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GENESIS 46:26-31

Series: Understanding Your Roots

[PRAYER] Lord, you have done great things. It's remarkable to hear about those things as we talk to each other, to see those things in people's lives, to see the results of your church in action. We are honored to be part of your church. We recognize there are other churches in this community that are also preaching the word and they are also sharing who you are with their neighborhoods. So we ask for your blessing on their ministries today as well. So our hearts are ready, Father. Having worshiped you, our hearts are sensitive and soft and ready for your word. So we ask that you teach us today from it and give us some practical understanding that we might go out of our way from this place with some new direction, new conviction, new practical ideas that we can apply to our lives. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

I talked to a lady this week who said to me, "I love the teaching that we're doing through Genesis." That's where we are in our book right now. She says, "I was listening to your sermon series that you did before in Genesis." That must have been ten years ago. Okay. She says, "I was listening to that series in Genesis and comparing it to the sermons you're teaching now. It's completely different." And of course that's the case. I used to think when I first started preaching about forty years ago, I better save the sermon because I'm going to preach this again some time. I need to keep the recordings and everything. So I have them aside since I did all that work. And then I realized I never go back and look at that stuff. Why? Because the scriptures tell us that they are alive, living and active. What that means is that they are engaging. When we come to the scriptures, every time we do, we learn something new. So my commitment to you is that I'm every week going to go into God's word and I'm going to experience God's word in my own heart. When I do, then I'll have something to share that comes out of my heart and out of God's word that'll be relevant and practical for you. That's my commitment to you. That's what I want to do. I love that kind of teaching and that approach to scripture.

So this week when I came to this passage in Genesis 46, I was actually startled. I don't think I ever saw this before. So I'm eager to show this to you. I was so taken aback. It kind of took me on a tangent into the New Testament to do some study and some work to compare the story in the New Testament to the Old Testament. So that's what I'm going to share with you today as we go into Genesis 46.

I'd appreciate it if you'd open your Bible if you brought it. I encourage you to write and take notes. I've also put the words up here on the on the screen so you can see them.

Let me explain to you where we are in the story. This is the story of Joseph. Some of you have told me that this is your favorite Bible story in all of the Bible. I understand why. This story of

Joseph is so exciting because we see the drama, we see the emotion. But we see God's providence at work in the life of a man who experienced all kinds of terrible things in his life. Yet he remained faithful. He continued to move forward. And God blessed him in some great ways. We all need that message. That's encouraging to all of us.

So we're going to pick up the story today. Joseph sent word to and his whole family back – go bring dad back here. And everybody come. I want you to move back to Egypt here. That's where I want you to come. So now let's shift over to the perspective of Jacob, the dad, and he's gathering everything, getting it all ready to go. We enter the story in verse 26 when we have this recounting of the numbers, how many people are going into Egypt away from Canaan.

It says in verse 26 – All those who went to Egypt with Jacob—those who were his direct descendants, not counting his sons' wives—numbered sixty-six persons. With the two sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family, which went to Egypt, were seventy in all.

So the number becomes important. There's seventy people that is marked out here in the scripture. It's important because it's a small number. Seventy is the sixty-six people who are coming (not counting the wives, but sixty-six), and then there's Jacob himself, and then there's Joseph and his two boys that are in Egypt already. So you're going to start with that group of seventy, so to speak, and it's going to grow, and God has a plan for these people. Over 430 years those number of people are going to grow to be over a million people. And those people are going to then be moved out of Egypt and go back to Canaan. That's room for another book of the Bible. That's the next book, the book of Exodus. But we're in the book of Genesis now. And this point is made that there are these seventy persons that are coming. God has a plan in their lives. So the numbers at that point become important.

It says, as we read in verse 28 – *Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Joseph to Goshen.* Now Judah here, we've already read about him. He seems to be a leader among the brothers in the family. He was the one whose idea was let's sell Joseph into slavery. That was his idea years before. And then you'll remember more recently, when Joseph said, "I'm going to keep Benjamin here; you guys can leave," it was Judah who gave that great plea and that appeal to Joseph saying, "Do not do that. Our father will die if we don't bring Benjamin back. Take me. Put me into slavery." That's what Joseph was looking for was the brokenness in Judah's heart. And when he saw that, that's when he wept and he revealed himself to his brothers. Now we see again, Judah is a leader and he's stepping out and he's saying, "I'll go," and they're sending him out to get directions to know where to go. I like it that men are getting directions according to the scripture here. That was very helpful. Notice getting directions to Goshen.

When they arrived in the region of Goshen, Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. So let's shift back to the perspective of Joseph for a moment, because he hears that his family is there. Ah, this is so great. He's been waiting for this for some time. And so it says he readied his chariot. I don't know how you ready a chariot. You check the tire pressure, check the oil level. I'm not sure what you do. Maybe it's the horses, you get them

attached there or something. But he is making ready the chariot. And then he goes to Goshen to meet his father, Israel.

As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time. I'm sure you can feel the drama. Put yourself in that story. They haven't seen each other for many years. Jacob is overwhelmed with emotion and Joseph is too, and they're just crying in each other's arms and so grateful to see each other. What power exists in the drama that we see in the passage.

And then it says in verse 30 that *Israel (or Jacob) said to Joseph, "Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive."* Okay, I have what I need. I've gotten the message here. I got to see Joseph. You. That's all I needed. I can go ahead and die. So there's this great reunion that's taking place here, an amazing drama that goes forward.

So this emotional drama that we see taking place in the passage is significant. It's going to kind of draw down now a little bit. You have the greeting each other, there's all the emotion part of this. And now as it subsides, Joseph has a job to do. And Joseph is going to present the strategy. Joseph is a planner. We know that. That's why... He had the dreams, of course, but then then when he presented them to Pharaoh, Pharaoh said, "You're the guy. We need a planner like this, someone who's a strategist to come in here and help us." So now Joseph is strategizing with his own family and he's going to lay out a plan. He's likely thought about this plan for some time, as we'll see. He'll say, "Let me lay out this plan. Let me tell you what we're going to do."

So let's go on to the next slide. The next part of the verse in verse 31 it says – *Now Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household...* Okay, guys. Listen up. Gather around here. I'm going to tell you the plan. Here's what he says. *"I will go up and speak to Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were living in the land of Canaan, have come to me. The men are shepherds; they tend livestock, and they have brought along their flocks and herds and everything they own.'"* So that's the plan. I'm going to go talk to Pharaoh. But what he's going to say now is here's what's going to happen, guys. Here's what you need to say because you're going to meet Pharaoh too and I want to give you words to say. So you see how he's kind of outlining what the plan is. He's revealing this strategy to make it work, which makes the last part of the statement all the more powerful. He says – *When Pharaoh calls you in and asks, 'What is your occupation?' you should answer, 'Your servants have tended livestock from our boyhood on, just as our fathers did.' Then you will be allowed to settle in the region of Goshen."*

Let's just pause there for a moment because I want to tell you about Goshen. If you don't understand the geography of Egypt, then you're going to miss out on this. Essentially what Joseph is saying is I want you to have the best land in the whole country. See, Goshen is part of the Nile Delta. The Nile River is the longest and largest river in the whole world. It starts way back down in Central Africa, where Kenya and Tanzania and Uganda meet together.

Now I lived in Kenya with my family for nine months, as we taught there, and it's rather high in elevation. Nairobi, Kenya, the capital is at 5800 feet above sea level. But where I lived was 7200 feet in Kijabe in Kenya. It was 7200 feet above sea level. It's hard to breathe air until you get

used to it. You're just walking up the hill and you're feeling tired. So it's quite high elevation, which of course is going to be needed to get from there all the way down to the Mediterranean Sea 4,000 miles away. This is a huge river that flows out of Lake Victoria, picks up these streams and so on as it moves down all the way to the Mediterranean River. And then when it exits into the Mediterranean, it has all these tributaries that flow out. Every year, about September, you have this overflow of water that comes down (because of all the rain and so on) that just overflows. And the water kind of goes all over the land there. That's what we call it a delta. About twenty miles away from the part of the river, it goes out all over that land and waters the land very nicely. And then the nutrients that it's picked up all along the way also are on the land. And so this land produces very rich crops. The land produces great food, I guess you would say, for the livestock and the sheep and so on that they're going to have.

So first of all, Goshen becomes this place of just beauty. It just reminds me that God has given us the ability to live in a world. He created a world for us that we could enjoy. So when we see those sunsets, like we saw this week, and we see the wind blow in through the Barn and we enjoy that, or we see that storm... I don't know how big the storm was. I was in Ohio last night, wondering if I was going to make it home because there was a violent storm in Columbus, Ohio that was preventing our plane from taking off on time. And then we flew through it all the way home because it was coming this way and we had the rain last night. I don't know if it was violent thunderstorms here like it was in Columbus, but you think about the storms we've had, and God has placed us in this beautiful place. I'm just imagining what God does for us is so beautiful and great, similar to what Joseph is doing for his family. "I want you to have the best," he says. "I'm going to give you good things." And God gives us good things as well. That's the Goshen.

But there's something bigger going on here. So as Joseph is strategizing and he's telling his family these things, he says, "This is what I want you to tell them. I want you to plant the flag. You tell them who you are, because..." and this is what startled me. Notice the last phrase. "*For all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians.*" Joseph is positioning his people in a way that he says they're not going to like you. I'm thinking that is so unlike me. I want people to like me. I'd be saying, "Joseph, wait a minute. Excuse me. Isn't there a way we can do this a little differently? Because I don't want people to not like me." And Joseph is saying, "No, I want you to tell them you're shepherds. You take care of livestock. You've been doing that from your youth. And they're not going to like you."

Oh wow. What is God doing here? What is Joseph doing? I think what he's doing is he's going to protect his people. He's going to protect them because he wants them to know that they are different, they are separate, they are His people. And because they're detestable, they're going to be this community that's going to grow and the temptation to assimilate into Egyptian culture will be diminished. Egyptian culture is not something for my people, is essentially was what God is saying, I believe. That the culture of the Egyptians is all about the ceremonies they have, all the gods they have, all the holidays they have to celebrate their gods, all these cultural and religious festivals they have. No, you're going to be detestable. You're going to be not be part of that, because you're going to be over here. And I thought, "Wow, that is so remarkable." It's unlike me because I want to be liked, I want to be this place where if I'm going to position myself, it's likely going to be I want to position myself so people will like me. And he's saying,

“No, no, no, no. We're going to position you in a place where people are going to see that you are different.”

It got me thinking about that passage in the New Testament where Jesus does the very same thing as He's praying to the Father in John 17 and He's sharing these words. Let me show you the last part of the passage I want to read first. In John 17:15, it says this. Jesus is praying to the Father and He says – *I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.*

So there's this idea we come away from where we say I'm not of the world, but I'm in the world. In the world, but not of the world are the kinds of things that we just use to describe this idea that He's saying. But even more importantly, I want you to see the verses right before that, that says in verse 13 – *But now I am coming to you (He's saying to the Father) and I am saying these things while I'm in the world, so that they may have my joy fulfilled within them. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them. For they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.* So Jesus is positioning us in the similar way that Joseph is positioning his family. They're going to hate you. And that's okay.

Oh, man. I want to talk about two ideas. And this is where I took this on a kind of tangent into my New Testament studies. I want to compare the two ideas that are represented – here in the world, but not of the world. I want to use two other words to describe that. One is the word ‘separation’ and the other is ‘assimilation.’ We must have both separation and assimilation in our lives.

Separation is this ability to pull away, to recognize that we're different. The advantages of separation is that you come away like we are here today. We're separated from the rest of our things we do and we become encouraged. So we designed this hour-and-a-half that you're here to include fellowship, where we can share together to include inspiring worship to energize us. We pray in a way that invites the Holy Spirit into our lives. We have Bible teaching that's centered on God's word because of the truth. Notice that's the word here that He says in verse 17 – *Sanctify them in the truth.* So there's this way in which we separate in order to strengthen. We separate in order to strengthen. The danger of separation is that you become sequestered and irrelevant to the rest of the world. That's the danger. That you're not out there. Oh I don't want to be with anybody who's not a believer. I just want to enjoy the fellowship of the believers. Well, we want to be separate. We want to recognize that God has designed us to be strengthened within that separation that we enjoy together.

But we also must have assimilation. The advantages of assimilation is that we're out there in a place where people can see who we are and how we live. The danger of assimilation is that we start taking on the view or the worldview of the people we hang around with. We start becoming more like them. If we want people to like us, then sometimes we become more like them in order for them to like us, and we end up compromising the truth.

There's advantages to separation, advantages to assimilation, and there are disadvantages to both of those. We must understand them. I think the best way to understand them is to go back to

Jesus Christ. Because Jesus Christ was separate in heaven. We use the word *hagios*, which is the Greek word for holy. That God is holy. Holy means to be separated. That's what it means. And so we are called the *hagios* or the saints, because we are separated. If you've accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are a saint. You are separated from others.

So Jesus was separated, but then He left heaven and all of the separateness of His holiness and He became a person, a man, and He lived among us. He assimilated himself with us so that He could feel our pain, so that you can know the things that we go through in that very human way, and He could demonstrate a different message than what everybody else is hearing. In the same way that Jesus Christ left heaven and came to earth, we want to have that balance of separation and assimilation in all of our lives.

I just want you to think about that in your life. You should have a time in your life where you are separated. It's like breathing. You're breathing in and you're breathing out. You have to have both of those in your life. You're breathing in and you're spending time in the word just by yourself to become stronger. Or you're spending time with brothers and sisters and hanging out with other men or women, or God's people in His church. You're worshipping the Lord. All of those things are strengthening you. You're breathing in. But there must be a way in which you're breathing out. Every one of us must be able to plant the flag somehow in our lives, that says, "I am a Christian and I am in the world, but I have a different message than the world communicates." Now how you do that is going to be different for each one of us. We have to be pretty careful about this.

I was talking to a young man, fourteen years old, earlier this year, who had made a mistake. He made a derogatory remark at his school about a gay person...or not a person, just about people who are homosexuals. So he made a negative statement about them. Of course the wrath of the school came down on him. I don't know if he was suspended for a day or whatever. But it was like hate speech. That's how they perceived it. And he made a mistake. He did the wrong thing. But what it did was it allowed us to talk some more about this very issue. The very issue that when we're in the world we want to have a message that proclaims both the love and the truth of God, but we don't want to be hurtful and mean to people. But we are not the same as everyone else. As he's wrestling with this, he says, "I'm never going to talk at school again about anything." Well is that what we want to do? Maybe. I don't know how you're going to do that. I don't know how you'd as a student... You live in a hard world, I want to say. Because you're trying to, if you're a Christian, be a Christian and tell people we have a different message, a very important message. But you don't want to be like everybody else, but you have this different message. So there's this way of working that out that is not easy. And I admire you, as you're trying to live out your faith in the school system.

It reminds me of the lady I talked to this week or I interacted with who's from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. She's contacting me because she wants to take advantage of my resources in biblical parenting. She wants to know how she can use that. Well I can imagine that she's very careful about how she shares her faith in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. She says she's a Christian and she wants to help people understand the Bible more. I think that's great. But I'm sure the way she shares her faith and plants the flag is different from someone else who plants the flag who might be here in America. Wherever you are, you have to choose. But every one of

us in our lives must have a time when we are being separate, strengthening ourselves. And then we want to be out there assimilating so that we can share this message that we have with others.

I think that as we look at this subject of being relevant, we can look at this as individuals and we can look at this as a church. Let's just think about churches for a moment because there are some churches who want to be so in touch with the culture, so in touch with the people around that they water down their message so that everybody will like them. They basically want to say, "We're like you. Come and fellowship with us." That's the message that they share. And so the gospel message then is put away somewhere or not even shared at all, because it is rather separating. Isn't it? It is rather divisive for people. So since it's so divisive, we won't talk about the gospel message. What happens then is that church becomes very relevant, but very weak because it doesn't have a message that's different. Then there are other churches that say, "Oh, we don't want to be part of the world at all. We're just going to come over here and we sequester ourselves." And so they are of no earthly good because the message they have isn't shared with anybody.

Are you understanding this idea of relevance? Are you relevant in your life? Are you in this place where you can plant the flag and say, "I'm a Christian. This is what I do."

I know a man; his name is Bob Van Antwerp. He was a major in the army about thirty-five years ago, something like that. A major in the army and he loved the Lord and he wanted to proclaim the gospel wherever you could. Whenever he had an opportunity he would share Jesus Christ. His way of planting the flag was he had a Bible on his desk his office as a major in the army. Well now he's retired, but then he became eventually a general. Okay. He's a general in the army, head of the Army Corps of Engineers, head of Officers' Christian Fellowship, and God used him in some amazing ways. But here's a guy who chose to plant the flag by putting the Bible out there on his desk. I just appreciated his message, his desire. He led his commanding officer to the Lord while I knew him while we were working together. Just good things happened in his life because he was willing to plant the flag.

There's two ways to become relevant. One is to be so in tune with the culture that you just absorb and find yourself in there. Nobody knows the difference between you and everybody else. You can relate to everybody, it's all fine. That's what happens sometimes in our lives or in the church. But I would suggest that the real way to be relevant is to say, "I want to connect myself with the people around, I want to love people, but I want you to know I have a different message. I have a different understanding of life. And actually the message I have is the best message for you in your situation. It's the message of Jesus Christ." You know if you say that, what's going to happen is that people are not going to like you. You're going to be detestable in their eyes. But the reality is, that's the truth. So you proclaim the truth and you know some people are going to like it, some people aren't going to like it. We can't do anything about that. That's just what's going to happen. My job is to proclaim the message and to share that message with others. That's the strategy involved here in order to get this.

You know when we think of the term 'world,' in the New Testament the Greek word for 'world' is the word *cosmos*. But it's used in three different ways in the New Testament. One of the ways it's used in John 1 is *God made the world*. He created all of the world. He's talking about the

trees, and the flowers, and all the beauty of the world that we have that we enjoy. That's the first way *cosmos* is used. The second way it's used is in John 3:16 where it says – *For God so loved the world*. Same Greek word *cosmos*, but used to describe the people in the world. That God loves all of the people in the world. The people are so important and valuable to God. That's the word world. The people. But it's interesting that at 1 John 2:15 it says this: *Do not love the world*. You're going whoa, whoa. *For God so loved the world*. But then says in 1 John 2:15 – *Do not love the world, neither the things of the world*.

What he's talking about there in this very same word *cosmos* is the system of this world. There is a world system that we see in our culture that's moving in a direction that's counter to Jesus Christ. It's like a river flowing this way. If you've seen *The Chosen*, you know the intro to *The Chosen* movies, you've got all the fish flowing this way, but then you've got some of them turning and then another one turning into going the other direction, just to illustrate the salvation of several people as they're going counterculture. They're going against the culture.

You see in the culture, whether it's education, or politics, or entertainment, or what shopping, whatever it is, advertisement, there is a message out there in our culture that's dangerous. And that message is all about the world system. So we have to be very careful that we don't assimilate ourselves into the world and embrace the world system. Because when we do, we're in danger.

Joseph, what he's doing here is he's protecting his family. He's setting them apart. He's saying, I'm going to create a place for you. They're not going to like you. And you're going to be able to grow to be the people that I want you to be, that God wants you to be. He has no idea what's going to happen. But God is going to take these people that are separate, and He's going to do a miracle in their lives. He's going to grow them to over a million people. Then they're going to leave Egypt and they're going to inhabit the Promised Land. There's a whole long story about that. But that's what's going to happen. God has a plan.

I want to tell you today, if you are hated by someone because of your faith, you need to take heart that God has a plan for you and your life. Yeah, you might be hated by someone. They may affect you in different ways. I mean all kinds of bad things happen to Christians because they take a stand for Christ. You don't want to be obnoxious in your stand for Christ. But as you stand for something, people are going to say that and there are going to be people who will hate you, Jesus says, and you have to be able to realize that.

I think we do a disservice to our children when we teach them only about how to win friends and influence people. I think it was great stuff in that book. It really impacted me as a teenager to read that book, *How to Win Friends & Influence People*. But if that's all we're doing, and we're not teaching them that you're going to be hated because you are a believer, you take a stand, you're different than everybody else, we're missing something very important. We must be a church, we must be individuals that have this breathing in and out, that allow us to do this life that God has called us to do.

It's kind of like playing football. I like football. I don't play it anymore. But I like to watch it. You get in the huddle. You get stronger in the huddle. You figure out the plan and you know what you're going to do. Then you go out and get on the line and you got to fight the battle out

there on the playing field so that you can win. You've got to be going back and forth between the huddle and being out in front. Now sometimes they do the no huddle. They just do it and they've got several plays going because they worked on them in the huddle. Maybe not that huddle, but they've worked on them in their practice. You see, we need that in our lives. We've got to have the back and forth, that breathing that takes place.

It is our desire as we design programs for Calvary Chapel Living Hope that we design them to fulfill both sides of God's mission for us. That when you come here, we have this all planned for you on Sunday morning. There's a lot of time and energy that goes into the edification of people on Sunday morning. We want to maximize the little bit of time you have and we want to make that a very special time in your life here. But we also want to have programs that are getting us out in the world to do things, to bless other people. We want to equip you to know how to share your faith. So that when you get out there and you're attacked, what am I supposed to do now? I'm going to call up my brothers who are praying for me. I want to call up my sisters or put it on Women's Connect. Hey, I'm having a struggle here. So you have the support and you have the ability to get out there and do what God wants you to do. We have to have both. If we don't have both, then we missed the harvest.

Jesus says, "Look guys, out there. It's a harvest. It's amazing. All the wheat is ready," but He's not talking about the wheat. He's talking about all those people are coming out of the city. He's saying the harvest is ripe.

But in order to be relevant and to meet the harvest, we need two things. We must have that time. We have a message, we understand what the message is, and we're ready to share it. And we must be able to accept the idea that we're sharing the same burdens that the people are in the culture. We have pain in our hearts because of the same kinds of things as pain. If we don't have those two things, it's like we're a turbine at the harvest, but the cutting blades are missing. It's my desire as a pastor to have those cutting blades strong and in process and to empower young people to go out and share the gospel with people, to empower young people to know how to live their faith out wherever they are, to know how to be this person that God has called us to be. It's not easy in a hostile world. But it is the most rewarding place to be because that's when you see God work in miraculous ways. Amen?

Maybe today you're here and you've not accepted Jesus. I just want to tell you, that's the best life you could have. I'd love to pray with you and help you understand who Christ is more and accept Him into your life so that you can have that personal relationship with Christ. Nancy and I are going to be prayer counselors up here during this next song. So I invite you. As we do this next song, this is time for you to do business with the Lord. You might sing, you might not. The point is you're going to listen to the Lord. What is He saying to you? You really need Him? Are you doing okay? And you're like, you don't really need God. If you really need him, then you're going to be saying, "Lord, would you do a work in my heart? I just want to be stronger so that I can take you out there so people know who I am and who you are."

Let's stand together as we pray and then we'll sing.

[PRAYER] Father, we do dedicate ourselves to you. We want to serve you 100% wholeheartedly in our lives. Lord, do a work in our hearts today that will inspire us to be the people and take risks that people might not like us, but that we are eager to have you affirm us more than anything else. Bless us, Lord, as we sing. We need you. We ask that you would empower us today. In Jesus' name, amen.