

Genesis 47

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[0 : 00] And let me add my word of welcome to you this morning at Christ Church Chicago. So glad that you are here. We are continuing our series, Family Matters, the story of Joseph and his brothers.

As you heard, we find ourselves this morning, Chapter 47. We are coming to the close of this series. But this morning, if I can just offer a word of encouragement with this theme from this morning's text, it would simply be trust God's provision for God's plan to fulfill God's promises.

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At the risk of dating myself, there was a TV show back in the 80s, Andy, called the A-Team.

Some of you, I know, are way too young to even remember it. But it featured a group of ex-Special Forces soldiers who became soldiers of fortune, as it were, riding injustices and helping people along the way, all while being on the run for a crime they didn't commit.

[1 : 40] It featured colorful characters like Mr. T. And the group was led by a military mastermind named Hannibal Smith, who was known for his clever tactics and meticulous planning.

One of the iconic lines from the show would come when one of Hannibal's strategies would work out successfully.

He would say, I love it when a plan comes together. This phrase became a popular catchphrase from the show and is now even generally used in our current American dialogue to express satisfaction or delight when things go according to plan or when a carefully crafted strategy is executed successfully.

I love it when a plan comes together. Here in chapter 47, we will see how God's plan comes together through his provision to fulfill his promises to Joseph's family, even in the middle of a famine and while in a foreign land.

Wherever you are today, church, whatever season of drought or famine you may be experiencing, whatever foreign land metaphorically or otherwise you may find yourself in, may we all learn today to trust God's provision for his plan to fulfill his promises and purposes in our lives.

[3 : 32] Now quickly, by way of review, we are entering the third year of a seven-year famine. And things have gotten pretty bad.

There is no way Joseph's family could continue to stay where they were. So Joseph has brought his father Jacob and the rest of his family, 70 people in all, and brought them into Canaan, out of Canaan, into Egypt, into a land called Goshen.

They weren't missionaries like the Swains. They were forced into a foreign land. There, Joseph and Jacob have a tearful reunion after 17 years.

Now, with this, it is also important to remember, by way of context, some of the promises and assurances that have been given up to this point.

As you heard last week, Pastor Helm, chapter 46, God tells Jacob not to be afraid to go into Egypt because I'm going to be with you, and I'm going to make you a great nation.

[4 : 51] In chapter 45, Joseph promises brothers and tells them, pack up everything you've got, move. You're going to dwell in the land of Goshen, and I will provide for you there.

We can go all the way back to Genesis chapter 12, which mirrors what you heard in chapter 46, where God tells Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, to leave his country, go to a land he will show them, and he will make them a great nation, and bless them, and through them, all the families of the earth will be blessed.

Well, now here at chapter 47, we begin to tangibly see God's plan come together and realize the fulfillment of some of these promises.

In other words, we begin to see, play out the provision for the plan to fulfill the promise. Keep this in mind as this chapter opens that though Pharaoh had previously invited Joseph's family to come to Egypt, and though as a result, Joseph brought his family to Egypt and put them in Goshen, it had not been formally determined where in Egypt this family would live.

Joseph still need to get Pharaoh's permission for the family to dwell there. But when you think about it, this is a brilliant strategy.

[6 : 28] Joseph brings his family to Goshen and then puts in motion a plan to get Pharaoh's permission for them to stay in Goshen.

It's like me buying something expensive knowing I should probably check in with my wife about it, but hoping that when I talk to her, the fact that I already have it will make her more inclined to just let me keep it.

Let's look at how this plan unfolds itself. Step one in the plan plays out in verses one through six. Joseph makes an introduction of five.

The text doesn't tell us which five, but five of his hand-picked brothers to see and meet Pharaoh. Now, back in chapter 46, he's already coached them up.

He's told them, now look, I'm gonna go talk to Pharaoh first, and then I'm going to introduce you and Pharaoh's going to ask you what you do for a living.

[7 : 37] You need to tell them that you are shepherds, which they did. Though, they added a little more onto it than Joseph told them to because after they said they were shepherds, they went ahead and asked Pharaoh, can we stay in Goshen?

Can you imagine, Joseph? I didn't tell you to say that. I just said, tell them you're shepherds. Still, Pharaoh tells Joseph they can go ahead and settle in the land of Goshen.

And by the way, if there are any among the group that are able-bodied men, tell them I got a few government jobs for them where they can watch over some of my livestock.

This is so amazing. In that first, we heard last week in chapter 46 that the Egyptians couldn't stand shepherds. But Joseph knew that perhaps precisely because of this, it would lessen the suspicion of Pharaoh and the Egyptian people that these immigrants posed any kind of real threat.

That they're not coming in to displace them from their positions or their jobs. So then, to be placed in Goshen, which was a rich pasture land that was also located towards the edges of Egyptian society, it really worked for everybody because it would enable Joseph's family to maintain their distinct identity separate from most of the other Egyptians, helping them to preserve Israel's commitment to God.

[9 : 20] Favor upon favor upon favor heaped upon God's people. Just look at the kindness of God's providence. Generally speaking, and by man's standard, there's no reason Jacob's family should have been received so warmly.

But man wasn't in control here. Pharaoh was considered a god by his own people, but Pharaoh wasn't even in control here. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was in control here.

And just as God through Joseph sovereignly orchestrated the events surrounding his family, so is God sovereignly orchestrating the events of your life.

You just have to trust his provision for his plan to fulfill his promise. Now, in the second movement of this passage, verses 7 through 10, we see Joseph bring his father, Jacob, now in to meet Pharaoh, the king.

Chuck Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship International, and before that, he was special counsel to President Nixon.

[10 : 40] He tells in his book about his conversion how cynically the White House staff would treat Christian leaders who were brought to the White House to speak to the president.

They knew no matter how angry those Christian leaders were about certain policies of the government that when they were brought into the presence of the president in the symbolic room of power, the Oval Office, they would crumble before those symbols of power.

Even if they were walking down the hall on the way to the Oval Office and they were saying, now when I see the president, I'm going to tell him this and I'm going to tell him that and I'm going to set him straight, all they would have to do is be ushered into the door of the Oval Office and suddenly they would become meek as little lambs.

Here now comes Jacob, this 130-year-old man whose days by his own account were few and evil, making his way into the presence of Pharaoh, the king.

But he is undaunted, unmoved, and unimpressed by the rank of the one standing before him. Why?

[12 : 04] Because this was not some quirky, senile old man. This was actually the covenant head of God's people. As such, what does he do?

He blesses Pharaoh, not once, but twice, both coming and going. Pharaoh is the ruler of the land, but in God's providence, his hand is upon Jacob.

This is a glorious picture of God's covenant head acting in fulfillment of Genesis chapter 12, when God told Abraham that I will bless you and you will be a blessing to the nations.

Jacob may not have been the greatest in the eyes of the world or in the presence of Pharaoh, but in God's governmental structure, he's the head.

And not only do we see here the fulfillment of God's word to Abraham, we also see a glimpse of God's plan in bringing all the nations to the Messiah, even in the actions of Jacob.

[13 : 10] There is, however, another portion to Genesis chapter 12, a part of that promise, that says, God says, I will bless those who bless you. You have to remember that Pharaoh has already blessed Jacob by treating Joseph well, by inviting them to Egypt, by giving them supplies and carts to come back to Egypt, and when they arrived, also treating them well, so that when Jacob now blesses Pharaoh, it is proper and divinely sanctioned.

This double blessing from Jacob not only results in Pharaoh giving them the very best of the land and fulfilling Joseph's promise to provide for his family, verses 11 and 12, it now also sets up further blessings for Pharaoh and the nation of Egypt.

Don't you love it? When a plan comes together? So now, you've heard about Pharaoh and Egypt and Jacob and Joseph.

Can I take a moment and just give my own testimony? I recall how God called my wife and I to leave the promised land of Florida.

No disrespect to California, Pastor Bing. We left Florida. The call came to come to Chicago. We got the call, but my wife wondered if maybe God had dialed the wrong number.

[14 : 51] Told me I should just let it ring and don't answer it. but we answered and embarked upon the transition here, which was by no means easy and even still at times has its challenges.

But let me tell you this one thing. We have also seen the miraculous divine hand of God over us. and we've seen him work his plan and his purpose in our lives.

We can tell you without a doubt that if you just trust God's provision for his plan, he'll fulfill his promise and he'll work things out in your behalf.

He'll do it. He'll do it. He will do it. We are living witnesses that he will do it. Now this third scene really verses 13 through 26, we see further how God uses Joseph to bless Pharaoh and rescue the people of Egypt.

One famous scholar says right here, before we focus our very western eyes on how God affected this blessing, we must resist as much as possible the question of the extent to which Joseph's maneuvers stand the test of modern opinion.

[16 : 16] What he's talking about is how people will read what Joseph did and what he acquired for Pharaoh and then hold it up against their modern political philosophy and perhaps dismiss it altogether.

The idea here that you need to get is that you should marvel and be amazed at how God through Joseph sets in motion an economic plan that pulls an entire nation back from the brink of an utter global catastrophe.

Let's look briefly at the plan. Joseph on Pharaoh's behalf is selling food to the people of Egypt. Soon, however, the people run out of money. Rather than starve them if they can't pay, Joseph offers to provide another year in exchange for livestock owned by the people.

With no other option, the people agreed to sell their cattle and animals to Joseph in exchange for food. This might have been something like a mortgage where the people physically kept the animals, but they were ultimately owned and controlled by Pharaoh's household.

When the next year arrives, the people return to Joseph fully aware they have nothing to trade for food, but themselves and their land. To survive, the people propose to offer up those very two things.

[17 : 43] Joseph agrees and explains to the people their servanthood will work much like a permanent mortgage. This form of indentured servitude, you should understand, was extremely common in the ancient world, and it was fundamentally different from the harsh slavery that the people of Israel would soon endure later, or how we look at slavery today through our modern eyes.

The Egyptians will continue to work as they've done, paying to Pharaoh 20% of each year's harvest from this point on. Can anybody say IRS?

Anyway, they will keep 80% for themselves. Yes, Pharaoh is blessed and becomes even more wealthy during this time.

Think back to Jacob's blessing in verse 7, but the people are also grateful to Joseph for saving their lives. He becomes a national hero, even at the cost of their freedom.

But, here's what I want you to get. Unlike the everyday Egyptians, Jacob's family continues to grow and prosper. Since they are provided food from Joseph, they can hold on to their cash, their livestock, and even the land that they now own in Egypt.

[19 : 15] As most citizens lose what they own, these foreigners, these immigrants from Canaan actually thrive, prosper, and continue to add to their numbers, providing more evidence of how God's provision for his plans fulfill his promises.

But here's what I need you to get. They prospered greatly as foreigners in the middle of a famine. Hold on to this.

They were provided for, cared for, and covered, though they themselves had really done nothing to merit this prosperity.

Jacob said himself earlier in the text that his days were few and filled with evil. Jacob's sons were murderers and liars selling their own brother into slavery, and now they have everything thanks to Pharaoh through Joseph.

Let me see, is there another way I can say this? They have profited through the good will, obtained through the work of their brother, and received blessing through a Savior, though they did nothing at all to get it.

[20 : 38] Y'all, you don't, y'all aren't hearing me. It sounds just like the gospel to me. Though we did nothing to deserve it, though there was nothing in us that warranted, God sent his only son to mediate for us, to work on our behalf, taking our sins on the cross to save us, provide for us, care for us, cover us, and ultimately give us the promise of eternal life.

This work was done for everyone in this room today. You just have to accept this gift that has freely been given.

I'd love to talk to you about it after church if you haven't done it already. So here we really see how God's sovereign provision works out his perfect plans and fulfills his promises in ways we could never imagine.

God caused Israel to go down to Egypt so that they might be both preserved, prospered, and then as one scholar puts it, incubated for the next 400 years that they may eventually come out a great nation.

So now we come to the close of this chapter starting at verse 29. And when the time drew near that Israel, Jacob, must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, if now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal kindly and truly with me.

[22 : 24] Do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place. Joseph answered, I will do as you've said.

So even though Jacob, now living in Egypt, is enjoying immense prosperity, his heart was in the promised land.

The land he remembers that God had promised to give his grandfather, Abraham, and his seed all those years ago. Even on his deathbed, he is thinking about the future fulfillment of the promise.

That's where Jacob wanted to be buried because that was his true home. This was not merely about emotional significance of where his body is, but covenantal significance.

He knew that his burial would stand as a testimony to his descendants that their hope is not in Egypt. Their hope is in the promise of God.

[23 : 35] And for them, that means the land of Canaan. So you ask, what does this mean for us? Our job as pilgrims here is not to set our hope on that city which has foundations here because this world is not our home, but it is to set our hope on that city which has its foundations in the fulfillment of God's plan for all the saints.

Growing up, when we would go visit family, I could always tell how long we were going to stay by whether or not my dad took off his shoes.

If he kept his shoes on, that meant don't get comfortable, we're not staying long. I say that to you today, children of God.

While you're down here, keep your shoes on and don't get too comfortable because we indeed have a promised land to look forward to, not just some plot of ground in the Middle East, but an eternal inheritance that God promised to his people.

And just like Jacob, that's where our hearts should be. Today, this text teaches us that God provides, God keeps his promises and God's got a plan for each and every one of you.

[25 : 12] God still has much he wants to accomplish in and through all of us. I know sometimes it may not look like it. I know sometimes you may not understand it.

Sometimes it may feel like you're a foreigner in Egypt, but he's got a plan. A plan to give you a future and a hope. How do you know this, Pastor Joe?

Because even while in Egypt, I'll just talk about myself, even while in Egypt, he still uses you, blesses you, positions you, promotes you, provides for you, and preserves you in spite of you.

Trust God's provision for God's plan to ultimately fulfill God's promises in your life. Then watch this God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, our God, work to bring all things together for good, for those who love him and who are called according to his purpose.

Then, in glory, you will say, don't you love it when a plan comes together? Let's pray.

[26 : 36] Father, we thank you. We praise you for your promises to us. We thank you for being a promise-keeping God. We thank you that even in those days where we can't see it nor understand it, we rest on the fact that you indeed have a plan for us.

And you will make provision to accomplish that plan and fulfill your purpose and promise in our lives. God, we yield ourselves to you.

We rest on the plan you have set out for us. We keep our heart focused on the promised land that you have prepared for us. Let us not get too comfortable in what's going on down here, but let us always remain ever vigilant, ever focused on what you have yet for us.

In your son's name, we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.