

Joseph and His Brothers

Two shopkeepers were bitter rivals. Their stores were directly across the street from each other, and they would spend each day keeping track of each other's business. If one got a customer, he would smile in triumph at his rival. One night an angel appeared to one of the shopkeepers in a dream and said, "I will give you anything you ask, but whatever you receive, your competitor will receive twice as much. Would you be rich? You can be very rich, but he will be twice as wealthy. Do you wish to live a long and healthy life? You can, but his life will be longer and healthier. What is your desire?" The man frowned, thought for a moment, and then said, "Here is my request: Strike me blind in one eye!"

Jealousy can be a very dangerous emotion if it's not kept under control and today we're going to learn about a bunch of brothers who were jealous to the core.

How do you show your love to someone? Well maybe you could buy them flowers or chocolates, or buy them dinner or write a nice letter to them. In the Old Testament they also had other ways to show you love someone and one of those ways is what we're going to look at this morning.

Genesis 37:2+3 "Jacob had twelve sons. Of all his sons, he loved Joseph best because he was born to him in his old age. To show his great love, He made Joseph a beautiful coat that had many colours."

Jacob loved Joseph and to show how much he loved him, he gave him a coat of many colours. Now I remember when I was younger especially around Christmas time when me and my brother and sisters got their presents. It was exciting but I also remember not being very happy because in my mind my brother got better presents than I did.

Have you ever got a gift from someone but your brother or sister got something else that you wanted more? How did you feel?

My brother always got a bigger stocking at the end of his bed and because I was younger I got a smaller one and I was just jealous. Well in much the same way that's how Joseph's brothers felt.

Genesis 37:4 "This made the other sons jealous because it showed everybody that Joseph was the favourite son". Joseph's brothers were jealous.

Genesis 37:5-7 "One day Joseph said to his brothers, "Last night I had a dream. We were in the field tying bundles of grain together. Suddenly, my bundle rose and stood upright while your bundles gathered around mine and bowed down to it." Genesis 37:8 "His brothers asked, "Do you think that you are going to rule over us?" And they hated Joseph even more because of the dream".

You see when my brother got a bigger stocking for Christmas to fill with gifts, I was jealous and as the day went on I started to hate him because of it.

You see guys what starts off as jealousy can lead on to another sin which in this case is hatred.

Genesis 37:12-14 "A few days later Joseph's father said to him, "Your brothers are out tending my sheep. I want you to go to them and make sure that everything is well with them." Genesis 37:18-20 "Joseph went as his father had told him, but when his brothers saw him coming, they made plans to kill him. "Let's kill him and throw him into a pit and say that he was eaten by a wild animal."

Now do you see how one thing leads onto another. First it started off as jealousy, then hatred crept in and now, murder. But thankfully at least one of Joseph's brothers had some common sense.

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Genesis 37:21 "But Reuben, the oldest of the brothers said, "Let's not take his life. Let's throw him into this pit here in the desert, but don't harm him." Genesis 37:22 "Reuben said this because he planned to come back later and rescue Joseph and take him back to his father".

At least Reuben loved him and cared for him. Yes he was jealous, yes he hated Joseph but he knew where to draw the line. He knew that murder was just too much.

Genesis 37:23-25 "So they stripped Joseph of his beautiful robe and took him and threw him into the pit. Then they sat down to eat their dinner". Genesis 37:25 "As they were eating, they looked up and saw a caravan of merchants coming their way. They were on their way to Egypt". Genesis 37:26-28 "What will we gain if we kill our brother? Let's sell him to these merchants instead." So when the merchants came by, Joseph's brothers pulled him up out of the pit and sold him for twenty pieces of silver".

What price would you put on one of your family member? You see you might be thinking I would never sell one of my family members but the truth is we do it all the time.

Every time you tell a lie to get one of your brothers or sisters in trouble, you've sold them out. Every time you tell your parents 'yeh, I'm going to tidy my room and do my homework' and you don't do it, you've just sold them out.

And this can happen in our spiritual family too. You see Jesus is not only our Lord and Saviour but He's also our brother. Every time we say 'yeh I will be at the meeting' and we don't turn up, you've just sold Christ out. Every time you say 'yes I'm going to pray for you' and you don't, you've not sold Christ out you've sold out the person you said you were going to pray for. Every time we say 'yeh I will organise that and come and support our studies' and you don't, you've not only sold Christ out but you've sold your brothers and sisters in Christ out too.

So before we go pointing the fingers at Joseph's brothers and think how could they do such a thing? We need to remember that we all do from time and time.

So Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery but to cover up the jealousy and hatred they had they had to get involved in another sin. Genesis 37:31+32 "Then they killed a goat and smeared its blood over Joseph's coat of many colours. They took the bloody coat back to Jacob and said to him. "We found this bloody coat in the wilderness. Look at it and see if it is Joseph's coat." Genesis 37:33 "Jacob recognized the coat and said, "It is my son's coat! Surely some ferocious animal has eaten him. He must have been torn to pieces." Genesis 37:34+35 "Then Jacob wept bitterly for many days. All of his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted".

You see guys; jealousy can lead to terrible sin. Do you see how one sin leads to another to cover up the sin before?

There is a story about an eagle which could out fly another, and the other didn't like it. The eagle that didn't like being second best seen a sportsman one day, and said to him: "I wish you would bring down that eagle." The sportsman replied that he would if he only had some feathers to put into the arrow. So the eagle pulled one out of his wing. The arrow was shot, but didn't quite reach the rival eagle; it was flying too high. The envious eagle pulled out more feathers, and kept pulling them out until he lost so many that he couldn't fly, and then the sportsman turned around and killed him.

And loved ones, if you are jealous, the only person you can hurt is yourself. Proverbs 27:4 "Anger is cruel and destructive, but it is nothing compared to jealousy."

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What a mess, jealousy led to hatred, then almost murder but now they have to lie to their own father. James 1:14+15 "But we are tempted when we are drawn away and trapped by our own evil desires. Then our evil desires conceive and give birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death".

If we're not careful, one sin can easily lead to another and before you know where you are, you're in an absolute mess. What a terrible thing for Joseph's brothers to do just because they were jealous of their brother.

I hope that we would never do anything so terrible, but we can learn from this story that jealousy can cause us to do things that will hurt other people. It is something that we should guard against. We have to learn to be happy with whatever our Heavenly Father has given us.

Philippians 4:12 "I know what it is to be in need and what it is to have more than enough. I have learned this secret, so that anywhere, at any time, I am content, whether I am full or hungry, whether I have too much or too little."

Are you content with what you've got? Or are you jealous of what others have got?

We've just learned the lesson of the terrible things that happen because of the sin of jealousy. Before we close, I must tell you that this is not the end of the story of Joseph and his brothers. The story does have a happy ending and Joseph is reunited with his father and brothers.

But let's focus on Joseph for a moment. Joseph had to be wondering what on earth is going on! I was given a beautiful coat from my father; my brothers became jealous and then hated me because of a dream. I was thrown into a pit and left for dead, and then my brothers changed their minds thanks to Reuben. Then they sold me out to some merchants, who later sold me into Egyptian slavery. And then after a period of time I became the main man in Egypt and was later reconciled with my family.

What on earth is going on? Genesis 45:3-5 "Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But when his brothers heard this, they were so terrified that they could not answer. Then Joseph said to them, "Please come closer." They did, and he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be upset or blame yourselves because you sold me here. It was really God who sent me ahead of you to save people's lives".

Even though his whole family didn't know what was going on, Joseph did. Even though the Egyptians didn't know what was going on, Joseph did. He may not have fully understood what was going on but Joseph knew one thing. God was with him.

And isn't our lives the same, even today? Sometimes there are good times and sometimes there are bad times. But ALL the time, God is with us. But even more than that, sometimes God uses what seem like the worst times to do something wonderful. THAT'S what was going on!

If only Joseph could see the amazing things God had planned. But he couldn't just then. For now, all Joseph could do was trust in God, because God was with him. But, boy, it sure didn't seem like it.

But that's how it is, isn't it? God where were you when my wife left me? God where were you when I lost my job? God where were you when my husband died? God where were you when I was diagnosed with a terminal illness? God where were you when my friends had a go at me at school because I go to church and they want to throw me in a pit?

All my friends seem to be having a lot of fun without God in their lives and they try to convince me that I don't need God in my life.

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Let me tell something guys Satan has been telling people that same lie since the **Garden of Eden**. He told Adam and Eve, **'hey you guys don't need God, yeh he's real but following God is boring, go and make your own decisions and have fun'**.

And so we listen to everyone except God and we get confused and we end up in a dark place lost in the confusion. Will I become a Christian and follow God or will I listen to Satan and just have what the world calls fun.

But loved ones, we may get lost in the confusion of darkness but even in the darkest times, God is still with us. And even then God is at work on a wonderful plan but we need to always remember that.

If Joseph were physically alive to day he would speak from **Psalm 18:2 "The Lord is my protector; he is my strong fortress. My God is my protection, and with him I am safe. He protects me like a shield; he defends me and keeps me safe"**.

He would say always remember that. If Joseph were physically alive to day he would speak from **Psalm 23:4 "Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, Lord, for you are with me. Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me"**. He would say always remember that.

Jesus would say **Matthew 28:19+20 "Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age."** Jesus would say always remember that I am with you.

Now we need to remember that God reminds us He is with us in many different ways. It could simply be through encouraging text message. Listen to this text message we all received from Funmi this week.

There is sunshine in our soul today more glorious and bright than glows in any earthly skies for Jesus is our light. Blessed sunshine while the peaceful happy moment's roll, when Jesus shows His smiling face there is sunshine and peace in our soul. So with Christ as our vessel we each smile and the storms as we go sailing to our eternal home. Have a blessed day no matter what the day brings.

Now I know that to a lot of people those would have been just nice words but to anyone who was struggling and losing their way, this text was exactly what they needed to hear. God could be speaking to someone today through this sermon, in fact I know He is, I don't know who it is but God does.

I know He's speaking to someone because He would never have helped me put this lesson together if it wasn't for someone who He knew was going to be here today. And if you're wondering, **wow is God speaking to me today?** Well yes He is.

He is saying don't let jealousy get a grip of you because it will only lead to other sins. He's saying be content with what He has given you and you will always be happy with what you've got. He's saying if you're going through a hard time right now, you need to know that God is with you. He's saying if you're not a Christian this morning, then you need to stop listening to what Satan is trying to convince you of and listen to God.

My point is God uses His people to get that message across to us all. Like John taught last week God wrote a bunch of letters to us all in the form of the Bible and it's our job to share those letters with other people.

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And that's what I've been trying to do this morning even with a poor excuse of a sermon as this one. So let me leave you with this question from God, **are you listening?** God is asking you today, **are you willing to say no to Satan and turn to God in repentance? Are you willing to publicly confess Jesus as Lord of your life today? Are you willing to be baptised, not sprinkled but fully immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins?**

Yes you will still struggle with sin. Yes you will still go through dark times. But God promises to be with you and help you through all of those times until the day He comes when you shall be with him face to face.