

BROADWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH • COLUMBIA, MISSOURI
THE WORSHIP OF GOD • JULY 28, 2019
“THE GOSPEL ON BROADWAY”

Litany

Based on Psalm 85

This place where we stand is hallowed ground, a blessing received.

Speak your ways of peace to our waiting hearts.

Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace join together.

Righteous harmony is as close as the ground and falls down like rain.

Let us pray:

Your ways are goodness and truth, and your path the way to peace.

Set our feet upon that way that we might delight in you! Amen.

The Scripture

Genesis 39:20-40:8

And Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined; he remained there in prison. But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. The chief jailer committed to Joseph’s care all the prisoners who were in the prison, and whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The chief jailer paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph’s care, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper.

Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker offended their lord the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. The captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he waited on them; and they continued for some time in custody.

One night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own meaning. When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. So, he asked Pharaoh’s officers, who were with him in custody in his master’s house, “Why are your faces downcast today?” They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.”

The Message
The Dawn Was Breaking
Nick Larson

The Musical: *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*
Songs: “Any Dream Will Do” and “Close Every Door”

Joseph was a young man, a teenager, one who had yet to understand or learn to know his true identity. Joseph fell into most of the classic traps of young heroes, stuck in their head thinking they can do it all.

Not hard to fathom, he was beloved just for being born. His father, Jacob, loved him best because he was born to him in old age. He was the baby of the family, the one coveted by his father.

Joseph was the one favored, famous for his brightly colored dreamcoat. In the ancient world, bright and vivid colors were rare, and one might expect to treasure armor or weaponry as a sacred gift from a parent, yet not here.

The Hebrew word describing Joseph’s coat of many colors is also translated in 2 Samuel, as the garment worn by David’s daughter Tamar.

This isn’t armor, it’s fashion. It signifies softness, and elegance. It isn’t function, it’s flair.

I can imagine those family meals where Jacob and Rachel, his second wife would serve Joseph the largest half; the left-over sweetbread, the tender cuts of meat.

Yet this cost Joseph, too. It cost him with his ten older brothers, the ones who squabbled amongst themselves and hated him. They took upon themselves to pull a Game of Thrones type move and held their own family revenge.

Setting up to kill him, these brothers mocked him, calling him a dreamer, for he had shared his dreams which all featured others bowing down before him.

Typical 17-year-old dreams if you ask me. Right?

Most fall prey to this type of unproductive thinking right, thinking we are the center of every story, that everyone else is automatically going to be thrilled that we are destined for greatness, no matter what it costs them.

In the ancient world, the strongest, most responsible, most typical masculine son is the hero of the story, yet not that, he is Joseph’s a bit of a dreamer. Rubbing it in his brothers faces, Jacob spoke of being the tallest stalk, the moon brighter than all the other stars.

That might be enough to get me to kick him into a water cistern, too.

Just pause with me for a moment and think about it. Imagine how toxic must have his relationship with his brothers got to that when they see him approaching from a far, they just huddled together. They huddled down and start to all mock him. “Oh look...the big dreamer...he’s coming this way.”

Joseph, if he’s anything like I imagine, would have been oblivious to this, happy that he spotted them, probably dreaming about how he could return home now to his father Jacob who was likely to gift him with a new PlayStation or a Xbox. Right! Perhaps, he can lay down in his own tent and play a little Fortnite.

Like any good 17-year-old, he’s probably just run the family car down on gas, spotted the ones his dad asked him to go check on, and now he’s thinking about what’s next. Not slowing down to notice the world around him.

But they aren’t. His brothers are frustrated, they are tired of his antics. They are saying, “Come on, we can just kill him and blame it on a wild animal, let’s see how good he is then.”

Haven’t you known this?

Turn on the tv today, load up your streaming service of choice, and pay attention to any family narrative and you could very well see this circumstance right!

“Game of Thrones” has nothing on Genesis. “Stranger Things,” naw. Check out what happens with Lot and his sister. The Bible, as a whole, but specifically Genesis is filled with romance, violence, fratricide, betrayal, family loyalties and disloyalties.

In this moment, we have our own little “House of Cards” moment. Yet instead of a train, they are looking to push Joseph in the mouth of a beast.

Yet, one pulls back, and Rueben says, “Let’s just push him into this desert cistern.” Cause sometimes, even when you are mean to your brother, he might just try to defend you anyway.

But even that takes a twist, as we know, and Joseph is sold into slavery. This dreamer is lost, is down and out. This golden boy.

Repeatedly, Joseph’s dreaming drives him into low place, into suffering. Yet each time he encounters someone else’s dream, it seems to be his deliverance.

Early church thinkers had a tradition of using Joseph's story as a "a type of things to come" narrative. They would reference as a prefiguring of Jesus' own narrative.

And we know, the cycle continues; right. It's not just his brothers, but his new owner's wife, who takes advantage of him. Potiphar's wife finds him attractive and tries to take advantage of him. Even when he doesn't want to do that, she finds a way to get him thrown in prison.

This is a biblical pattern, is it not? A person that God treasures and adorns, is told they are valuable just for being born, but the world doesn't like that right?

We don't like that. We want them to earn it. We want to be the favorite one. And that one is cast down, sometimes on their own, sometimes by others, sometimes by things within their control, sometimes by things outside of it.

This is life, too, isn't it? Sometimes we close our eyes, we draw back the curtain, to see for certain, what we thought we knew.

In the midst of sleeping, we figure that any dream will do. The dream of being rich, the dream of endless days off to do whatever we want to do with them. We fall prey to the idea that any dream will do.

Here, in our narrative sits Joseph, at the point where he sings this song in the Broadway adaptation of his story. He's in jail. He's longing for a future yet unseen in the light of all his loss and injustice. Here's Joseph still waiting, still hesitating, still waiting of dawn to break.

An interesting insight comes when you notice Joseph's story has four dreams. First, his two about his brothers.

Let's look closely at the examples in the dreams.

The first dream has stalks of wheat, vegetation bowing down before it. In the second one, repeating the bowing imagery, takes place not on the earth, but in the heavens, the moon outshining the stars.

In Pharaoh's dreams, it's the reverse. His first dream starts with animals, his second vegetation. Pharaoh's dreams are a descending order of creation, while Joseph's dreams are in an ascending order.

Joseph's dreams, if we pay more attention to them than the surface reading, might help us see that Joseph's role is to elevate the earth into the heavens and bring

balance between these two. While Pharaoh's dreams are about building up his empire. It is chasing the dreams of this world.

Perhaps, that is over thinking it. However, I want you to see that it isn't really about how "Any Dream Will Do," but how God can give your dream meaning.

The world's dream is about eating. It's about consuming. It's about taking what is given and perhaps more.

There is an invitation in our longing, in our waiting for the not-yet. In the midst of our sleeping, not just any dream will do.

God's dream is for a world to live, truly live. Humanity eats to live. We don't live to eat.

Too often in the church, we forget this. We get caught up in the idea that our lives match and mimic the lives of those around us. In America today, the narrative is, "Get all you can; hold onto it. There isn't enough to go around. Someone is always coming for that nice coat you've got.

Too often we've turned our back on life, in order to eat. We're scared of famine and loss. We see jail as the worst possible place, even when we see God work in the midst of it all.

God, our God, the God of Jacob and of Joseph, remains loyal even when we hit rock bottom. Even when all seems lost, even when the hits keep coming.

This is how it can feel; right? The hits keep coming. Turn on the news today, and you see it. Kids in cages. Violence in the streets. Lies from on high. Each and every turn seems to be about how and who gets to eat, at someone else's expense.

We've forgotten that not any dream will do. We need to be a part of God, and through God, we can be a part of what it means to truly live.

Jesus is calling us to know that we are loved for being his eccentric robe-wearing, color-loving, sibling. Friends, we are already loved. We have gifts and graces. More importantly, we have the ability to interpret God's dream in each new time and place.

We get so caught up thinking about how we can escape what we are in the midst of, that we often don't pause to see what God's interpretation is showing us now.

Feeling trapped? Jesus' dream is to set the captives free. Feeling alone? Jesus' dream is a beloved community where all are welcomed. Feeling depressed? Jesus' dream is

for you to find fulfillment. Feeling consumed by death? Jesus' calls us to have a faith all about life.

This week, I was at our General Assembly for the Christian Church Disciples of Christ. We were a couple thousand gathered in Des Moines, Iowa. There were workshops, business sessions, nightly powerful worships. But as I drove home on Wednesday night, I realized. What I love most about those gatherings, isn't what we do when we gather, it's that we gather at all. It's important the work we do. We passed several excellent Sense of the Assembly resolutions that made important statements about justice issues going on in our world today. We urged the wider church to study and work with large issues like immigration, transgender issues, domestic violence, and even our General Youth Council led a move for Disciples churches to embrace a Spirit of Active listening. These were worthy and worthwhile work. But what I realized, as I gathered with new friends and old friends, is that there among the people of God, God shows me how to interpret the dreams for Jesus. For together, we can understand ourselves.

For together, we are not alone, no matter what you are going through, or how you ended up there. The God who stayed loyal to Joseph, will be loyal to you.

We ended our text this morning on a particularly important question. It is the one I want you to walk away carrying this morning. These two officials in jail with Joseph both tell him, that they both had dreams, but that there was no one to interpret them. And Joseph responds, "Do not interpretations belong to God?"

God is the one, who can show you how your dream can lead to life. That dream that is deep within your heart and comes to mind when you wake. That dream that visits you in the middle of the night. God can help you interpret it. God can show you how to take whatever dream it is, even if it has years of famine within it. God's interpretation always leads to life.

Because friends, Dawn was and is breaking. For the Sun is rising, and so can you.

Amen?

Amen!