

Meadow Creek Presbyterian Church
Reading Together
The Golden Thread—The Story of Jesus

January 30 – Genesis 37: 1 – 11

Jacob (Israel) had twelve sons who would become the twelve tribes of Israel. His favorite son was Joseph. Joseph was not the first born son to Jacob, but he was the first born son of Jacob's most loved wife, Rachel, and because of that he had a special place in Jacob's heart. From an early age, Joseph was destined for greatness. As you can see in today's reading that kind of went to his head, but that is another lesson for another day. God had given Joseph a dream, a dream that pointed to a time in the future when his own brothers would bow down to him and recognize his power over them. Needless to say, this did not sit well with his brothers, especially the ones who were older than him. In Joseph's day, there was very much a pecking order. The older brothers had more power and authority over the younger brothers, but in the dream God gave to Joseph things get turned upside down and Joseph is put in a place of power over his brothers. In the dream Joseph has, he becomes their ruler.

You know Joseph's story well. His brothers sell him into slavery in Egypt and Joseph suffers terribly there, but through another dream and through the hand of God, Joseph rises to a place of power in Egypt and becomes second only to Pharaoh himself. There is a famine in the land and Jacob and Joseph's brothers are starving. They have to go to Egypt for food, and unbeknownst to them, the ruler they bow down to as they beg for food is their brother Joseph. It is a most unlikely turn of events.

Again, as we think about this we see a little picture of Jesus. Born to a peasant girl in humble circumstances, but born to be a king.

Matthew 2:1-3 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." ³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

Just as Joseph's brothers did not like the dream Joseph had, Herod doesn't like the prophecy that points to a new king being born—a king that he sees as a threat to his kingdom. As Jesus grew into a man, the Pharisees didn't like it either. Jesus was a threat to their power, so like Joseph's brothers, the Pharisees decided to get rid of Jesus.

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John 11:49-53 *Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all!"⁵⁰ You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."⁵¹ He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation,⁵² and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.⁵³ So from that day on they plotted to take his life.*

Just as they did for Joseph, things seem to go from bad to worse for Jesus. But just like in the story of Joseph, God turns things upside down.

Colossians 2:15 *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

Just as Joseph's brothers would have to bow to him one day, all men will have to bow to Jesus, our risen savior and King.

Hebrews 2:9 *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death*

January 31 – Genesis 37: 13 – 36

Joseph's life follows a very interesting pattern. He starts off in a high and exalted position. He is his father's favorite son, but then through a series of events he is brought low. Today we are only reading about one of those events, when his brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. You would think that would be about as low as you can go, but as you remember Joseph's story, he hasn't hit bottom when his own brothers sell him into slavery. Through no fault of his own, Joseph goes from being a slave, to a prisoner, as a result of a false accusation brought against him by his master's wife, and Joseph becomes a forgotten prisoner when Pharaoh's cupbearer forgets to tell Pharaoh about Joseph. Because we are trying to follow the Golden Thread of Jesus in this study, we won't directly be reading about these other events that brought Joseph low, but if you want to, you can read more about these events in chapters 39 and 40 of Genesis. The point is that Joseph was a young man who had everything and then his life took a sudden downturn to a point where all seemed to be absolutely hopeless. But throughout all of Joseph's troubles, God was at work carrying out his plan to give not just Joseph, but also Joseph's people, a hope and a future. Just when you think that God has abandoned Joseph, God suddenly turns everything upside down. Joseph goes from being an

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abandoned prisoner in Pharaoh's dungeon to the second in command of all of Egypt (Genesis 41), providing life sustaining food and a place for his family who had turned their back on him.

Do you see any similarities to Jesus, in Joseph's story? Jesus, the only begotten son of God the Father, left his throne in heaven and came to earth. He was born in a stable to a poor peasant woman, and spent most of his adult life homeless.

Matthew 8:20 *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."*

Like Joseph, it would seem as if things could not get any worse for Jesus, but then he is betrayed by one of his disciples, and crucified on the cross. To top it all off, as he is dying on the cross, his own Father (God) abandons Jesus and turns his back on Jesus, because Jesus has been defiled by our sin that he carried to the cross with him.

Mark 15:34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

When Jesus was abandoned to the grave it seemed like all hope was lost, but then God raised him from the dead, and exalted him to the highest place in heaven.

Hebrews 2:9 *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

Joseph's suffering and subsequent rise provided hope and a future for his family. Jesus' suffering and subsequent resurrection provided hope and a future for those who belong to his family through faith in him.

February 1 – Genesis 49: 9 – 10

As Jacob's life comes to an end he calls each of his sons in to bless them. Today's reading centers on the blessing that Jacob gave to his son Judah. Read it again, because what Jacob says to Judah is very significant. First, let me point out that Judah was not Jacob's first-born

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son. This is a significant fact to think about as you consider what Jacob says to Judah. As we saw earlier in the story of Jacob and Esau, the normal thing would be for the oldest son to receive a blessing that would point to him ruling over the rest of the family. That was the normal way things happened in that day. The older brother took the position of leadership. But as you look at Jacob's blessing of Judah, notice what Jacob says at the end of verse 8 and then again in verse 10. As he blesses Judah, Jacob makes a proclamation that Judah's brothers will bow down to him, and then in verse 10 Jacob continues and says, "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his." Jacob's proclamation/prophecy is stunning. Stop and think about what he is saying. Judah will not only rule his brothers, but one day rule the nations. Jacob's prophecy was initially and partially fulfilled when David, the son of Jesse, from the tribe of Judah, became King over all twelve tribes of Israel. But it was ultimately fulfilled when Jesus, from David's family line and the tribe of Judah, rose from the grave and ascended to the right hand of God, where he is seated today as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Acts 2:36 *"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

The words Lord and Christ are words filled with significance. In Greek, the word Christ meant the anointed one, the messiah, the future king that God had promised would come from Abraham's seed, through the tribe of Judah, and the family of David. The word Lord means king or ruler.

In Revelation chapter 5, John has a vision of the throne room of heaven, and that center of that vision is the Lion of Judah, who is also the Lamb of God—Jesus from the tribe of Judah.

Revelation 5:5-6 *See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals." ⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne.*

Everything that Jacob said to his son Judah was pointing ahead to the Lion of Judah—Jesus our Lord.

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February 2 – Genesis 50: 15 – 24

Joseph's brothers had wronged him terribly when they sold him into slavery, and they knew it. Now their father was dead, and they were afraid of what Joseph might do to them to pay them back for the wrong they had done to him. Joseph's answer to their fear is one of the most profound things that any human will say in the Bible. Joseph's answer to his brothers shows a deep understanding of God's sovereignty (control of all things) and the meaning of mercy and forgiveness. Read verses 19 – 21 again:

Genesis 50:19-21 *"Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹ So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children."*

As Joseph looked back and saw all that had happened in his life, and how God had worked through all those things to accomplish his purposes, Joseph understood that what had happened to him because of his brother's bad intentions was all part of God's plan to bring good to Joseph, his brothers and generation of Israelites who would follow them, and that allows Joseph to forgive his brothers completely.

Now fast forward to the New Testament. What did Jesus say as we nailed him to the cross?

Luke 23:34 *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*

The men who were nailing Jesus to the cross had no idea who he really was. To them he was just a man—a man pretending to be a king. They had no idea they were actually nailing God to the cross. Why would they even begin to think that? What God would ever allow his own creation to rebel against him in such a way that they kill him? Why did God do such a thing? God allowed his son, Jesus, to be crucified to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Romans 5:7-10 *Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved*

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from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

What we intended for harm, God intended for good to accomplish His purpose.

February 3 – Exodus 2

Today's reading focuses on the early life of Moses, the part of his life that prepared him for what he was to do with the rest of his life. As we looked at Joseph, we saw many parallels between Joseph's life and Jesus; however, the opposite is true when we compare Moses' early life with Jesus'. There is a definite contrast between the two. Moses' parents were slaves in Egypt, and then through God's sovereign protection and his mother's ingenuity, Moses ended up in the palace, growing up as if he was royalty. God did this to prepare Moses for what was to come in his latter life. He learned how to govern as he grew up in the palace. But then as we continue to read, Moses is forced to flee from his royal lifestyle out into the desert. Moses took matters into his own hands and became judge, jury and executioner to an Egyptian slave driver. So Moses went into the desert to escape punishment. He was there for forty years, and in those 40 years he learned humility. Now God had a man he could use, a man who knew how to lead, but also a man who had been humbled, and was ready to obey God and lead his people from slavery to freedom.

Jesus' early life was almost an exact opposite. Moses started as the child of slaves, Jesus started as the Son of God. As a baby Moses went from the humble dwelling of his parents, to the palace of Pharaoh, Jesus went from the throne room of his Father in Heaven, to a peasant girl in a stable in Bethlehem. Moses condemned and passed judgment on that Egyptian slave master; Jesus passed judgment on no one and condemned no one.

John 8:15 *You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one.*

John 3:17 *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

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Moses went into the wilderness because he was defeated by his sin; Jesus went into the wilderness led by the Spirit to defeat the power of sin.

Mark 1:12-13 *At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, ¹³ and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan.*

But what both Jesus and Moses had in common was that God was using suffering in their lives to mold them and prepare them for what He had called them to do.

Hebrews 5:7-9 *During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹ and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him*

If Moses had to suffer to get ready for what God had for him to do, and if Jesus had to suffer to get ready for what God had sent him to do, what purpose might suffering have in our lives?

Romans 5:3-5 *Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*

February 4 – Exodus 3: 1 – 10

In today's reading we find the account of Moses and the burning bush. The account tells us that Moses, while tending sheep, saw a bush that was on fire, but was not being consumed by the fire. As Moses walked over to the bush a voice came from the bush, telling Moses that he was in the presence of God and the ground that he was standing on was, therefore, holy ground. You may recall that when we were looking at Jacob's life we read about a time when Jacob wrestled with God, and we used the word theophany to describe this. A theophany is a visible manifestation of God. This burning bush certainly qualifies as that. But most scholars believe that this burning bush was not just a theophany, it was also a pre-incarnate (before his birth) Old Testament visitation of Jesus. Why would they think this? Well we'll see more in tomorrow's

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reading, but as we consider today's reading, we can see why as well. In John 1: 1, Jesus is called the Word.

John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

Jesus is the revealer of God to us. Just as the bush revealed God to Moses, Jesus reveals God to us. When we see Jesus and think about Jesus, we see God.

John 14:9 *Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.*

John 17:6 *"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.*

The voice that came from the bush gave Moses specific instructions concerning what Moses was to do for his people. The bush didn't just reveal God to Moses, it also revealed what God wanted from Moses. Jesus does the same for us.

But as we keep reading this account from Exodus 3, we see a God who comes down from heaven to come close to his people. We see a God who has compassion on his children who are suffering. We see a God who comes to rescue his people from slavery.

All those things about God that the voice in the bush revealed to Moses are the same things we see Jesus do as he comes to earth and reveals God to us. He came close to us by taking on flesh and living among us.

John 1:14 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.*

He has compassion on those who are suffering.

Matthew 9:35-36 *Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

He rescues us from our slavery to sin.

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Galatians 4:3-5 *So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. ⁴ But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*

February 5 – Exodus 3: 12 – 17

As we continue the account of Moses and the Burning Bush, Moses asks God what he should tell the Israelites, if they ask what is the name of the God who has sent to rescue us? God's response reveals a great deal about who God is. The response seems to be cryptic—a mystery to solve, but what God is saying really isn't a mystery at all. The name that God says Moses is tell the Israelites is found in verse 14, "I AM WHO I AM." That is the name of the God who would rescue Israel from their slavery. What does that name mean? It means that God is all-sufficient; He doesn't need or depend on anyone for His existence. That name means that God is eternal, and all powerful—able to accomplish whatever He desires to do. He does not need anyone or anything. He is all in all—completely self-sufficient. Those words "I AM WHO I AM" are the words that become God's Hebrew name "Yahweh." Just a side point, but whenever you see the word "LORD" in all capital letters in your Bible, it is referring to the name Yahweh.

So what does all of this have to do with Jesus? We don't have to guess because Jesus tells us throughout the Gospel of John. Seven different times, in that Gospel, Jesus refers to himself with the words I AM.

John 6:51 *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever;"*

John 8:12 *Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I AM the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*

John 8:58 *Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."*

John 10:9 *"I AM the gate. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." **John 10:11** "I AM the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*

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John 11:25 *Jesus said to her, "I AM the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.*

John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I AM the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

John 15:1 *"I AM the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.*

Jesus was very intentionally using this phrase to tell us who he is. He isn't just bread, or a good shepherd, or a light, or life, or a vine, he is God—the Great I Am. As God, Jesus is the spiritual bread that nourishes our faith, he is the light that exposes evil and brings us out of darkness, he is the good shepherd that watches over us and defends us, he is the vine that supports us, feeds us, and allows to bear fruit, he is eternal (John 8:58) and the only way to eternal life. He is Yahweh.

February 6 – Genesis 4: 1 – 17

So God called Moses to go and rescue his people, the Israelites, from slavery and oppression in Egypt, but as we read these verses we see that Moses didn't really think he was up to the task. The question Moses asked in yesterday's reading was really a very good question.

Exodus 3:11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

That is a question we should always ask when we believe God has called us to do something. Who am I? If you remember from yesterday's reading, God answers that question by saying who He is, and then in today's reading God gives Moses extra tools to do the work He has called him to do. In verses 1 to 9, God shows Moses the extraordinary powers that Moses will have to do miracles to validate his calling and his message to the people of Israel and to Pharaoh. But Moses still isn't satisfied, because Moses is worried about his speech, so God gives Moses his brother Aaron to be his spokesman.

Jesus has called us and left with an enormous task. Jesus has told us that we are to take the message of his gospel to the ends of the earth.

Matthew 28:19-20 *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

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But like God did with Moses, Jesus does not leave us on our own, or expect us to do this in our own power. Just as God gave Moses his staff, and Aaron, Jesus gives us his Holy Spirit to live inside of us, to empower us, and to speak for us.

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Luke 12:11-12 *"When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."*