TRIETSCH

STUDY GUIDE
& DAILY READINGS
Sunday, June 13, 2010

Joseph: From Prison to Palace

Hope ***(Week 1 of 3)***

No matter how difficult life may seem, God has created us for a purpose. Our hope in this sermon series is to encourage parents to discuss the Joseph story with kids and family as they experience the same story at VBS. In addition, all of us can learn from the Joseph story the great promise of God's promise to use even the most difficult and challenging times in our lives for good.

Jeremiah 29:10-14 — The Word from the Bible ***(Today's New International Version)***

This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

_____

_____

_____

_____

Jeremiah 29:10-14

Jeremiah preaches at a very difficult time in Hebrew history. The Babylonians are to the north and the Egyptians are to the south. Each wanted the precious trade route that ran through Judea. Jerusalem and Hebrews stood between these two great ancient powers.

By the beginning of the 6th century B.C., Babylonia had defeated the Hebrews and had begun the occupation of Jerusalem and Judea. The Egyptians retreated back across the Sahara Desert. Chapter twenty nine in the book of Jeremiah is a letter to those who are being carried off into exile and slavery in Babylonia.

Jeremiah's message is one of hope and patience for those in exile. The letter promises that God will one day reestablish the Kingdom of Judea, but it will be a long road back to Jerusalem – at least seventy years. But the promise is sure – God will be faithful. The key passage for the letter is in verse 11, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"

Patience to await God's restoration would be the key factor for the slaves in captivity. Jeremiah wanted to make sure they kept their faith and continued following the ways of God. Faith in God's tomorrow is what is needed for every generation. Faith involves patience, expecting the action of God even when it seems God is absent. Faith in the promise of God's presence leads us to see despair as a waste of time and energy.
Do not retreat from your faith and beliefs. God is going to finish what he promises.

Joseph

The story of Joseph takes place long before the Babylonian exile, but was well known by the people of Judea. This story was as well-known as the great stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the Exodus, Joshua, the Judges and Kingdoms of David and Solomon. These were the stories of their faith history. This history continues through us as we experience God's goodness, care and providence over God's people. During the next few weeks we will be looking at the story of Joseph and how the hardship and tragedies of his life were used by God for blessing.

Genesis 37:1-36 – The story begins…

Joseph is described as the eleventh and favorite son of Jacob and the first-born of Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife. Joseph was a spoiled, pampered child, never letting his brothers forget his status and never taking the blame for anything in the family. His brothers hated him for this. Jacob had a special coat made for Joseph at the expense of the brothers. Further, with great arrogance, Joseph shares a dream about his brothers bowing down to him. Finally, the brothers had had enough. They plotted his demise and sold Joseph to slave traders heading to Egypt. They took the special coat; covered it in lamb's blood, telling their father Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. They thought this would be the end of Joseph, but little did they know the plan God had for Joseph and for them.

Genesis 39:1-23 – From favorite son to slavery, betrayal and prison

Joseph is sold to an Egyptian soldier named Potiphar. As Joseph matures to be a man, he proves to be an intelligent, wise, honest, and hard working slave. His youthful arrogance has seemed to melt with maturity. Quickly, he rises to the head of the Potiphar household, administering all of Potiphar's affairs. It is said that Joseph became a successful man because his master noticed ***"that the Lord was with him, and the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands."*** In the mind of the writer, all other factors in Joseph's rise to importance are of secondary importance. For the man who is favored by God, there is nothing that cannot be overcome.

Joseph's success comes to an end as he makes Potiphar a wealthy man. In the process, Potiphar's wife falls in love with Joseph and approaches him with her desire. Joseph is true to his master, even at the outrage of the soldier's wife. To get revenge against Joseph, she lies and accuses Joseph of approaching her. Potiphar is enraged and has Joseph thrown in jail. Even in jail, God favors Joseph and all he does prospers.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

The following prayers are for inspiration as you pray this week to seek the will of God.

Remember… someone is praying for you. Have a great week!

O God, early in the morning I cry to you. Help me to pray and to concentrate my thoughts on you: I cannot do this alone. In me there is darkness, but with you there is light. I am lonely, but you do not leave me. I am feeble in heart, but with you there is help. I am restless, but with you there is peace. In me there is bitterness, but with you there is patience. I do not understand your ways, but you know the way for me... Restore me to liberty, and enable me so to live now that I may answer before you and before me. Lord, whatever this day may bring, your name be praised.

— Composed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) in a Nazi prison while awaiting his execution
From A Catholic Prayer Book, www.catholiccity.com/prayer/book.html

O Lord
teach me to seek you,
and reveal yourself to me
when I seek you.
For I cannot seek you unless
you first teach me,
nor find you unless
you first reveal yourself to me.
Let me seek you in longing,
and long for you in seeking.
Let me find you in love,
and love you in finding.

— Saint Ambrose of Milan, c. 340 - 397

Next week we continue this series by looking at the life Joseph.
The sermon will focus on the wisdom that Joseph receives
from God through his dedication and devotion to God.

Invite someone to worship this week. You will be glad you did.
God is doing great things through the ministry of Trietsch.

Daily Readings

Please note: The book of James is a book I like to read at least once a year. During the next few weeks the study guide will follow the book of James. This book is often misunderstood as emphasizing works over faith. Martin Luther in the 16th century referred to James as the "epistle of straw." Luther believed that the focus of "salvation by faith" is lost in James as he teaches his reader about the importance of works as a person of faith in Christ.

James' message is for the person who has lost touch with the high call of Christ in their behavior. It is far more than an "epistle of straw". As the apostle Paul says, "By your fruit you shall be known." Likewise, James knows that our life with Christ begins in faith, and then leads to a new way to live. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper.

Monday June 14 – Read James 1: 1-8. James introduces his letter with an invitation to faith. Clearly, James is using the need for wisdom as a beginning point as evidence of faith. James states that nothing comes from God except through faith. Begin this day by asking God for wisdom. In faith, expect God to provide wisdom. In faith, expect God to provide wisdom for you in each circumstance in your life. Have you shown wisdom in your relationships? At the end of the day thank God for what God has done through you.

_____

_____

Tuesday June 15 – Read James 1: 9-11. Now James begins to address the different aspects of our lives. In this short passage ,James briefly mentions the unimportance of wealth or poverty in the eyes of God. He makes the statement, ***"in the midst of a busy life, they will wither away."*** In other words, no matter if you are rich or poor; if you are too busy your life will lose its meaning. Today review your schedule for the week. Do you have time for those persons in your life you love? Have you left time to pray, to worship, and to study God's word? Are you too busy? As your day ends, pray for direction in clearing your schedule for what is really important.

_____

_____

Wednesday June 16– Read James 1: 12-18. As James moves through the challenges of life he now addresses temptation. He reminds us that temptation is not a test from God, but rather part of our inner human struggle. The warning is clear that temptation left unchecked leads eventually to death. Likewise, every ***"generous act of giving"*** connects us to the work of God in this world – ***"first fruits of God's creatures".*** Start your day by identifying your greatest temptation. What is separating you from God? What act of generosity can pull you closer to God today?

_____

_____

Thursday June 17– Read James 1:19-27. Focus on verses 23 and 24 – ***"…be doers of the word and not merely hearers…"*** Follow the advice of James in verse 24. Begin your day by looking in a mirror and seeing the person God has created. Remember through the day the image of God you saw in the mirror at the beginning of the day. As James reminds us, our words as well as our actions affect the way we are seen as followers of Christ.

_____

_____

Friday June 18– Read Hymn 399, Take My Life and Let it Be. Sing or read this hymn as a prayer for the day. Give thanks for the privilege of serving God and the growth that it brings to our faith and life. Focus especially on verse three and the need to release our will to God.

_____

_____