

It's Me!

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon explores the story of Joseph as a powerful symbol of Jesus' love and desire for reconciliation with humanity.

Duration: 33:26

Scripture: Exodus 12:7, Mark 16:15, John 1:29

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Joseph and his brothers from the Bible. He highlights the dysfunctional family dynamics in Jacob's household, where Jacob favored Joseph over his other sons. This favoritism led to resentment among the brothers. The sermon also focuses on the events that unfold when Joseph, who had been sold into slavery by his brothers, becomes a powerful governor in Egypt and tests his brothers' character by demanding the presence of their youngest brother, Benjamin. The preacher emphasizes the lessons we can learn from this story, such as the consequences of favoritism and the importance of taking responsibility for our actions.

Transcript

I want us to be visited by the Lord today because I want to tell you my favorite story in the whole Old Testament. It's a great story. And it helps us to do something that some of us are not used to, which is trying to see Jesus in the Old Testament.

Most people think if you're gonna talk about Jesus, you have to look in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Then you see him being talked about in Acts and in the epistles of the New Testament. But there's a great way to study the Bible, which is called looking for Jesus on every page.

Because in the Old Testament, there are symbols, or it's called among the Bible experts, types, T-Y-P-E-S. Types, symbols, referrals, prophetic references to what Jesus would do. But it's happening in the Old Testament dispensation.

For example, shed the blood of that lamb on Passover night and put it on the doorpost, and when I see the blood, I will, what was that lamb and that blood a real symbol of, though? Of course, the blood of lambs can provide salvation. That was a symbol, a precursor, of what Jesus would do and be. That's why John the Baptist called him Behold the Lamb of God.

And then there's people in the Bible like David, et cetera, who go through things and do things that are typical of what Jesus would come and do. But this is my favorite one. This is my favorite one of all.

I just wanna tell you this story, and oh, I have such good news for all of us to rejoice in today. In Genesis, it's a long story, I'm just gonna give you a couple verses. When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, why do you just keep looking at each other? He continued, I have heard that there's grain in Egypt.

Go down there and buy some for us so that we may live and not die. Then 10 of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others because he was afraid that harm might come to him.

He was the youngest. So Israel's sons, that's another name for Jacob, Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain for the famine was in the land of Canaan also. And now finally, oh no, now Joseph was the governor of the land, the person who sold grain to all of its people, so when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.

As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger, and he spoke harshly to them. Where do you come from, he asked. From the land of Canaan, they replied, to buy food.

Then three chapters later, and then Joseph could no longer control himself before all of his attendants, and he cried out, have everyone leave my presence. So when there was no one with Joseph, he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

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. And then Joseph said to his brothers, come close to me.

And when they had done so, he said, I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt. 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. And I am standing right here before you, standing right ahead of you.

Oh, praise God. Well, you know the story, but let's go over it for those who knew her in the Bible. Jacob had a dysfunctional family like the one he grew up in.

He had 12 sons, and he had a favorite who was born to him named Joseph. And Joseph, the father showed that he was his favorite by giving him a beautiful robe, jacket, outer garment that none of the other brothers had. Now the brothers knew that daddy was favoring Joseph, so that made them resent him.

No one likes to grow up with a pet in the house. Maybe some of you grew up with your parents favoring someone else. It's not fun.

It's not nice. It's wrong to do that. So Joseph was resented from the get-go.

But on top of that, Joseph had dreams. He didn't ask for dreams, but he got dreams. And in the dreams, he saw, I'm speeding up the story, he saw his brothers bowing down to him.

And he went and told them that. Not so good to share that kind of dream with your brothers who can't stand you to begin with. What, are we gonna bow down to you? I'm just telling you my dream.

Then he had another dream where his father and his mother would bow down to him. He shared that one. Oh, they couldn't stand him.

One day, his father sent him out to find out how his brothers were doing. They were far away from home, taking care of animals. And as Joseph just approached the brothers, the 10 of them saw him, and they started talking.

Let's kill him, we can't stand him. Let's kill him. Imagine that.

Hating your brother so much, you wanna kill him. If God is love, you can be sure wherever there's hatred, that's where the devil is. So these brothers, when he arrived, when he came to them, they grabbed him.

Imagine what that did to him, psychologically and emotionally. They grabbed him, and they were gonna kill him, but one of the brothers said, no, we can't kill our own brother. So let's just put him in an empty cistern that's stored water, and let's try to figure out what we'll do.

But don't do that, because our father will go down to the grave with a broken heart. So while they're trying to discuss what they're gonna do, and he's been beaten, maybe stripped, and he's lying in this cistern, some Midianite slave traders' caravan, they're passing by, and somebody gets the brilliant idea, oh, how about this? Instead of killing him, let's sell him as a slave. Let's make believe he's just a slave.

Make some money off of him, and let him go to Egypt as a slave. These are his brothers, who the 12 tribes of Israel are named after. So that's what goes down, and Joseph ends up in Egypt.

And they go back with some corny story, getting his robe, they kill an animal, they rub the blood on the robe, and they go to their father and go, Dad, it's so bad. We found the robe, and Jacob has a fit of hysteria and emotion, and he starts weeping, and he's saying, my Joseph, it has to be animals who got him, and look at the robe. And they've covered up everything so beautifully.

Got rid of the brother they hate, and Joseph's down nowheresville in Egypt. But while Joseph's in Egypt, he gets hired by a guy named Potiphar, who is a leader next to Pharaoh there in Egypt. And you all know the story.

God is with Joseph, and Potiphar begins to trust him, and he puts everything under his charge, but Pharaoh's wife has eyes for Joseph, tries to seduce him. He won't do it, and then because she's been spurned, she makes up a story and says, he tried to rape me. And as he fled, when she was trying to grab him, she kept his outer garment.

Joseph has a thing with outer garments through the whole story. Look what he did, and she lies, and Potiphar believes her, and now Joseph is in a slammer, and Joseph is in a slammer, but God is with him in prison. I tell you, when God is with you, wherever they do, wherever they put you, God is with you.

Come on, let's put our hands together. The blessing of God. So, he's in prison, and he interprets the dreams of two people who worked with Pharaoh, and he tells the one, you're gonna be restored back to the right hand of Pharaoh, and I just want you to know, you're the cup bearer for him.

Remember me, because I'm in here for no legitimate reason, but the guy forgets him. I mean, Joseph's life is turmoil, and now he's lying in prison for a while. But then Pharaoh has a double-featured dream, not just a dream, he has a repeated dream, and as he's trying to figure out what it means, the cup bearer says, oh

my goodness, my bad, my bad.

When I was in prison, there was a guy named Joseph, a Hebrew, and he interpreted my dream, and it came to pass, Pharaoh says, get him here. Joseph comes, cleans himself up, hears the dream from Pharaoh, and he says, here's what's gonna happen. There's gonna be seven years of plenty coming.

That's what your dreams mean. God gave you a double dream, and that's to affirm it very strongly, and to say it's gonna happen soon. There's gonna be seven years of plenty, and the crops will be abundant, but it's gonna be followed by seven years of famine.

So, without even asking permission, Joseph goes further and says, that's not only what your dream means, but let me tell you what you need to do. During the seven years of plenty, oh Pharaoh, you need to store up every kind of food you can, give the people what they need, but do a conservation of the crops, so that they can be stored up in silos, and whatever they used back then, so that when the seven years of famine come, you're gonna be able to not only have food for the people, but people will come from around the world looking for food from Egypt. And Pharaoh sees all this, and that God's spirit rests on this young man, and he says, not only did you interpret the dream, and I know it's right, you're the man.

I make you next to me now in all of Egypt. You're in charge of storing all the food for seven years. I put you in charge of everything.

Next to me, you are number one in all of Egypt. That's how quick it all happened for Joseph. He went from the basement to the penthouse, right next to Pharaoh.

Well, the seven years of plenty happened, and they're storing food, and now the seven years of famine come. But the famine isn't just in Egypt, it's in everywhere. And guess where it hits? In Canaan.

And his father, and his brothers, and his sisters are being affected. And Jacob says to his brothers, I hear that there's food in Egypt. Go down, because we're gonna die.

So now years have passed. Some commentators believe 20 years have passed. At least 10 or 12 years have passed.

And Joseph now has an Egyptian name, and he dresses like an Egyptian, and he speaks Egyptian, but he still also knows the Hebrew tongue. So Jacob sends 10 of the sons, but he keeps the youngest one, Benjamin, home. That was like Joseph's best brother.

And he sends them down there, and they make the trek down to Egypt. And whose palace do they come into, and whose office and throne room do they come into? But Joseph. And he picks it up in a second, who they are.

But they don't know it's him. Of all the places in the Bible that I'd love to be a fly on the wall, what emotion, what tension. So the 10 of them bow down before him, just like the dream.

Boy, when God says something, it's gonna come to pass. And they bow down to him, and they say, oh, governor, we're from the land of Canaan, and we left our father and our brother, and. No, you're not, you're spies.

No, no, we're not spies. No, you've come to spy out our land, Joseph says. And to speed up the story, he says, I'm not letting any of you go.

You say you have a father and a younger brother? How come your younger brother isn't here if your story is true? No, no, no, our younger brother, see, we had two other, there's two other brothers. One, he died, and the other one is young, and dad is worried about him, because he lost that other one who he liked so much. Oh, did he? And the Bible says, he puts them in prison for three days, and says, no, you go and get your younger brother before I give you any supplies.

And they go, no, our father won't let him go. Then all 10 of you wait here. Well, in front of him, they begin to remonstrate with each other, and they go, you know why this is happening to us? They start talking in Hebrew.

You know why this is happening to us? This is happening because we killed Joseph. And then when we didn't, we tried to kill him, and then when we didn't kill him, we sold him down the river. This is all coming back on us.

And Joseph's listening and understands every word. And now he can hardly hold back the emotion. Three times in this story, it says he wanted to cry so bad that at one place, he had to run out of the room so they wouldn't see him cry.

Well, he finally says to them, okay, I'm keeping one of the sons here. I'm gonna keep Simeon here. You go back, the other nine of you, and you get the younger brother, or I won't believe anything about you.

So they go back, but before they go back, Joseph tells his assistant, look, put all the stuff that they need for food and all the money that they paid, put the money back that they paid to get the food, put it back in their saddlebags, because this is brothers. So they go back to see Jacob, and they had to leave one brother behind as security. And as they're getting back to their dad, one of them stops and opens his saddlebags, and he goes, oh no, what has God done to us? There's our money, I thought we paid the, didn't you pay the money? Yeah, we paid the money.

Then what's the money doing in the saddlebags? And then they all find out, all our money is back. We got it for free. So they go back to Jacob, and they tell him what happened, and Jacob says, where's Simeon? No, we had to leave him.

You don't know this guy is hard to deal with. Where is Simeon? I already lost Joseph. No, you gotta let Benjamin come with us.

No, Benjamin's not going with you. I already lost Joseph. Now you want me to lose my youngest son? No, no, why is everything going wrong in my life? That's what Jacob says.

And the brothers can't persuade him, and they know they can't go back without that younger brother. Well, time goes by, and now they're starving to death, and Jacob finally comes to his senses and says, look, we gotta figure something out. We're gonna die.

This famine is so brutal. So go back, but not without Benjamin. No, no, you don't get it.

The governor said, if you don't come back with Benjamin, don't come back at all. You don't come back with that younger brother. Okay, so Judas says, look, I'll take responsibility.

Dad, it's my responsibility. It's on me, but he's gotta go, or we're gonna perish. So he says, okay, I don't know.

My life's gonna end bad, I think. And they take off again. And now they arrive, and all the brothers are there.

And Joseph calls for a meal, big lunch, and they're nervous. Were we eating today? Just anything? No, you're gonna eat at the governor's house. Why are we eating at the governor's house? Because the governor said he wants you all to be there.

He's gonna bring Simeon, and you got your other brother. All 11 of you will be there, and they're nervous. So many lessons in this for us.

So they all sit down at the table, and Joseph said, is this the younger brother? And they go, yes, governor. And he goes, very interesting. How's your father doing? Oh, dad's well, but he's a little nervous because we're all down here.

So he eats separately, they eat separately, the Egyptians eat separately, but the Egyptians have nothing to do with Hebrews back in that day. And then he sends them all home. But again, he puts the money back.

He gives them all the food that they purchased, but he puts the money back, and he puts a cup in Benjamin's saddlebag, his own cup, drinking cup. And then after they leave, he sends some people after him, his assistants, and says, why would you steal from me? Why would you steal? And when they're caught up with, we're not stealing. Yeah, he says, you're stealing.

The cup's missing, and he knows you took it. No, no, no, we would never take a cup. That's the last thing we do.

Am I right, brothers? And everyone goes, yes, we would never take a cup. Good, then open the saddlebag. And they say, listen, whoever has that cup, let him be killed.

And they open the saddlebags, and there it is in Benjamin's. So now they're all hauled back. And now we get to what we read in chapter 45.

Joseph can't take it anymore, as he sees them squirming. And he says to everyone, get out. All the Egyptians, all out.

I wanna be alone with these 11. And the Bible says, he starts crying so loud that the Egyptians could hear it. See, he gets rid of everyone because he doesn't wanna shame them in front of other people.

Because as he reconciles with them, he doesn't want anyone else to know what they really did to him, because some of the Egyptians who love him might turn against these brothers. And he says to them, I am Joseph. And they go, no, no, what are you talking about? He goes, no, I am Joseph.

Come near to me. Don't worry, don't be afraid, just come close to me. And he wails, and he cries, and he hugs them.

And tears are flowing, but at first they're too afraid to believe this. And then he hugs Benjamin, and he says to all of them, you go get my father and bring him here. I'm gonna give you the best land in Egypt.

I'm gonna give you everything you need, because God was overseeing this whole mess, including, including what you did to me. Where do we see Jesus in that? Just this. Did you know the great desire that

Jesus has today is to reveal himself to our hearts, who he really is, how much he loves us.

See, the whole story changes when Joseph reveals himself. Until Joseph reveals who he is, the story is going nowhere. It's just full of dead ends, and tension, pain.

Everything changes when Joseph says, I am Joseph. And he starts speaking to them, probably in the Hebrew tongue, and says, I am Joseph. I am Joseph, but I'm not mad at you.

I love you, I know all about you. I know what you did. I am Joseph, and I wanna help you, and I wanna bless you.

And they're shaking in their boots. And he's trying to convince them, I am Joseph, that's what Jesus is doing here today. He's saying, I am Jesus.

I'm the one you need, I'm your savior. I'm the only one who can help you. I've been with you, and you didn't recognize me.

In earlier parts of your life, I was five feet away from you, but you didn't know me, just like the brothers didn't know Joseph. But now I'm telling you, I am Jesus. Open your heart to me.

I don't wanna hurt you, I wanna bless you. Oh, come on, let's put our hands together and thank God what Jesus means to us. That's what Jesus still wants to do today.

You know why some of us here, maybe in this building, aren't serving him with all our hearts? Because we don't know who he is. When he reveals himself to your open heart, you will fall in love with him, because you will find out how much he loves you. Do you know that you're even here today because he kept you from stuff before you even knew him? Can I get an amen? Come on, let's put our hands together, what God has done.

He's watched out for us, he's led us. Even before we knew him as our savior, he protected us. And the supply that you need, the food you need, you're dying, you're starving inside.

Jesus is the one who will feed you. Jesus is the one that God has declared to be the savior of all men. And that's what he wants to do.

And you know why the Bible tells us Joseph made everyone get out? Because when Jesus reveals himself to us, it's always in a private, personal way. He reveals, Paul says, I remember the day when Christ revealed himself in me. There's a time for noise and for praising God, but when Jesus reveals himself to you, it's a very tender, emotional moment.

In your heart, you realize, oh no, oh no. I didn't even know it was him helping me along the way, and now he's knocking on the door of my heart and he's saying, open the door, let me come in. I am Jesus, I am Jesus.

I love you more than you could imagine. I don't wanna hurt you, I have plans to help you. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Oh, I wish that God, by your spirit now, just reveal Jesus to our hearts. Christianity isn't about coming to this church. What in the world could this church do for you? It's Jesus.

It's pointing you to Jesus. Can we give Jesus an ovation? Jesus, Jesus, I am Jesus. That's what's burning in Joseph's heart during the story.

That's what's burning in God's heart, because you know why some of you aren't serving him and we're not living the right way? It's because we don't know who he is. We don't know who he is, but when you know him, you love him. We love him because he first loved us, but if you don't have that love revealed to you, how are you gonna love him? Secondly, Joseph is a beautiful type of Jesus in this way.

The one they had rejected became their savior. They rejected him as their brother and sold him down the river, and the one they rejected has become the one who is the only one who can deliver them, and that's just what Jesus has done. He came to his own, but his own what? Received him not.

The one we reject is the one who's our savior, and he comes with no recrimination. This is the amazing thing about Jesus. Joseph is the rejected one who's the savior, just like Jesus, crucified on a tree, yet he's crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords by God.

So if you're rejecting him today, I'd love to just jump in your heart and make you see how much he loves you, and when the brothers look at him and he says, listen, I know you rejected me, but don't worry about it. There's no recrimination. If you were Joseph, what would have you done when you revealed yourself to your brothers? I know what some of us would have done if we could have our way.

Yeah, I'm Joseph. How about that? Yeah, Joseph as in cistern Joseph, you know? As being sold down the river, Joseph? As when you grab me and strip me? Every dog has their day, and guess what? Bow wow, you're having your day right now. How many are glad that God is not like us? Lift your hand up.

No recrimination. Shh, no recrimination. No, just no recrimination.

See, it makes no sense. You know why it makes no sense? It's what some of us struggle, and maybe you're here today and you were brought up in a legalistic background like I was. You don't understand God's grace, so you can't receive his love.

The Bible says keep yourselves in the love of Christ. You can't because you're always trying to earn something, trying to do something good so that he'll love you so you can merit it, and that's a dead end. Trust me.

Grace is God loving us despite what we've done. Joseph loves them not because they've been good brothers. He loves them because he loves them.

Jesus loves you today not because you've earned his love, because he is love. No recriminations. We stagger at that because we have, all of us keep a little book if we're not careful of the good guys and the bad guys.

The people who have stroked us the right way, we're good with them, and then there's the bad list, the people we want to get back at because of what they've done. Jesus isn't like that. Joseph just said, come here, come close to me.

I know, but we're not, I know you're not worthy. It's not about that. It's not about what you've done.

It's about my heart, and I'm in charge. You come close to me because I'm gonna help you. I'm gonna save you.

You know, after Jesus rose from the dead, he told his disciples before he ascended, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, to every person, every man or woman. And I can imagine those disciples, as D.L. Moody points out someplace, I can imagine those disciples saying, you said preach the gospel, that I love them to every person? No, you can't mean that. You're not, not to the Gentiles.

You don't want the gospel to go to the Gentiles. We're Jewish, but those Gentile dogs, because Jews look down on Gentiles, and Gentiles had anti-Semitism from the get-go. You don't want us to go to, yeah, I want you to go tell the Gentiles too, eventually.

Tell them I love them. No, no, but we're the Jews, I know. But it doesn't matter because in me, my love, there's neither Jew, nor Greek, or Gentile, nor black, nor white, nor Asian, nor Japanese, nor Polish, nor Puerto Rican.

So, well, I know, but you don't want me to go to the one who put the crown on your, the thorns on your head. Yeah, go tell him I love him. No, no, no, no, no, no.

We'll tell everyone else, but not the guy who, how about the ones who spit on your face? Yeah, tell the ones who spit on my face. Tell them that I love them. Tell them I'll change their life.

I love them, I died for them. No, you don't mean the ones who put the nails in your hand, who grabbed your hand and put the nail in it. We're not gonna tell them the good news, are we? Yeah, tell them I love them.

Tell them I love them. Because no matter what you do, my love is deeper than what you do. Can we put our hands together and thank God for his love? Oh, come on, one more time.

Let's just thank him for his love, his awesome love. Could I insert this little thing? It wasn't in the text. When he sends them back to get his father, he says to them, and don't fight with each other on the way because he knows what they're like naturally.

Isn't that a good word for all of us? If Jesus has forgiven everything, all the junk that we've had in our trunk, if he's forgiven us for all that we've done, the last thing we should be ever doing is fighting with one another and judging one another. After Joseph has forgiven, I mean, in other words, Joseph said, I have you and I could destroy you, but I let it go because of my love. Now, you love one another.

Last thing. What did Joseph want most of all once he revealed himself? So simple. That's why this story helps me in my walk with the Lord.

Joseph says, after he reveals himself, just these simple words. Come close to me. Say it with me.

Come close to, again, come. We've been separated for so long. I know what you did, but forget that.

That's over. My love is bigger than your nastiness. Now, now that we have had reconciliation, there's gotta be restoration of fellowship.

Reconciliation is not enough. I'm gonna live close to you when you come here, but right now, just come close to me. And they're feeling like, isn't this the way we are with Jesus and with God? We're so many times conscious of where we have failed.

We're afraid of him or we feel guilty or we feel defensive. I've messed up so much. You can't mean me.

You don't mean me, do you? You mean me? Yeah, come close to me. No, but I'm not, I know, I know all that. Don't talk.

Don't say anything. Just come close to me. Did you know the great thing Jesus wants for everyone here in this building? Because he loves us, he wants us to be close to him.

The best life in the world is to live close to Jesus. Whether you have a lot of money, little money, doesn't matter, just living close to Jesus is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. And if you're here today and you know Jesus, but you've kind of like drifted away, that's what Jesus is saying to you.

It's what Joseph said to his brothers. Now that I have forgiven you, don't be 20 feet from me. Come close to me.

Don't you see the picture? I wanted to be there so bad. I'd love to have been there. When he puts his arms around them and they're all hugging and kissing each other's neck.

Just stay close to me. And the Bible says later, and they began to talk to him. That's what Jesus wants today.

Just come close to him and talk to him. Tell him what you're going through. Tell him where you hurt.

Tell him where you've been devastated. Tell him whatever. Just tell him and stay close to him.

Oh, it's the story of Joseph, but it's really the story of Jesus. I am Jesus. Come close to me.

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