

9th August 2020 10am: You Alone Can Rescue: Joseph & His Brothers

Service led by Beryl Dayus, readings by Mark King, Peter Jackson & Mike Dayus,
talk by Mike Berry

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Introduction

[Beryl Dayus:]

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to St John's 10 o'clock service. Thank you for joining us. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Beryl, and this is my husband Mike.

[Mike Dayus:]

Good morning,

[Beryl:]

And our home group have put together today's service. If you're joining us for the first time, it's really good to have you with us. So let's commit this time to the Lord in prayer.

[Mike:]

Heavenly Father, we thank You for today. It's a good day, Lord, because You made it. We thank You for the technology that allows us to meet together in this way. And we ask a blessing on the whole service, and all those taking part, especially Mike Berry, as he speaks to us. Lord, Give us ears to hear, and the heart to embrace Your message this morning. May all that takes place be honouring to Your holy Name, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

In a moment of quiet, we reflect on the week just gone and say sorry for anything that might have displeased God.

Father God, You know us intimately. Nothing is hidden from You, Lord. We ask You to cleanse our hearts and minds, through Your Spirit. Help us to love You with our whole heart and show Your love to those around us in everything we say and do. Amen.

Notices

[Beryl Dayus:]

So we come to the notices. All the notices are on the news sheet. There are just three, really, that I'd like to draw your attention to, in case you've just joined us.

1. There will not be a live six o'clock service tonight as today is Mary Sumner day, founder of Mother's Union. And normally we would celebrate that in

church at the six o'clock service. But today there's going to be a special service streamed at nine o'clock [pm], and all the details of how to join that are on the news sheet. If nine o'clock isn't convenient to you, then you will be able to watch it at a later date and a later time. So, after the event.

2. Next week's six o'clock will be an outdoor service, weather permitting, and that will be taking place on the grass outside of the vicarage. Do let people know if you're intending to go, and please read the notice in full.
 3. And of course the Wednesday Bible Study: do join this if you possibly can. It's a really good, lively discussion and sound teaching.
- And I hope that you've all had a chance to look at the activities that Denise has sorted out for us [and emailed and made available on the internet] so brilliantly - she's done us proud - there's a lot to choose from.

So today's theme is "You Alone Can Rescue: Joseph and his Brothers", a well-known story about Joseph. But the wonderful thing about the Bible is that there is always something new to think about, and to learn. And it may be that God wants to say something to you today. So have your pen and paper ready to jot down anything that God might want to reveal to you during the talk.

We're now going to have two Bible readings, read by Mark and Peter, and after our first song, Mike Berry will bring the message.

First Reading: Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28

[Mark King:]

¹ Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

² This is the account of Jacob.

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. ⁴ When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

And now from verse 12:

¹² Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, ¹³ and Israel said to Joseph, 'As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them.'

'Very well,' he replied.

¹⁴ So he said to him, 'Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me.' Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron.

When Joseph arrived at Shechem, ¹⁵ a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, 'What are you looking for?'

¹⁶ He replied, 'I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?'

¹⁷ 'They have moved on from here,' the man answered. 'I heard them say, "Let's go to Dothan."'

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. ¹⁸ But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

¹⁹ 'Here comes that dreamer!' they said to each other. ²⁰ 'Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams.'

²¹ When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. ‘Let’s not take his life,’ he said.
²² ‘Don’t shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don’t lay a hand on him.’ Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

²³ So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe – the ornate robe he was wearing – ²⁴ and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵ As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, ‘What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?

²⁷ Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.’ His brothers agreed.

²⁸ So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Second Reading: Psalm 105:16-22

[Peter Jackson:]

¹⁶ He called down famine on the land and destroyed all their supplies of food;

¹⁷ and he sent a man before them – Joseph, sold as a slave.

¹⁸ They bruised his feet with shackles, his neck was put in irons,

¹⁹ till what he foretold came to pass, till the word of the LORD proved him true.

²⁰ The king sent and released him, the ruler of peoples set him free.

²¹ He made him master of his household, ruler over all he possessed,

²² to instruct his princes as he pleased and teach his elders wisdom.

Song: Mighty to Save (Everyone Needs Compassion)

Everyone needs compassion
A love that's never failing
Let mercy fall on me

Everyone needs forgiveness
The kindness of a Saviour
The hope of nations

Chorus:

Saviour, he can move the mountains
My God is mighty to save
He is mighty to save
Forever Author of Salvation
He rose and conquered the grave
Jesus conquered the grave

So take me as you find me
All my fears and failures
Fill my life again

I give my life to follow
Everything that I believe in
Now I surrender

Chorus x 2

Bridge:

Shine your light and let the whole world see
We're singing for the glory of the risen king
Jesus [2x]

Chorus x 2

Bridge x 2

Talk

[Mike Berry:]

Good morning everybody. I thought I'd like to introduce myself for some of you who may not know me well. I trained as a pharmacist. But I spent all my life in academia, working in northern Nigeria, Liverpool, Malaysia, and ultimately Malawi and hence, of course, the elephants [on cushions behind him], which Katie my wife loves very much. She's a teacher, and ultimately after teaching primary, secondary, and adult education, she became a teacher of children with special learning needs. So that's us.

But our theme this morning is about a young man, aged 17 years old, called Joseph. Now Joseph, as far as his brothers were concerned, probably thought he had a very vivid imagination. He kept having dreams and two of the dreams particularly upset them. Perhaps if we asked somebody on the street, what they knew about Joseph they would say, "Oh, is he the character in Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Joseph and the Technicolour Dreamcoat*?" Andrew Lloyd Webber was quite clever in taking two issues for Joseph's brothers and putting them together in one word. He called it a Dream-coat. Because the dreams were partly the problem, at least in two of them, he suggested that his brothers would bow down to him eventually, even though he was very young, and the last child in the family. It was so concerning that even his father actually asked him whether he would bow down to him as well. The other problem was the coat. His father loved Joseph very much, perhaps because he was the baby of the family, I don't know, but he gave him a very special coat, a coat which had many colours on. Now the children will have had lots of nice things to do. One of them will be to colour in the coat. And this is a picture of Joseph with his brothers, and this is probably rather like the actual event, a coat of stripes of many colours.



The brothers became very jealous of this, and unfortunately plotted to kill him. Reuben, one of the brothers, did try to rescue him at the beginning, but failed to do so. It was to no avail. And as we were to discover, only God could rescue Joseph from this situation.

So what was the effect on Joseph of what happened? We read it in the story. I'm sure there was terrible apprehension, fear, probably absolute terror, as they flung him into the cistern, the well. As the time came that he was shackled by the Ishmaelites as a slave, he would have been exceedingly uncomfortable and very worried about the future. And when he got to Egypt, I have no doubt that he was in great awe of the Egyptian court, and indeed fearsome, in case he put a foot wrong. Katie and I have had a great privilege, because we went to see the exhibition of Tutankhamen in Cairo. And those of you who've been watching the television programme *Valley of the Kings* will no doubt realise how wonderful this court was in comparison to his own humble background in a shepherd family. So I'm sure there was lots of terror for him.

Let me tell you a story about when I was 27 years old. I arrived in Nigeria. It was immediately after the Biafran war and there were still pock marks in some of the buildings where the bullets had landed. And I was a day late, the reason being that there had been a terrible fog at Heathrow Airport, so the plane couldn't take off. I had been promised transport to take me 100 miles from Kano down to Zaria. And there was nobody there, there was only one man standing on the forecourt outside the airport: an airport which would in those days have been more like Coventry airport than it would have been like Birmingham.

I'll tell you more about that later.

For Joseph things would never be the same. He suffered, I've no doubt, in the cistern, a great fear of death. When he was enslaved, of course, there was a fear not only of the present, and of the uncomfortable feelings that he had about that but of the future. And when he got to Egypt, he would have been fearsome of the Pharaoh's displeasure.

What about the brothers? Well, I'm sure overall they did have a sense of guilt, particularly as they went on to deceive their own father as well, pretending that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. And then there was of course the fear of retribution: it hung over him, I've no doubt, like a large cloud: should they ever meet up with that brother again if he survived, what would happen to them?

What was the outcome for Joseph, and indeed for me in my circumstances? Well, Joseph, of course we know, was saved by interpreting Pharaoh's dream. And because of that, he was promoted for his wisdom. He was given great power and authority in the court, especially to train elders and princes in the court. And it brought to mind that verse of the Scriptures which says, "All things are working together for the good of those who love God." ¹

Well, how about me arriving in Nigeria? Well, a few weeks before I was due to fly, my best man and I were standing on Waterloo railway station (sorry, train station these days), and we saw something glinting on the floor. And it turned out to be a Nigerian sixpenny piece. Dave put it into my hand and said, "There you are, Mike, the Lord has given you your first spending money!" When I stood on the forecourt at the airport, I approached the man, and said, "Can you tell me where there's a telephone?" He may have been speaking Hausa only, I didn't know. But he was able to point me around the corner to a public telephone hanging on the wall. I was able then to make a phone call to the people I'd been told to contact [...] and asked them for some help. And they sent a vehicle to look after me and take me 100 miles to Zaria. I had a sixpenny piece, which I was able to put into the telephone box. All things are working together for good.

As to Joseph: well, he survived the threat of death. He gained Pharaoh's confidence and was released from bondage as a slave, and he was given a very solid future in the court.

He was, it proved to be, a wonderful man. Abraham Lincoln once said, "Most men can survive adversity, but to prove a man's character give him power." And so he gained great power. A little song we used to sing came to my mind,

And the end is not yet, praise the Lord;
Blessings new He's still bestowing,
And my cup is overflowing,
For the end is not yet, Praise the Lord!

And [the end] wasn't for Joseph. But what about his brothers? Haha! Well, they were sent by their father to Egypt to get resources, during a period of famine. You can only imagine their terror, when they realised that the man before them who they met was Joseph. And so they fell on their faces in fear. And then, a very unexpected thing happen: Joseph met them in tears: tears, because for the first time in many years, he was meeting the members of his family, and also hearing that his father was still alive. So what did he do? Well, the first thing was, he made provision for their need. He sent them off back home with sacks of grain. The second thing was, he forgave their sins against him. And the

¹ Romans 8:28

has for you? Are you fearful about anything? From the story we see the consequences of not handing over such feelings to God. If so, now is an opportunity to write them down and give them to Jesus.

[pause]

Now tear up that piece of paper and put it in the bin. Allow Jesus to heal you, in the way only He can. Or you may know someone who is struggling with these sorts of issues, who you could pray for, in which case write their name on a piece of paper and pop it in your Bible to remind you to pray for them, so that they too, may come to know the healing power of Jesus. He alone can rescue. Which brings me to the [piece of paper], which has "Jesus loves me" three times on it like this:

JESUS LOVES ME
JESUS LOVES ME
JESUS LOVES ME

If you didn't print it off, then you could write it on a piece of paper.

And you'll see that I've underlined a word on each of the lines. Each time you read it, emphasise a different word, so that you have: Jesus loves me. Jesus loves me. Jesus loves me. Think about the words as you say them.

JESUS: Jesus, the Name above all names. Scripture tells us that there is no other name under Heaven given to men by which we must be saved. He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Prince of Peace. Jesus loves me.

Then Jesus LOVES me: this deep, deep unconditional love, it's like a perfect circle, without a beginning or an end. This love that is so strong, so powerful that he died for me.

And then Jesus loves ME: Just as I am, with all my imperfections. I don't need to try to be like anyone else. We can put our complete trust, and the whole of our future, in his hands. And I for one am immensely grateful for that.

Intercessions

Sue and Katy will now bring our prayers.

[Sue King:]

Good morning. After each prayer. I will say, "Lord, hear us." If you would like to respond, please say, "Lord, graciously hear us."

In the Bible reading this morning, we heard how Joseph was in a situation he did not want to be in: he experienced estrangement from his family, sadness, fear, and the loss of his freedom. We lift to You all who are, in our time, facing challenging and difficult circumstances, both in this country and abroad. We ask for strengthening faith, praise and perseverance, and hearts that are thankful for what Jesus has done for us. Almighty God, we praise and thank You for being the author and perfecter of our faith.

We pray for those who have decisions to make, perhaps about going out after shielding for so long, or jobs and financial matters; and for young people who are considering their next steps after leaving school or college.

Lord, hear us;

All Lord, graciously hear us.

Father God, we thank You for our families, friends and neighbours. Help us to follow Jesus' example, by being kind and patient with one another. Help us through Your Holy Spirit to build up good and wholesome relationships with each other, day by day. May the favour of the Lord our God rest on us.

Lord, hear us;

All Lord, graciously hear us.

[Katy Berry:]

As we come to [God] in prayer, please join me in the same responses. "Lord hear us," "Lord graciously hear us."

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the level of health we enjoy now. And ask that You will help us to manage comfortably any of our difficulties or disabilities. Give us Your peace as we live within our present circumstances, lifestyle changes and restrictions. For those who have been affected by COVID, we pray that they may be able to adjust to any side-effects and quickly benefit from any medication and treatment.

Lord, hear us;

All Lord, graciously hear us.

In these difficult times we pray for all those in positions of authority and responsibility, particularly those in church, in business, in health and social care, and in politics. We ask for wisdom, patience, clarity of vision and humility; and that leaders may turn to You, Father God, for guidance in the unknown and challenging days ahead.

Lord, hear us;

All Lord, graciously hear us.

Finally, we remind ourselves that because Jesus died on the cross, we're forgiven, when we fail. We have freedom without fear to approach You at any time and have a secure future with You. Help us now also to appreciate and enjoy all the blessings You bestow on us,

Lord, hear us;

All Lord, graciously hear us.

Amen.

[Beryl:]

I'd like us to stay in that place of prayer for a moment to remember the people of Lebanon.

Father God, we've seen the devastation and horror caused by the explosion in Beirut, and our hearts go out to the people of that city. We pray especially for those who have lost loved ones, that You would be very close to them and comfort them at this time of great sadness and desperation. We pray that countries across the world would stretch out their hand of love and compassion, and send supplies, food, medicine, temporary shelter and clean water quickly. Lord, the list is endless. And we pray for all in the medical profession, working tirelessly to help the wounded, that You would bless them, Lord, with all the strength and skills they need. at this time.

And we say,

Lord, in your great mercy,
All **Hear our prayer.**

[Mike:]

We are now going to have our final song, "And Can It Be", after which Peter and Janet will bring a blessing. But before we go, we'd like to say a huge thank-you to Michelle for all the technical support and help she's given us. So thank you again for joining us. Take care, and enjoy the rest of this beautiful day.

Hymn: And Can It Be

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me!</p> <p>2. 'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine!
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.</p> | <p>3. He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.</p> <p>4. Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee.</p> <p>5. No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.</p> |
|---|---|

Blessing

[Janet and Peter Jackson:]

The blessing is the doxology from the book of Jude, the last two verses: 24&25.

²⁴ To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy –

²⁵ to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore!

Amen.

[Transcribed by Hamish Blair with help from <https://otter.ai>]

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