaps in marriage, In friendships, In all kinds of relationships, In the midst of all of that, To know that these things, Messy as they can seem to be, And are in fact, That these things, Can be the very theater, For God's power, To display his wonderful, Redeeming love, His reconciling love, Among his people.

And that, Certainly is what these stories, Are here to remind us of, So very clearly. Last time you remember, We read in chapter 42, About these brothers, And their first journey to Egypt.

And now in chapters 43 to 45, We have their second journey. It's a much longer account, Than the first one. But if you read carefully, You'll see it's an almost exact parallel. Begins and ends, In Canaan, With Jacob and his sons, Speaking together.

And in the middle, Just like last time, It's in Egypt. And there are two, Encounters with Joseph. Each of them, Is punctuated by, Arrest, Of one of the brothers, Or some of them, In custody.

So it's a long section here, In chapter 43 to 45. There's lots of detail. And that's deliberate. And so I don't want to rush over it. I think it's very important, That we see, At the point being made.

[9 : 30] That yes, Although, This is all part, Of a much bigger story. It's all part of God's plan, For this whole wide world, That's unfolding here. It's all about, How his people will move to Egypt, Where they'll become a great nation.

And all of God's purposes, For them will begin, To be fulfilled. But nevertheless, God's, God's big plans, Never eclipse, His little people. And every individual, Every family, Every child, That he calls to be his own, Is very much, In his view, And under his care.

And that's so important, Isn't it? Our God, Yes, The Lord, He cares determinedly, For his covenant. But he cares just as deeply, For his children. And that's something, That should encourage us greatly.

What he's doing here, He's beginning to, Bring about the rescue, And the redemption, Of Israel as a whole, The whole family. But he's not going to do it, Without bringing about, Reconciliation, And restoration, Within this, Very real family.

The real flesh and blood, Of these individuals. Because our God is, A patient, And powerful healer, And reconciler. And those he calls, To himself, He will transform.

[10 : 44] And he'll transform them, Into the image, Of his own holy son. Whatever it takes. That's the message of, The gospel.

And that's, What these chapters, And all of their detail, Are actually here, To remind us. And I don't want us, To miss that. Today we're, Therefore just going to focus, On chapter 43. The first part, Of this extraordinary journey, Which describes, The beginning of a, A painful, And rather perplexing path, From famine, To feasting, For Joseph's brothers, And his father.

And I think, I think what we'll see, Is that the narrative, Invites us to dig deeper, And to see, And to understand, What God is doing, On the field here. When, In many ways, He seems, Very invisible, To all these brothers.

So the focus, On the camera, In this chapter, Homes in, Particularly, First of all, On Judah. And then you'll see, On Jacob. And then finally, On Joseph.

So let's look at these in turn. Verses 1 to 10, Hinge on, A courageous pledge. A courageous pledge, That reveals Judah, As a man who has truly, Been changed by God.

[11 : 58] Judah really is, Being transformed here, By God's sovereign purpose. The story begins here, Beginning of chapter 43, In the land of Canaan, And the family is still in crisis.

Verse 1 says, The famine is severe. They're starving. And the grain, That they had bought previously, Verse 2, Tells us, It was finished. So they're, In dire straits.

And they're still in strife, Aren't they? So Jacob says to the brothers, Go and buy food. And they say, No, We're not going. Jacob had refused, To let Benjamin go with them.

And, That was the condition, Wasn't it? That they'd be received again, In Egypt. And so, They weren't going to go. Now, These brothers, Of course, Had been deeply shaken, Hadn't they?

By their experience, And their journey, At home from Egypt. But clearly, Jacob, Their father, Is not stirred. And so, The picture is one of this, Prevailing famine, But also, Prevailing fear.

[12 : 57] The brothers feared, The man. Notice that, That's what he's called, Verse 3. And all the way through this chapter, The man. And, Jacob, Also fears, But he fears, His own sons.

There wasn't really any threat, To Benjamin from Egypt. But his worry, Was all about suspicions, With his own sons, And what they might do to Benjamin, If he let them go with him.

He suspected, Deep down, Didn't he? That they had done something dreadful, To Joseph. Because he wasn't a fool. And that's why there was this, This stalemate. And they could have been back, And forward, Twice, As verse 11 says.

But instead, Here they are, They're still starving. And they're still striving. And no doubt, The discussion there, In verses 6 and 7, The arguments about, Why they wouldn't go back down, Have been repeated, Again, And again.

But at last, Verse 8, A decisive step, Is taken by Judah. He sees, Doesn't he, That the real issue, Is Jacob's distrust of them, His own sons, And he knows why.

[14 : 07] He does, Remember the history of this family, With their temperance, With their violence, With their lies, And deception. So there's no point pretending, In a way. So in verse 8, Judah faces it, Head on, Doesn't he?

And the stakes are very high, It's life or death, For us, And for you, He says, And notice, For our little ones. He's being deliberately emotive. But he's appealing here, Not just, To Jacob's paternal instincts, But he's appealing actually, To something more, To his patriarchal responsibilities.

Because, His father, Jacob, Is not just any man, Is he? Look at verse 6, What's his name? Israel. Israel. He's the man, Called to be the father, To a company of nations.

And he is risking the life, Of his entire progeny, But his stubbornness. I think it's striking, That Judah emerges, As the leader of the family, As he decisively, Grasps hold of the destiny, Of this covenant family.

Do you see? The seed of promise. And he's putting his whole life now, On the line, To protect that destiny. Judah's risking his own life, His whole destiny, In this career.

[15 : 23] Just pledge in verse 9, Make no mistake about that. You see, From my hand, He says, You will require him. That's an echo, Deliberately, I think, Of God's words, In Genesis chapter 9, Verse 5, To Noah, Where he says, For your lifeblood, Will require a reckoning.

A reckoning. It seems that Judah Is consciously putting his life On the line, As a pledge here, For Benjamin. And it's more than that.

Notice, He says, If I don't bring him back, I'll bear the blame forever. Forever. Now, Judah knows that Jacob, His father, Israel, His father, As the patriarch of Israel, He has the power to promise Blessing, And cursing.

Something that far, Far, Overshadows, Overshadows, Just present life and existence. We'll see that later in chapter 49, When he blesses all his sons. So he knows that this is a deadly, Serious thing.

He knows he's dealing with lasting matters. He knows he's dealing with eternal matters, Even. So it is indeed a very deeply courageous pledge That he makes. My life for his.

[16 : 35] Guilt forever. The stakes are very high. And notice the word, He said, A pledge, In verse 9. And again, That's a deliberate signal, I think.

Should ring a bell, About this man's past, Because apart from here, And then later in chapter 44, Where it refers back to this, The only other place, In the book of Genesis, Where that word pledge is used, Is back in chapter 38, Verse 18.

Do you remember what happened? Judah gave, A pledge, Of his signet ring, And his seal, To Tamar, When he thought she was a prostitute, Remember? Remember? But what a change, In Judah, From that pledge to this.

What a transformation, From sordid selfishness, To something quite different. Here is sacrificial servanthood, In this man. And Judah's own life, Remember, Had known plenty of tragedy, In the two decades, Since he sold Joseph, For twenty pieces of silver, With the brothers.

He'd been bereaved, Of his own two sons, Do you remember? They were judged by God, Weren't they? By, Because of their evil hearts, And their evil actions. And then his whole life, His own life, Had descended into, Into paganism, Was full of, Promiscuity, Full of profligacy, And yet, Do you remember, How God, Had allowed him, As it were, To fall into the gutter, So that he would be humbled, So that he might be restored, And saved.

[18 : 05] And what we're seeing here, You see in chapter 43, Is the extraordinary fruit, Of genuine change, Genuine transformation. Because it's Judah's action here, And as we'll see next time, His intercession before Joseph, In chapter 44, That is the climax, Of this whole story.

Judah becomes the surety, He becomes the pledge, The protector, The savior. At the price of his own life, For his brother Benjamin, Indeed, For all his brothers.

It's a wonderful evidence, Isn't it? Of what God can do, And what God does do, And what God is doing, All the time, In people's hearts, And lives. Not just, Convicting them of their sins, Not just, Forgiving their past, But actually, Changing his people, To give them a glorious future, Serving his kingdom.

Sometimes in ways, That make us marvel, With astonishment. Can a leopard, Change his spots? Can a liar, Or a drunkard, Or a man of violence, Or an adulterer, Or a sexual predator, Can they really change?

Well, Most people, I think, Would say, Well, No, A leopard doesn't change his spots. But friends, The answer is yes, When the God, Of transforming grace, Does change him, Gloriously, By his mighty saving power.

[19 : 39] Judah, Do you remember, When he was born, He made his mother, Praise the Lord, That's what his name means, Praise. But what a terrible disappointment, What an agony, Judah's life, Must have become, To his parents, Over the years.

I'm sure many tears, Were shed by them, Don't you? As he plowed his own furrow, In a far country, Living as a pagan Canaanite, All those years. And yet, In that far away place, God touched him, God humbled him, God restored him, And it was that man, Who became the great leader, The great savior, Of his family.

Well, That might be a great comfort, Mightn't it, To, To some parents here, Who knew the praise, The joy of, Of early days, Turned to terrible sorrow, As they've watched, A child of their own, Perhaps, Go far away, Perhaps very far away, From the Lord.

Maybe a comfort, To someone, Here themselves, Who thinks that, Well, Maybe my background, My mess, My baggage, Maybe I can be forgiven, But never really, Can I have a place, Serving the Lord, And serving his people, Well not so, Remember Judah, Go back and read, Chapter 38 of Genesis, And then come back, And read this chapter, And the next, That's why they're here, To show us, What God can do, To remind us, To assure us, That in God's hands, Real change, Real transformation, Is possible, Even from a terrible, Sordid mess, It's what God loves, To do, It's what God does do, Still, That sometimes, Yes, It does take a big fall, That's true, Sometimes, It can take a long famine, But you see, The courageous pledge, Here really is a testimony, To a man, Who has been truly changed, By the grace of God, A man transformed, According to God's,

Sovereign purpose, And God's purpose, For those that he loves, Hasn't changed, It's still the same, To transform us, If you doubt me, Well read, Ephesians chapter 1, Read Romans chapter 8, And many other places, In the Bible, Well, We need to keep moving, In verses 11 to 14, The focus moves, From Judah to Jacob, And especially, To his covenant prayer, A covenant prayer, That reveals, Jacob's capitulation, To God, Because what we see here, Is a man who is surrendering, To God's sovereign power, Judah, Is very persuasive, Perhaps his pledge, Is enough to make Jacob, Think twice, About whether his, Sons are completely, Untrustworthy, But at any rate, He suddenly becomes, Very decisive, Doesn't he?

[22 : 30] Very practical, Verse 11, Take some gifts, He says, These things, That the Egyptians, Obviously valued, They're the things, That the Midianite traders, Were carrying, Down to Egypt, In chapter 37, It's not a bribe, It's just a wise approach, Isn't it?

And take double the money, He says, Verse 12, To show honesty, To show good faith, And last of all, Look at verse 13, Take, Take your brother, Also, And arise, And go again, To the man, The man, In whose hands, The destiny lies, It's full of, Delicious irony, Isn't it?

The story, But don't underestimate, The magnitude of this, The decision, That Jacob makes here, People are very quick, To beat up on Jacob, Commentators always seem, To do that, He's utterly self-absorbed, He's wallowing in grief, And so on, I don't know, But I wonder, How many of them, Have any idea, Of just how painful, It is to lose, A child like that, To lose a boy, On the cusp of adulthood, With their whole life, Before him, That's a very, Very hard thing, And imagine, Imagine that situation, Where you, Have that doubt, In the back of your mind, All the time, That perhaps your own family, Your own sons, Have been complicit, In a terrible crime, Against him, That's a very, Very hard thing, To live with, Isn't it?

So yes, Jacob's grief, May have been very severe, May have been abnormal, But I suspect, He just, He found himself, Every day, Struggling through, The terrible pain, Of all of that, So, Let's not be too, Over pious, In our pronouncements, About Jacob, But, I think there's more, To be said, Because look at his prayer, In verse 14, I think this reveals, To us, An even, An even deeper, Aspect, Of Jacob's grief, You see, It's a covenant prayer, He's praying to God Almighty, To El Shaddai, El Shaddai, The covenant God, Who spoke to Abraham, Back in chapter 17, Remember, Promised him, That his offspring, Would be blessed forever, And the El Shaddai, Who spoke to Jacob, At Bethel, And promised the same, For his seed, In Genesis 28, And again, When he returned to Bethel, And that's the last time, God spoke to Jacob, In this story, In chapter 35, Promising that king's rulers,

Would come from his own body, And Jacob believed God, And you see, That's why he clung to Joseph, The firstborn son, Of his beloved wife, Rachel, The only true wife, In his eyes, Not Leah, Who'd been tricked on him, By Laban, That's why Joseph, Was Jacob's anointed one, That's why he gave him, That special royal robe, To wear, And even back in chapter 37, Remember when, When Jacob was a bit irked, By Joseph's dreams, He didn't dismiss them, We're told, He rather kept it in his mind, And that I think, Is why Joseph, Why Jacob's grief, Was so dire, So deep, Because Joseph, His son, The seed, The promised seed, In his mind, Was gone, And so his grief, Wasn't just full of pain, It was full of great perplexity, How, How could the line of promise, Of the covenant God,

[25 : 51] Be disrupted in that way, And you see, I think if that is, The right view of things, Then it explains again, Why he's so protective, Of Benjamin, Because in his eyes, He is the only legitimate, True covenant son, At air, The brother of Joseph, So I think, We need to see, That in Jacob, It's not just natural grief, It's not just, Indulgent grief, It's covenant grief, That's what's shaken, In his whole faith, In his whole understanding, In God, In God's purpose, Then that can happen, Sometimes, Can't it?

Sometimes, Something can happen, In our life, Maybe it is some kind, Of terrible loss, But something that shakes, The whole foundation, Of what we believe, What we've, What we've built, Our whole life on, As a Christian, Think of the disciples, Terrible grief, At the death of Jesus, Everything they built, Their whole future on, Seemed to have been, Taken away, And utterly destroyed, So that I think, Is what's happened, To Jacob here, You see, And God, God had left him, In the dark, For a very, Very long time, How would you be feeling, In that circumstance, And yet now, Here in verse 14, Although he's still, In the dark, He still can't grasp it all, But he capitulates, Doesn't he?

He capitulates to God, He hands over his son, His beloved son, His only chosen son, Of promises, He believes him, Nighter be, And he hands him over, Into the, The hands, Of El Shaddai, The covenant God, And he throws himself, Entirely on God's mercy, May he grant you, Mercy, Compassion, Before the man, See, He's been brought, To a point of, A point of real trust, And resignation, Before God, Hasn't he?

If I'm bereaved, I'm bereaved, He says, That's not a cry of despair, That actually is a confession, Of faith, That's what the three men said, In Daniel chapter 3, Remember, Before the fiery furnace, If we die, We die, Because, We trust our God, Regardless of what happens, That's what David said, In 2 Samuel 24, When he'd sinned, And he throws himself, Entirely, On God's mercy, For his mercy is great, He says, And Jacob's capitulating, To God, He's surrendering, To his sovereign power, He's trusting utterly, In God's great mercy, That's what God had to teach Abraham, Do you remember?

When he, Was willing to give his son, His only son, Into the hands of God, And surely, This is the climax, In the same way, Of Jacob's faith, He learned here, You see, That to have Benjamin, He's got to be willing, To give him up, And entrust him wholly, To God's mercy, And Jacob meant well, Obviously, In protecting Benjamin, But he had to learn, That in the matter, Of God's covenant promise, As Paul says, In Romans 9, It depends not, On human will, And exertion, But on God, Who has, Mercy, And that's what, The apostle Paul tells us, Plainly, Was the message, Of Jacob's own, Election, Over and above Esau, And here, Jacob is going to have to learn, The same thing, About his offering, It's not going to happen, The way that, The way that he thought, It would be happening, He doesn't know, Exactly what God's doing here, He doesn't know, How the plan is unfolding,

[29 : 32] For his kingdom, To be built, But at last, He is willing, To capitulate to God, And to let the sovereign God, The all sufficient God, El Shaddai, To let him do it his way, And for Jacob to stand aside, And that's a great lesson to learn, To let God be God, To surrender our lives, To say, Okay Lord, You do know best, I can trust you, Even though I, I don't perhaps understand everything, Maybe when, God tells us very clearly, As we understand something in his word, That, That, We must give up something very precious, Maybe, Something that feels so wrong, To give up something that we love, We cherish, We want to hold on to, But God tells us we must, Because it just doesn't fit, With the way of his kingdom, A certain behavior perhaps, Maybe a certain relationship, Or a particular career path, Or a social area,

Whatever it might be, You see, It's a triumphant prayer of faith, To be able to say, Lord, I'm staking everything on your mercy, On your compassion, And if I'm bereaved, Well then I'm bereaved, See sometimes, Sometimes we can think, That we know what God's plan is, For our life, Or for some situation, We think that we, We've got God's secret providence tape, That we, We know what's, Going to happen, We know what he's going to do, With our life, Or in a situation, And the challenge then, Of a clear command of God's word, Can seem to put that whole, That whole vision in jeopardy, And we can sometimes, Let our idea, Of what we think God's plan is, Keep us back, From clear obedience, To what we actually know, Clearly, God does want us to do,

Because he says it in his word, And that's very easy for us to do, Very common, And that was Jacob, You see, Until, He surrendered to God's sovereignty, And he obeyed, Obeyed what he knew he had to do, And had a responsibility to do, And he trusted, The all-sufficient God of mercy, Even though he didn't understand everything, And God was, Was teaching him, The inviolable law, Of true spiritual harvest, That Jesus taught us all, Remember, That the way up, Is down, That the way to life, Is death, Death to self, Death to, Self-rule, Death to self-belief, And surrender, Instead, To the sovereign God, The God of mercy, But that's what we see here, As Jacob, Capitulates to God, And it's the beginning, Isn't it?

It's the beginning, Of the road, To his family's restoration, And that road leads to Egypt, And the story moves there, In verse 15, Right to the end of the chapter, And the focus there in Egypt, Turns on Joseph, And this scene, Is all about a costly peace, A costly peace, That reveals Joseph, As a man full of mercy, The mercy of God, A man who manifests, God's saving presence, And God's peace, The longest section, But the focus comes to the climax, And the focus is on Joseph, And notice, In this section now, Joseph is no longer called, The man, He's named Joseph, And it's the brothers, Who lose their names, They're just called, The men, Verse 15, And none of them are named, Except for Benjamin, And all the actions flow, Don't they, From verse 16,

When he sees his full brother, Benjamin, And now you see, With all the twelve of the brothers, Gathered together, The path to peace, And reconciliation is open, And peace, Shalom, That's the key word here, You see it there in verse 23, Peace, But it's there three times actually, In verses 27 and 28, It's just translated, As well, Or welfare, It's a very significant word, Remember back in chapter 37, They hated Joseph so much, We're told, They could not even speak a word to him, In peace, And then Jacob, Sent Joseph off, Remember to inquire, To find the brothers, And to inquire about their peace, Their well-being, And when he did that, They tried to kill him, And get rid of him, But this scene ends, With a wonderful picture of peace, Of happy feasting, And it foreshadows, The far greater restoration, That's still to come, But the path,

[34 : 32] The path to that final peace, Was far from painless, Real peace, Was very costly, It was costly both for the brothers, But also for Joseph, Because all true reconciliation, Has a price, Doesn't it?

Begins here, For the brothers, With panic in verse 18, Because they've got guilty consciences, And of course, That tends to make you panic, They're very worried, About this whole money in the sack business, So before even they're in the door, They blabber it all out to the steward, But look at verse 23, What a surprise, It's not punishment they're met with, As they think, But peace, Shalom, Peace to you, Don't be afraid, All is well, In fact, All is even better than well, Because your God, Your father's God, Has done all of this, Wonderful, isn't it?

They get a lesson in theology, From this pagan Egyptian, Or maybe he's not still a pagan, Who knows, Maybe Joseph has taught him about, About the covenant God, Of his father, And all his wonderful good gifts, The treasures of grace, That he gives, To those who deserve nothing, God has given you treasure, He says, And then the good news goes on, Verse 24, Here's Simeon, Alive and well, And here they are, Like royal guests, Having their feet washed, Having their animals fed, Being made ready for a banquet, With this ruler, Of all Egypt, They must have been, Absolutely astonished, And all this talk about God, The God that they'd paid, Hardly any attention to, For years and years, In their lives, They sense God was on the case, Last time didn't they, In chapter 42, When they were coming back, But it was fear, What has he done to us?

You see, When you, When you forget God, When you ignore God, When you put God at, At arm's length, Then of course, Your pet perspective gets confused, And you see God wrongly, Because, You paint him in your mind, As something quite other, Than he really is, You paint him as an enemy, And so you have a warped view of God, You start to fear him, In the wrong way, Remember the story Jesus told, In the parable of the talents, And the one talent man, Who said of the master, Who was immensely generous, Giving out his treasure, To his servants, Who said of his master, I knew you were a hard man, He had no sense, Did he, Of a master, Whose house was overflowing, With joy, With feasting, With sharing, He thought he was a hard man, But you see, God is teaching, These brothers here, Their view of him is wrong, He's a God of grace, He's a God of mercy, He's a God of forgiveness, They needn't fear him, In the wrong sense, No, No doubt,

They were waiting very nervously, When Joseph returned, And verse 26 says, Immediately, They bowed to the ground, Isn't that ironic, We'll never bow to you, They'd said, And yet his first words, Verse 27, Are words of peace, Are you well, Are you at peace, And your father, Is he at peace, Literally, It's heavy with iron, Isn't it, Before they couldn't speak, A word to him in peace, They wanted to kill him, And yet here, Where he could have killed them all, He wants to talk about peace, And their peace, They had callously sat down to eat, Hadn't they, As he lay in the bottom of a pit, And now they're all sitting to feast, Surrounded by his peace, His mercy, It's a seat of peace, Of harmony, Merriment, Fine food,

[38 : 22] Fine wine, For shadows, A greater reconciliation, That's still to come, But that isn't quite yet, Because, Peace doesn't come, Quite so easily, If it's real peace, Does it?

It's a costly peace here, The brothers have still got things, To learn, God's megaphone, Is still unsettling them, And it does so here, In verse 33, Look, When they're all seated, At the table, In exact order of their age, How on earth, Could this man in Egypt, Have possibly known that?

And then this lavish favoritism, That's shown to Benjamin, Five times, What all the rest of them are given, How are they going to react to that? Like they did to Joseph, When he was favored, All those years before, Or have they perhaps, Begun to be really changed, You see like, Like Jacob, They also have to learn, The ways of God's mercy, And God's grace, That it's not by merit, That it's not by natural right, Or privilege, Or rank, But it's by God's mercy, By God's choice alone, And that's the scandal of grace, Isn't it?

And there's something deep, In our human hearts, That hates that, Because, Joseph says to Benjamin here, God be gracious to you, My son, Verse 29, And then he lavishes, All this extra upon him, And we say to ourselves, Well, That's not fair, What about me?

God gives an abundance of gifts, Of whatever kind it might be, To someone else, Five times what you have, And you say, That's not right, Why can't I have that, Why can't I have that position in life?

[40 : 18] Why can't I have those possessions in life, That he has or she has, Why can't I have that position, In the church? Why can't I have, That recognition about my ministry, That he has about his?

Why can't I have that reputation, Among others, That she has or he has, Or whatever it is, You see, We think so easily like that, Don't we? But you see, What we have to learn, And what the brothers had to learn, And Jacob had to learn, Is that it's submission to God's way, To God's choice, To his grace, That's the path, To real peace, To shalom, In life, What did Jesus say, Unless the seed falls into the ground, And dies, And bears no fruit, The way up is down, You see, The way to life, Is death, Jacob wouldn't bow to God's way before, But, The brothers likewise, Wouldn't bow down either, Would they, To Joseph, Never, They said, But they must, And the Lord's, Teaching them that, And it's hard, And it's costly, And you see, The way of submission,

To God's way, Is always hard, But it's the only way, To peace, Peace with God, And peace with one another, That's why Paul's always telling the church, In the New Testament, Submit to one another, Out of reverence for God, But don't, Don't miss this, Because I think this is the most important thing of all, The path to peace, Wasn't just costly for the brothers, Who had to be humbled, In order to receive that peace, And that restoration, It was costly, It was far more, Profoundly, Deeply costly for Joseph, He had been humbled utterly, Hadn't he, To become the peacemaker, To become the reconciler, Of his brothers, Think how much is hidden, In just that one little verse, Verse 30, About what it cost Joseph, To bring his brothers, To that table in peace, We're told his compassion, His mercy, The same word,

That Jacob had prayed, The brothers would receive in Egypt, In verse 14, His mercy grew warm, Literally it says, It boiled up, And yet, You see what happened with his mercy, It was tears, Tears, Weeping, That surely spoke of pain, And anguish, Surely reminded him, Of all sorts of bitterness, The memories of loneliness, And darkness, The pit, The slavery, The prison, The despair, The forsakenness, Of one who alone, Had had to tread that painful, Perplexing path, Of huge personal cost, All in order that now, These brothers who hated him, And despised him, And rejected him, That they might find themselves, Walking a path, Not only from famine, To the place of feasting, But from all that fear, All that family fracture, And back to the place of fellowship, Of real peace,

Shalom, A costly peace, But one that reveals, The true wonder, Of God's mercy, We must close, But the story of course, Isn't finished, But even, Even in this chapter, In the pledge, And the prayer, And the peace, I'm sure you can see, A pattern, Can't you?

[44 : 01] A characteristic pattern, That we see all through, The story of the scriptures, A pattern that points us, Ultimately to where this whole story ends, In the wonderful Christ of God, In our Lord Jesus himself, Because his fragrance, Is everywhere in this chapter, Because it's a chapter, Full of compassionate mercy, And grace, And peace, It's full of the gospel, A father's prayer for mercy, Met in his beloved son's, Overwhelming mercy, To brothers, Who despised and rejected him, Who extends his grace to them, Who even weeps great tears, At the cost he has borne, But who overcomes, In order to bring them, To his table in peace, And with joy, It's a remarkable pattern, Isn't it?

But so characteristic, Of the story of God, Because it is above all, The pattern, Played out in the life, Of the great reconciler, And bringer of peace, Our Lord Jesus Christ, God seems so often, Invisible, To all of those, Who are living through the story, He seems silent, He seems absent, And everything is, Is perplexing, And terribly painful, In the path, That they're being made to walk here, And maybe that pattern, Does feel very familiar, To some of us here this morning, But you see, That's why the story is here, So that we see the pattern, That God is on the field, As we sang, Even when he is, Seemingly most invisible, His grace, His mercy, His peace, Is all around, And even though that path, Might be very painful, And perplexing, And costly, It is the path, The only path, To real peace, And the wonderful thing,

That this story reminds us, Is that, The end of the road, For those who walk with God, The covenant God, It isn't famine, It is a great feast, In the presence of the king, Well, There's much there for us, To ponder, But let's pray together, Heavenly Father, We thank you, That you are, The God of mercy, The God of grace, The God who has promised, To lead, Fractured, Broken, Warring people, Into the path of peace, We thank you, That far greater than Joseph, Our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, Came to bring us peace, Through his reconciling love, And the forgiveness of our sins, We ask, Lord, therefore, That that pattern, Might be evident in our lives,

We might walk in his way, Gladly bearing the cost, To be those who both love peace, And who make peace, Peace with you, And peace with one another, We ask it in Jesus name, Amen.