

GOD IS NOT ABSENT IN THE CHAOS

4. The Saved Life: Walking into the Unfamiliar Part 2

Genesis 46:1-6

Last Sunday we saw how the narrative in **Genesis 46** looks **away from Joseph** to Joseph's dad. We noted that everything in this section was the result of Joseph's life. The great suffering and injustice that Joseph experienced was all to the end that he would save his family, and the future of the nation of Israel — all of which advanced God's plan to redeem fallen man and renew this fallen planet because God had promised that Jesus would come into this world through the nation of Israel.

Here in **Genesis 46** Jacob is now embarking into the life he was saved to! Last week I made note of how there are THREE important things in the narrative for us to OBSERVE and LEARN from. So this morning is an exercise in the process of observation and application.

1. Jacob had a fear that was very natural
2. God didn't want Jacob to be afraid

We spent a lot of time last Sunday walking around in the first two. At the close of our study, we broke into the third observation:

3. God had a cure for Jacob's fear!

THE FIRST THING the Lord did to remedy Jacob's fear was let Jacob know that He knew him by name.

***Genesis 46:2** And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob."*

The Gospel tells us that the God of Jacob came in human flesh — Jesus of Nazareth! In John's Gospel Jesus referred to Himself as the Good Shepherd. Here's what Jesus said about a true shepherd:

John 10:3 (ESV) The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When you and I face the fear of the unfamiliar we need to remember that **JESUS** calls **US** by name. Jesus calls **YOU BY NAME**. Jesus knows you intimately. He knows EVERYTHING about you. In Psalm 139 we're told that He knows the path you have been on. He knows the path you will be on. He knows when you stand up and when you sit down and everything in between. He knows your words before you speak them. He knows your thoughts from afar.

The Bible also tells us that God knows about all our needs ([Matthew 6:33](#)). He knows all about the needs we have in every new circumstance; **needs that are unexpected**. That leads me to a couple thoughts:

- 1.** It's natural for us to fear the unknown because of the needs we can't anticipate — needs that even our contingency plans can't anticipate. But Jesus knows them, and He's anticipated them.
- 2.** As we walk with Jesus, He leads us into unfamiliar circumstances that expose and reveal that we need Him more than we ever imagined; we need Him in ways that are deeper and broader than we ever imagined. And it is in those unfamiliar places that we discover that HE is our sufficiency and our everything. I love that line in a song that asks: *Where would I be without You?*

THEOLOGY IS A BIG DEAL! Theology touches our lives in such practical ways because our faith in God is rooted in knowing who our God is. THAT is why reading and studying the WHOLE Bible is so crucial!

What God has been to all of His people throughout the history of man — He will be to you. The God of MOSES is YOUR God. The God of Elijah is YOUR God. The God of David is YOUR God. The Jesus of the Gospels is YOUR Jesus.

IF God is YOUR God — **THEN** everything is secure. As secure as it was

for Moses before Pharaoh, as secure as it was for Elijah before the prophets of Ba-al. As secure as it was for young David before Goliath. **IF** God is YOUR God — **THEN** the rest will be right. **IF** God is YOUR God — **THEN** you have everything.

HERE'S WHERE WE PICK UP THIS MORNING

To deal with Jacob's FEAR OF CHANGE, God made some PRECIOUS promises to Jacob.

In **Genesis 46:3** God said to Jacob, *Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for...* This is called the imperative indicative paradigm.

Imperative = command

Indicative = a statement of fact

**** The command to obey is undergirded with a statement of fact, or a promise.*

The imperative (command) *Do not be afraid* is absurd in this incredibly broken world. That's why it is always accompanied with the indicative

THIS IS SO INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT TO SEE. The command for Jacob to not be afraid is undergirded by three promises — three statements of fact. **Jacob — do not be afraid FOR**

Genesis 46:3 (ESV) for **there I will make you into a great nation**

Genesis 46:4 (ESV) I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again

Genesis 46:4 (ESV) and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes."

LET'S START WITH THIS —

Genesis 46:3 Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation.

THIS MOMENT in **Jacob's** life was THE WHOLE POINT of everything **Joseph** went through! Follow me here. In **Genesis 12** God had appeared to a man named Abraham in the Ur of the Chaldees. He was an idol worshipper living in the birthplace of every form of pagan idolatry. God told Abraham to leave that place — and go to a place he had never been to — a place he didn't know how to get to! God promised Abraham that He would lead him there and give to him that land. God promised to make a nation of from that one man.

God promised that through Abraham's descendants the whole world would be blessed — because the Savior of the world would come from the descendants of Abraham. That was a radical promise — because Abraham and his wife Sarah were really old and childless. God was faithful — even through the times Abraham was less than full of faith.

Abraham and Sarah had a son named Isaac. Isaac had a son named Jacob — whose name was changed to Israel. Israel had twelve sons. His 12 sons became the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel.

When we first meet Joseph in the book of **Genesis 37** the nation of Israel — if we put it in medical terms — was neonatal *and* it was in the NICU (neonatal intensive care unit) because its very existence was threatened by a famine.

God not only SENT Joseph to Egypt to be the means of his family's salvation. As we have seen in **Psalm 105**, He sent Joseph AHEAD of them. Joseph's family would eventually follow him down to Egypt. They would go down to Egypt as **70 people (Exodus 1:5)** and they would come out of Egypt a nation of millions!

But the story doesn't end there! God had done everything to rescue Jacob and his family. Being saved from the famine was not the end — it was the beginning! God rescued them so that He could make them a *great nation*. Not for themselves. Not as the world measured greatness. In fact, the nation that God was going to make great has always been little in the eyes

of the world and abused by the world. They would be a *great nation* because through them He would bring Jesus into the world.

DON'T MISS THIS — For Jacob and his family to walk in all God saved them to; for Jacob and his family to become all they were saved to be, would require faith and obedience!

All of that is not merely a bit of Bible history. It is a radical picture of new life in Jesus. God does the saving! Even as He sent Joseph to save Jacob's family — He sent Jesus to save us. Jesus not only saves us FROM our great enemies of sin and death, He saves us **to** a new life — a life that He called abundant. He saves us **to** a new identity — a true identity — that is derived from and rooted in our Savior. He saves us **to** a mission. WE become the people who bring Jesus to a lost and dying world. Our mission is called the GREAT COMMISSION. Not only because of the scope of the mission is great

Go into ALL the world and make disciples of ALL nations

But because of the very nature of the mission! Our mission great because it's all about our GREAT Savior — all about a GREAT salvation.

CHRISTIANS — God is making something GREAT out of our rescued lives! THAT life **begins** by faith and is **lived out** by faith. The same God we trusted to save us — wants us to trust Him to make our lives BIG enough to LIVE OUT all He saved us to! Without trusting in Him, clinging to Him and relying upon Him, our lives will never be big enough to live out all He saved us to! The Christian life is a great life — a magnificent life. The mission He saved us to is absolutely incredible! It is absolutely beyond us. It is eternal in its scope. Its eternal in its outcome. You and I are not big enough to live out that mission alone. God did not save us to live out that mission alone. God didn't save us and say — "You're on your own now." God wants us to be trusting in HIM to make us big enough to live out all that He has saved to.

BY THE WAY — This has tremendous relevance to us on our first Sunday @ West PARK!

I believe God sovereignly and providentially moved us from the familiar to the unfamiliar because God wants to make the name of Jesus great and make the name of Jesus known in West Park. I believe that God wants men and women to meet Jesus right here in West Park High School. I believe He wants men and women to be taught the Word of God right here at West Park High School so that they will grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus — so that the Gospel will go from West Park to the uttermost parts of the world!

Genesis 46:4 I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again,

For them to walk in all they were saved TO — for them to become the great nation God saved them to BE — involved **radical change**. It was a life that Jacob and his sons knew NOTHING about! EVERYTHING about life as Joseph and his sons knew it was going to be left behind.

Left to themselves — they would have been crushed by the weight of the life they were saved to. BUT GOD didn't rescue them only to cut them loose. God didn't save them and abandon them. God didn't save them and leave them to their own resources to survive; leave them alone to carry out their mission.

WHY is this so important to Christians living in the 21st century?

New life in Jesus — a life governed by God — is totally foreign to the life we were rescued from

***Colossians 1:13-14 NLT** For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.*

Two radically different and disparate kingdoms. We were living in a kingdom characterized by death and darkness — but God rescued us and put us into the Kingdom of His dear Son that is characterized by life and light! We read in the book of Ephesians

***Ephesians 2:1-3** ¹Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. ²You **used to live** in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. ³All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.*

The life we are saved **to** looks nothing like the life we were saved **from**. It’s as different as day and night — as different as light and darkness — as different as life and death. In the Kingdom of God, the way up is down; the greatest is the least — the greatest is the servant. In the Kingdom of God we’re to prefer others above ourselves rather than preferring ourselves above others because that’s the way our King lived. Embarking into the life we’ve been saved to can be scary **because** we are walking into the unfamiliar; because our old life offers us zero reference point for our saved life! When I got saved, I had thousands of questions. The first and foremost was “What does it mean for God to control my life?” But the love of God for me was so real that I found myself willing to trust Him to show me what that means.

Embarking into the life we’ve been saved to can be scary because everything about our new life meets resistance from without and from within. If you haven’t heard it before — you need to know that the moment you give your life to Jesus — you have enemies!

Almost exactly six years ago Valerie and I went for a walk early in the morning before it got to hot — and we were listening to a sermon by Timothy Keller on the subject of Peace and Anxiety. He started to talk about **the world, the flesh and the devil** and my ears really perked up. What he had to say was so incredibly relevant to what we’re looking at right now.

He said that when you become a Christian you have more enemies than when you were not yet a Christian. You only had ONE enemy before you became a Christian. It was God! It wasn’t because God’s the bad guy — or because God’s mean. God was our enemy because we were at war with Him! I love how Keller put it

Timothy Keller — *God is a mighty, wonderful adversary. He tries to save all the people who are trying to kill him.*

Then Keller gave this great analogy. Try to imagine saving a cat that was thrown in the river! What will that cat do? That cat will be at war with you! That cat acts as if you're just someone else who wants to drown him. That cat will bite and scratch. The one who is going to save that cat has to be willing to take all the bites and scratches the cat can dish out as it fights against your every effort to save it. THAT is how the Bible describes the way we act towards God. The Bible says we are born like that — We are at enmity with God.

Romans 8:7 (ESV) Because the carnal mind (unregenerate mind) is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Keller said that the moment you make peace with God (which by the way is the fountain of all other peace) all of God's enemies declare war on you and they are not like your old enemy. Before coming to Jesus — your one enemy in life loved you; cared about you; was doing everything He could to wake you up to your need to be saved. He was trying to rescue you.

CHRISTIAN — Your new life is totally out of step with the course of the world you once moved in unison with. You are moving towards heaven — and THAT is the exact opposite direction of the world you used to belong to. Your new life is totally dissonant with the life we used to harmonize with. Your lives are tuned to the perfect pitch — they are referenced to the one who IS the truth — the one who is FULL of grace and truth.

We're in a NEW life — one that is totally unlike the life we used to have. We are facing opposition to everything our new life is about.

BUT HERE'S THE DEAL — Our savior promises to be WITH US in this new life!

Hebrews 13:5-6 (ESV) for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ⁶So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

John 14:16-17a; 26 (ESV) And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth.... ²⁶But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

DON'T MISS THIS — Had God made promises to Jacob based upon what Jacob must do — THEN there would still be reason to fear. But Jacob was told what GOD was going to do — and THIS is key: What GOD says He will do — will ALWAYS be done **because**

1. He has the power to do ANYTHING. We read concerning Abraham

Romans 4:21 (ESV) fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

2. GOD ALWAYS keeps His Word

Isaiah 48:3 (ESV) The former things I declared of old; they went out from my mouth and I announced them; then suddenly I did them and they came to pass.

FOR SURE — There are certain things that God wants US to do. But I would encourage you to make it a habit to study the Bible to see what God HAS DONE for you — and what God WILL DO for you.

The book of Ephesians is the quintessential example of this. Before Paul ever tells the Ephesian Christians what they are to do for God he spends THREE CHAPTERS telling them what God has done for them.

The promises of God are of great comfort in the face of change and the unknown

Genesis 46:3 there I will make you into a great nation

Paraphrase — *You will see more of MY goodness than man's evil. Egypt will not exterminate you — In Egypt you will become a mighty people*

Genesis 46:4 I will (KJV =surely) also bring you up again

Your descendants will return to the land of promise. But the most precious part of the promise is this: *I myself will go down with you to Egypt*. No matter how dark, how unknown, how uncertain the future appears to be, we are in the light if God is with us. **His presence** causes the night to be as the day. Like a child afraid of the dark — if mom or dad is with him it's as if every light in the house is turned on

PERSONAL: Valerie and I would have NEVER made such a step in coming to Northern California unless we knew that the Lord was with us. We left family, friends, and everything familiar. We came to a place that was totally foreign to us. We knew NOTHING of the people we were coming to serve. We knew MUCH of ourselves (Our own failures and fears). But the Lord was **with us** — and that's all that mattered. In eight days Valerie is having another birthday (she's way younger than me). I'm turning seventy in October. If I didn't believe the Lord was with us, I would never attempt to work with a group of men and women to move out of nearly 28,000 sq.ft. of building and then help unload and load a 20 foot trailer at 8:00am every Sunday before teaching a Bible study.

Psalm 23:4 (ESV) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;

I love this last one!

Genesis 46:4 (ESV) ⁴and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes."

The son you thought was dead — will actually be there with you when you die.

A lot of people have written of Metro as dead — but I believe Metro is going to outlive me!

I want us to close with TWO applications

1. If you are a Christian — you are participating in the GREATEST possible life and you are on the most amazing journey — you are walking with God on your way to a forever in the presence of God.

This moment in the life of **Joseph's dad** is such a great comfort to every believer **as we follow Jesus** and **deal with our fears** along the way. Be encouraged — fear is NATURAL. Be encouraged — God is very concerned that you NOT be afraid. Be encouraged — God has a CURE for your fears. HE is our peace!

2. For the person who has is not yet a Christian — you are left to your own devices to deal with fear. To be afraid is more than understandable for you. You **don't know** what tomorrow holds for you. You **don't** have God with you — because your sins have separated you from Him. You are - as Paul wrote - WITHOUT GOD AND WITHOUT HOPE IN THIS WORLD

Come to Jesus TODAY! Because the first peace you need is peace WITH God — you need to be reconciled to God — and that can only happen through faith in Jesus. And once you know Jesus — **He** will be your life in this world — Because HE IS the life! **He** will be your hope because though you don't know what tomorrow holds — you know the One who holds tomorrow. **He** will be your peace —

NO Jesus — NO Peace

KNOW Jesus — KNOW Peace

