

THINGS UNSEEN

Joseph's Ultimate Refinement

Genesis 45:1 – 15

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June 8/9, 2019

MESSAGE NOTES

Freeing forgiveness ...

1. ... values relationship over retribution.

*What is it that helps us believe in God's mercy? We can believe because in our tiny little lives we have known people who have forgiven us, people we hurt in the worst possible way, people we hurt with a deliberateness and callousness — to the extent that we were sure they would never again have anything to do with us. And yet they refused to let our actions be the ultimate reality. They robbed our wrongs of their divisive power, robbed them of their power to eternally separate us - and at great cost, since they bear the agony of our loveless deed(s) and since they take the initiative that results in forgiveness. — Jim McGuigan, *The God of the Towel**

2. ... often begins with the one who has been offended.

If you are suffering from a bad man's injustice, forgive him, lest there be two bad men. — Augustine

3. ... seeks to help the offender forgive themselves as well.

*In the final analysis, forgiveness is an act of faith. It is the belief that God can take care of the fairness problems. It is not fair just to pretend that something doesn't happen. It did happen. It still hurts. It still stings. Forgiveness is not fair, but forgiveness is a way of taking that burden from us and giving it to God who is fair. — Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew**

4. ... does what is possible to repay with kindness.

*It is a common expression, "I'm gonna make them pay..." The problem is that in most cases it's impossible to be reimbursed for what was taken. Whenever I press people to tell me exactly what was taken by those who hurt them most and what it would take to make things right, they look a bit bewildered. Suddenly they're faced with the realization that they are owed a debt that cannot be paid. Can a man who abandoned his kids ever really replace what he has taken from them? Can a son who has made a parent's life hell for years give back what he has taken? And how do you restore time? Affection? How does a mother pay her grown daughter back for not being there to tuck her in at night as a child? You can't pay back a missing relationship. You can't pay back a reputation. There's no way to make up for years of criticism and neglect. How does someone give you back your innocence? Your purity? These are debts that cannot be repaid. The best thing to do is cancel them. — Andy Stanley, *It Came From Within**

I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. — Matthew 5:43 – 44

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. — Ephesians 4:31 – 32

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. — Colossians 3:13

5. ... restores what can be restored while recognizing the losses.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Review our passage from the weekend.
- How would you summarize Joseph's life through the various stories we've looked at over these six weekends?
- Last week we saw Joseph testing his brothers. What test is Joseph faced with now?
- Why is forgiveness so hard?
- Have someone read Matthew 18:15 – 17. What sort of character qualities are being tested when we're faced with someone else's failure — especially when that failure has hurt us in some way?
- Read Matthew 5:23 – 25 and share why this teaching of Jesus is so crucial for all our relationships to thrive?
- In Genesis 45:5, who ultimately is in charge of Joseph's life and circumstances? How does this understanding contribute to our ability to forgive others?
- How does Joseph account for his rise from prison to the palace in Genesis 45:9?
- How would you rate your own "God awareness" when things are difficult? How about when things are going well?
- Is there someone in your life right now in need of your forgiveness, whether they acknowledge it or not?
- How does forgiveness set us free?
- What is one thing you've gained from this study in the life of Joseph?