

Mission - Where Will You End Up?

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[0 : 0 0] this story that we've heard this morning is about family, but it's far more than family. It's far more than family. It's about saving your family. And this morning, we baptised Beatrice into God's family. I don't know what God will do in Beatrice's family, but one thing I know for sure that he will do in Beatrice's life is that she will grow in faith and in love. And most of all, I pray that she'll have a heart to share that with other people and bring them into the knowledge and love of God. I want to ask a question. I want to ask you a question this morning. When was the last time you were sent somewhere on an errand? And where did you end up? Last time you were sent on an errand. And where did you end up? I remember the first time I was sent as a young lad to the corner shop. That was my errand. You have the money in an envelope. Your mum writes on there what she wants, in case I forget, in the 200 yards it was to get there. And there was a full briefing, of course, before you went. Don't talk to anybody. Don't lose the envelope. Don't lose the money and carry it properly home with the basket that you were provided with that you wish you hadn't.

And off you go, six years old, six years old. This was an adventure. I remember it as though it was yesterday. And it was an important mission because my mission was to get half a pound of mince, two onions, a wheat sheaf loaf, and a packet of Huntley and Palmer biscuits. Now that tells you how old I am. Okay, I declare it. People are smiling. In the envelope was three shillings and sixpence.

And I was allowed to get a penny's worth of sweets with that as well. How do you feel? How do you feel when you are called on an errand? How do you feel when you step out on an adventure? How does that feel?

Exciting, apprehensive, important, nervous. Can I do this job that I've been sent to do? Life doesn't change whether you are six or whether you are 60. We still feel that. When God calls us out onto a job, we can feel all of that. And welcome here to the story of Joseph, a story that in so many, many ways encapsulates the whole breadth of what it means to be family. In our Old Testament reading, Joseph, he was about 17, was with his brothers. They're tending sheep. And he brought to his brothers a bad report. He towed tails. He ratted on them. They were not a pleasant bunch. And here we see, and right at the beginning, this idea of a dysfunctional family at work. How does God use that?

I am so encouraged when I read about all the dysfunctional families in the Bible. It helps me so much in life. You see, Joseph and his younger brothers were born by a different wife. And Jacob loved his wife dearly, and especially the oldest son, Joseph. He poured and lavished love upon this one boy. No wonder he was going to have problems with his siblings. And so easily in the Old Testament story, we can be dazzled by the coat of many colours. Andrew Lloyd Webber, images perhaps of the Joseph the Dreamer. But in this dysfunctional family, have you noticed in the Bible that in this reading, in all these dysfunctional families I read about, brings me hype. It brings me true hype. Because here we have a family in crisis, whose father was too busy running a minor nation that he couldn't control his sons, let alone love them, let alone direct them. And who do we identify with in the story?

[4 : 37] Because perhaps we identify with the jealousy of the brothers, faced with a younger sibling who had life lavished upon him. So many people in large and small families feel that they have been ill, treated, forgotten. But this morning, I don't want to concentrate so much on the family. I want to concentrate on the journey. Because so often we look at the family, but not the journey. And the journey is important because in many ways, the mission that Joseph was about to embark on was totally, totally out of his control. His brothers wanted to get rid of him. And so what's your mission and purpose at the moment? Is it clear? Is it defined? Do you know what your mission and calling is at the moment? What does God want for your life and the life of others around you? Because that's an important question to ask. Because if we don't know that, often we can be like a boat without a rudder. We can just go along. And sadly, if we don't know what that is, we will be diverted. And we will be diverted so easily. We are lost. We're perplexed. We need to be clear about God, what God wants for us and to be in the power of God. Because God has a plan for your life. It may not be evident, but God has got a plan.

Now, I can say that because I personally don't need the flashiness of life. And so often, we can buy into different situations that we think is of God that gives us status, that gives us purpose.

But unless we know the true value and calling of God, we will be diverted. Joseph didn't have that option. He's sold into slavery and has to ask himself, what is this all about, God? What is this all about? And maybe this morning, we need to do that. What is my mission? What is my calling? What are you actually calling me to do at this stage of my life? Something this morning, I want to talk about how something's changed in the spiritual life of Christchurch over the past few months. Something missionally that is hugely exciting. You see, today, there are those that are returning from New Wine. There will be those that will be coming back from Falcon Camp, who are serving on Falcon Camp.

There are those who are getting ready to serve at Hill House. There are those that are looking forward to working with young people in September, in transforming lives for good in our schools. There will be those of those who are looking forward to Alpha and bringing their five friends along, that they've already thought about and prayed about, about inviting along. There will be those who are serving on our new under-14s football team. There will be those who are serving in Uganda and on Uganda teams. There will be those who serve on Monday lunchtime clubs. There are those who are serving in the workplace. The list goes on and on. We ask God, what is our purpose in that? Why am I here? What am I doing? How will you increase your purpose for me? Why? Because it's God's desire. It's God's desire for us.

We want to see people saved. It's as if a family, because when you're in family, it costs. And my goodness, did it cost Joseph. It cost Joseph dearly. Joseph's mission was to take him face to face with family jealousy so rife that some would have killed him. It took him into slavery. It nearly took him into Potiphar's wife's bed. How did he avoid that? Then it took him to jail for saying no. Good man.

[8 : 47] What am I doing here? I did the right thing, but now I'm in prison. Do you know what? He never gives up hope. And God gives him the ability to interpret dreams. He gives him the ability to move in the prophetic. And from that, it's wonderful when that happens and when the Spirit of God moves, bringing chaos into order. And that is where we are with Joseph. And then before Pharaoh, he brings him to Pharaoh because he prophesies into Pharaoh's life. Then he comes into Pharaoh's court. He is promoted.

He's running the whole infrastructure. This Joseph, this man of God, and God takes him to the heart of Pharaoh's life from nearly being killed to head up a prime position to save a land from famine.

God calls Joseph to feed a whole people and to feed his brothers. For me, this is a revelation in the story. I often read the story of Joseph, but he feeds not only a whole nation, but he's called to feed his brothers. I pray that's part of our calling. Because what is your Christian journey like? Do you feel as though you are being called to feed others with the power of God?

Mission is hugely rewarding, but it's rarely easy. And I want us to seriously consider what God might be calling us to in this new season. Because some of us will go to places that we never ever thought that we would be called to go to in order to feed the community that we are called to reach.

Joseph didn't know that where he would end up, but he trusted and he responded. He trusted and responded. Trust and respond. Is that your journey? And if it has been, well done.

[11:07] You know, but I'm going to ask a big question. Do you want to feed a hungry nation in the community? Do you want to do that? Because I do. Joseph gets to feed not only the ones who sold him into slavery, but to a whole nation because God called him and he responded. He saw a nation healed, fed, and spiritually restored. He showed grace. He showed the love of God to people and especially his brothers who didn't really deserve it. And that is transformational. Do you want to see a nation, a community with the saving power and spiritual food of God? Because I do. And we want to increase that and what God is doing amongst us. I can't do that on my own. I can't do that even with you. I can only do it and we can do it together as family in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Acts chapter 2, people scoffed at Peter. Verse 14, then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd. Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you. Listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk. They thought they were drunk because they were so ecstatic and filled with the Holy Spirit. These men are not drunk as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning.

No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel. Important line. This is what is spoken by the prophet Joel. In the last days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days and they will prophesy. Even on my servants, they will prophesy. Something transformed happened in the life of this church on Father's Day. On Father's Day, if you, for those that were here, especially for those that weren't, we saw one of the many missional outreaches that we're now engaged with, with a 14-year-old boys football club.

They're playing in the league. It's significant. Most of the lads that are playing aren't yet Christians. And yet people have come and we are reaching out into the sporting community through a 14-year-old football team that play in the league. What many didn't know was that day that there was a man, a faithful member of this congregation called Doug Hand. Doug Hand was a man who was passionate about sport. He was passionate about Jesus. He was a passionate follower who had seen in his own life as a boy the value of what it was to play sport, but to know Jesus. And he had a desire, he always had a desire to see a football team of lads as an outreach. That was his dream.

Doug had a dream to see young lives saved. Doug was a faithful Christian gentleman. He was called home to be with the Lord in 2013. He shared a dream with me. He shared a dream. Your old men will have dreams.

He shared a dream. Perhaps he didn't know where it would end. He didn't know where the Lord was going to use him, but he knew that it was God's purposes, that people would be saved. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. On Father's Day, through that dream and vision, Kathy and Mike Pope and others realised the vision.

[15 : 10] And they saw the opportunity and we commissioned them and an under-14s football team. You probably know as Peter was speaking at the start of the early church or the way as it was called then, that Peter didn't know where it was going to end. He didn't know where this new thing was going to end. He didn't have a clue, but he knew that he was called, that he was passionate and to put things in place and to start things. I wonder if Joseph knew when he was sold into his slavery where it would end up, how God would use the events to change the lives of other people. As we come to communion and prayer this morning, prayer for healing. And that can be for physical, for the Lord to heal us, but also healing of our doubts, healing of our cynicism, healing of our dysfunctionality, our failure of failing to encourage others to build them up.

Our healing in so many different ways, our preferences, our jealousy. You know, how will God use our lives? Let him show you. You know, if you're expecting to see it all mapped out before you, well done. I wish I did. But is your heart to see others saved? I'm just going to ask you that this morning. I'm going to ask you to take that away with you. Is your heart to see other people saved?

Do you want to see people hungry for God fed? In Acts chapter 2, Peter says, and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Everybody who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. I have pictures in my head now of those I want to see saved. I want to see them on that great day. I want them to be welcoming me in.

I want them to put their arms around me. I want to be putting my arms around them. I want to see them not just saved for that great day, but saved today because God has got a purpose for them, for you and I and for them. There is a new missional feeling in the air and the people that we've spoken about in Christchurch. The saints who have gone before us who dream dreams. Maud Obery, a great saint in this church. She's now called to be with the Lord. She dreamed when there was no children here to see children filling this church in excess of 80 kids now on the books. That isn't including the ones we're reaching in schools and we're reaching in various different settings. She had a dream and Maud's dream was fulfilled and she was fortunate to see it in her lifetime before she went to see the Lord.

[17 : 55] Hugh Garlick, walk of a thousand men. Hugh had a dream to see men come to Christ. Hugh was a great saint. He is with the Lord. I have no doubt we saw 28 men at our last men's meeting and we have contact with over 50. That is growing. You know, we sense that the Lord, we are having men coming to baptism.

We are having men asking to be baptised and that will be happening in the next few months. We sense that the Lord is asking us to be both feet in and I want to encourage you of being in that culture. Be in that culture here of both feet in. Not one foot in, but both feet in. You know, we're not happy. We're not happy with just being one foot in anymore. No more sitting on the fence, but people who are both feet in. And that will be out of our comfort zone, I can promise you.

While we see life saved, while we see opportunities to bring people to Christ, as we come and share as a family at this table, ask Him to transform our hands, our hearts, our feet, our wallets, to see our brother and sisters saved. You see, my mission, my mission, my mission, my mission, my mission and your mission is not written on an envelope. It's not written on an envelope and I pray it is written on your heart. And that is where we are as a church. I pray that mission of God will be written afresh today on your heart. And God will show you people that we will reach, that we will dream dreams and maybe not in our lifetime, although I pray that they are, that we will see a whole community come to Him.