

November 15, 2015 “You'll Get Through This” Pt 4 Genesis  
41:14-32

Things seemed to be going so well! I keep telling people I have never experienced a symptom of cancer. From my point of view all the “recovery” stuff has been recovery from surgery. I am not being naive here. I am not disputing the fact that I had a tumor. In fact I know it registered as a 7 on the Gleason scale. That means it was aggressive. That means it was serious. It was obviously the right decision to have it surgically removed. Recovery from surgery has not been a nightmare. I'll say that again. Recovery has not been a nightmare. However a number of times, just when I thought things were going well...there has been something else to deal with. Blockages. PSA scores that we wish were not there...the prostate gland is gone. The need for radiation after all...sometime in the future. Bleeding. You may think I am cool and collected about all this. Fact is I panic rather easily.

If that is a description of my last 6 months, it is also a description of life for most of us. Things seemed to be going so well. And then the bump in the road. The curve that seemed to come out of nowhere. The thing that turns your day or your week or the rest of your life (that's what it sometimes feels like) turns things upside down.

Joseph went in a matter of minutes from a life of privilege, he was his father's favourite son, to living on the edge of destruction. He heard his brothers talking about killing him as they ate lunch and he languished, bound and bruised at the bottom of a cistern. He screamed for help. They were deaf to his pain and his fears. You would have thought he hit bottom when they sold him to the Ishmaelite traders as a slave bound for Egypt. But what could

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get worse got worse in the most demoralizing way possible. Joseph became the slave/servant of Potiphar, a captain in the Royal Guard that served Pharaoh. Pharaoh's security detail.

And things began to look up. Potiphar was, looking back,

easy to work for. He rewarded good service. Joseph got a series of promotions to the point where over a period of time it was like he owned Potiphar's house and his fields. He ran everything. He was in charge of everything. When Joseph gave an order it was like Potiphar was giving an order. Obey it or you are gone. Do the work or you're finished. Things were going so well....given that Joseph is technically property, a slave in a foreign land. In a foreign culture. And then there was Mrs. Potiphar.

She wanted Joseph to serve her needs in place of Potiphar in bed. Joseph refused. Joseph said, "I can't and I won't. He tried to avoid her. He tried to be invisible. She grabbed him one day and when Joseph refused her hitting on him, she reported him to Potiphar and accused him of trying to take her by force. Bam! Things were going so well. And then things went sour. Joseph is sent to prison for a crime he did not commit. And there seems to be no way out. Potiphar has disowned Joseph. Joseph is lucky to be alive. But can you imagine the hurt. Joseph tried to do the right thing. He sought to honour God in the midst of Potiphar's wife's advances. Life is not fair. Sometimes that is exactly how we feel. This is so unfair. After all I have done. The temptation, Joseph must have felt it, the temptation to cry out against God. Apparently Joseph recognized it as temptation. The tempter is real! He did not do it.

In prison Joseph was a model prisoner. In fact he was so upright and positive and likeable, the guards soon found

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themselves asking his assistance with some duties. The guy in charge of the prison heard about Joseph and his, for lack of a better word, his way...and began using him in areas where they were understaffed, as a volunteer. Over time, time moves slowly, a day at a time, but over time Joseph is almost running the jail. But he is in jail. And there appears to be no way out. It is one of a series of low points.

This is the way things happen. In life things can turn on a dime. And of all the causes who would have thought this possible. Pharaoh is having trouble sleeping. He has dreams. Troubling dreams. Bizare dreams! 7 cows. If you were a cattleman, you would say they

were prime animals. For lack of a better word, big, beautiful specimens, well fed, shiny hides. A lot of steak on the hoof. And then out of nowhere, 7 of the ugliest cows you have ever seen, skin and bone. Looking like walking death, they come up behind these 7 beauties and they devour them. And it isn't like these 7 painfully thin bruits prosper. They still look like walking death. They are tired and weak and worn out. Pharoah can't figure out why but he wakes up in a cold sweat. And the images are so disturbing he cannot get back to sleep and he is haunted by the images. Next night, same idea, different images. He is looking at a field of crops. 7 plants come to his attention. They are the picture of health and vigour. The stalk is strong and straight. There isn't a blemish on the leaves. The roots are healthy and strong and deep into the soil. The promise of fruitfulness is so easy to see. Plants don't walk. But along comes 7 more. Twisted malformed stalks, the telltale blemishes and blisters that promise disease on the leaves. It is clear these specimens are not going to bare fruit, nor will they survive to harvest time but they walk over and consume the 7 prize plants Pharoah has been examining. Pharoah awakes bathed in sweat. An attendant has

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rushed into the room, apparently Pharoah cried out in his sleep. In the waking hours of predawn Pharoah is haunted by the images. He can't get them out of his mind. He has no idea what these dreams mean. It almost feels like madness, but he has this assurance that there will be no restful sleep, until he understands what he has seen in his sleep.

Pharoah issues an order. His advisors, the chief magicians, and anyone is an authority is summoned to the equivalent of a council of war. Pharoah describes his dreams...the two troubling nightmares and he asks his council to tell him what they mean. There is a lot of talk. But frankly no one has a clue what these dreams can mean. I mean, after all, dear Pharoah they are dreams. Who can say?

The Pharoah's cup bearer steps forward and says what amounts to, "Your highness, I am reminded today of my failures. You were angry with me and sent me to prison. It is over 2 years ago. In the prison there was a Hebrew. He had been a servant to the captain of the

Royal Guard. I and the chief baker both had dreams. We told them to the Hebrew. He told us what our dreams meant and it came to pass he was correct in every detail...Merciful master, you restored me to service. The chief baker was hanged for his crimes.

And so the Pharaoh sent for Joseph. It takes time. He has to shave and bathe and be given suitable clothing to appear before the Pharaoh. The odors and the stains of prison life have to be washed away. But eventually he arrives. Pharaoh is direct. He lays his cards on the table with precision and candor. I had a dream...2 actually...no one can tell me what they mean. I have heard you have the skill necessary to tell me the meaning. He expects

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Joseph to leap at the opportunity. But to his surprise the Hebrew issues a word of caution. "I cannot do it. But God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." Pharaoh is surprised by 2 things. He feels a sense of hope as he talks with this young Hebrew. He is surprised as well by the denial of the possession of skill, or secret knowledge, and yet the assurance that God, Yahweh, the one true God, will provide the answer to Pharaoh's questions. He tells Joseph the details of his dreams. Joseph replies, "It is just as I said to Pharaoh...God has shown Pharaoh what HE is about to do." And Pharaoh experiences the decent of peace upon him as Joseph explains the 2 dreams are one message. Seven years of harvests abundant, followed by the worst news possible, seven years of famine. And then the reminder. The dream was given in two forms, because God has decided to do this, and the clock is ticking, the sand is running through the hourglass.

Joseph did not stop there. He suggested a disaster plan should begin with the finding of a person to manage the crisis by managing the food supplies. Make the most of the years of plenty and plan for the years of disaster. Pharaoh discerned. Good plan. You, Joseph, had best do it. Joseph becomes the 2<sup>nd</sup> most powerful man in Egypt. Life turns on a dime.

What is the message? It is very basic. God is good all the time. All the time God is good. The Scripture makes clear that God

permits evil to occur. He permitted the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus said as much to Pilate. But God takes the evil things that occur and reweaves them into a cause that brings blessing and good.

I was in my second year of ministry in Kapuskasing and Cochrane Ontario. Bill Graham was the guest on the tonight show.

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Johnny Carson asked the question, "Things go wrong in the world, and in our lives, how do you keep your faith. It must happen to you too. Billy Graham's answer was both profound and fundamental. "I have read the last page of the Bible Johnny. God's gonna win." In the eternal battle for lives, for souls, God will triumph over all that is evil. Salvation awaits us at His blessed hand. God is good all the time. All the time God is good.

Let us pray;

Lord, once again we have witnessed calous and careless slaughter, this time in Paris, back in 9/11 it was New York. The killing of crowds to spread terror is hard for us to witness, and even harder not to react with murder in our own hearts and souls. Help us to remember yet again, that evil is real. Sin is not about to go away, nor to disipate because we think it should. Help us to remember yet again, that the best thing we can do is fall on our knees before your throne of grace, and seek to serve your will...to love you and serve you and to care for our neighbours as you define them. Help us also to remember, the resurrection comes after the cross and not before. Amen