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GENESIS 47:13-31

Series: Understanding Your Roots

Today what I want to do is we're going to look at Genesis 47 from two different perspectives. If you're a young person here today, you should have a clipboard. Ten to fourteen years old, there's going to be a slide that will show up and when it does you're going to go out with Joan Rose. Where's Joan? You guys are going to talk about it. So anyway, you're going that way or that way. You're going to go out with your leader and you're going to talk about the sermon. So jot down some notes, some things that you hear that I'm saying.

Now we're going to look at this passage in Genesis 47 from two completely different perspectives. So you got to walk with me here. You're going to have to focus a little bit because otherwise you'll get distracted and you might not get it all. So Genesis 47. We're going to start by looking at this story of Joseph managing Egypt as a type of Christ. Then we're going to look at it in its cultural dynamic as it normally would be read.

Now we have license to look at the Bible as a type like this because the New Testament gives us this model for looking at types. In 1 Peter, Peter looks at the story of Noah and the ark as a picture of salvation and how we can get into the ark, so to speak.

Jesus Himself looked at the Old Testament story in the wilderness when the pole was lifted up. He says in the same way the pole was lifted up and people saw the pole and got saved, when I'm lifted up on the cross, people will see me and they'll get saved. When they trust me as their Lord and Savior. That's what He's saying in that story.

When Jesus was walking on the road with Cleopas and the other disciple on the way to Emmaus do you remember, they didn't understand who He was, but He was explaining to them from Moses and the prophets, everything that had to do about Jesus. I'm sure that Jesus was talking about the sacrificial system and how He fulfills the sacrificial system, all those sacrifices. I'm sure that He told them about the priesthood and how He is the high priest before the Father. I'm sure He told them all the stories that existed and how they are foreshadows of Jesus Christ. I wonder if He told them the story of Joseph and said there's some stories in this in the life of Joseph that are just so Godlike, they're just so representative of Jesus Christ and us. I wonder if He told that story.

That gives us license to look at the story itself from this perspective of Jesus reigning over His kingdom, and how we come to Him in the same way that Joseph is reigning over the kingdom and people are coming to him. You see, what's going to happen is the people are going to give of

themselves. They're going to give more and more and more of themselves. And then Joseph is going to take care of them in the same way that God does in our lives.

Let's look at the passage. Let me show you what I'm talking about with Joseph as a type of Christ. It says in verse 13 – *There was no food, however, in the whole region because the famine was severe; both Egypt and Canaan wasted away because of the famine.* So there's this big famine that's taking place in the whole region, not enough food. It's a physical famine.

Do you know that in our world today, there's a spiritual famine? In fact, let me just take you to another slide real quick because in this next slide we see Amos talking about a spiritual famine. Look at what he says. He says – *I will send a famine through the land -- not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the word of the Lord. People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.* He's saying, there is going to come a time when there's not going to be the prophet speaking the words from the Lord.

Now in our world today, we have God's word; we can look at it, but there's still a spiritual famine because so few people look at it. I'm not talking about you. I know that you study God's word, you're trying to understand it, and you're fed by God's word. But I'm talking about so many people who are spiritually malnourished because they don't eat from the word of God. Oh they've got the fast food of the podcast with self-help ideas, or the books that give you remedies for helping you feel joy in the moment. There's all kinds of short-term things that take place in our world that say here, I can pump you up a little bit, I can make you feel better. But that's like eating at McDonald's all the time. Okay, there's just not enough sustenance to feed your soul.

When we partake of God's word then it gets something very special for us. So in this passage I'm just going to suggest there's a spiritual famine that goes on. We all must come to the Joseph or the Jesus. And we say, “God, I want you to be the ruler of my life. I want I need help. I need food. I need sustenance.”

Well, let's go back to our passage. In the next slide starting in verse 14, it says – *Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh's palace.* So as I read this, watch the progression of dedication that people are making to Joseph. *When the money of the people of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, “Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? Our money is all gone.”*

“Then bring your livestock,” said Joseph. “I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock, since your money is gone.” So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, their sheep and goats, their cattle and donkeys. And he brought them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock.

There's a progression of dedication of the people to the king that I'm suggesting is a progression that represents progression we have in our own lives, as we dedicate ourselves to the Lord.

In the next slide it continues. Verse 18 – *When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, “We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land. Why should we perish before your eyes—we and our land as well? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate.”*

So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. The Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields, because the famine was too severe for them. The land became Pharaoh’s, and Joseph reduced the people to servitude, from one end of Egypt to the other. However, he did not buy the land of the priests, because they received a regular allotment from Pharaoh and had food enough from the allotment Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land.

So the Egyptian priests, the pagan priests, they didn't participate in all of what was going on. They were exempt from that.

Now as we're looking at this story and we see what's happening in the lives of these people, what are they doing? They've given all of what they have to the government. They've given everything they have to Joseph, to the king. It just represents so much this picture that we have in our own lives that we give everything to the Lord. When you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you're saying, “Lord, I'm giving you everything, all that I am.” But you know there are times when after you become a Christian, new things come into your life and you go, “Oh I need to give that to the Lord too.” Or there are times in your life, when you're experiencing troubles and challenge and you go, “You know what, I don't think I've given this over to the Lord as much as I should have.” If you want to find things that you haven't turned over to the Lord, often you can look at your own emotions. Follow the trail of emotions into your heart. If you're getting angry more often than you think you should, if you're feeling anxious more often than situations warrant, or that anxiety is starting to control you, it's a sign there's something else I need to give over to the Lord. There's this total commitment that we must have in our relationship with Christ.

That's what Jesus was trying to say in these verses in Matthew chapter 16. He says – *Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way.”*

If you're here today and you're interested in Jesus Christ, you've got to understand it is total commitment. It's not just adding something to your current repertoire. It means you give everything to the Lord. All of your schedule, all of your finances. You give Him all of your time, all of your energy, all of your possessions, it all goes to the Lord. All of it. Total commitment. He says – *You must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your own soul?*

I just see that application right here in the story of Joseph, who we look at it in this form of a type. That everybody was totally dedicated, they were giving everything to the king. It leaves

room for us to give everything to the king in our own lives. And when we start to do that it affects us. It affects how we view the things that we have.

Let's go back into the story and read a little bit more. Starting in verse 2 it says – *Joseph said to the people, “Now that I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh, here is seed for you so you can plant the ground. But when the crop comes in, give a fifth of it to Pharaoh. So he's going to take care of them, but he's saying I want you to give a fifth back, 20% back. The other four-fifths you may keep as seed for the fields and as food for yourselves and your households and your children.”*

It just reminds me of what God does with us. He says, “Alright. I've taken everything from you. You've dedicated all of your life to me. I'm going to give it all back to you as a steward. Okay, you're going to be taking care of those things that you have – your schedule and your time and your possessions, your finances, your energy, all of those things – but I'm going to require some back I want you to give.” And so here it's 20%. You know that in the Mosaic Law it was 10%, a tithe, which many people use today.

I remember the story of Zacchaeus when he got saved he says, I'm going to give half of all I have. When Jesus was looking at the temple and the widow putting in her three mites, these three cents, so to speak, He says she's giving her all. There's a way in which we give back to the Lord and in our finances as a statement of who we are and our gratefulness. What do you think is going to happen when Joseph says to them, “Okay, guys, I'm going to require 20% from you.” Do you think they're going to go, “Oh no, 20% that's so much.” No, look at their response, because I think this is a good model for us.

Notice what the people say in verse 25. *“You have saved our lives,” they said. “May we find favor in the eyes of our lord; we will be in bondage to Pharaoh.” So Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt—still in force today—that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. It was only the land of the priests that did not belong to Pharaoh.*

This picture of giving to the Lord is an important one. I want to encourage you young people to think about this. Because if you start giving to the Lord when you're young, it's much easier when the amounts of money get bigger. Let's say that you get a job, your first job you're working at. Well, we love McDonald's. So we'll keep talking about McDonald's or some other great establishment. Let's say you're working there and let's say you bring in a paycheck home of \$500 a month. Wow. Because you're working full time, you're making some money. And you choose to put \$50 aside. You get your first paycheck, you're going, “Whoa I got \$450 I get to keep.” It's a lot easier to do that than when you go down in your life a little ways, you've got your nice job, and now you're making lots more money and you're going, “Oh I don't know if I can even give 10%.”

I would suggest that you want to start your giving to the Lord early so that it's easier for you as you grow into that. Because when we give back to the Lord it's a statement of our gratefulness to Him, it's a statement of our commitment to Him, it's a statement of giving away some of our own selfishness. If you haven't started the discipline of giving a percentage of what you make, I would encourage you to do that. It's a way for you to just say how grateful you are that God has

rescued you from the famine that you see all around you. It's God's message. It's a message that we enjoy as we share with Him.

Well let's just pause there for a moment because we could end the sermon here with this one idea. And that is that we're totally committed to God in our lives. Maybe God is drawing that conclusion into your heart. Maybe there's something you haven't given over to the Lord and you just need to stop right now while I continue talking and you need to pray, "Lord, this is the thing. I need to give it to you." When you give yourself 100% of the Lord, He cares for you, He takes care of you in a similar way, as we see in the passage with Joseph doing this with these people.

Now I'm going to completely switch gears. You can't try to do both of these at the same time. Let's go back and look at the passage now from the cultural historical events that are going on, like we would normally interpret scripture. Because I feel a little bit uncomfortable (I don't know if you do) with the way that all these people are giving all of their stuff to the government. That they're looking at the government to take care of them. I just feel uncomfortable with all of that taking place because I don't believe the role of government is to take over all of our stuff. I'm not a communist, believing that everything that we have in common goes to the government. And so I want to be careful about that in my own life. I'm thinking, "Wow, what's going on in this passage? I wonder." Because here's what we're going to see now.

Before I read you this last verse, verse 27, I want you to see that there's a difference between the way these people are thinking in Egypt, all the culture of what's going on and the Israelites. Because they're thinking a whole different way. In the same way, God I think has us thinking a whole different way than much of the culture today. Oh I think sometimes even as believers we can start viewing the government as our savior and we must be careful of that because the government is not our savior. Jesus Christ is our Savior. There's a different way to think between those two things. Very important for us to understand.

I wonder if the Egyptians had a short-term view of life. I wonder if they knew this. They had seven years of plenty. And Joseph stored some food away. But I wonder if they could have just stored more food away and had a longer-term perspective they would have had some food at this time. I don't know. But I do think that in our world today, there's a lot of people who have a short-term perspective about life.

Oh money. Let's just talk about money. Do you know that the average person in America spends 105%, of what they make. You're going how could they spend 105% of what they make? You know how they do it? They go into debt. So they have huge credit card debt, because they can't live on what they have. There's this short-term perspective that people have when it comes to finances. They do the same thing in our world really with health, right? It's a short-term perspective. I just want to feel good right at the moment instead of thinking long term and exercising and eating right, and doing the things necessary.

See I think as Christians we have a bigger perspective, not just with finances and food, but other things as well. Take sex, for example. There's a lot of people in our society in our culture, who say, "Oh, I just want to have pleasure right now." No wonder we have a rampant divorce rate.

We don't have successful relationships that last a long time because of the misuse of this gift that God has given. See, there's a long-term perspective.

Now I'm going to read to you verse 27. But I want you to see the contrast between two different life missions or two different ways of thinking about life. The Egyptians are all about Joseph and Pharaoh and all the things going on there. But notice the Israelites, verse 27. *Now* (because now we have a contrast here; the Israelites are different) *the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number.*

There are five things that made them different. One, they were given land, they were given jobs. Remember Pharaoh said they can take care of my livestock. They were given a place to live. They are now acquiring more property and increasing greatly in number. There's just a whole subculture here that's different. I would suggest we as Christians are the subculture within a world that is going in the wrong direction. And so the subculture that we live in is very important. I think we have a bigger perspective. We think long term.

The reason I thought about this long-term idea is because I went back to the to the story of Abraham. Because when Abraham first got that promise... Not the first time, but he was given the promise a couple times. In fact, let me show it to you in Genesis 15. He predicts this very experience that they're in. All of these people in Israel know this. Genesis 15 says – *As the sun was setting, Abraham fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the Lord said to him* (note this), *“Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.”*

You see, I'm sure the Israelites living in the culture had a different perspective about life. They thought bigger, they thought longer term, they realized God had a plan for their life. They knew that God had a different way that they could think.

Do you see the parallel here between us? We're Christians. We think differently about our paycheck. We think differently about our health. We think differently about the decisions that are going on. It even affects the way we process the news. Because we as believers aren't caught up with all of the anxiety and all the anger that is often seen out there. Oh yeah, we experience a lot of the same problems that people experience, but we process them differently because we're in this subculture just like the Israelites were in this subculture.

The other thing that leads me to believe that the Jewish people had a longer-term perspective, is the last verses in the chapter. Because now we're going to go back to Jacob. He's the dad. Remember that? Look at it and see what he says. Because he says, “Don't bury me here. This is not my place.” He had a bigger perspective. He knew where he was going. So let's just look at the rest of this passage.

Verse 28 says – *Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years, and the years of his life were a hundred and forty-seven.* I just want to point out I don't know what to do with this information. But isn't it interesting that seventeen years he lives in Egypt, where he gets to re-meet his son, Joseph.

Seventeen years he has enjoyed with him. And remember, in the first seventeen years of Joseph's life, he was with his dad, but at seventeen years old he was taken away. So he gets the first seventeen years and the last seventeen years here to enjoy Joseph in the midst of that. I don't know what to do with that information. I just thought it was interesting.

Verse 29 – *When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called for his son Joseph and said to him, “If I have found favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh and promise that you will show me kindness and faithfulness.”*

Not a lot of explanation needed there except to say I want you to put your hand in the place where life comes from. We don't do that today. But there's a very serious dedication that I want you to make. Swear to me, he says, *“Do not bury me in Egypt, but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried.”*

“I will do as you say,” he said.

“Swear to me,” he said. Then Joseph swore to him, and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

See, Jacob had this bigger perspective as well. I don't live here. This is not my home. I'm just passing through. Do you see the implications that has for us? We are a subculture in a world that's headed in the wrong direction and we have this bigger picture of where God wants to take us. A bigger picture of what God is doing. And yes, we experience famines or disease, or we experience trials or challenges in our lives. We have a responsibility to be in this world. I don't want to view this just as a bubble of we're stuck here and we're separated out. Because we're also assimilated into the world where we're having an impact on the rest of society. But we're bringing with us this perspective. We're bringing with us this model of what God is doing in our lives. We think bigger.

I hope today that you'll step outside of what you're experiencing, think bigger, get the perspective that God wants you to have so you can be more effective in your world. And so you don't have to get caught up in a lot of the stuff that's going on in the culture.

Well, that's two completely different sermons, but I wanted to tie them together in the same passage today and help you see that maybe God will take you on a journey in your own heart as a result of our time today. Allow Him to speak to you because God wants more from us in our lives. Allow Him to speak to you this morning.

Would you stand with me as we sing a song together? Allow God to speak to you during the song and as He does you do business with the Lord. Maybe during this song it's just time for you to listen to what's going on. Maybe it's a time for you to take something that you've heard today and say, “Yes, I will do it,” putting it into practice in your life. This is the time, a time of dedication.

Young people you can head out and go that direction with your leader, Miss Rose. Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we now come before you and ask you to take your word, put it into our hearts in a way that it explodes and does some real work. So we're entrusting ourselves to you, Lord. Even speak during the words of this next song to demonstrate your power. Demonstrate your love and speak to us, we ask, In Jesus' name, amen.