Genesis Ch43v1-34 - A Compassionate Welcome

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[0:00] So, the last time that we met, I think Sam was bringing us through chapter 42. So, to bring us up to speed, before we head into chapter 43, there's a famine over the whole land.

And Jacob sends his sons down to Egypt to buy food. And what the brothers don't know is that when they arrive, Joseph has been made governor of Egypt.
He's in charge of distributing food to all the surrounding nations. But the thing is, Joseph recognizes the brothers, but the brothers don't recognize Joseph.
They get their food and return home. And on their way home, they stop and open up their sacks and discover that the silver they had used to buy the grain had been returned to them.
But also, the food that they had got came at a price. Joseph keeps one brother in prison, Simeon, and demands that if they come again, have a look in chapter 42, verse 34.
[1:11] Joseph had said to them, you're to bring your youngest brother, that's Benjamin, to me, so that I will know that you are not spies, but honest men.

Then I will give your brother back to you, and you can trade in the land. You can buy food. So it was crystal clear that if you come back again to Egypt, you're not going to get any food unless you bring Benjamin.
And that brings us to chapter 43. Well, let's pray before we look at that together. Father, your word is living.
It is like a surgeon's scalpel that cuts right to the heart and exposes what our hearts are truly like. And so we come and ask that you would show us our need of you so that we may come to your throne of grace and mercy and receive all that we need for our lives today.
[2:28] We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, Avian. Just what I needed. Well done. Thank you.

Well, there's a crisis in Jacob's clan. The boys are getting hungry and their bellies are beginning to rumble. Have a look at verse 1. Now, the famine was still severe in the land.
So when they had eaten all the grain they had bought from Egypt, their father said to them, Go back and buy us some more food. Well, that's easier said than done.
Look at verse 3. Judah said to his father, Come on, Dad. You know the answer to that. The man, speaking of Joseph, warned us solemnly.
You will not see my face again unless your brother Benjamin is with you. If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you.
[3:40] But if you will not send Benjamin, we will not go down because the man said to us, You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.

Well, Jacob didn't trust his sons. In fact, he had made his feelings known after the last trip. Look at the last verse of chapter 42.
Jacob said, My son, Benjamin, will not go down there. Your brother, speaking of Joseph, is dead and he's the only one left.
If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my grey head down to the grave in sorrow. There was no way he was going to part with his younger son.
Well, once again, all these hidden hurts and these deep divisions that existed within the family bubbled to the surface.
[4:39] Look at chapter 43 and verse 6. Israel, that's Jacob, asked, Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?

They replied, The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. Is your father still living? Do you have another brother?

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We just simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, Bring your brother down here. It's not our fault. So Jacob's in a dilemma, isn't he?
If he doesn't send Benjamin, they're not going to get food and they're all going to die. But if he does send Benjamin to Egypt, he fears that Benjamin could die.
Well, the brothers are worried about supplies. So Judah, one of the brothers, offers his father a deal. It's not really the sort of thing you do when you're in good relationship with one another.
[5:44] It just shows the breakdown that existed. Verse 8. Then Judah said to his father, Send the boy along with me and we will go at once so that we and you and our children may live and not die.

I myself will guarantee his safety. You can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life.
As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice. Just hurry up, Dad, and make your decision before we all starve to death.
Now, while the brothers are prioritizing food for their bellies, it seems that God is actually more concerned about the sin in their hearts.
You see, 22 years have passed since the brothers had sold their brother, Joseph, into slavery. Remember, Joseph had been the special one, the favorite one.
[6:59] And his father, Jacob, had bought him that designer jacket, the lovely bright colored one. So in envy and jealousy, they sold their brother as a slave.

And to make matters worse, they covered it up. They killed a goat. They put blood on the coat and bought it to their father, Jacob. We found this father when we were out.
Check and see if it's your son's coat. We don't know who it belongs to. Well, Jacob fell for it. It is my son's coat.
Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces, he said. Well, the brothers may have deceived their father all these years, but nothing is hidden from God.
You see, they may be prioritizing food for their bellies, but God is more concerned about the sin in their hearts. You see, the most important need for us is not physical, but spiritual.
[8:15] It's not about a good career, finding the right partner, owning a house, retiring on a big pension. It's not about having a great ministry program in your church, the best music and wonderful sermons, all of which we have here, of course.

All these things are good, but they're not God's priority. What God desires is that we face our sin and deal with our sin.
In this account of chapter 43, we're going to see that God confronts sin, revealing our desperate need for mercy, and displays the grace and welcome he gives to sinners like us.
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So first, the mercy we desperately need. Look at verse 11. Then their father said to them, If it must be, then do this.
[9:33] Put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift. Now remember what they bring, okay? A little balm and a little honey, some spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds.

Take double the amount of silver for you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. Take your brother also and go back to the man at once.
Well, Jacob's request must have hit them like a ton of bricks. Take spices and silver and your brother and go to Egypt.
Well, it's like their sin of the past is being replayed before their very eyes. Do you remember what happened to Joseph?
Go back to chapter 37 and see if you can spot some similarities. Chapter 37. The scene here is the brothers have thrown Joseph down into an empty well and they're thinking of a way to get rid of him.
[10:56] We'll pick it up in verse 25. As they, the brothers, sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan or a convoy of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead.

Their camels were loaded with spices and balm and myrrh and they were on their way down to Egypt.

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Judah said to his brothers, What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay hands on him.
After all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood. His brothers agreed. So when the merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the well and sold him for 20 shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt.
Let's go back to chapter 43. You see, the scene is almost identical, isn't it? Their hidden past sins are now playing out before their very eyes.
[12:11] The brothers are packed up with spices and silver and their brother and they're heading for Egypt.

Coincidence? I don't think so. God is taking them back to that terrible day when they sold Joseph. God is confronting their unconfessed sin. Well, of course, all of this is unknown to Jacob.
But he does the only right thing. He gathers his sons together before they head off and they have a quick prayer meeting. Verse 14.
We're back in chapter 43. Let's pray, brothers. May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you.
[13:14] As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved. Now, this is no superstitious tradition, a kind of quick prayer, a lucky charm.

No, Jacob is crying out to God Almighty. This is how God had introduced himself to Jacob years before.
I am the Almighty God. I'm the Creator God, the Sovereign God, the God who has mercy on his people. So what Jacob is praying is that God would deal with the sons in mercy.
He wouldn't treat them as their sins deserve, but that he would be kind to them. Now, isn't that what the brothers really need?
As they head off to Egypt with their spices and silver and their brother remembering their past sins? Well, they've also got their father's prayer ringing in their ears.
[14:22] God have mercy. You see, that's where we all need to start. You see, maybe there's something in your past or my past that is undealt with.

It's been brushed under the carpet all these years, hoping that with the passing of time it will just go away and everybody will forget.
perhaps God is confronting us, reminding you of a relationship that is broken and not sorted within the family, convicting us of some habit that has never really been addressed.
How do we deal with it? Well, we start with prayer just as Jacob did in verse 14. We recognize our desperate need and we cry out to God for mercy.
Now, the big question is will God answer that prayer? Will God be merciful? Can you press the space bar there, Alex?
[15:47] Sorry. Thank you. Thanks. Second, the grace we generously receive. No? Never mind.

Don't worry. Leave it. I'll, um... It's the grace we generally generously receive is the next heading. Verse 15. So the men took the gifts and doubled the amount of silver and Benjamin also.
They hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. Now, remember they don't recognize Joseph. Verse 16.
When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, Take these men to prepare my... Take these men to my house. Slaughter an animal prepare a meal.
They are to eat with me at noon. The men did as Joseph told him, and he took the men to Joseph's house. Now, the men were frightened when they were taken to his house.
[16:54] They thought, we were bought here because of the silver that was put back in our sacks the first time. Remember... Don't worry, Sam.

Leave it. It's fine. Remember, Joseph had kindly put back in their bags the silver they had paid for the grain. But the brothers thought it was all a trick.
But it wasn't a trick. It was Joseph's kindness. Verse 18. He wants us... He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys.
The brothers are terrified. We can imagine them thinking and talking amongst themselves. If he's anything like how we treated our brother, we don't stand a chance.
We're going to end up as his slaves too. Verse 19. So they went up to Joseph's steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house.

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[17:56] We beg your pardon, our Lord, they said. We came down here the first time to buy food. But at the place where we stopped for the night, we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver, the exact weight, in the mouth of his sack.

So we've brought it back with us. We have also brought additional silver with us to buy the food. We don't know who put our silver in our sacks. Well, we can hear their knees knocking.
What's going to happen to them? Will their father's prayer for mercy be answered? Well, amazingly, God acts with generous grace.
Look at the response of the steward, verse 23. It's all right, he said. Be at peace. Don't be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure treasure in your sacks. I received your silver. What? Not only was their silver returned, this act of kindness was none other than the work of God.
[19:15] Look what he says, your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in his sack. this is covenant talk. This is the God who had made promises to his people, the God who promises to be loyal and faithful despite their sin.

You see, the silver turning up in their bags was not some kind of miraculous act. No, Joseph had given orders to the steward to put the silver back.
However, the steward, verse 23, is making it abundantly clear that it was God working through Joseph. God was responding in generous grace to a bunch of broken sinners.
And to show the extent of his generosity, look at the end of verse 23, he also brought Simeon out to them. He freed his brother.
What generosity, what kindness. You see, we too can be terrified like the brothers, afraid that if we face our sin, that if God would somehow find out or somebody else would find out, God will give us what we deserve.
[20:37] So rather than confessing our sin, we hide our sin. Instead of running to God freely, we hide in shame and we bury our guilt and we live in fear. If this encounter with the steward teaches us anything, it teaches us that God is patient and God is kind.

He responds not as we expect, but with generous grace. You see, mercy is not being treated as our sins deserve, but grace is receiving what we do not deserve and that's what the brothers get, not just mercy, but grace.
God is more than merciful, he is generously gracious. In fact, it only gets better for the brothers.
Third, if you're taking notes, the welcome we compassionately gain, the welcome we compassionately gain. Let's follow the story, verse 24.
The steward took the men into Joseph's house, gave them water to wash their feet, provided fodder for their donkeys. They prepared their gifts for Joseph's arrival at noon because they had heard they were going to eat there.
[22:06] When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts they had bought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground. He asked them how they were, and then he said, how is your aged father you told me about?

Is he still living? They replied, your servant, our father, is still alive and well, and they bowed down, prostrating themselves before him.
All this bowing down before someone they don't know. At last, there's a sign of humility from these hardened brothers.
It seems that their encounter with God's grace is beginning to change their hardened hearts. Verse 29, as he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son, he asked, is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?
And he said, God, be gracious to you, my son. Deeply moved. Now, that's an important phrase for us to understand.
[23:19] Deeply moved means his heart was filled with compassion. Not just a feeling inside, but a desperate need to act to help those who were in desperate need.

So, verse 30, deeply moved with compassion at the sight of his brother. Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there.
He didn't want them to know who he was. After he had washed his face, he came out and controlling himself said, serve the food.
I mean, what a transformation is taking place. Not only have they received generous grace, but now they also gain a compassionate welcome, eating in the home of the governor of all of Egypt.

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Verse 32, they served Joseph by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with them by themselves.
[24:29] So, three different seating areas, but all within the same vicinity, because the Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to the Egyptians.

They obviously saw themselves as superior. Verse 33, the men had been seated before Joseph in order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest, and they looked at each other in astonishment.
How does he know our ages? Who told him? Did you tell him? No, I didn't tell him. Did you? No, I didn't say anything. Well, all of this will be revealed next week, but there's something else that we need to be astonished about.
Not just the brothers as they try to figure out how he knows so much about them, but remember back to when the brothers were plotting to get rid of Joseph.
Do you remember how that account all started? Chapter 37, verse 25, it tells us, they took him and threw him into an empty well, and then they sat down to eat their meal.
[25:50] Well, here they are again, all the brothers together. The first time they're all sitting down again eating a meal, but this time they're being served by their brother who they had sold as a slave.

They had hated him, they had got rid of him, and now they've been welcomed by him and served by him. We, the reader, should be astonished at what is taking place.
What compassion, what kindness. But what is even more astonishing about this event is the picture it paints for us.
You see, we have been welcomed to the feast of King Jesus. You see, like the brothers treated Joseph, so as we read the story, so we have treated Jesus.
We have turned against him. We have hated Jesus and sought to get rid of him. We've plotted and planned to remove his rule over our lives.
[27:02] We don't want anything to do with him. We've killed him. But Jesus in his goodness doesn't give up.

He confronts us with our sin. He reveals to us the mercy that we desperately need. He calls us not to hide our sin, but to run to him and confess our sin, to receive his generous grace and his compassionate welcome.
You see, the one that we have disowned, has become our true brother, who has served us by giving his life for us.
Although we have sinned against him, he has taken our sin on himself and died in our place. And now Jesus, our brother, reaches out his hand of friendship and he invites us to feast at his table.
The brothers here in this account, are separated. It's not a true union. But isn't that what we do receive when we are welcomed by Jesus?
[28:16] We become his children. He is our brother. We feast at his table, forgiven and welcomed.

God's loved. So as we reflect on this story together, let's not hide our sins of the past.
Let's not brush them under the carpet and hope that they'll all go away and everybody else will forget. Don't live under the crushing weight of guilt and shame.
rather let us come to Jesus with open hearts and we will find mercy and grace and a compassionate welcome.
Let's pray together. Father, as we reflect together, we know that nothing is hidden from your sight.
[29:37] You know all our thoughts and all our deeds. Father, help us that we wouldn't carry the weight of guilt and shame, but that we would cry out to you for mercy and know that you respond with generous grace, taking our sin upon yourself.

and giving us that compassionate welcome that we might feast at your table with our brother, Jesus Christ.
How amazing is your gift to us. Please help us to run to him every day. We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
[30:54] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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