

Genesis 50

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[0 : 0 0] A story from Genesis 37 to 50. Peter Jackson had to do that with the movies is because Tolkien had written this beautiful story with so many storylines and he was weaving them back together at the end of the book in such a way that you would have just left all these storylines hanging if he hadn't had seven endings in this movie.

I feel a little bit like that about Genesis 50. Genesis 50, we're going to pick up storylines that the writer of Genesis has been weaving and sort of laying out throughout the book.

And in fact, as we will see later, it points us even to the greater weaving work of God as he weaves together his work in this world.

And so that's what we're going to be looking at this morning. And you know, one of the things we haven't talked about very much as we've thought about this Genesis series, but I want to point out is that as I understand it, the context of the writing of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, it was as Moses was leading the people to the brink of the promised land, as they were wandering through the wilderness for 40 years, as they were waiting and slowly approaching this promised land that God had said they would take.

God, through Moses, was recording what he had done up to that point in the history of his people. Think about this for a minute.

[2 : 0 3] They're standing on the brink of entering into a land that is full of people, full of other tribes. They're entering into a land where they have never lived and they're going to claim it as their own.

Perhaps they were filled with fear. Perhaps their minds were captured by this question. Will God be good to us as we go across the Jordan?

I wonder if that's a question that we all ask. Different places, different times in our lives we ask, is God really going to be good to us?

Why do we ask it? Well, it's not hard. Open the page on CNN and what will you see? Well, there's racism in Ferguson.

There's Ebola devastating West Africa. There's civil wars in various countries around the world and so on and so forth.

[3 : 0 9] We live in a world where there's lots of suffering and pain. But my guess is that that's not the most powerful argument for most of you.

Probably for most of you as it is for me as well. It's that our experience, our own personal story has moments of trial, moments of pain, moments of injustice, moments of tragedy and disappointment.

And even if you have lived one of those blessed lives where you feel like, no, I haven't really seen that. Even then, I wonder if you live with an insecurity.

How long will it last? Will it continue forever? You see, the challenge that we have is that our experience doesn't always seem to match with our theology.

God says that He is good and we want to believe Him. But then we look at our world and we look at our own lives and we wonder. We wonder why it's so hard and where is God's goodness in all of that.

[4 : 26] And you know, without diving into the whole philosophy of it, I'll refer you to great books if you want after the service to delve into it. We can resolve it one way by denying that God's good.

We can just say God's sovereign but He doesn't care very much. He doesn't care about the details of your life. We could resolve it by saying that God is good but not sovereign. He's like a great-grandfather who's going to hold your hand and say, I'm so sorry.

But He can't do anything to help you. But this will not do. It is not what the Scriptures tell us. Jeremiah 29, 11, For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord.

Plans for welfare. And not for evil. To give you a future and a hope. And Isaiah 46, 9 says, Remember the former things of old.

I am God and there is no other. I am God and there is no one. There is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning. And from ancient times. And from ancient times.

[5 : 35] Things not yet done. Saying, my counsel shall stand and I will accomplish my purpose. And so the Bible says that God has good plans.

And He will accomplish His purposes. It's hard, isn't it? When your best friend in high school decides that you're now the target of her mockery.

When you watch the self-destructive patterns of a loved one spiral down. When that thing you'd hoped for.

A spouse, a job, an opportunity. Snatched out of your hands. And an untimely death rocks your family. As you are worn down by the wearying battle.

Depression. Chronic pain. Slow, painful tearing apart of a marriage relationship. How is God good in these things?

[6 : 48] Will God be good to us? This is what our passage is about this morning. As we end the book of Genesis.

We see God drawing together these strands of His story. To answer the question, will God be good? Will God be good to Joseph and his family? Will God be good to the people of Israel?

Standing on the brink of the promised land. Will God be good to you and to me today? So, turn with me, if you will, to Genesis chapter 50.

The page number is in your bulletin. I'm sorry, I forgot to get it. Genesis 50. As you're turning there, we will see that in the first 14 verses of chapter 50, it's this record of Jacob being taken up into Egypt and being buried with a great train of Egyptian court officials and people.

He's buried in the tomb of the Bible. He's buried in the tomb of his fathers. And it leads us to verse 15, chapter 15, which is where I'm going to read from.

[8 : 10] I'm going to read 15 through 21 as the simple text today. So, please read with me. When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.

So, they sent a message to Joseph saying, Your father gave this command before he died. Say to Joseph, Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin because they did evil to you.

And now, please forgive the transgressions of the servants of God, your father. The servants of the God of your father. Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, Behold, we are your servants. Joseph said to them, Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?

As for you, you meant evil against me. But God meant it for good. To bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today.

- [9 : 24] So, do not fear. I will provide for you and your little ones. Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. Please pray with me.
- God, we thank you that you have not left us to strive to understand you in our own efforts.
- Lord, we thank you that it is not in our reasonable mind alone that, Lord, we know you. But God, it is that you have revealed yourself to us.
- You have shown us and told us what kind of a God you are. Lord, I pray this morning that we would be comforted.
- Comforted as we see you as you truly are. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. In this central passage.
- [10 : 37] It's quite a story, isn't it? If you haven't been here, remember? Joseph's brother sold him into slavery long ago in chapter 37. God was with Joseph sovereignly through great trials and sufferings.
- And miraculously and sovereignly brought them back together years later where Joseph was in a position to provide for and to care for his family.
- And in the middle of that, God worked not only provision for his family but also reconciliation. God brought them together and brought, in fact, Jacob, his father and his sons and all of their families down to Egypt to live.
- And at the end of the story, Jacob, the patriarch, dies. And now it is his 12 sons who are left. And 11 of them are afraid.
- They remember the evil that they did. And even though Joseph had spoken words of forgiveness and pardon, even though he had demonstrated through his actions to them, they don't believe it.
- [11 : 51] Maybe now that Jacob's gone, maybe he'll finally take revenge on us. Maybe he'll finally mete out the punishment that we know that we deserve and never got.
- So they come up with a scheme. They make up a story. What Jacob probably didn't say. They make up a story about how his father asked them to tell Joseph to forgive them.
- Joseph sees through this ploy and he weeps. He weeps because his brothers still don't understand. He weeps because they don't get the God that he knows.
- And therefore the ways that he has acted towards them. They come and they fall down before them. They bow down again. Fulfilling the dream in chapter 37 that sparked the whole story.
- They say, we are your servants. Please don't kill us for what we did to you. Just make us your servants. Just make us your servants. That's enough. They beg to be his slaves rather than be executed.
- [13 : 10] Joseph's reply is a complex one, isn't it? Joseph says, you did do evil to me. He remembers the suffering.
- He's not forgotten. He remembers the years of slavery in Potiphar's house. He remembers the time when he was unjustly accused and then sent to prison.
- He remembers when he was abandoned by the cupbearer. Spent more years. He's totaling probably close to 17 years as a slave in prison in Egypt.
- He remembers all of those things. And he does not sweep it under the rug or make it go away and say, ah, it's fine. He says, you did mean it for evil.
- He called it what it is. But then he says, am I in the place of God? I am not the one to be your judge and jury and executioner.
- [14 : 15] That is God's job. And I will not presume to take it. I will not make myself the arrogant one who believe that I have to bring judgment and make the world right.

He says, am I in God's place? Your sin certainly deserves punishment. It certainly deserves judgment because of the suffering that I endured.

But I won't inflict it on you. I will not take revenge on you. He trusts the judgment to God. And he turns.

And in verse 20 makes the most astounding comment. The most surprising thing. A few minutes for evil.

But God meant the devil. Joseph saw that through all of the trials and all of the suffering and all of the injustice that he endured, God had a good plan that he was working out.

[15 : 30] What did that goodness look like? Let's remember this story. Let's think through some of these threads of what God's goodness has looked like to Joseph.

First of all, Joseph and his brothers. These brothers that sold him into slavery. They hated him for his dreams. They hated him because he was the favored one.

And they wanted to get rid of him. They only didn't kill him because in an act of sudden and unexplained mercy, Judah decided to intervene.

And instead of killing him, they sold him off. And he was gone for 17 years. And they never looked for him. And they never went to find him. And God brought them back together.

God sovereignly worked through all of Joseph's cycles of suffering and trial and injustice so that he could be exalted to the right hand of Pharaoh so that he could be the one in charge of a grain distribution in the middle of a grand famine.

[16 : 39] And then brought his brothers from Canaan down to Egypt because it was the only place where there was food so that they could be reconciled.

God worked. You remember chapters 42, 3, and 4 in surprising ways through Joseph to help his brothers see their sin, to help his brothers confess their sin, to help his brothers overcome the guilt by repenting of it.

He reconciled them and brought them together so that they together were family again. Not only a family, but they were provided for.

They had everything they needed in Egypt. They had land. They had the protection of the right hand man of the king. Joseph says, and you see in verse 21, this blessing wasn't just for them too, it was for their posterity.

Which was a remarkable thing because in that culture, one of the best ways to wreak vengeance on your enemies is to kill their children. Joseph wouldn't do that.

[18 : 01] Instead, God brought them together into this unity, into this reconciliation. The second thing that God did is that He brought the promise of Abraham to the next step.

Do you remember Abraham chapter 12? God comes to him and says, Abraham, I am calling you to God and I'm going to bless you and I'm going to make you a great nation.

Your descendants will be as many as the stars in the sky and the sand in the seashore. And I will give you land for you to dwell in. I will make your descendants a great nation and I will bless the nations through you.

I will raise up you to be my people so that the world may know what kind of God I am. Well, you think about the storyline of Genesis from 12 to 50.

What have we had? Abraham had two sons. Isaac had two sons. The family isn't growing very big, is it? And certainly none of these men showed exemplary character and faithfulness to God.

[19 : 21] God surprisingly and graciously fulfilled His promise to an undeserving people. And here we are in Genesis 50. And Jacob's household, now more than 70, is positioned to thrive.

Positioned to explode in multiplication. Positioned even in, one commentator pointed out the fact that God brought the family of promise down to Egypt in a culture where the Egyptians would have nothing to do with them so that they couldn't intermarry with the people around them.

But that they would live in this isolated setting so that they could grow like an incubator from a small family into a great nation of people.

God did all of this. All of this providing and all of this furthering of His promises being fulfilled to the patriarchs through Joseph's suffering, through his pain.

Not only were they blessed, but they were a blessing. Egypt consolidated its power. Egypt, through this famine, was exalted to the highest place in the nations.

[20 : 47] And the people of Egypt lived when other nations came to them for food because of Joseph. Because God, through suffering, had brought Joseph to this place where God would provide and be a blessing to the nations.

Wind the lens again. Think about the Israelites standing on the brink of the promised land. Looking in to where the Canaanites were, the tall men who scared all the spies 40 years before.

Wondering. But then remembering. How has God been good to Israel? Not only did God preserve the family of promise and take them down into Egypt, but by the time Moses is writing this, they've also been delivered.

They've seen God work with a mighty hand. That they became a great nation, so great that they became a threat to the Pharaoh who did not know Joseph anymore.

And then God came and the book of Exodus is about God's powerful deliverance of his people. And the rest of the Pentateuch all the way up to the beginning of Joshua is God providing for his people, shaping them to be his people, teaching them what kind of a God he is through the law, providing for them as they wander in the wilderness and as they face various trials and enemies.

[22 : 23] God's goodness is all over. All over the history of his people. All over the history of his people.

I want to stop for a second and think about a little bit of application for us. Sometimes when we in a church setting like this talk about God's goodness, isn't God good?

And you're sitting there and you're going through a really hard trial. You're facing something that's overwhelming and painful beyond what you think you can endure. You think, that just sounds like happy power.

That's not real. Friends, I want you to think about Joseph for a minute. Joseph spent those 20 years prison, in prison, treated as a slave, wrong and unjust.

I think one of the challenges that we face in the trials that we go through is a question of perspective. We think that God ought to fix things now for him to be good.

[23 : 44] Joseph clearly didn't think that that was necessary. God's timing is not our timing. And his greatest good for us is not simply alleviating the pain of our life in this moment.

No matter how great it is. Joseph did not forget the evil and the suffering. He did not pretend that it didn't exist.

He acknowledged it and looked beyond it to the goodness of God. We're going through trial. May we have this perspective and be able to wait to see God's goodness.

May we also do as Joseph did. May we focus on his goodness. May we see that every day there are things that are good about what God has done in our life.

every day God gives you blood. Every day there are people who love you. Every day there's food on the table.

[25 : 01] And you know what? Even when one of these is taken away there are other ones that are still there. I know some of you may not experience those three things I just mentioned. But still there is God's goodness in your life.

And even if you don't see it right now. Even if you are in the place of Psalm 88 where darkness is my only friend. And you can't see any goodness in your current situation.

Stop and think and remember God's goodness in the past. He has been good to you. I have no doubt. It may be hard to remember but see it all.

Focus on God's goodness and not just the tragedy or the evil or the pain that you are facing now. That's what Joseph did to be able to say you meant it for evil but God meant it for good.

Friends I want to say that there are times when we do lose sight of any goodness in this world.

[26 : 18] There are times when we think it would be better to not be here. But you know the bedrock the bedrock of the Christian hope for us is that the greatest evil ever in this world accomplished the greatest good ever in this world.

Joseph spoke better than he knew when he said the words we meant it for evil but God meant it for good because he spoke without knowing the details of what God would do in the future.

This is what Kyle read earlier from Acts but let me read Acts 2 22 again for you to remind you.

Men of Israel hear these words Jesus of Nazareth a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Friends Jesus was the best human being ever. He was attested to by mighty works of good.

[27 : 54] He healed the sick and the lame. He raised the dead. He loved the outcast. He challenged the injustice in his world.

He exposed the religious hypocrisy. He exhibited love in every time. Jesus was the only person who did not deserve to die.

Who could never say you meant it for evil for there was no evil in Jesus. Jesus. He did no evil and there was none in him. He alone of all the human beings who have walked the earth did not deserve to die.

Yet he the creator of the world was crucified by his creation. He the author of life was beaten mocked and killed and killed by those that he gave life to.

He the sinless righteous one who in all of history alone did not deserve to die was accused and executed as a common criminal.

[29 : 08] The greatest evil the greatest wrong that has ever happened is the death of Jesus Christ. If you are a crusader for injustice in the world hear this.

This is the worst injustice ever that Jesus would not be honored and exalted but instead treated with great harshness ultimately being crucified.

Not only did this great injustice happen but as Peter says in Acts 2 it happened by the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. God did not send Jesus to try to make the world a better place and then suddenly these evil people jumped out and out of his control and beyond his plan suddenly did something that completely derailed his plan and he had to think what do I do now I guess I'll raise him from the dead that might help.

From the very beginning this was God's plan. And the father and the son agreed upon it before the foundations of the earth God and Jesus willingly came forsaking the privilege of being God himself humbling himself to take on human flesh making himself a servant and submitting himself even to the cross for us.

for this was the greatest good. The greatest good that God would redeem for himself out of this fallen broken world that deserves only judgment for the evil.

[31 : 03] The evil that's out there and the evil that's in our hearts. God wanted to bring something good. So he would redeem a people through the death and resurrection of Christ.

What good is there for us in Jesus' death and resurrection? Let's think about it for a minute. First of all, we have forgiveness of our sins. Just like Joseph's brothers who bore the burden of guilt and therefore the fear of judgment throughout their whole lives.

So we, knowing our sin, bear that burden of guilt and a fear of judgment. And God comes and he says, I will do for you what you can't do for yourself.

I will die in your place and take the punishment for you just as Joseph suffered for his brothers. Instead of inflicting vengeance, he offers forgiveness, freedom, welcome, reconciliation.

You who don't deserve it, come back to me. This is what God says is a good for us. Secondly, he brings reconciliation with God and adoption into his family.

[32 : 31] just as God brought Joseph and Jacob's family back into a unity and into a place of health and prosperity in Egypt. So God in Christ calls all who believe in him into his family, breaking down the dividing wall, not only between us and God because of our sin, but between each other, between Jew and Gentile.

And he's made us one people in Christ and a great family, a family that will be forever with God. Not only does he bring us into this reconciled relationship with God and with one another, but he gives us a purpose in this world.

1 Peter 2, 9, that we may declare the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. God is that all the things of our life, our jobs, our family, our work, our friendships, our hobbies, that were meant to be blessings that we so often look for to give us meaning and purpose and significance in our world.

God says, no, I've already given you a purpose. It's to tell about the great Savior who has rescued you. He will one day come and renew the world.

He's given us a purpose like the dying man who finally found water in the desert is refreshed and ran around for the rest of his life saying, do you know where the water is?

[34 : 09] It's here. Come, find it. Drink of it and live. The goodness of God to us on the cross is forgiveness, it's reconciliation, it's adoption, it's purpose, and it's hope.

God did not abandon the Egyptians. He did not abandon his covenant people. You meant this for evil, but God meant it for good, for the saving of many lives as you see it now.

God, the hope is that our lives will be saved because of Christ. Death is no longer the end, but the beginning for all who have put their hope in Christ.

We don't need to live to seek our life just here, but we can see that the 70 years that we have now are merely a preparation for an eternity of life with God.

And our pain, and our sickness, and our trials, no matter how deep they are, no matter how overwhelming they are, they will not last.

[35 : 32] The trial will not be forever. The evil that was done to us will not triumph. God raised Christ from the dead.

And one day, Christ will return, and He will make all things new. And He will redeem this fallen, broken world. And when He does it, evil will be judged.

And we will see goodness that we've never seen before. There will be no more tears. There will be no more sorrow. There will be no more sickness. There will be no more suffering.

There will be no more death. that we will be with the author of life forever. So everything we do now is in preparation for that ultimate renewal that is yet to come.

We have all we need. 2 Peter says, the apostle writes this, His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

[37 : 04] God has granted to us great and precious promises. His goodness stands. We look at the cross and we look at the empty tomb and if the darkness in your life is so completely overwhelming, if the evil seems so great, look there.

There is where you can stand in the midst of it. There is where in the midst of the storm of your life there is not just resigned hope.

But there is real hope. God needs it for good. He has good for you. And friends, He may not explain it to you.

He's not answerable to us. We don't always get to see in this life what the good is. Friends, I know He's good. and I stand at the foot of the cross in front of you and I know that He is there.

If you are here this morning, you are not a believer in Christ. I want to urge you. I want you to hear what I have said.

[38 : 25] hope. I don't hope there is because I don't honestly know what hope there is outside of Christ.

I don't know what will keep you going when it gets that hard. But I know what God has done in the world. I know what God did in Joseph's life and I know what God has done at the cross.

And I know that there is a refuge and a hope. So come to Christ. Believe today in this God who loved the world so much that He did not abandon it but entered into it and endured the greatest evil ever for your good.

For you who have put your faith in Christ hold fast. Hold fast to what you know.

Look again and again and again to the Savior who loves you. He's done good for you. God what love have you shown to us that you are God.

[40 : 00] What amazing grace you have shown to us. Lord we thank you. We praise you.

Even in the worst even in the darkest hours you can serve you good. It's not just wishful thinking.

It's not just ignoring the evil because it's true. God hopeless. The worship team is going to come and we're going to stand and we're going to sing a song.

It's a song of victory. Now unto the King who reigns over all and never changes or turns. Unfailing justice and builders are willing justice and ■■■ and you