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GENESIS 46

Series: Understanding Your Roots

An article came through my newsfeed this week that grabbed my attention. It was about how people are living now and how now is different than it has been in the past, especially during COVID times. So here's what it says. "Now, for many, daily life lacks the structure, status, and meaning that it once had, as the Princeton University economist Anne Case and Angus Deaton have explained. Many people feel less of a connection to an employer, a labor union, a church, or a community group. They are less likely to be married. They are more likely to endure chronic pain and to report being unhappy. These trends have led to a surge of deaths of despair, a phrase that Case and Deaton coined from drugs, alcohol, and suicide."

You want to read those words, those words obviously written from people who aren't believers, I look at that I go, "Oh man." My heart just goes out to those people. You know some of those people. They're negative, they're complaining, they're just despairing about life. And you go, "Oh man." My heart just grieves for them, because I know the truth that they need. I don't just want to say, "Well they need Jesus," because if you say they need Jesus, it sounds trivial and doesn't maximize the pain that they're experiencing in their own heart that. But I think that it's more than just I need Jesus, it's more than just coming to a church, it's more than just praying a prayer, it's more than just reading a Bible verse during the day. It's all of those things. But it's embracing a biblical worldview. The way to look at life, the way to think about life. It's just a whole different way to approach life. And people need that. They need to understand the key that we're going to look at today in Genesis 46.

God's going to do something in Genesis 46. Just the first few verses we're going to look at today. He's going to do something in Jacob's life that we all need. I need it. You need it. It is a powerful truth that is going to be...it sets the rivets in our lives so that we can move forward in a positive way.

You see in the story, Joseph has already told his brothers go back and tell Jacob to come on back. So we're going to leave the idea of Joseph in Egypt for now. Now we're going to go back to Canaan where Jacob is, and Jacob heard the words *my son is alive*. He was overwhelmed. The Bible says he was numb when he heard it. Just the news surprised him so much.

Now he's going to have to make a move from Canaan, where I'm sure he thought he was going to die. He's an old guy. He's an old man. He can't even walk anymore. They're going to have to put him on a wagon to take him to Egypt. That's how old he is. He's older than me. He's really old. So he's going to go back. But he's got to make a change in his life. How is he going to be able to adapt to that? How's he going to be able to make the adjustments necessary to go where he needs

to be? There's one key idea that takes place in these verses that's going to grab him. I think it's the same idea you and I need to experience life in a chaotic world. How can we go on every day? How can we experience God? How can we experience life in a powerful way? It's this one idea that we find in Genesis 46.

Now, you know he's just heard about this. And now he's going to get ready to go. He's getting ready for the trip to go down to Egypt. Here's how Genesis 46 opens up. Look at it in your Bible with me. It says – *So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.*

So notice they call his name Israel. He's going down to Beersheba. Now Beersheba is the southernmost part of Israel. We describe Israel geographically from Dan to Beersheba. Now he gets down to that place where he sees the exit sign. You are now leaving Israel. You are now entering wilderness territory before he gets to Egypt. He sees the sign there and he says “Okay, we've got to stop here. I need to spend some time with the Lord.” And he says he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Interesting that he references his father, because we're going to see that his father passes his faith on to him in a very powerful way. Something that is a treasure that we want to see in these verses. I'll show you more about that in a moment.

It says – *And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, “Here I am.”* Oh I love those words. He hears his name called and he says, “Here I am.” It's so important for us to have that kind of response. That's why when I talk to young people, I talk to children, I say that's what your response needs to be to God certainly, but you practice it in your response to your parents. When your parents call your name, “Jacob, Jacob,” what do you say? Do you have the “wait a minute” disease and you say “one more thing” or “no” or whatever you say. You've got to say “yes.” That's the answer. That's why we sing that song first. Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord. Yes, yes, Lord. We've got to be in the habit of saying yes. Not wait, but now. I tell kids if you don't practice yes now, when God speaks to you, are you going to be able to listen? Are you going to say, “One more thing, God, before I obey you. Oh, God, wait just a minute.” No, we want to immediately obey. And that's what Jacob does here. He immediately obeys God or listens to him. *“Jacob, Jacob.” He says, “Here I am.”*

Then he said, “I am God, the God of your father. The same one that you knew and saw his experience in his life. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you... (We'll come back to those words. Those are the key words I want to look at.) I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes.”

I myself will go down with you, he says. I will be with you are those words that provide us with what I think are the key to dealing with the chaos in our world, the challenges we experience. We can enjoy God's blessing, we can enjoy what he has when we understand God's saying to us, I will be with you. I'm going down there with you to Egypt, He says.

Now this whole idea of God's presence is not new for Jacob. Jacob has experienced that. I want to show you some verses just to illustrate God's presence. So that today when you leave here, you can walk out of here in God's presence. When you go home, you can be in God's presence.

If we look at Isaac's life, we see in Genesis 26 that he wanted to go down to Egypt. And God said no. He says to him in verse 3 – *Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you. Stay here. Don't go down to Egypt. Stay in this land, I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham, your father.* So Abraham passed the faith on to Isaac. Isaac is now thinking he's going to go down to Egypt. God says, “No. Stay right here.”

I just want you to know that sometimes the presence of God is needed when you have to make a change. Some of you here today are needing to make a change in your life. It's either happening, or you know you need to make those changes that need to take place in your life, and God's presence is with you to do that. There's other people who need God's presence because you're not making a change. You have to stay right where you are. And you need God's presence in the midst of that. That's what God is saying to Isaac. He's saying to him, right now, right where you are, I am with you. You're not going anywhere. Don't go down to Egypt, like you think you want to do. Stay here in Canaan.

Well Isaac continues on in his life. And later on it says in Genesis 26:24 – *The Lord appeared to him the same night and said, “I am the God of Abraham, your father.”* It's interesting, the passing on of faith between generations here. *Fear not, for I am with you, and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham sake.* So Jacob is hearing it from his dad. I'm sure his dad told them about these times when he was making decisions when God's presence was with him.

Well let's go back into our story of Jacob a little bit because this idea of the presence of God doesn't just pop up in Genesis 46. Do you remember when Jacob left his home, kind of went off to college or went out to get a job, or, in this case, went out to get a wife in Paddan Aram. He puts his head down on this rock pillow and he sees the stairway to heaven, representing the connection that he had with God on his own. Not just his father's faith, but his own faith. And now he's heading off into some new territory, something where he hasn't been before. And it says in Genesis 28:15 – *Behold, I am with you, God says, and will keep you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.* What's going to allow him to go on into the next place. What's going to allow him to experience success or joy or whatever in the next place. It's the presence of God. You and I need the presence of God in our lives to go to the next step. Whatever that next step is, we need that.

Now you remember he's in Paddan Aram. He's going to come back now to Canaan, to the promised land, but he's afraid about Esau. So he wrestles with God at night. And God says this in that wrestling experience brings back the same idea. It says – *Then the Lord said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and your kindred, and I will be with you.”* It's a sense of I will be with you, the presence of God, that's helping Jacob at each step in his life. Do we experience the presence of God?

Now we come to chapter 46, where we are now, and we saw that God is saying to him, “I'm going down to Egypt with you. That's how you're going to make it.” I know you don't understand the future. We look at our own lives and the challenges that we face. God says, “I know you

don't understand the future. I know you're disappointed in the past. I know you've got things going on in your life. I will be with you. My presence is right there with you. You don't have to know all the details." I don't know the whys of life, but I know the God who has the answers. All I have to know is to keep that connection strong and to trust in God's presence in my life. And He can take me anywhere. I can live in any situation, because of the very presence of God.

But Jacob is going to use these words with his son. I just got to show you this. Because it's remarkable. It's passed on from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob, and now Joseph is going to receive this at the end of Jacob's life. Jacob is about to die and he brings his son Joseph in there in Egypt. I know we haven't gotten to this passage yet. But here's what he says to him. Notice he says – *Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I'm about to die, but God will be with you, and will bring you again to the land of your fathers."* God will be with you, Joseph. He's passing that faith on down the line.

I just love that. I think it's powerful. I think we need it. I actually think that is the solution. And I can write a book to answer the problems that they're facing at Princeton University, trying to understand the despair of hope that people have, I could write a book. It's really a simple one. It just talks about Jesus Christ and His presence in our lives.

In fact, when God sent us on this mission, you remember the Great Commission when He says – *Go out and disciple the whole world, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do all that I've commanded.* You know what his next words are? I'm just going to show it to you. He says – *And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.* I believe God has created for each one of us a mission. That's why we're here. A mission that God has given you. It's a unique mission that God has given to you to bless the world through God's grace in your life. I believe that God has created every family with a mission. When we've got a lot of tension and challenges in life, it robs you of the energy you need to keep going and to fulfill that mission. God has a mission for your life, but he says, "How are you going to fulfill this mission? I will be with you."

I think it takes courage. I think it takes courage to take steps in our lives to move forward in every situation. But let me just show you when you're in God's presence, something happens. You see in the midst of chaotic times, in the midst of challenging times, when you have the presence of God, it's like this big envelope around you that allows you to experience life differently than others experienced. Let me just take you to one verse. We could go through the whole scriptures and look at this presence of God idea. I've just given you some highlights because the idea of the presence of God is all throughout the Bible.

Look at Psalm 16:11. It says there – *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy. In your presence, there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* You see inside of God's presence is this powerful thing that we need in life. It makes the chaos have order. It makes the disappointment have the sense of joy in the midst of all of the things. God has done this. It's so powerful, the presence of God. We need it in our lives.

So you might say to me, "Well, I don't understand this. Because isn't God always present everywhere?" I mean isn't that what we believe? We call it the omnipresence of God. God is

everywhere. And the Bible even says that. He says – *Where can I go from your presence? If I go to the heavens, you are there. If I go to the far side of the sea, you are there.* In other words, God is everywhere. Yes, that's true. But there is a way in which we enter into His presence. Psalm 95:2 says - *Enter into his presence with thanksgiving.* You see, we make a choice to experience God's presence or enter into His presence. In that case, it's a reference to entering into the house of God and praising the Lord together. I know that many of you like to come to church. Calvary Chapel Living Hope is just one church. But you come to church because you experience the presence of God.

When we had been absent for a while because of COVID, and then we came together on that first Sunday, and we sang songs together, people cried on that first Sunday. Why did we cry? Because, yes! This is the presence of God. I need this in my life. There is something special that happens when we gather together. The presence of God is here. You experience that and then you take that out of here. And what do you do? You take Jesus home. You take Jesus home, you take the presence of God into your home, into your living room, into your car, and the presence of God envelops you so that you can enjoy the fullness of life right now. You don't have to wait until things get better. You don't have to wait to get a certain amount of money or you retire or you whatever. You can experience the presence of God right now. And within that is this fullness of joy talked about in Psalm 16:11.

The courage required to live the life of faith is a lot. I think there's a lot of people who regress to self-defeating activities in their lives to try to maintain and handle things. But if we would take the courage to enter into life in the presence of God, amazing things could happen.

Another verse that I love is the one in Joshua, Joshua 1:9, where God is saying to Joshua in his calling here, He's going to send him off to take the people of Israel into the promised land. He says these words: *Have not I commanded you? Be strong and courageous.* I think there's some people here who need that message right now that God wants you right now in the midst of your situation to be strong and courageous. How do you be strong and courageous? He goes on. He says – *Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.* You want to have the strength and the courage to go forward? It's going to be dependent on your ability to get into God's presence in your life.

Wow, I just think this message is so powerful and so important. We just need to feel that presence. How do you enter into the presence. You read God's word. You have an attitude of prayer that you're engaged in. You're fellowshiping with other believers. There's this presence that you're enjoying, because you are a child of God and it changes your whole outlook on life.

He says – *Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed.* I have this picture in my mind of a child who's five years old, who wakes up in the night and who cries out because they had a bad dream. Dad comes in and Dad says, “It's okay. It's okay, son. It's okay. Here, why don't you lay down and I'll rub your back or let me hold you.” I think some of you today just need the big hands of God to come right around you and hold you and say, “I'm here. It's okay. I can take care of you.” But the dad comes in to this son, “Okay, here. Let me rub your back. I'm here.” And the child feels okay. It's okay. Now dad is here. The presence of my dad is in this room. And so now I can

go to sleep. I'm okay now because of the presence of my father. I think that's the same feeling that we want to have in our own lives that we can enjoy the very presence of God today.

You don't have to be anxious, you don't have to be upset, you don't have to be angry, you don't have to be disappointed. You can be right now experiencing the fullness of joy. And it's because of this, this whole dependence of God that Jacob knows he needs. So God says this to him, as he's going off into Egypt.

So let me just read these next few verses so you see what's happening as they go off. It says in verse 5-7 – *Then Jacob set out from Beersheba. The sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him. They also took their livestock and their goods, which they had gained in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him, his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters. All his offspring he brought with him into Egypt.*

How can he go into this new place, even though he feels like I can't do this anymore. If you ever feel like that (“I just don't have the strength. I am too tired. I can't do this anymore”), you need God's presence. The key to life is to understand the presence of God. In order to understand the presence of God, the very first thing we must do is accept Jesus Christ into our lives. God, I want you to live inside of my heart. I want you to run my life so that I can experience your presence. Because God has decided of all the places He wants to live, He lives inside the heart of a person. So God wants to invite you into His presence by allowing you to invite Him into yours. When you ask God to come into your life, you're accepting Him as your Lord and Savior, then something powerful takes place in your life. And then, of course, many of us have already made that decision in our lives. We need to keep entering into that presence and enjoying that. Because it's through the presence of God that we experience this fullness of joy that God has designed for us.

I hope that will encourage you today. I sense that some people here are in deep need of this saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Not just saving for salvation, but saving from the chaos of this world. We need this in our hearts and lives. I need it. And I trust that God will use this message about the presence of God in your life today.

Would you stand with me? If God is speaking to your heart and you'd like prayer today for some area of your life, then while we're singing this song, come on up. Rose will be over here. I'll be over here. We'll pray with you today and just align ourselves with you in prayer with God concerning whatever challenge you're experiencing. Maybe a challenge in your own life. Maybe a challenge in somebody else's life that you know that you want to lift up before the Lord. We will pray with you.

Let's worship together as we sing this song.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we look forward to what you're going to do. We're grateful for your love for us. We thank you for your presence. We ask, Lord, that you would now be honored as we worship you. Even speak to us, Lord, during this song, that we might take its words and apply them to our heart. In Jesus' name, amen.