

WRONG PLACE, RIGHT TIME**Genesis 40****(Read Genesis 40)**

Intro: Kathy and I really enjoyed the TV series, LONGMIRE. It's a modern day western that is supposed to be in Wyoming but was filmed entirely in New Mexico – which, as you know, is very special to us. The show portrays Sheriff Walt Longmire as he upholds the law in fictional Absaroka County, Wyoming. It ran for 6 seasons and someone was murdered in just about every episode. I determined that the series finally had to conclude because there had been so many homicides in Longmire's remote county that there were no more citizens for him to be sheriff of. Such is the nature of TV series, they are meant for entertainment value and not necessarily for believability.

I've called this series from Genesis "LESSONS FROM JOSEPH: DREAMS, DECEPTIONS, DISASTERS, DETOURS, & DELIVERANCE". And as if it is a TV series, we've seen about every one of those words that begin with the letter "D" play out in Joseph's life. He is the main character and he experiences a setback in every single episode – and we've only been through a few years of his life since he was sold into slavery at age 17.

But this isn't fiction. It's the Bible. And it's an account of God at work in the lives of everyday people like you and me. Here in Chapter 40, Joseph is again beset by a major detour while he obediently uses his gift of the interpretation of dreams. God utilizes his faithful people to provide deliverance. Really, there's not that terribly much to cover here and this is a shorter talk than I normally preach. But, what we find is powerful. Let's see how. (BTW – read chapter 41 for next week).

First, notice how Joseph makes . . .

The best of a bad situation

- This is a recurring theme for our guy Joseph. He is especially good at it. He is faithful to God, even in the face of tragedy, and he is blessed for it and also is a blessing to those he comes in contact – well,
- He might have been in prison, but as the concluding verses of chapter 39 tell us he rapidly gained favor with the prison warden. No matter where Joseph is he is obedient to God and it shows up in the fact that he is so highly regarded. He could have reacted violently or even given up and shut down. But he didn't. I mentioned last week that he truly bloomed where he was planted.
- Joseph very obviously is not hung up on himself. He wasn't curled up in a corner wallowing in self-pity – instead he was alert to where he could be of assistance. Notice how when the two men came to him in the morning after their respective dreams, he is very quick to inquire into why they were so dejected. Joseph is a beautiful picture of how, no matter what our situation is, there is still someone we can help. Making the best of a bad situation is a good way to be doing the right thing even when you're in the wrong place. In fact, it's a picture of how what we think is wrong, God makes right.
- So, don't miss opportunities for ministry and always remember that . . .

Good things take time

- Joseph's life is a perfect illustration of this. From the beginning, his treatment at the hands for his wicked brothers was bad by all indications, and by any human evaluation. Despite that God was orchestrating his will and his plan of deliverance.
- In this particular situation, Pharaoh's cup-bearer and his chief baker came into prison with the excess baggage of people who had little or no knowledge of the one true God, and every bit of the heavy burden of Pharaoh's full wrath. There is no indication of what they had done that had made them fall out of favor with the big boss, but they were in a bad way for sure.
- Joseph, on the other hand, had none of that baggage. He had been falsely accused by his boss's wife and that is why he was in prison. And before that he had been sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. His slate was as clean as any man who is sold out to God. As a result, he had less stuff to get through and that made it much easier to interpret dreams. He had a cleaner pipeline to the one who really does the interpretation and he readily acknowledges that in verse 8 when he tells the men "*Do not interpretations belong to God?*"

- So they tell their dreams and Joseph interprets the dreams, and they get sprung and he gets forgotten. He did the right thing, in the wrong place, at the right time – and he’s still in prison. Was he disappointed? I’m sure it was a bitter letdown for him. But he remained faithful. I don’t know if he knew it or not, nevertheless, it was, in reality, God’s preparation for Joseph. And it’s proof that . . .

God is even inside prison walls

- It seems that we think that just because we are in a rough patch or situation, God is not in it. This is what bothers me when we complain about God being taken out of schools or that we are no longer a “Christian” nation. But, truthfully, what constitutes God being anywhere except that he exists in the lives of his obedient people? If God is absent from schools or government or even churches, it is because his people have neglected to invite him in with them.
- That is how, even behind prison walls God is there. Our friend Wesley, who is looking forward to his release from prison this summer after over 15 years, can attest to that. And God was there with Joseph. He never forgot that – EVER. God was with Paul and Silas as they were imprisoned in the Philippian jail – that’s why they joyously sing hymns of praise as they were in chains.
- Where the people of God are – God is present. That is why Joseph knew what we need to know – even when we are abandoned by everyone, God is still there. Even when we are in the wrong place, humanly speaking, God makes it the right time.
- So, that’s how Joseph knew he was in prison for a divine appointment. Like Esther, he was there for such a time as this. Remember the book of Esther? Esther was part of a conquered people far from home when she was selected to be the queen of the Medes and Persians. They were a pagan people and she was from the chosen people of God. But Esther was there in that situation for a reason – she was there *for such a time as this* (Esther 4:14) and the people of God were delivered from the treachery of evil men who would have wiped them out.
- What situation are you in that seems like prison walls? First of all, have you thought about how God is there with you? And then, have you considered what he is teaching you through it? And also, what kingdom impact might it have through you? God is in what is humanly called the wrong place, but he makes it the right time. As his obedient people follow him, he does it every time.

Conclusion: Like Joseph we need to make the best of a bad situation. Something we’ve seen over these three messages from Joseph’s life is how he bloomed where he was planted. We must do the same.

We also saw how good things take time. One could legitimately question how Joseph’s imprisonment, in fact, all of his life since he was sold into slavery by his brothers at age 17, was a good thing. But as we have the luxury of reading how his life unfolded and we see God’s deliverance unfolding. It was obvious, no matter how long it would take – God’s good things were in place.

And finally, as we just saw, God is even behind prison walls. He brings the best out of our bad situations. So that even if we’re in the wrong place, through our obedience, he always makes it the right time. Amen.