

Welcome Home

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. And as always, if you'd like to learn a little more about us as a church family, you can go to FCCgreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

Hey, we are excited to jump into the Word of God today to let it get into us and change these hearts. And today's message is called Welcome Home. It is the seventh week of our series over Old Testament Joseph called Living the Dream.

And if you want to go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 41, starting in verse 41. Now, as a church leadership, we care deeply about how someone is made to feel when they come into one of our worship services, one of our gatherings, because we know how intimidating it is not knowing exactly what to expect and if they're going to bring out the snakes next.

And we tell people, listen, that's only Fifth Sundays. No, I'm kidding. I'm kidding. And while we always encourage our church family that each of us are missionaries, even on Sunday mornings, I am proud that so many of you take that seriously, showing the love that you've received from the Lord that now flows onto your neighbor.

And I so appreciate the intentionality and how you befriend those around you. So well done, church. Keep it up. Because it takes all of us being the hands and feet of Jesus.

[1 : 30] And one story that is near and dear to me is about a young lady who had always been kind of grown up around church, but she had been away from church for a while.

And Satan had been chirping in her ear, telling her all kinds of lies. And like all of us, she bought into some of them. And one Sunday, she decided that she wanted to get back in church. And for whatever reason, she visited our church family. She was pretty nervous about it. The parking lot was too busy, like normal. And she probably looked a little confused on where exactly to go in the building.

And that's when a church member that I have no idea who it was, they spotted her. They probably saw the nervousness. And they decided to ask if they could help. This person immediately took her to the child check-in for her son.

There she was greeted with a smiling face in a safe environment that made her feel good about where he would be. And then she nervously headed towards the sanctuary by herself.

[2 : 29] And she later told me that even when she looked into the sanctuary, she began to cry. Because God was already working on her heart. And the greeter who handed her the bulletin saw all this.

So she just began to minister to her, welcoming her home. And once she got seated, that same greeter came and sat beside her. Others in the church welcomed her.

And she discovered that the service wasn't too weird, minus the preacher. But that God was using every part of worship to minister to her heart.

And the cool thing is that she's now a member. And has been coming ever since, trying to love and make others feel welcome. But she also said that from the letters on the doors that read, welcome home.

To the words spoken from the platform. To the welcome bag she got when she left. She needed to hear those words, welcome home.

[3 : 27] And if that's you today, welcome home. To a far from perfect church that worships an absolutely perfect God. And therefore we are striving to be more like Jesus.

And while there may not have been a fancy vinyl wrap on the doors of the Egyptian palace. Joseph had to be feeling the same joy and peace about his new home.

So here we are in week seven already of our series. Over Old Testament Joseph called Living the Dream. And to catch you up on three plus hours of preaching in 60 seconds.

Okay, so if you want to grab your stopwatch, you can go ahead and time me. And I'm going to fly through this. Here we go. Let me catch you up on it. Joseph had a great childhood that came crashing down as his envious brother sold him into slavery.

He ended up a slave to a high-ranking Egyptian man who saw that the Lord was with him and put him in charge of everything. But then it all came crashing down again when the man's wife lied about Joseph sending him to prison.

[4 : 29] There he rose to basically be the volunteer prison warden and everything ran great again. Then one day Pharaoh's baker and cupbearer are sent to prison and end up having confusing dreams.

God gives Joseph the ability to interpret and it comes true. But his hopes come crashing down again when he's forgotten in his jail cell for two more years until Pharaoh has a bad dream.

And the cupbearer says, hey, I know a guy. So here comes Joseph interpreting the dream, being elevated to the number two man over all of Egypt. Thirteen years of suffering and intense growth and training have led him home.

And that brings us to today. Because listen, in the words of R.T. Kendall, home is not where, but when. It is when you find yourself, and I would add to that, in Christ, no matter where you are on this earth.

So this makes me think of my friend Cammie, who graduated from South Decatur around the same time I did and has been, I actually went to North, but around the same year and has now been teaching in Japan around 20 years, just shining Jesus.

[5 : 38] It makes me think of an elder from the church we were at in Tennessee who was in a high executive role during his career at this large chemical factory, chemical company, and would often have to move to different parts of the country for his job.

And he moved multiple times during his career. And whether he lived in New Jersey or the hills and hollers of Tennessee, he and his sweet wife were home because they were walking in the center of God's will.

So do me a favor. Turn with me in your Bible. First book, Genesis, chapter 41. We'll be in verse 41 as we start. And here we see the culmination of 13 years of suffering, perseverance, success, disappointment, waiting, hoping, learning, growing, maturing, changing, trusting.

And now all of that has brought Joseph not to perfection, but to a place where he was equipped to fulfill God's plan for his life that honestly was beyond what he could have dreamed.

In fact, if you're a note taker today, know that anytime you're listening here on the radio, that you can always go to the YouVersion Bible app, Y-O-U Version Bible app.

[6 : 54] It's a free download, incredible resource. You can go to that, go to the menu, go to events, go to First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana. It should kind of see your location and kind of give you those options.

And then you can see the outline. But here's the first thing I want you to see. Welcome home to a purpose beyond your wildest imagination. Beyond your wildest imagination.

Now, let's look at Genesis 41. Verse 41 is where we'll start. And here's what the word of God says. So Pharaoh said to Joseph, I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as second in command, and people shouted before him, Make way!

Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh, but without your word, no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt. Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphonath-Paneah and gave him Asenath, daughter of Potipharah, priest of On, to be his wife.

[8 : 11] Okay, so put yourself in Joseph's shoes for a second. He knew hardship really well. He knew want and hunger. He knew poor living conditions.

He knew what it felt like to be mistreated, lied about, and betrayed. And now here he is with all the finest luxuries available of his day. Adored and respected by one of the most powerful men in the world in Pharaoh, given his own signet ring to symbolize Joseph's power and authority.

Dressed in the finest linen robes with gold around his neck, riding in the most luxurious transportation available in his day, people celebrating you as the number two man over this nation.

And honestly, the number one man is basically giving you sole authority to reign as he just eats grapes and lives the good life. Then he even gives you a new name to fit this Egyptian culture. Zaphonath-Paneah, which we're not 100% sure what that meant. But different scholars and historians throughout time have given a few suggestions of what they thought.

[9 : 21] And here's a few of those thoughts. God speaks and he lives. Now that's pretty good. How about this one? He who explains hidden things. He definitely did that. Or even this one.

Healer of the world with all the lives he saved. Whatever exactly it meant, that was a great name clearly intended to show respect and honor to Joseph.

And then we see this quick line in verse 45 that says that Joseph was given Asenath to be his wife. Obviously, there were cultural differences from today on how a wife was given.

But like this portion of scripture is doing repeatedly, I have a feeling that Joseph was very pleased with his wife. We're even told a few verses later that they had two sons in their early years of marriage.

So he was blessed beyond his wildest imagination. Could you imagine a couple years into his prison stay, or even before that when he was a slave to Potiphar, telling him, hey, when you're 30 years old, this is what you're going to be doing as the number two man over Egypt.

[10 : 32] From slave to royalty, from rags to riches, from prison garb to finest robes, from on his own, probably pretty lonely, to now being a married man with two boys in those first few years of marriage, no way he would have believed any of that.

But listen, when God comes into your story, and I don't mean just a token acknowledgement, okay, I believe in God, but when he has your heart, and there's a surrender to him, he does what the Apostle Paul understood well, and even said through the power of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 3.20. He said, Now to him, Christ, who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work, listen to this, within us.

To him be the glory in the church, and in Christ Jesus, through all generations, forever and ever.

Amen. A few people in our church gave me permission to share their God does immeasurably more than I could ever ask or imagine stories.

A young man in our church, if you would have asked him two years ago when he was running from drug to drug, from high to high, doing all kinds of crazy stuff, if you would have told him that now he would be clean and sober with a steady job, serving his church regularly as a sound tech, walking in the joy of the Lord, he would have asked you what you had been smoking.

[12 : 03] But this is what God does. Or my good friend Kelly. Just a few years ago, he would turn you down in a heartbeat if you asked him to speak at something. But now he's done communion meditations, he's done talks at the Emmaus Walk, he even did a campfire talk for first and second graders just a few weeks ago when we worked at Mahoning Valley Camp together.

See, that's God. Or I even think about Shelley who heads up our world outreach team here at FCC that has a budget of roughly \$130,000 a year that her and the team get to allocate to missions in the community, in our nation, and across the world.

So in her own words, here's what she said. 33 years ago, I went on my first mission trip to Jamaica, leaving Tim at home to care for our four and eight-year-old boys.

I could not have imagined how God would use me as a vessel since that first trip. He has called me to provide medical care in remote villages and clinics in multiple foreign countries.

He has placed on my heart the Hebrew word, Hineni, from Isaiah 6, 8, that means, here am I. And if you know the rest of that verse, it says, here am I, send me.

[13 : 18] Man, that's pretty good stuff right there. And I wish we had time to share more of those, but I want you to think about this quote by D.L. Moody. He said, there is no man living who can do the work that God has for me to do.

No one can do it but myself. Or I even think of a powerful passage like Jeremiah 29, 11, where God says these words to Jeremiah, but as we understand the big picture of Scripture, this applies to all of us.

He says, for I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you a hope and a future. And then you will call on me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you.

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. And here Joseph is after 13 years of intense trials and suffering, and yet he has done his best to choose to do the right and

godly thing in every situation.

He's trusted the spiritual maturity process even when he didn't understand why this had to happen. And now God has elevated him to exactly where he needed to be to live out the purpose he was created for.

[14 : 33] To save many lives. And even though he may not have fully understood this when he was alive, to even preserve the line that the Messiah Jesus would someday enter through.

And I want you to know that God has plans for you that are beyond your wildest imagination if you're willing by faith to say yes. It's going to require some stretching.

You're not always going to be 100% comfortable. There might be some maturity growing pains. And sometimes he even takes those who desire to be behind the scenes, who don't want anything to do with being up front, and he puts us in visible leadership roles.

I'm one of those, okay? And other times he takes those who like to be up front, maybe too much, and puts them behind the scenes because his plans are always perfect for his glory and for our good.

So as we continue this story, let me show you one more powerful truth. Welcome home to a purpose that requires continued trust.

[15 : 38] Continued trust. And I wish I could tell you that once you discover the calling God has on your life and that once you start to walk in that, that it's just going to be easy peasy.

Every step of the way will just be so easy. But that's just not reality. Number one, because you have three enemies that seek to take you out and to pull you away from your calling.

The flesh. So that natural desire that desires things that are not of God, that we all have to deal with every day. The world and its ways that are always trying to conform us to the ways of the world and not to the ways of God.

And then third is Satan. And we know that he comes to steal and kill and destroy anything that belongs to Jesus. And then second, God is always stretching us.

He's always growing us to make us more and more into the image of Jesus as we learn to trust him in all circumstances. And remember, Joseph, through God's power, has already interpreted the dream that there will be seven years of plenty on the land followed by seven years of extreme famine.

[16 : 45] And watch how the plans become reality. So look here in Genesis 41 and jump down to verse 46. The word says, Joseph was 30 years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt. So he was active.

He was doing his job well. During the seven years of abundance, the land produced plentifully.

Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt. And by all the food, it means the extra that they were going to collect. And he stored it in the cities. In each city, he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it.

Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain like the sand of the sea. It was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

Now, can you imagine the manpower and strategic planning that went into storing up so much grain that they could not keep track of it, that it was like the sand of the sea?

[17 : 48] So much that it could feed what historians would estimate were between two and a half and four and a half million people in Egypt for seven years?

Guys, we have a family in our church that owns a business that builds grain bins. And can you imagine the amount of grain bins that would take? All the moving pieces and headaches for a leader to coordinate all this?

And I don't know exactly how he stored it, but they obviously didn't have the technology and the equipment that we have today. But I do know that this would take a world-class leader.

And that's exactly who God had prepared Joseph to be. And while this passage doesn't give us what the day-to-day operations look like, we know that Joseph, though he was called and compensated well, he still had to trust God's leading, God's calling, God's wisdom every day.

We also know that there had to be challenges. And if I can just be completely real with you here, my wife could tell you that there have probably been at least three or four major moments in ministry where something happened and at the end of the day, I buried my face in her arms and I just let loose.

[19 : 01] I had a good cry. And I'm not ashamed to say that because real men cry. Or at least that's what I tell myself. Then, it was usually followed by, I don't want to do ministry anymore.

God, why? Why would you call me? I'm not the right person. Blah, blah, blah. And listen, we both knew that we were still called to this. That this too shall pass.

But sometimes you just need a good venting and cry session. And while this passage doesn't give us these fine details, I'm sure Joseph had his days where this was a challenge to get ready.

The money, the manpower, the maneuvering, the mentoring of the people to convince them that this plan is right, giving up food even though they have no reason to expect a famine when everything's going so well.

When everything's being watered by the Nile River with this extensive irrigation system that Joseph would have overseen. And listen, when you are walking in the plans that God has for your life, there will be frustrations.

[20 : 04] There will be detours along the way. And even oppositions, which often can be an absolute blessing if we're willing to listen and be coachable. Because God is known to bring people into our path who can call us out in our immaturities so that we can grow and better live out His plans over our life.

And some of the godliest people who are used in powerful ways by the Lord are those who are humble enough to sit under mentors and be molded, to listen to those who've walked with God a little longer or who maybe even have some experience in the same area.

And Joseph had to keep trusting the Lord even in times aplenty because the lean years were coming. Speaking of that, look at verse 43 here in Genesis chapter 41.

41-53. Genesis 41-53 says, The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end. And the seven years of famine began just as Joseph had said.

There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. When all Egypt began to fill the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food.

[21 : 19] Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, Go to Joseph and do what he tells you. When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians for the famine was severe throughout Egypt.

And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe everywhere. So, the seven years of plenty had come to an end.

And just as God foretold through Joseph, the famine started and it got bad. It got really, really bad.

People are starving to death. And that's when Joseph opened the storehouses that were strategically placed throughout the nation in the cities and the people had grain to make food.

And instead of the nation being wiped out, they keep on trucking along. And not only will millions of lives be saved through Joseph, obviously by God's power, but Egypt, which history tells us was already in its heyday, the golden age of the 12th dynasty, they would go on to be even more of a beacon of hope for other parts of the world who would come to them to get food.

So, once again, under Joseph's godly leadership, all of Egypt grew in power and influence on the world stage. But, but, every step of the way required trust.

[22 : 45] Joseph had to trust that God had told him the right amount to store up, that they wouldn't run out. He had to trust the famine would only last seven years when it had to feel like it was never going to quit.

And as we'll talk about the next couple of weeks, he had to trust God's plan to save his brothers and his father and ultimately preserve that line that Jesus, the Messiah, would enter through about 18, 1900 years later.

And I love how Terry Esau put this in his book that he wrote back in 2008. He said, trusting God trumps understanding God. The train will have long left the station and left us on the platform if we determine to ride only with full understanding.

Life will have passed us by, so I'm choosing to trust the conductor and the track he's laid down for me. And you know what? You and I, even when we are fully surrendered to Jesus, we still have to daily trust him along the way because there's nothing Satan wants to do more than derail you from God's plans that will lead others to the throne of grace.

So how do we do that? We daily immerse ourselves in Christ. We sit at his feet through his word asking the Holy Spirit to transform us by the word of God.

[24 : 04] Daily I'm laying my heart down before him listening, worshiping, trusting his perfect plans, praying without ceasing. I'm choosing obedience to his word as I pursue holiness and purity in him.

He is my daily bread. He is my living water. He is my source of hope and strength. He is my everything and without him I surely fail.

fail. And that's the kind of trust, that's the kind of dependence it takes to live out God's perfect plans. So welcome home. Not to just a church that wants to be your family and your support system that we were all wired to need, but also welcome home to a purpose in Christ that is beyond your wildest imagination as you trust him every step of the way.

Because absolutely nothing compares to the high of walking intimately with Jesus Christ. So here's your challenge this week. I want you to think about the gifts, the passions, the skills that God has given you and where you feel he may be calling you to use those.

And then step out and start to trust the plans he has for you that are for good. And if we can help you, give Pastor Steve a call in the office and we will get you connected serving.

[25 : 29] So here's the last thing I want to say to you today. Welcome home. Let's pray together. Father, we are so very grateful for the word of God and how you have used it just to speak this powerful truth over us that you have plans.

And we have such a hard time wrapping our minds around this because we can only see our faults and our failures and our sins. And yet by the blood of Jesus Christ, when we surrender by faith, you wipe all that away.

You cleanse us. You purify us by the blood of Christ making us as white as snow. And not only do you forgive, not only do you give us access to eternity with you and your grace right now on this earth, but you also give us a purpose like nothing else in this world could ever compare to.

That is better than anything we could ever dream on our own. A purpose to use our gifts and our passions and our skills to impact the lives of others for Jesus.

So Father, I just pray right now that you will mature us, that you will grow us, that you will mold us into the image of Christ, and that you will just use us.

[26 : 46] We are broken vessels and it's not about us, but that you will use these broken vessels for your glory and for our good. God, thank you so much for how you have spoken to us through your word, and God, may you stir it in our hearts so that we may be faithful to trust you every step of the way.

We love you, Jesus. You are so good. We pray in your precious and your holy name, in the name of Jesus and God's people said, amen and amen.

Hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. Once again, my name is Ray Sweet. I am the lead pastor at First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. We pray that you are blessed by this.

If for any reason this has sparked maybe something in you where you have questions about the church, about faith, about following Jesus, we would love to come alongside you and be a support system for you in that.

So here's a couple quick ways that you can reach out to us. You can call the church office. So our phone number here at First Christian Church is 812-663-8488.

[27 : 53] That's 663-8488. Or you can just go ahead and email me at ray at FCC Greensburg dot com. Hey, thank you so much for tuning in today.

I pray you have a fantastic week.