

## **Greenways Benefice Weekly Devotional (No 24)**

### **Sunday 30 August 2020**

#### **Bible Readings:**

Genesis 42:1-13, Ephesians 4:29-32

### **Drawing from Joseph - Overcoming Bitterness**

‘Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.’ (Ephesians 4:31,32 )

Bitterness starts out small. An offence burrows its way into our hearts. We replay it in our minds, creating deep ruts that will be hard to build back up. We retell our hurts to any available listener and we enlist support pushing us further into our resentment. We hear the offending person’s name and cringe.

We decipher the offence as intentional and our offender as full of spite. We look for other reasons, both real and imagined to dislike the person. With each new piece of information, we form another layer of bitterness. We may think, ‘someone should pay for this’.

The point is Jesus did pay because God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son Jesus who died for the whole world so that we may be forgiven.

Today we continue to think about Joseph overcoming bitterness. Much had happened since Joseph rose to power . The seven years of plenty predicted by Pharaoh’s dreams had come and gone and Joseph’s plan had worked to perfection. The grain was stored and now in the midst of seven years of famine, the world was coming to Pharaoh’s palace for food.

In Genesis 42, Joseph’s brothers also came looking for food and he provided it for them. In the course of that meeting, he questioned them and discovered that their father and younger brother Benjamin were still alive. Joseph set the wheels in motion for a reunion. He sensed that his brothers had changed, but for the sake of Benjamin, he had to be sure. In the ensuing events (chapters 43 and 44) he forced them to return with Benjamin. Then he tested them to make sure that they didn’t resent the kind of favouritism that they had despised so viciously in him.

Joseph also put Benjamin in harms way and planted evidence of a stolen cup to see if the brothers would try to save themselves and get rid of Benjamin. However they were concerned for Benjamin and agreed that they would face the consequences together and so they fell on their knees in front of Joseph and pleaded for Benjamin.

For Joseph, the years of pain fell away as he realised they had truly changed. He wept tears of joy and relief and then revealed who he was “I am Joseph” (45:3). The dream had come true – Joseph had the power of life and death over them.

Joseph exemplified grace, giving full forgiveness and no revenge. He exemplified love,

discarding the wrongs of the past and he exemplified faith, trusting that God would preserve him from the bitterness that leads to self-destruction.

When we trust God and rest in Him , we can love others because he first loved us and we can believe in a God who is big enough to work in all things for our good. As we face the pains and heartaches and mistreatments of life, it is only by complete confidence in the goodness and plan of God that we can overcome.

In 1 John 5: 4,5 it says 'for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith.

Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

So reflect and pray,

Lord , we give you thanks and praise that by your love and grace you conquered the world.

May the grace, love and peace of Christ reign in our hearts today enabling us to overcome any bitterness that would destroy us. Amen.

God Bless

Judith