



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Joseph: Seeing the Good in God's Detours

Part 6: Cinderella Man

Tim Badal | November 6, 2016 | Genesis 41



We're in a series called "Joseph: Seeing the Good in God's Detours." After church last week, a lady who is new to our church, new to the Bible and new to Christianity came up to me. She said, "I may be out of place to ask this, but you talked about seeing the good in God's detours using this Joseph story I've never heard about before—and I haven't seen one yet. Everything in Joseph's life goes from bad to worse to terrible. What good is there in the process?" I said, "You'll have to come back next week. There will be some changes in Joseph's life, and you'll begin to see the good in all these detours."

Maybe all this is new to you as well. Let me tell you where we've been so far. Starting in Genesis 37, we saw that Joseph was born into a dysfunctional and chaotic family. Joseph's father Jacob showed overt favoritism toward him, loving him more than any of his brothers. Jacob's affection for Joseph was very visible to his brothers and was symbolized by a coat of many colors Joseph was given.

While he was young, Joseph experienced God through two dreams, which he interpreted to mean that his brothers would one day bow down to him. This, added to the favoritism of his father, was an easy recipe for disaster. The anger of his brothers boiled over one day when Joseph, following the instruction of his father, traveled to check on them while they were shepherding Jacob's flocks in a nearby region. While Joseph was still far off, his brothers conspired to kill him. They were tired of the dreams, the coat, and their father's favoritism toward him. Then cooler heads prevailed, some greed rose up, and they decided instead to sell Joseph to some traders who were passing by. That way they would be rid of him without the guilt of murder, although they later led Jacob to believe Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.

The traders then took Joseph to Egypt, where he was purchased at a slave auction by a man named Potiphar. While a slave in Potiphar's house, Joseph began to see God's favor in his life. He worked diligently and faithfully, and his integrity soon paid off. God began to prosper everything he touched. Potiphar soon elevated this lowly slave to a position of second in command, trusting Joseph with the oversight of everything in his household other than himself and his wife. That created a problem.

That Joseph was handsome and successful was noticed by Potiphar's wife, who began to lust after him. After many attempted advances, she finally grabbed Joseph and told him, "I want to sleep with you." Joseph, being a godly man, chose to flee from her, leaving his garment in her hands. This proved to be enough evidence in Egyptian culture to incriminate him, as she charged him with assault. So even though Joseph had done nothing wrong, he landed in prison. But again taking a positive approach to his situation, he became the best possible prisoner. As a testimony to God's faithfulness in what seemed a hopeless circumstance, Joseph rose from being a run-of-the-mill prisoner to second in command. The warden gave him oversight over all the prisoners and their activities. It's almost unthinkable—a prisoner running a prison.

Everything was going well, until one day Joseph was approached by two of his fellow prisoners, who were very troubled. They had both been men of position—one had been Pharaoh's cupbearer and the other Pharaoh's baker—and both had had frightening dreams the night before. Being a caring man, Joseph asked them why they were downcast. So they told him of their dreams. The baker told how he had dreamed of some baskets of bread which the birds were devouring. Because Joseph himself had received

dreams from God, he offered to tell him the interpretation: "In three days you will be taken out of prison and brought before Pharaoh, and you're going to be hanged for your crimes." And his dream came true, exactly as Joseph had said.

The cupbearer also told Joseph of his dream involving cups and grapes and wine. Joseph told him, "In three days you will be pulled out of prison as well. But unlike the baker, you'll be restored to your position as Pharaoh's cupbearer. You'll receive life, not death." And again, it came to pass just as Joseph had described. But we are told that when Joseph gave the cupbearer the interpretation of his dream, he also gave him one request. "I've given you good news. Now will you remember me when you come before Pharaoh? Tell him I am a man who was stolen from his homeland, and I'm now in prison for a crime I did not commit. Pharaoh is my only hope for getting out of this prison, and he'll listen to you. Please speak to him for me, and maybe he will have grace and grant me my freedom." Unthinkably, we're told in Genesis 40:23 that the cupbearer did not remember what he had promised, but forgot Joseph. Joseph was in prison for two more years—two long, arduous years. Then everything changes. In Genesis 41 the story of seeing the good in God's detours begins to come into view.

I've entitled this sermon "The Cinderella Man." As many of you know, in 2005 Ron Howard produced a movie with that title that chronicled the life of James Braddock. Braddock was a boxer from New York City in the early '30s, during the time of the Great Depression. I don't usually recommend movies, but I would recommend this one. As a father of three boys, I appreciate stories of manly men that show what an ordinary guy can do—hopefully to inspire them. Braddock was a successful boxer, but injuries and age were getting the best of him. When he fought what he believed would be his final fight, he broke his hand. Unfortunately, boxing was his livelihood, and in the Depression it was hard to find other work. Every day, thousands of men would go down to the docks to find what work they could. Many days there would be only six or seven openings.

Like many others, James sold almost everything he had just to keep his family alive. Eventually, though, they got to the point where they could not pay for their electricity or gas or even afford food. In fact, his oldest son was caught stealing just to provide for the family. So James and his wife did the unthinkable: they gave their children over to family members and friends. James was at the end of his rope, as were many people in those horrific circumstances. He still found occasional work, but never enough to provide what he needed. Then an opportunity came to box again. While it was a small-time, small-crowd, small purse event, he made the decision to try. In his earlier days, when James fought for the fun and the glory of fighting, he became washed out. But because of the intensity of his need, because his back was against the wall, he now had a family man's heart beating in his body that brought him to do more than he ever thought possible before.

By the way, the story of James Braddock inspired another boxing story. In the late '70s, Sylvester Stallone read a biography of Braddock and would then live out the life of another boxer, Rocky Balboa. This boxer, too, would continually have his back against the wall, yet would find a way to rise above his circumstances. Which is what James Braddock did as well.

In one interview after a fight, when asked what he was fighting for, he said, "Milk money for my family." After fighting and winning a few smaller fights, a promoter came to him with an offer. "Max Baer, the heavyweight champion, was scheduled to fight a particular contender, but because of injury that contender had to drop out. You have the opportunity to fight against the world champion."

But there was a problem. The last two men Max Baer fought were killed in the ring. Even if Braddock were to lose, the purse for the fight would be enough to provide for his family for six to eight months. James said, "I'll do it. I want my family back." He was the underdog of all underdogs, but he began to train, and his heart made him ready for the fight. So in 1935, James Braddock—true story—fought Max Baer in Madison Square Garden and won. He became the "Cinderella Man" for all of America in those days. Everybody was fighting for their lives. Everyone's back was against the wall. The story of James Braddock, an everyday guy from Brooklyn, was something Depression-era America grabbed hold of. "If James Braddock can win in the fight of his life, then surely I can win in mine." It was the fairy-tale story everyone needed.

Now, why would I bring Hollywood into a sermon? I believe Joseph is the real Cinderella Man. He has his back against the wall. He is the man who has the whole world coming down on him. When things can't get any worse, they do. But instead of giving up and quitting, he rises above each challenge, finding something in himself to face them.

But in his case it wasn't just a heart of iron—it was the Spirit of God Who was with him, Who allowed him to prosper. And because that same Spirit lives in us, Joseph's life should help us realize that no matter what we face, whatever fight we're part of, we can know that just as he rose above his struggle, we can as well—because God is with us. If we give ourselves to faithfulness and honorable living, trusting God to see us through, we can find victory even in the worst circumstances.

Let's turn now to Genesis 41. I want to walk through three points together. We're covering a lot of text here and my first two points are going to be information, then the third point will draw some applications.

1. This is a story that should take our breath away.

Chapter 41 brings an amazing turn of events in Joseph's life. He's in prison—a place where he should never have been. But through his brothers' betrayal, and through the lies of Potiphar's wife, he's now serving time for a crime he did not commit. He seeks the help of the cupbearer, but is forgotten. Two whole years go by and nothing changes. If Joseph ever has a dark time, it must be during these long days alone in prison.

But in a matter of moments, everything is going to change for him. He will go from the prison to the palace, from being a prisoner in Egypt to prime minister of Egypt. All of that should cause us to stop and realize, "What an amazing set of circumstances!" It's a story made for Hollywood that should take our breath away.

I'm going to break this story up, reading through the 57 verses and explaining them as I go.

The problem.

Beginning in verse one we find a problem:

After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile,² and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass.³ And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile.⁴ And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke.⁵ And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk.⁶ And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind.⁷ And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.⁸ So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

Pharaoh has a problem. He's had two dreams in one night. Dreams so vivid that he remembers them in fine detail—where they took place and everything that transpires. He says to his wise men and magicians, "I'm the boss here and I don't like to be troubled. If I'm troubled, everyone will be troubled. So help me understand these dreams."

But one by one the magicians and wise men have to admit they have no idea what the dreams mean. Pharaoh becomes even more troubled, because he believes these dreams are significant for Egypt—but he has no answer as to why he dreamed them. So he begins to seek for someone who can interpret his dreams.

Let's continue reading in verse nine. *"Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, 'I remember my offenses today.'"* Remember, the cupbearer stands right next to Pharaoh, where it's his job to test all the food and drink before it touches the lips of Pharaoh. Then a light bulb comes on in the cupbearer's mind. He says, "I remember my offenses today."

¹⁰ "When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard,¹¹ we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation.¹² A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream.¹³ And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged."

The plan.

All of a sudden, after two years, the cupbearer remembers Joseph. "Aha! I knew I forgot something." When he hears about Pharaoh's dreams, and sees how troubled he is, the cupbearer remembers going through the same thing. "Oh, yeah. I promised Joseph I would tell Pharaoh about him. And here's the perfect time." He says to Pharaoh, "I had a dream, and the baker had a dream. You killed the baker, just as Joseph said. I was restored, just as Joseph said I would be. Maybe we should go get Joseph. He's a Hebrew man who has the ability to interpret dreams." So that's what Pharaoh does.

The providence of God.

"Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit." The word "quickly" means they acted with incredible haste. "Get him now!" He gets washed up and shaves, and stands presentable before Pharaoh.

¹⁵ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." ¹⁶ Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." ¹⁷ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Behold, in my dream I was standing on the banks of the Nile...."

And Pharaoh goes through the dream again. "Seven cows get eaten up by three ugly, skinny cows. Seven plump ears of corn get eaten up by withered and beat-up corn. What in the world does this mean? I've never seen anything like this. What is to be made of it?"

God gives Joseph the interpretation, and he begins to tell Pharaoh what needs to be done. He says, "Something is going to happen. Egypt is about to experience seven years of the worst famine it's ever known. If you don't do something about it, we'll have real problems. If we don't prepare for this famine, Egypt will no longer exist."

The proposal.

Let's go down to verse 33. After revealing the meaning of the dream, explaining that the seven big cows represent seven years of plenty, but that those years would be followed by seven years of famine represented by the withered and ugly cows and corn cobs which will consume the land.

³³ Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. ³⁴ Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years. ³⁵ And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. ³⁶ That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine.

So Joseph proposed that Pharaoh find someone who would lead the process of storing 20% of all the grain produced during each of the seven hefty years so there would be food during the years of famine.

The promotion.

Joseph's proposal leads to a promotion. Verse 37, *"This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, 'Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?'"* Hmm. Let's look around. And someone must have said, "Why not get the man who's right in front of you, who interpreted your dream? If he's smart enough to interpret the dream and give you the proposal, might he not be smart enough to carry out what needs to be done?"

³⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. ⁴⁰ You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you." ⁴¹ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." ⁴² Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand.

The signet ring represented Pharaoh's authority. It was sort of like a credit card. "You get access to my business account." Then he puts garments on Joseph that identify him as a ruler. A gold chain is put around his neck, and he's privileged to ride in the second chariot. When Pharaoh rides in a parade to be praised and adored, Joseph is right there with him. He is set over all the land, and when he goes out in public, everyone is to bow the knee at the name of Joseph. He goes from prisoner to one of the most prized individuals in all of Egypt.

The program.

In verse 46, Joseph starts a program of food collection and storage. During this time he is given a wife, who gives him two sons. All is going well. The food he's storing up is so abundant he can't even measure it. According to the text, the grain outnumbers the sand of the sea.

The profession.

In verse 50 we read about Joseph's sons. *"Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph...Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. 'For,' he said, 'God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house.'"* Joseph is professing God's faithfulness. He admits that his heart has been broken, that he has been downtrodden and mistreated. "But my God, Who gave me the ability to interpret dreams, has now brought me to the place where I give up my bitterness."

Then later he has a second son whom he names Ephraim, *"For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."* Even though he has been afflicted, God has remained faithful to him. He professes his allegiance to God, saying, "It's not me—it's the God Whom I serve." That is Joseph's profession.

The provision.

Finally, we see the provision of God.

⁵³ The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end, ⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. ⁵⁵ When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do." ⁵⁶ So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷ Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth.

Wow, what a story. From prisoner to prime minister. He is waiting on God, and in a couple moments God changes everything. This is a great reminder to us that we never know in the middle of a trial when the storm clouds will be run off. Some of you are convinced you are destined to live perpetually in a state of tribulation. Joseph had no idea that day when he woke up that it would be the day everything would change. And it might be this week that God will change your circumstances as well. Are you ready for that? Are you ready to give God the glory for it?

We might look at this story in chapter 41 and think, "What an amazing man Joseph is." He's the MVP, right? When the Cubs won the World Series, they awarded the whole team the trophy, but there was one guy, Ben Zobrist, who got another trophy. He was the Most Valuable Player. In our story today, we might say that Egypt won the championship. They're going to live through the time of famine. But there is an MVP, and that person is Joseph.

I want you to know that it's not Joseph who is the MVP. It's God. God was the One Who was working behind the scenes. God was the One Who for 13 years put Joseph right where He needed him to be. It was God Who gave Joseph the ability to interpret dreams. It was God Who reminded the cupbearer of Joseph's ability. It was God Who gave Pharaoh the dreams he couldn't understand. It was God Who confounded the magicians and wise men of Egypt. It was God Who gave Joseph the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams. It was God Who gave Joseph the ability to prepare the land of Egypt for the famine.

Over and over again, it was God. And that same God Who served Joseph is the same God Who serves you. You and I need to recognize that no problem we face is too big for Him to figure out. He is the MVP of this story. And if we promote Joseph to that position in our minds, we will miss the real point of the story. Only God belongs in this Hall of Fame.

2. The symbolism in the story points to Someone even greater.

Joseph was a real-life person whose story contained real-life circumstances. But as we look behind what actually happened in his life, we can see an even grander story. Even though he was a great man, his life was a preview to the life of an even greater Man—Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament, Jesus explained that parts of the Old Testament were signs or previews of His coming. In God's divine plan, He gave "sneak previews" of what He was going to do. It was rather like the previews you see in movie theaters, the trailers of things that will be shown later, designed to whet the appetite of moviegoers. The stories of the Old Testament have little trailers in them that point to Jesus. You might ask how we know that. Jesus Himself tells us of one: Jonah. Remember the man who was swallowed by the big fish and spent three days in its belly? Jesus said, "Just as Jonah spent three days in the belly of the fish, so the Son of Man will spend three days in the grave." Jonah's experience was a picture of what would happen to the Messiah.

Over and over again we see that Joseph is a picture of Christ. In Genesis 37 to 40 we see many of the similarities between them. First of all, both were loved by their fathers. Jesus was loved by His Father, and Joseph was loved by Jacob. Both were mistreated by their brothers. Both were rejected and were conspired against. Both were abused and delivered up to die. Both were delivered from death. Both Jesus and Joseph were servants who were hated, and both were exalted by God to higher positions of authority.

While these chapters contain many similarities, I want to focus on the ones we find in today's chapter. I want to look at how the symbolism in Joseph's life previews the life of Jesus Christ.

Joseph is a picture of Jesus in his position.

Joseph's position is similar to Christ's in three areas. First, we see it in his great giftings. There was a great problem in Joseph's day, and he was the only one who could resolve the situation. Pharaoh's dream caused him to gather all kinds of people into his throne room, yet no one could relieve his distress.

In the same way, Jesus would come into a city, and all manner of people would bring their distresses to Him. Either they were filled with demons, or had diseases eating their bodies, or had all sorts of other problems. They would come to Jesus because He was the only One Who had the giftings to heal and deliver them. He was the Person they turned to—just like Joseph.

Second, Joseph was similar to Jesus in his greatness. Because of his giftings, Joseph was given supreme authority in the world of Egypt. Pharaoh was so impressed with his ability to interpret the dreams that he gave him control over all the land. Because of Jesus' giftings, Paul tells us in Colossians, He would be given control over the entire universe. Not a single molecule is in its place outside of Jesus' plan. Joseph was the lord of all—and so was Jesus.

Third, Joseph's position, like Christ's, was one of glory. The glory of Joseph extended over everything except Pharaoh himself. He was second. Although he was equal to Pharaoh, he deferred to him, doing his will. In the same way, Jesus' glory is second only to that of the Father in heaven. Why? Because they're not equal? No, Joseph was equal with Pharaoh, but he deferred to him. Jesus is equal with the Father, but He defers to the will of the Father. As He says in the garden, "Not My will, Father, but Your will be done" (Luke 22:42). He allows himself to be second to the Father, even though they're equal, so He can fulfill the work and will of His Father in heaven.

His greatness, his gifting, his glory—and look, Joseph is clothed with all splendor. A mere prisoner, a mere servant, is given a robe and rings representing his place of great authority. Even so, Jesus made Himself one of us. He put on skin, walked around, went about life as we do—although without sin. He died a sinner's death, and now He has been elevated to the right hand of the Father.

Joseph would go about Egypt, and wherever he went, people would bow the knee. At the name of Joseph, people would bow—just like Jesus. Philippians 2:10-11, *"At the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."*

Are you seeing the similarities? Let's go on.

Joseph is a picture of Jesus in his personal life.

We also see the similarities in their personal lives. Joseph becomes prime minister over all Egypt and his life changes dramatically. The first thing that changes is he's given a new name: Zaphenath-paneah. In Hebrew, this means "savior of the world." Hmm. Now, why in the world would he be called that?

In seven years, Egypt would have died a merciless death through starvation. They would not have seen the famine coming, had Joseph not told them. But Joseph saw the problem coming and warned them of their impending doom. But because they listened to his instructions they were spared this destruction. Pharaoh said, "You've saved us from our demise."

Just like Joseph, Jesus came preaching that doom and destruction were coming. But there was an alternative. If people would obey the words of the One Who was warning them, they could be saved. And Jesus is rightly called, "The Savior of the world." We see a preview of that salvation in the saving of a nation, but Jesus is even greater than Joseph, as He saves the world from destruction due to sin.

In addition to being given a new name, Joseph is given a new bride. At 30 years of age, he had never been married. There wasn't opportunity to meet women in the prison. We might ask why a Hebrew man is marrying an Egyptian. Well, there weren't any Hebrew ladies around. It's Egypt. And honestly, I wonder if Joseph even wanted to look for a bride in the land where he had been thrown into slavery. But he's given a beautiful woman as a gift from Pharaoh, and he marries her. He marries a Gentile woman, a non-Israelite.

What symbolism is there in this? Jesus Christ would come to be the Messiah of Israel. He would be rejected by His brothers. What would He do? He would say, "Salvation is no longer found simply in Israel. Instead, all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved—Jew and Gentile alike."

Here's what we need to see. Joseph didn't marry the Egyptian to merge their cultures. No, in the naming of his two sons, he shows us that for a Gentile to be brought into the covenant work of God, they have to bow their knee to God. No mother would allow her children to be named after a different God unless she believed that God to be true. So Joseph's wife is converted to the Jewish faith, their children are brought under the teaching that God, Jehovah, is the only true God. He's the One Who will protect Egypt from this disaster that's coming their way.

In this we see a picture of Jesus being rejected by His brothers, Israel. As a result, He opens His arms to you and me as Gentiles—if we will bow the knee and ascribe worship to the one true God, the Father in heaven. See the similarities? They're pretty uncanny, aren't they?

So we see that Joseph has a new bride, a new name, and also he has a new business. For seven years he will be preparing for something that will happen later. Everything is going well for the first seven years, and people may have been saying, "Why do we need Joseph around? We're getting bumper crops now. We don't need him—why is he here? Also, he's taking away 20% of our crop. We may always have crops like this." But Joseph says, "I'm preparing for something that will benefit you in the future."

If I remember John 14 right, Jesus said, "I'm going away from here." The disciples asked, "Why, Jesus? Why do You have to leave? Everything is great. You're with us. You don't have to go anywhere." But what does Jesus say? "I have to go prepare a place. And when I'm ready, I'll bring all of you to be with Me."

Joseph prepared, and then he called all the nations to come and enjoy the benefit of his preparations. Again, do you see the similarities? In a sense, Joseph was also interceding for the Egyptian people. He was doing work that they did not understand. They didn't know the good life they were experiencing would not last. But Joseph went between them and their possible future destruction. He stood in the gap for them when they didn't know they needed him.

Again, do you see the similarities here as well? Jesus stands in the gap for you and me. Even though we can't see our future destruction, Jesus stands between our sin and our punishment, telling the Father, "Put it to My account." Joseph is a picture of Jesus. We see him interceding, we see him preparing and we see his care for the people.

Joseph is a picture of Jesus in his power.

When we think about Joseph's power, we realize he's not divine. He's not the fourth person of the Trinity. But he is a picture of Jesus, giving us a preview or trailer of what was to come. Jesus has the keys to life and death. At the end of chapter 41, we see that it is Joseph who opens the grain barns for the people to get food. He holds in his hands the keys that determined whether the people would live or die. But he locked up the grain he had prepared until the proper time for it to be distributed.

Likewise, Jesus holds the key to whether we will live or die. At the time He will choose, His treasures will be what we need. He will open the doors to heaven's throne room, allowing us to enjoy the blessings of our salvation. This is in His power to accomplish, and He becomes the Savior of the world. And just like Joseph, Jesus is sufficient. Joseph had enough grain to provide for every Egyptian and even more—so much that he provided for the needs of people from other nations, who as we'll soon see included Joseph's own family.

Likewise, Jesus is sufficient in His salvation for us. As our text makes clear, it was only through Joseph that the people were spared from the famine, and it's only through Jesus that we are given eternal life. He said, "*I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*" (John 14:6). Joseph said in essence, "I am the way, the truth and the life—no one gets to the grain except through me."

All of these things are important, because they tell us that from Genesis to Revelation God has a plan. We can trace a redemptive thread from Genesis 1:1 to the end of Revelation 22. God has a plan He's working through, and Joseph's life is one chapter in that plan.

But let me ask you this. Just as Joseph was a preview of Christ, are you also a preview of Him? Are you living in such a way that when someone looks at you, they not only see you but they also see Jesus? Do they say, "When Tim works, I see Jesus. When Tim serves, I see Jesus. When Tim talks, I hear Jesus. When Tim lives, I see Jesus. When Tim cares, I see Jesus." Can they say that of me? I've got to work through that.

Can they say that of you? Does your boss see Jesus? Does your spouse see Jesus? Do your kids see Jesus? When your neighbor looks at you, does he see Jesus? When strangers see you, do they see Jesus? When we look at the life of Joseph, we see Jesus. Can others say the same of us today?

3. What are the steps for the rest of us?

I know I've given you a lot of information. In some way I apologize, and in some ways I want to overwhelm you, because the information is pretty awesome, isn't it? But now what are some applications from chapter 41? I see four specific things.

We are reminded of God's greatness.

I've already said this, but I'll say it again: God is the MVP. He is the Champion. He is the main character. In fact, He's really the only character in the redemptive story. And just like Joseph, we need to marvel at what God is doing. We serve a great God; a God Who can take us out of our prison cell and make us a prime minister in a New York minute.

We have a God Who can in one night make a pagan king—or *president*—bow the knee. Amen? How did He shake the foundations of Egypt? Our God gave puny Pharaoh a couple dreams and it freaked him out. How strong is Pharaoh? Not very. How strong is our God? He's awesome! So when we go to vote and wonder, "Can God do anything about this?"—all He has to do is give Hillary or Donald a couple dreams, and it could change everything. We serve an amazing God. Don't ever forget God's greatness.

We are reminded of the gifts God gives.

God was the One Who gave Joseph the ability to interpret dreams with the expectation that Joseph would use that gift. Imagine for a moment that the guards come, grab Joseph, put him before Pharaoh and say, "I hear you can interpret dreams." Suppose Joseph would say, "Well, I used to do dreams, but not anymore. I'm too old for that. I did that when I was younger, but I've moved on from that." "Can you interpret Pharaoh's dreams for him?" "Well, I'm not feeling it right now. God hasn't been that nice to me, and so I'm not going to help God."

Some of us use excuses like that regarding our gifts. We sit on them. "I'd love to have you serve in the children's ministry." "Ah, I'm kind of busy here in the prison right now." Or, "God hasn't been helping me, so why should I help Him?" And we sit on our gifts. Listen, God gives us gifts expecting that we're going to use them. So what gifts has God given you that He's expecting you to use? Don't sit on them.

In fact, God may call you to use your gifts at a moment's notice, so be ready. I am a preacher today because I said yes to an in-the-moment opportunity. That's it. I was available. I never could have imagined that this was what my narrative would be. I was asked one time, "Would you fill the pulpit?" I said, "I've never done it before." "We still want you to fill the pulpit." "I'm not sure I can do it." "That's all right. Fill the pulpit." "I don't know what I'll say." "That's okay. Fill the pulpit." I had a couple hundred other excuses, but they wouldn't listen. "Fill the pulpit." "I'm just a caterer." "Tim, shut up. Fill the pulpit." And look at what's happened. I never could have imagined it. I pinch myself sometimes, because God moved in my spirit to say yes to a moment's opportunity.

Joseph said yes in the moment, and his life would never be the same. Are you in that moment going to say the same thing? God gives you gifts—He wants you to use them.

We are reminded to live for the glory of God.

God has given many of you success. But wasn't it great when Ben Zobrist got up and said, "It's not me, but it's Christ"? Oh, that was sweet. That was good. "Oh yeah, we're great baseball players. That's wonderful. But it's God Who gives us the abilities." And one thing I want you to see in Joseph's life in Genesis 41 is that glory came to him. When God makes you successful, glory is going to come. Here's a word picture I want you to think of: When glory comes, I want you to pull out a mirror and deflect the spotlight that comes on you, and shine that glory toward God instead.

So Joseph is told, "Man, I hear you can interpret dreams." Joseph responds, "It's not me. It's God." "Hey, you've got some great children there." "It's not me. It's God." "How did you get through those circumstances and all the bitterness in your life?" "It's not me. It's God."

When a spotlight is being turned on you and you take that mirror and deflect it to someone else, two things happen. One, you're pointing it where all glory is due. And two, God in His grace and mercy allows a little bit of that residual spotlight to stay on you. And that's okay. Joseph walked around and everybody bowed the knee to him. He's thinking, "No, you shouldn't do that." But he always knew, "The reason I'm where I am, the person I am today, is because of God." Reflect the glory. That's why Scripture tells us that when we eat or drink, we should do all things to the glory of God.

We are reminded of stewardship that allows for generosity.

One final truth I want you to take with you. We should be stewards of what God gives us in such a way that we can be generous. Joseph did the most un-American thing possible. Listen to this carefully. Joseph lived on less and saved the rest, so he could be generous with others.

We learned at a conference a couple weeks ago that Americans spend 125% of what they earn. Let me say that again. We make a dollar and we spend \$1.25. How do we do that? If we only have a dollar, how do we get the other 25 cents? We put it on credit, right? Somebody else has given us the ability to spend more than we have. Then we find ourselves with a problem. We're not good stewards of what God has given us. We're not only consuming all we have, but also 25% more than we have, so we can't be generous with God or with others. And on a rainy day—or in Joseph's case, a non-rainy day—we won't have anything in the supply house. Statistics tell us that most Americans are one \$500 repair away from being in financial ruin. That's a refrigerator. That's a laundry appliance. That's a car repair. Why? Because we, like the Egyptians, are not planning for a rainy—or not-so-rainy—day and are not prepared.

Joseph reminds us as Christians that if we want to be ready for the days of famine, days when we should be letting God's glory shine through our money, that means we spend less than what we get, and we save some so when someone is in need, we're able to help them. When Joseph was handing out the grain, do you think he was taking all the glory? No. "My God in heaven told me that this was coming. He told me what to do. And now I can give you something, and you should worship God as well." I believe, and commentaries agree with me, that the greatest revival of Yahweh worship broke out in Egypt because of Joseph's good stewardship.

Your neighbors may need your help, but you can't help them because you don't have anything to give—because you're consuming 125% of what you have during the seven good years. But when you're generous with them, and they ask, "How can you do this?" you can answer, "Because I serve a great and awesome God. And I want you to know Him."

But you need to reorder your life now in the same way Joseph did—by not eating all you have. "I'm going to save some now, in case I may need it or my neighbor may need it—and while I'm being generous, I can share the gospel with that individual." Wow. That would change how some of us live, wouldn't it? The way we spend, the way we go about our lives, in order that the gospel might go out.

Genesis 41 tells us that there is a Cinderella Man—and it isn't Jim Braddock during the Great Depression. It isn't even Joseph. That Cinderella Man is Jesus Christ, and He's the One we adore. He's the One we worship. It is He Who knows the beginning from the end and the end from the beginning. He loves us and went to the cross to die for us, so we might have everlasting life in Him.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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