

Faith in God's Promised Future

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[0 : 00] Well, why don't I pray again before we look at God's Word together. Let's pray. Gracious Father, we do pray again that you would help us to hear, mark, learn and inwardly digest your Word to us this morning.

That we might be encouraged to keep trusting in the Lord Jesus until you land us safely on Canaan's side. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, school holidays have started and the kids have gone, yes, while us parents have gone, yes, home again.

And we can't even go anywhere interstate because, as I mentioned last week, we are the unclean state, especially with 113 new cases yesterday. But the good news is there are over 100 different vaccines being developed.

And at the moment, nine of those 100 are having human trials. Now, there are no guarantees. Vaccines are very tricky.

[1 : 07] But imagine for a moment that one company promised a vaccine for Christmas. How good would that be? And you believe them as well.

And here's the question. How would your faith in that promised future vaccine shape your present life?

It would give us hope, wouldn't it? Like a light at the end of the tunnel and help us persevere in the present. Whether it's persevering with the kids at home or persevering for the kids with the parents at home, perhaps.

Whether it's persevering with online church, as I know some are getting tired. Or persevering with having to line up and social distance everywhere. A promised vaccine in the future might help us to persevere in the present.

It might even shape our plans. We might hold off that big celebration for a birthday that we're hoping to have this year until next year. Or hold off our travel plans until next year.

[2 : 14] How would the promise of a future vaccine shape your present life? Well, today it's not about a promised future vaccine, though I do pray that happens soon.

It's about a promised future land. You see, a couple of weeks ago I said that running beneath these chapters are God's promises. In fact, ever since chapter 12, when he made those promises to Abraham.

And so back in chapter 48, you can see on your screens, there's a break signaled by the word sometime later. Jacob is dying, we heard. And Jacob recalls how God blessed him and promised him offspring and land.

So a couple of weeks ago, we saw Jacob adopted his grandsons by grace to be part of his offspring as sons to share in those promises.

Land and blessing were mentioned, but the focus was offspring. And that was chapter 48. And then last week in chapter 49, we heard how Jacob blessed his own sons with those mixed blessings that would shape their future in the land.

[3 : 25] Land and offspring were mentioned, but the focus was blessings. So we had a focus of offspring, 48, focus of blessings, 49. And today in chapter 50, the focus is land.

We're looking at the promised land and Jacob's faith in it. That's right, point one on your screens and in your Bibles, the end of chapter 49, verse 29.

Have a look there. Then Jacob gave them these instructions, talking to his sons. I'm about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron, the Hittite, the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham brought along with the field as a burial place from Ephron, the Hittite.

There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried. There Isaac and his wife Rebecca were buried. And there I buried Leah. The field and the cave in it were brought from the Hittites. When Jacob had finished giving his instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into his bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people.

[4 : 42] I don't know if you noticed the repetition of the word bury here. It comes up five times in those verses and 14 times in our passage. The word land is also mentioned several times alike on your screen.

Although if you've got an NIV, it misses the first land in verse 30 there. In fact, at the end of chapter 47, Jacob had already made Joseph himself swear not to bury him in Egypt, but to take him back to the land of Canaan.

And now here, Jacob makes his other sons swear. That he will be taken and buried in Canaan with his parents and grandparents.

But why? Well, it's because he had faith in God's promise. He believed God's promise to give this land to his people. So much so, he wanted to be there with them, even in death.

Verse 33, it says that he was gathered to his people. Well, he wants his resting place to be where God's people will one day be. In the land.

[5 : 50] To share with them in whatever else God has in store for them. In other words, his faith in God's promised future meant he regarded that land, not Egypt, as his true home.

Where he belonged. Where his body belonged. Here is Jacob's faith in God's promised future. And it shaped his plans, didn't it?

I may have told you before that I used to be a youth group leader at one of my old churches. And one winter like this, it was suggested that we go ice skating. And as soon as someone suggested we go ice skating, I knew I'd wet my pants.

From the ice, you understand. And so certain of my future was I, that it shaped my present plans. I planned and packed a spare pair of pants, which I actually needed.

That's another story for another time. But you see, the point is, I believe what would happen in the future so much so, it shaped my plans in the present. And it was the same, not just with Jacob, but with Joseph too.

[6 : 58] Our passage today actually, it starts and ends with similar scenes. So if you've got a printed outline, we're going to actually skip to point four. So point four on your screens and verse 22 in your Bible.

Have a look at the end of the passage, verse 22. Joseph stayed in Egypt along with all his father's family. He lived 110 years and saw the third generation of Ephraim's children.

Also the children of Micah, son of Manasseh, were placed at birth on Joseph's knees. Then Joseph said to his brothers, I'm about to die, just like we saw with Jacob.

But God will surely come to your aid or visit you and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, God will surely visit you. And then you must carry my bones up from this place. So Joseph died at the age of 110.

[8 : 01] And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt. It's a very similar scene, isn't it? But this time we see Joseph's faith in God's promise.

Just as we heard on your screens from the New Testament reading. And there you can see that Joseph believes God's promise of land so much so that he says twice, or he speaks of the exodus, the exit out of Egypt.

In our verses in our Bible reading here, he speaks twice and says that God will visit them. That is, God will come and take Israel from Egypt to the promised land.

And when God does this, they are to take Joseph's bones with them. For like Jacob, he too regarded Canaan, not Egypt, as his true home, where his body belonged.

You see, this future land also shaped his present plans, didn't it? Of course, for us, our true home, where we really belong, is not the land of Canaan, but the new creation.

[9 : 15] As we heard in our second reading, it's described as a city of God or a heavenly country. Not heavenly in the sense that it's up there in the clouds, but heavenly in the sense that it's perfect.

It will be a perfect creation. Yes, when we die, we will go to heaven and be with Christ. But when Jesus returns, when Jesus visits us, he will bring heaven to earth.

A perfect world. As we read in 2 Peter on your screens there, but in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven, skies, and a new earth where righteousness dwells, where it will be perfect.

So Christians have something even bigger to look forward to than a vaccine and a virus-free world. We have the new creation, a perfect world.

People sometimes look at the world and say, if God is good, why doesn't he do something about all the mess? But he has, you see. He gave his son, Jesus Christ, who, as we saw last week, is the Lion of Judah, the king, who also became the sacrificial lamb, who at the cross paid for our sins so that we could be redeemed from the curse of judgment, made his people, the Christ tribe, if you remember, with every spiritual blessing now and every physical blessing later in our promised land, the new creation.

[10:54] God has done something about the mess in the world. He's opened a way to a new world. But can we trust his promise about this new world, about our future?

Well, I think our writer gives us two reasons why we can. Because between these two scenes of Jacob and Joseph's faith in the face of their deaths are another two scenes which help us to have faith like them.

So we're at point two on your outlines and we come to Jacob's funeral procession. So come with me in your Bibles to the beginning of chapter 50.

Chapter 50, verse 1. Do follow along in your Bibles. It helps you to check what I'm saying and keeps you from getting bored. So chapter 50, verse 1. We need to remember that Jacob wants to be buried in Canaan.

And Canaan is not just around the corner. It's a fair distance away. And so to make sure his dad didn't start to stink on the way, Joseph has his father embalmed.

[12:22] That is, he's made into a mummy like on your screens there. Like that one, not like the next slide. Not like that one. And then we're told the Egyptians mourned for him for 70 days.

That's probably the 40 days for embalming plus the other 30, which of course equals 70. The number of days that Egyptian king was mourned for. So this is a huge compliment for Jacob and his family.

Probably because of Joseph's high standing. But it's now made Joseph's job all the more harder.

Because now Joseph has to say, thanks for the big compliment.

But dad doesn't like Egypt. He wants to be buried elsewhere. And I think that explains why Joseph, in verse 4, doesn't approach Pharaoh directly.

He goes to Pharaoh's court. That is, the officials. And to ask Pharaoh for him. And in verse 5, he tactfully leaves out the bit where Jacob says, don't bury me in Egypt.

[13:28] And only says the bit about burying him in the promised land. But notice the language about going up. Have a look from the end of verse 5.

Now it says, Joseph, let me go up and bury my father. Then I will return. Pharaoh said, go up and bury your father as he made you swear to do.

So Joseph went up and buried his father. All Pharaoh's officials accompanied him, the dignitaries of his court and all the dignitaries of Egypt. Besides all the members of Joseph's household and his brothers and those belonging to his father's household.

Only their children and their flocks and herds were left in Goshen. Chariots and horsemen also went up with him. It was a very large company.

Did you notice the language of going up there? It's the language used for the Exodus. Like on your screens. There's a couple of examples there. Where God did visit Israel.

[14:31] And did bring Israel up out of the land of Egypt. Into the promised land. But there's also some other allusions to the Exodus that will happen later.

Like remember how Moses asked Pharaoh to let his people go. Well here Joseph asks Pharaoh to let him go. And remember how the Egyptian chariots and horsemen chased after Israel.

Well here are the Egyptian chariots and horsemen following after Israel. Though obviously not to get them. But part of the funeral procession. But the point is this funeral procession is.

It's almost like a mini Exodus from Egypt. It's even likely the route they took here. Was the same route the nation will take later. Minus going through the Red Sea of course.

And so this funeral procession foreshadows. The fulfillment of God's promises. To bring Israel up out of Egypt. Into Canaan.

[15:36] The promised land. So does the mention of the Canaanites. In verse 10 and 11. And how the Egyptians seem to stay near the Jordan. While verse 12.

It's Jacob's sons. The Israelites. Who seem to enter the land alone. And it's why our writer repeats the details again in verse 13 and 14.

Have a look there in verse 13. They carried him to the land of Canaan. And buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah. Near Mumre. Which Abraham had brought along with the field.

As a burial place from Ephron the Hittite. After burying his father. Joseph returned to Egypt.

Together with his brothers. And all the others. Who had gone with him.

To bury his father. Here Jacob joins the founding fathers. Of the Israelites. The patriarchs Abraham and Isaac.

[16:31] Along with their wives. And where are they? Buried in the promised land. In the cave. Brought from one of the residents of the land.

The Hittite. Ephron the Hittite. You see the writer records these events. Not just because they happened. After all. Lots of other things happened that he didn't record. But he recorded these particular events.

This mini exodus. And the burial of the promised land. As a reminder. That God did. Keep his promise. As the Israelites are reading Genesis.

In the land of Israel. They're going. Yeah. I recognize. This is what happened. In history. God kept his promise. And if he kept his promise. In the past. Then we can trust.

He will keep his promise. In the future. He fulfills. His promises. Including. The fact. Of our. Promised.

[17:28] New creation. And yet. Even if that's the case. It still seems. So far fetched. Doesn't it? You know. A whole new world. It seems so impossible.

Because when we look around. At our world. It seems to be. Spiraling. Out of control. I mean. Look at what's happening. In Hong Kong. Or the US. Or here in Victoria.

As COVID cases. Increase. And now. Whole apartment blocks. Are locked down. What's more. The church is. Being persecuted. More than ever. They say.

More. Christians. Have died. For their faith. In this century. Than all the other. Centuries. Of church history. Combined. It seems like.

Evil. Is winning. And the new creation. Will never come. And so. Maybe God. Is willing. To fulfill. His promise. In the future. But can he.

[18:25] Is he. Able to. Well. To show us. He can. Our writer. Includes. Another scene. About the fearful. Brothers. Of Joseph. So at point.

Three. Verse. Fifteen. When Joseph's. Brothers. Saw. That their father. Was dead. They said. What if Joseph. Holds a grudge. Against us. And pays us. Back.

For all the wrongs. We did to him. So they sent word. To Joseph. Saying. Your father. Left these instructions. Before he died. This is what you are. To say to Joseph. I ask you.

To forgive. Your brothers. The sins. And wrongs. They committed. In treating you. So badly. Now please. Forgive. The sins. Of the servants.

Of the God. Of your father. When their message. Came to him. Joseph. Wept. His brothers. Then came. And threw themselves. Before him. We are your slaves.

[19:18] They said. Here. It's clear. That the brothers. Fear. Retribution. Don't they? And so. They make up. This story. About their dad.

Telling Joseph. To forgive them. A few weeks ago. We saw that they. Recognized their guilt. Which they did. We even saw that. They repented. Changed their behavior. Which they did.

They didn't try. And get Joseph again. And Judah. Was certainly. A changed man. We also saw. Joseph. Hug. And kiss them. A clear sign. Of his desire. To be reconciled.

With them. And yet. There's no fear. In true. Reconciliation. And so. What we saw before. Doesn't seem to be. Quite complete.

There seems to have been. Something missing. And that something missing. Seems to be. A remorseful heart. That accepts. Forgiveness. It's interesting.

[20:13] That we're told. Back in chapter 45. Joseph. Wept. As did Benjamin. But none of the other brothers. Wept. And maybe. They're not criers. Or maybe. The writer. Was giving us.

A contrast. Suggesting. That they weren't. Really. Sorry. Perhaps. They repented. Of their behavior. Out of fear. And not. Remorse. Either way.

It's hard to know. Either way. It seems. They weren't quite ready. To accept. Joseph's. Forgiveness. But now. They are. Because for the first time. In the whole story.

They ask for it. Twice. But this really sets the scene. For Joseph's reply. In verse 19. Joseph said to them.

Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me. But God intended it for good. To accomplish what is now being done. The saving of many lives.

[21 : 09] So then don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children. And he reassured them. And spoke kindly. To them. Joseph reassures them.

And tells them not to fear. Retribution. Because he is not God. It is God's. Job. To punish the guilty. Joseph's job.

Is to forgive. Which is a good lesson for us. Isn't it? But they need not fear. Also because. God has used. Their evil.

To bring. Great good. The saving of many lives. This is the key verse. For the whole. Joseph's story. That God. Is in control.

So much so. That he can even work. Through evil. To bring. Good. Joseph actually used. The same reason. On your screens. Earlier.

[22 : 03] Back in chapter 45. When he first. Encouraged his brothers. Not to be distressed. But be reconciled. Child. And we've kind of seen.

God do this. A bit today. Through this evil virus. Haven't we? I'm sure you've seen. Those pictures. Around the world. Like on your screens. Of New Delhi. In India. Before and after.

COVID. With the reduced. Air pollution. Or on the next slide. Canals in Venice. Before and after. With less water pollution. It's a bit hard to see.

On one of them. But the one without the boat. You can actually see. Right down. To the bottom.

Whereas you couldn't before. Here is God. Working some good. For our creation. Through the evil.

Of the virus. But God has worked. Even greater good. Than that. I was speaking. With a minister. At another church. Not too far from here. And he said. With online church.

[22 : 58] He's had a number of. His parishioners. And their relatives. Tune in. Who aren't Christians. And so he decided. To run a course. Explaining Christianity. And five people.

Have become Christians. Through that online course. Here is great good. The saving. Of souls. Of course. The supreme example. Of God bringing good.

Through evil. Is Jesus himself. Isn't it? Through the evil act. Of conspiring. Against Christ. And then crucifying him. God has brought.

The greatest good. Hasn't he? The saving of. Billions. Of souls. Of course. It still might feel.

Sorry. So when we feel like. Our world. Is out of control. That evil. Is winning. We need to remember. It's not. Because if. God can even. Work through evil. For good.

[23 : 53] He can do. Anything. I mentioned before. That sometimes. People ask. If God is good. Then why doesn't he do. Something about all the mess. And the answer was. He has. He sent Jesus.

To open a way. To the new world. But then the follow-up question. Then becomes. Why doesn't God bring in. This new world now? And the answer to that question is.

Well he's waiting. And working. Through the mess. Of this world. For more good. To bring. To save more souls. But the point here.

Is that if God. Can even work through. Evil. For good. Then he can do anything. In other words. God is. Unstoppable. And so he can.

Keep his promise. As I said. The passage. Begins and ends. With faith. In God's. Promised land.

[24 : 49] At Jacob at the top. And Joseph at the bottom. As you can see on your screens. And then in the middle. The writer. The writer. Helps us. To have the same faith. Because he speaks about. The funeral procession.

Which reminds us. God fulfills. His promises. And then he speaks about. The fear of the brothers. Which reminds us. God. Is unstoppable. You see.

That new creation. May seem. Far-fetched. And far away. But we can. Trust that promise. In fact. Next week. We start. One Peter.

We'll be given. Even more reason. To trust that promise. At the resurrection. Of Jesus himself.

Which makes our hope. A living hope. But the point is.

Since God fulfills. And God is unstoppable. We have every reason. To have faith. In our promised future. And so do we.

[25 : 45] As so much so. That our promised future. Even shapes. Our present lives. And like Jacob. And Joseph. Does it shape. Our present plans. And decisions. I know.

A number of parents. Who plan. Time. To take time. Out of their day. To pray. For their kids. And non-Christian friends. That they might make it.

To the world to come. Because that's more important. Than an extra 10 or 20 minutes. In this world. Or another guy. Who gave money.

Sacrificially. To help a ministry. Because he cared more. About people. Having a place. In the world to come. Than having extra cash. In this world. I still remember.

One family. From our church. Who planned to come back. From holidays. On Saturday. Late on Saturday afternoon. Just so they could come back. To church. On Sunday morning.

[26 : 43] Because they cared more. About being encouraged. To keep trusting. In Christ. Until the world to come. Than having an extra day's holiday. In this world. Does.

Do we have faith. In our promised future. So much so. That it shapes. Our present plans. Or perhaps. Our present. Perseverance. I started.

I started. By saying that. If we had a promised vaccine. For Christmas. It might help us. Persevere in the present. Knowing that was light. At the end of the tunnel. A virus free world to come. How much more so.

A perfect world. To come. So will we. Persevere with following Christ. Whether it's persevering. With online church. Even if. You know. We're tired of screens.

Or it's hard to concentrate. You know. With phone calls. Or knocks at the door. One person actually. Thought about putting a sign. On their front door. That says. Do not disturb. Church in progress.

[27 : 38] I suppose you could do that. Whatever helps. Or will you persevere. In following Christ. By persevering. With patience. And godliness. Even now.

That we have to queue again. At the supermarkets. And people are back. To being selfish. For we have a brilliant future. That will more than make. Our present perseverance.

Worthwhile. And like Jacob. And Joseph lastly. Will our promised future. Even shape. How we face. Death. Such that we regard.

That future with Christ. As our true home. Where we belong. We're giving us school holidays. And online youth. Is on hold.

There may be some teenagers. Tuning in this morning. In fact. I'm pretty sure there are. So here is a teenager. From one of my old churches. In Sydney. I had to put one of our songs. As a backing track. So. Because of copyright.

[28 : 34] But have a listen. To his testimony. In Christ alone. My hope is found. He is my life.

My strength. My song. Is course. Hey everyone. Let me start off by saying. I would be doing this live. But I'm in hospital at the moment.

Having scans. Which obviously isn't ideal. But it's how it's going to have to be. Sorry about that. So for a bit of background information on me. My name is Nathan Mark Philip Barry.

Love basketball. Hanging out with mates. Watching movies. You know. Regular sort of stuff. But I've got a fair few cancerous tumors throughout my body. One in the heart. A few in the brain.

And just others around the body. Today I want to share the story of how I became a Christian. And the struggles I've had this year. And how I've dealt with them. So my dad is a minister at Janelle Anglican Church.

[29 : 29] So we went to church weekly. And they sent us youth group too. I've always loved youth group. And I've heard these bible stories so many times. I can't pick a moment like other testimonies.

But eventually it just made sense to me. That I was a sinner. And the story of Jesus actually dying on the cross for us. Became so clear that becoming a Christian. Is what I should do. Because eternal life with Jesus.

Who loved us. And he died for us. Sounded great. Especially compared to the alternative. Eternal suffering and all. So shortly after this. I became a follower of Jesus.

A verse that made this clear to me. Is 1 Peter 3.18. For Christ also suffered once the sins. The righteous for the unrighteous. To bring you to God. To this day this verse reminds me.

