

When Your Past Comes Calling

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Preacher: Ray Sweet

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

But hey, we're just so grateful that you are tuning in to the preaching of God's Word today. It is always our desire to just get out of the way and let the Word of God speak in power and in truth.

And today we are in the eighth week of our series called Living the Dream. And today's message is over Genesis chapter 42 to 45. And it's called When Your Past Comes Calling.

Okay, so we're going to start out today with confession time. Are you ready? I easily struggle with bitterness. That was a quick jump into the message, wasn't it?

But let's just go there, okay? Anybody else willing to admit that sometimes we're very eager to let our own wrongs go, but not quite as quick to forgive a wrong done to me?

[1 : 0 6] Maybe we're even oblivious to how our attitudes and words and actions affect others. But we're very sensitive to how others affect us.

Can I let you in on just a little secret about our God? He is not afraid of confrontation. He is all about dealing with issues, calling you and I to holiness in Christ.

And it's because He's both a God of mercy and justice all at the same time. It's because He loves us enough to call us to purity in Him.

Now, I had an interesting Sunday a little while back. And I'm going to be vague on purpose here. But years ago, so we're talking an eight-year span of ministry, my very first ministry, there was a couple people who I really felt had wronged me.

And especially with one of them, they even slandered me to the point that some people I loved and trusted actually believed them. And I'll tell you, it hurts. It really wounded me in the moment.

[2 : 0 7] And while I have tried to forgive, even examined my own heart, asking what could I have done in a more Christ-like way, from time to time, I still run into those people.

And that's when you usually find out if there's still bitterness in that heart. Because, man, it can come springing up in a hurry. And each time I do, I usually walk away saying, Father, help me.

Help me forgive. Help me love them. And please don't let this steal my joy and the purpose that I have in you. Well, I felt like I was really learning how to forgive. And even love those people the way that maybe I should.

Doesn't mean we have to be best friends, but still respect and kindness for sure. No ill will. Even compassion for their hurts and struggles. And then a while back, there was a Sunday where both of those people were at FCC the same day.

This isn't even their home church. It was the only time they'd ever been here and even since. The Lord had just lined it all up and my past came calling.

[3 : 10] And I couldn't help but laugh and then just pray in my head, Okay, God, so you are putting me to the test right now to see if I'm willing to walk the talk and heal to the point of loving those who are hard for me to love.

Well played, God. Well played. And today, if you want to go ahead and grab your Bibles, we're in the very first book of your Bible. So easy to find.

Genesis chapter 42. Genesis 42. And we see Joseph's past come calling as well. But listen, my struggles don't compare to what Joseph had endured at the hands of his older brothers.

Yeah, he was cocky in that fancy robe as daddy's favorite. But listen, he still didn't deserve it to be thrown into a well, sold into slavery, having everything he'd ever known in his life ripped away from him at 17 years old.

And for 13 years, he resided as either a slave in Potiphar's house or a prison inmate. And even though we've beaten this horse throughout the first seven weeks of the series, the Lord often moves in us the most in the hardest times of our lives if we let him.

[4 : 22] And Joseph did. He sought the Lord. And for 13 years of hardship, he's learning, growing, maturing, learning some more, healing, forgiving, honing leadership abilities, and even being used in powerful ways as he's in the potter's hands, being molded for an even greater purpose.

And as we come to our passage today, Joseph has been the governor of Egypt, the number two man behind Pharaoh, but honestly, really the leader of the nation for nine years now.

He is blessed as a married man with a beautiful family, wealth and honor like none of us can even understand. And as God has revealed to him through Pharaoh's dream, his first seven years were a time of plenty in Egypt.

Joseph worked hard to store up as much grain as possible, knowing seven years of extreme famine were coming. And now, two years into the famine, things are bad throughout the world.

People are starving. This is serious stuff. But Egypt is blessed because they not only have food for millions of their own citizens, but much of the world is coming to Joseph to try to survive.

[5 : 31] And I'm sure the nation is getting wealthier as God's hand has been on him. And these people, they've been on them in a big way too. And now here comes his past calling, and he's ready.

He's ready to answer the door. So look with me here at Genesis 42, and we'll start in verse 1. And let me just tell you this today.

I am not going to do these four chapters from Genesis 42 to 45. I am not going to do them justice. We're going to fly through them. We're going to kind of focus on the beginning and the end a little bit more, kind of hit the high points.

But listen, please check this out on your own. Read this for yourself. Make sure everything I'm saying is true. But here's what it says, starting in Genesis 42, verse 1. When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his son, so this is Joseph's dad who's all the way in Canaan.

He said, why do you just keep looking at each other? He continued, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us so that we may live and not die. Then 10 of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt.

[6 : 41] Guys, we're talking about a couple hundred mile journey here, okay, depending on their route. But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others because he was afraid that harm might come to him.

So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for there was famine in the land of Canaan also. Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the person who sold grain to all its people.

So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. Huh? Does that remind you of anything Joseph had? When he was 17 years old in the form of a dream?

Okay, verse 7. As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them. But he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. Where do you come from?

He asked. From the land of Canaan, they replied, to buy food. Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Why would that be the case? Because number one, they never in a million years expected him to be there, or probably even alive.

[7 : 43] And then he's probably covered with Egyptian garb that would have made it really hard as well. Now look at verse 9, just the first part of it. Then he, Joseph, remembered his dreams about them.

See, those dreams, those promises that Joseph had as a teenager have now come true. His brothers are bowing before him in need. And he's able not only to save the lives of millions of Egyptians, but also his own family preserving the line that Jesus would come through as the Messiah to save us from our sins.

So if you think about it, the purpose God had for Joseph has affected us, me, you, in the most significant way possible. And even though we're living roughly 3,800 years after this man, if you're a child of God covered by the blood of Jesus Christ, if your faith is totally in Jesus, then you can rejoice in God's unstoppable plan for Joseph, knowing that it's affected you and knowing that God has plans for you as well.

So from a 17-year-old having God-given dreams to now an Egyptian governor who's been through more at the age of 39 than most people in their entire life, Joseph has learned to trust God's promises.

Actually, do me a favor. If you got the YouVersion, and it's a free download, the YouVersion Bible app, if you got that on your phone, you can always access our outline.

[9 : 15] Okay? So if you go to the YouVersion Bible app, go ahead and download that when you get the chance. Go to the menu. Go to events. Go to First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana.

And then you can see it. But let's put it this way. Okay? Here's the first thing I want you to see. When your past comes calling, stand on God's promises. Stand firm on every word from God.

See, Joseph lived so early and most likely would have heard through oral tradition or storytelling all about God's power and creation. He would have heard about Noah in the flood, how Abraham and Sarah had his grandfather Isaac in their old age, even the promises of God during that time.

But we are blessed to have the complete, perfect, infallible, inerrant, and Holy Spirit-inspired 66 books, the Word of God, at our fingertips.

You could even stop by Connection Point if you come to church, and you could get a Bible promise book if you want. That's how blessed we are with God's Word so readily available, both in print form or on your phone or tablet.

[10 : 25] And I want you to know that if God has promised it, then you and I can walk in it. Let me say that again just in case you just tuned out, okay? If God has promised it, we can walk in it.

In fact, 2 Corinthians 1, verse 20 says this, For no matter how many promises that God has made, they are yes in Christ.

So through Him, the amen. All that word means is it is true. So through Him, the it is true is spoken by us to the glory of God.

So when you're at church and you hear someone shout out, Amen! Okay? They're saying, yes, I believe that. And I am going to walk in that God-given truth. Now maybe it makes sense why people shout that out.

So just like Joseph, you can trust God's promises are always true, that they never fail. And listen, they always come true at just the right time.

[11 : 28] Not according to us. Not according to what we want. Because remember, our timing messes everything up, but according to God's perfect will, God's purpose over our lives.

And you know this too. When we wait on the Lord, His perfect timing, it's amazing how much better everything goes. But don't forget, we still have an enemy, as John 10.10 tells us.

The thief. It's talking about Satan. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. So he wants to kill, steal, and destroy.

Your purpose in Christ, your relationship with the Lord, the peace, the joy, the hope that you walk in every day. That is Satan's mission in your life.

So we got to start taking that seriously. But listen to this. Jesus says, and listen, Jesus can crush Satan in a heartbeat, okay? He is superior in every way times a million.

[12 : 26] He says, but I have come that you may have life and have it to the full. So while there are hundreds of promises in the Bible that we can walk in every single day, and I hope you do, let me just throw a few at you this morning that I pray will give you that hope that we need every day.

James 1, verse 5. If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault. Now listen to this. And it, wisdom, will be given to you.

That's a promise. And then I think about Exodus 14, 14. The Lord will fight for you. You need only be still. That's a promise. Quit trying to fight with everybody and let God do what he does.

He's so much bigger and stronger and more eloquent than you. One that the Lord has also used in my life, especially here at the church during a time of coming in and becoming the new lead pastor about seven years ago when Pastor Danny, who's had a great impact in this community, when he transitioned into retirement and I came in as the lead pastor, God used this passage of my life in big ways.

Joshua 1, 9. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged. For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

[13 : 49] So yes, yes. Here Joseph is as his past has come calling again saying, not today, Satan. I trust God's perfect plan. I trust his gracious promises over my life.

I will not seek to get revenge on my brothers because we know he could have wiped them out in a second. Instead, he's saying, I will seek to bless them. And you know what? For you and I, there are times when our past comes calling.

Faces show up that will bring back all kinds of painful memories. Stories of old remind us of the disobedience and the insecurity of my past. And I have to choose to bless those people who maybe have cursed me.

And I have to choose to love them the way Jesus calls. And sometimes they even call up all kinds of emotions in me. Right? When those memories come flying back, when those people come back into our peripheral, all kinds of emotions like jealousy, anger, hurt, resentment.

And that's when we let the Holy Spirit remind us of who we are because of whose we are. And we dig our feet even deeper, standing on the promises of God. You know what?

[14 : 59] That sounds like a really great song, doesn't it? Because it is. By Russell Kessel Carter. He wrote these words in 1886, but they are still true to this day.

Standing on the promises that cannot fail. When howling storms of doubt and fear assail, by the living word of God, I shall prevail. Standing on the promises of God.

See, when your past comes calling, that's exactly what we do in our own godly stubbornness. Okay? I'm using this as a good thing. Godly stubbornness.

We stand on those promises. And then second, when your past comes calling, run towards your God-ordained future. Let me put it another way.

When you hear a knock at the door and you look through the peephole to discover that your past has come calling, say those famous YouTube words. Ready? Ain't nobody got time for that.

[15 : 57] I've not answered that door because Satan, I'm a child of the king. My past has been forgiven. My future is in the Lord's hands. And I'm choosing to live a life worthy of my calling, walking in purity, seeking the Lord's face.

Now, once again, we're covering a pretty big story with a lot of details. And I'm just going to give you a very quick version here. I'm going to walk through these middle chapters pretty fast. So Joseph has a plan to ultimately get his family to Egypt to protect them from this famine.

But right now, he's going to come across as an angry Egyptian dictator until the time is right to reveal himself. So he puts them to the test, even tells them that he believes that they're spies from Canaan.

And while they deny it and they promise we're only here to get food, he makes one of the brothers, Simeon, stay behind until their youngest brother, Benjamin, can come before him.

So they head back on that, you know, what a lot of scholars say would have been a 200 to 300 mile journey, depending on the route. We're talking six weeks of travel time, roughly.

[17 : 00] And I find it amazing that all they can think about when it feels like this is not going to turn out well, all they can think about is what they did to Joseph 22 years earlier.

And that this might be their punishment from God. See, when we have unrepentant sin that may still have deceit and lies attached to it, it will tear us up on the inside.

It will turn us into a person we never wanted to be. And trust me, Joseph's brothers have suffered for what they did to him. Seeing how their father has grieved and having to walk in a lie for over two decades.

So they head home and they share all this with their dad, Joseph, with their dad, Jacob. But Jacob isn't having it. He's already lost Joseph in his eyes.

He now knows that Simeon is locked up and he's not sending baby boy until they run out of food and he needs him to go back and get more.

[18 : 02] So reluctantly, I mean, he had to be talked into this. He agrees, sending all kinds of gifts to hopefully butter up the Egyptian governor. Still has no idea it's Joseph.

And when they return with Benjamin, Joseph's only full brother with Rachel, Jacob and Rachel's sons, Benjamin and Joseph, he is overcome with emotion.

He invites them over to his place for a meal. And this kind of freaks them out thinking that maybe they're in trouble. But the meal goes great. They get more grain. He sends them on their way.

The only problem was that Joseph was setting them up. This time he put their silver back in their grain bags that they came to pay with. He put it back in their bags again.

But in Benjamin's bag, he also put his own silver cup, which would appear to be theft. And so as they start to leave, they're just getting out of the city.

[18 : 57] So not very far away. Joseph sends his attendants to go check their bags. And because they hadn't really stolen anything, they're kind of shocked. They expect nothing to be found. But when Benjamin's bag bears the silver cup, they all come back to the city to meet with Joseph.

They're distraught. They're pleading their case. They're explaining why they just don't understand and how this didn't make sense and nobody really stole it. And yet when Joseph calls for Benjamin, the one who was guilty to be his slave, and he says, hey, I'm going to let the rest of you go, that's when the brother Judah comes to the rescue explaining that their father had lost a son years ago.

And if he now lost his baby boy again, that he wouldn't recover. He would surely die in his old age. And what a beautiful picture. If you know the story here a little bit, Judah, that brother, is the line that Jesus the Messiah would someday enter through.

And he offers to be the sacrifice for his brother. And then, how amazing, Jesus would go on 1800 years later to give his life for each of us.

See, it's amazing how God is connecting all these dots. Now, let's jump towards the end of our passage here today to Genesis 45. And let's read a decent chunk of scripture here from Genesis 45, 1 through 10.

[20 : 25] Here's what God's word says. Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants. And he cried out, Have everyone leave my presence.

So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph. Is my father still living? But his brothers were not able to answer him because they were terrified at his presence. Guys, they're shocked.

Never in a million years do they think this is going to happen. And then it says in verse 4, Then Joseph said to his brothers, Come close to me. When they had done so, he said, I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt.

Now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here because it was to save the lives, save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now, there's been a famine in the land and for the next five years, there'll be no plowing and reaping.

[21 : 28] But God sent me ahead of you, Joseph says, to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not, listen to this, it was not you who sent me here, but God.

He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of the entire household, ruler of all of Egypt. Now, hurry back to my father and say to him, this is what your son Joseph says.

God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me. Don't delay. You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me. You and your children and your grandchildren, your flocks and herds and all you have.

You know what's scary about our past sins that have not been confessed before our God? Our past sins that have not even been made right before those maybe we wronged.

As the Bible says, your sins will find you out. And here they have as Joseph's brothers have to go back to daddy and tell him the truth. They have no choice.

[22 : 30] This is the only path for their family to survive. This is why many of us teach our kids that even when it has consequences, always tell the truth the first time because it will get worse.

Because when that snowball gets a rolling, it's going to be bad when it finds you out. In fact, I love this quote by a famous theologian, Andrew Murray.

He said, always meet with God as a God who desires truth in the inward parts. He's talking about in the heart. He said, in all your confession of sin, in all your religion, in your whole existence, let truth in your inward parts be your desire as it is the desire of God.

And yet, even though, even though facing their dad is going to be tough beyond words, their God-ordained future is bright because look what happens when Pharaoh finds out about Joseph's brothers.

Look at what happens when he finds out the whole story here. Genesis 45, verse 16. When the news reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased.

[23 : 36] Isn't it cool how Joseph had so done well for Pharaoh and all his officials that they are pleased. These are secular people who do not know the God of the universe.

Okay? They are pleased and want him to be blessed. They want the best for him. Verse 17. Pharaoh said to Joseph, tell your brothers, do this. Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan and bring your father and your families back to me.

I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land. You are also directed to tell them, do this. Take some carts from Egypt for your children and your wives and get your father and come.

Never mind all about all your belongings because the best of all of Egypt will be yours. So guys, let's just be honest. His brothers did not deserve this beautiful future ahead of them with all the luxuries that Joseph has been enjoying for nine years now.

And you know what? We don't deserve the God-ordained future that he has in front of us both on this earth and for all eternity in paradise. Because listen, if you guys could see every sin that I've ever committed, every impure motive, every ungodly thought, every flesh-dominated behavior that went against the heart of God, you would be disgusted as I am.

[25 : 00] And if I could see yours laid out in front of you, I would be disgusted. And we'd all cry out, I'm not worthy of you, Jesus. And you know what?

That's absolutely true. But I love how much God loved us. Romans 5.8 reminds us, but God demonstrates his own love for us in this.

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. So what a beautiful image of amazing grace. And we're going to look more into Joseph's reunion with his dad next week, but this is a stunning view of God's grace over our sins and his purpose in our lives when we belong to Jesus.

That riches greater than anything material are ours in Christ Jesus right now and for all eternity in his presence. Do you see why we praise him? Do you see why we trust him?

Does it make sense why we forsake the things of this world and run after the heart of God with all we are? Even when we appear like madmen or crazy women to the world around us, we still do it.

[26 : 07] We still seek the heart of God. Because listen, nothing compares to God's grace and the future that awaits us in him. Nothing compares to the peace, the joy, the hope of walking in his presence daily.

And you know what? Every several weeks, I love to just remind you of this because listen, the world is hard. Life is stressful. Life is chaotic.

Life is brutal at times. And I like to point you to the ultimate hope of eternal life in Jesus that all who've put their trust, put their faith in him, who've been baptized into him just like his word teaches constantly, we will someday know this amazing hope when our faith is made sight, when we take our last breath or if Jesus comes back first.

Listen to how 2 Corinthians 2, verse 9 says this. It says this is what scriptures mean when they say no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.

Now here's your challenge this week. I want you to think about that person, that memory that likes to come calling, bringing up painful junk from your past.

[27 : 26] Maybe it's that person who brings behaviors and attitudes out of you that don't match who you are in Christ. Maybe don't match who you are 98% of the time, but this person has control over you.

Starting today, I want you to commit that person to prayer as hard as it may be. And I'm not talking about what they call that imprecupatory or whatever prayer where you're asking God to smash their teeth out.

That's not what we're talking about, okay? We're talking about praying for God to do an incredible work in them. I want you to pray for them. And when you start to get negative in your prayer towards them, repent and start to pray that God will change hearts, that he will do incredible things.

Intercede for them. Ask the Lord to truly help you to forgive so that you can stand on his promises. So you can run after that God-ordained future. That grudge has to go now.

Healing may be hard, but it's so totally worth it. And you might just be surprised at how God uses you when you choose to bless those you feel have cursed you.

[28 : 34] Let's pray. Father, we are so grateful for these words of hope and life that you have spoken today. Lord, have your way in these hearts.

Stir it up. Cause us to surrender everything to you and to find reconciliation not only in you, but with those who maybe have wronged us or we have wronged.

God, take our lives, take our hearts, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Hey, real quick, if you are listening today and you have questions about your faith, about giving your life to Jesus, maybe even about First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana, once again, I'm Ray Sweet.

I'm the lead pastor here. Here's how you can get a hold of us. You can call us at 812-663-8488. That's 663-8488. Or you can email me at ray at FCCgreensburg.com.

Hey, God bless you. Have a great week.