



Be Prepared – Anniversary Sermon for 2017

June 4, 2017

Scripture Reading. Genesis 41:25-36

Introduction

Genesis 41 is a great chapter. We as individuals can learn so much. Also, our churches can learn some valuable lessons. Even politicians can learn from Joseph how to govern!

Joseph trusted in God's Promises that was revealed through dreams. Yet it was not happening. Everything was going contrary to God's promises.

Without knowing God's will for sure, our life can turn out to be a wilderness. We would feel as though we are in darkness. Joseph's life was like that. He was literally shut in a dark dungeon with no possibility of parole for two full years! There was no hope. But yet he did not give up hope. He held on to God's promises in spite of his dire situations.

The church may go through many setbacks. The future may look bleak, dark and gloomy. But yet, the promise of the Word is great, bright, and for sure. Gates of hell can not prevail against it and we will be the bride of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But we must be patient as a church, just like Joseph. Let us follow his formula of success in the midst of setbacks. We can learn some important principles from Joseph!

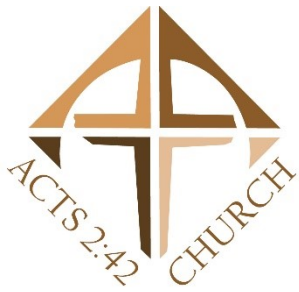
I. **First, Pray fervently!** All we can do is just pray without ceasing. Just like Joseph we must wait patiently and pray fervently! Jesus said, pray that you may not enter into temptation. Let us not enter into the temptation of despair, frustration, and hopelessness. Let us continue to pray that God would intervene and deliver us from despair and despondency.

Pin your hope through God-given visions and dreams that are aligned with the Word of God to move forward. Pay attention to it. Interpret it accurately.

Joseph knew that his dreams would come true one day. But it did not happen for 12 long years as he was kept in the dungeon.

Acts 2:42 church is my vision and my dream for this church, and I am diligently running after it. I am convinced beyond doubt that a church must be built on these principles and not based upon man's ear tickling, feel good, marketing gimmicks. Let us continue to dream that kind of church that is built upon the intimacy of fellowship. Not that we have attained that kind of church already. But let us press on and move forward. Let us continue to teach the world what a church is all about. Let us pray for such a church! Let us continue to pray like Joseph when things are not going that great!

II. **Second, let us persevere just like Joseph!** Joseph teaches us another important lesson. We must not only pray but also persevere through good times and bad times! Life is full of hills and valleys. Cannot run away from the sorrows of life.....



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The Pharaoh's dreams clearly point to those hills and valleys!

Pharaoh's first dream

Gen. 41: 1-4. 1Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile. 2And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass. 3Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. 4The ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke.

Attractive and plump cows vs thin and ugly! The thin and ugly cows ate the fat and attractive cows. That must have been a gruesome dream, just imagine ugly thin cows eating with ferocity like ugly hyenas eating the fat ones with so much hunger!

At that time Pharaoh got up. He must have been really rattled by this dream. Yet he was not spared. God made him see another dream also that repeated similar theme.

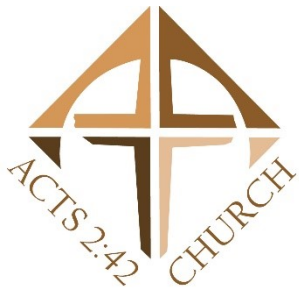
The second dream!

Gen. 41:5-8. 5And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. 6And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. 7And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. 8So 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.

Now in this dream the thin and scorched chaff, I would say, swallowed the plump and good ears just like that!

No one in Egypt could interpret Pharaoh's dream. Pharaoh was desperate. The chief cupbearer had conveniently forgotten Joseph. For some reason, he waited until the king was really desperate! When there was no one else left to interpret the dreams, the king became desperate, that was when the chief cupbearer invoked Joseph's name. He reluctantly brought Joseph's name. Why? Did he not want him? What happened to his compassion? He did not care about Joseph's suffering in the prison? We may have some friends also like that. They may remember us only when they want something from us. Finally, Joseph was brought before the king.

Gen. 41:14-16. 14Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. 15Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." 16Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.



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Joseph trusted that God would reveal it to the king through him. It is not us who should counsel or provide answers. God must give those answers! Joseph gave the answer for Pharaoh's dream immediately.

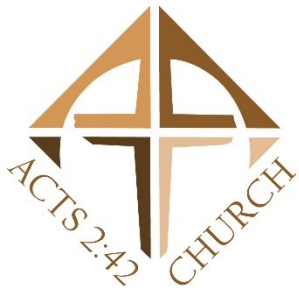
Gen. 41:25-32. 25Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do. 26"The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one and the same. 27"The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind will be seven years of famine. 28"It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do. 29"Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt; 30and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine will ravage the land. 31"So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it will be very severe. 32"Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about.

Joseph interpreted the dream straight forward without mincing any words: there will be seven years of abundant harvest followed by seven years of famine. God gave similar dream twice to emphasize that it is bound to happen!

In pharaoh's case, he was to face both the hill and the valley. Our church also must walk through the hill and the valley. When we have a bountiful harvest, we must save and invest. When there is famine, we must tighten our belt and hold onto God for everything. There is absolutely no need to have famine when it comes to providing the Word of God for this church. Those who minister must take a lot of effort to prepare and provide the Word of God week after week that the congregation may be fed well accurately.

The last commandment Jesus gave for Peter was, **Feed my sheep**. We can feed the sheep only when we love Jesus more than anything in this world.

Joseph not only interpreted the dreams, he gave Pharaoh the Plan according to God's will. Let us not plan according to the world. Joseph's plan was meticulous according to God's wisdom. Let us see his plan!



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III. Joseph's Plan for Pharaoh!

Gen. 41: 33-36

33“Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34“Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. 35“Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh’s authority, and let them guard it. 36“Let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not perish during the famine.”

What a great plan! Now Joseph did not say, "o king! you hired me. I am very smart and wise. I can handle this matter for you. "Instead he laid down a detailed plan. Joseph could have hidden this plan

and used it as a bargaining chip for his release. He didn't even bring out his plight. He just gave a straight forward answer removing himself totally from the equation! What a selfless advice!

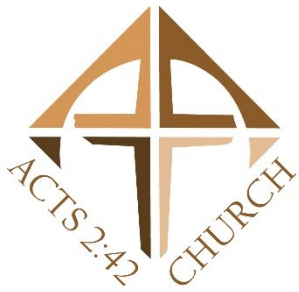
Let us not only pray, let us not only persevere, let us plan for the future of the church also. I do plan for the Word of God, (the very bread of life), one year ahead. Let us plan for the finance also. Let us plan for the missions giving diligently ahead of time. Let us plan for the famine as well as plan for the bountiful harvest!

The king was so impressed with Joseph, he made Joseph his right hand, the point person to rule Egypt. What an amazing God we serve! He moved Joseph from the prison dungeon to royalty over night! He gave him a new name and new life!

Gen. 41: 45Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt.

IV. The fourth principle we see in this story is that Joseph not only planned but he promoted his plan also. It was a Progressive agenda. Joseph talked about something that no politician would like to talk about - that is saving the grain for the rainy day. Does any politician talk about saving the tax money for the future?

I remember the argument we had when President George Bush took over. Believe it or not, we had some surplus after President Clinton's era. Republicans did not want to have the surplus. They argued that it is tax payer's money and it must be returned back to the taxpayer in the form of a tax cut! No one could stop that tax cut. The tax cut coupled with a war against Iraq accelerated the deficit!



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We are hearing the same tune again. Instead of saving for the rainy day, we are hearing tax cut, that too that tax cut through borrowing this time, and not through surplus fund!

We have a gas reservoir in this nation for an emergency. Now we are hearing the news that President would like to cut that saving of gas in half! No one seems to have wisdom for rainy day resources! We underestimate the power of saving during an emergency. See how wisely Joseph approached this problem!

Gen. 41: 46-49. Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. 47During the seven years of plenty the land brought forth abundantly. 48So he gathered all the food of these seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt and placed the food in the cities; he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields. 49Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure.

Joseph collected 20 percent of grain from farmers when they had a bountiful harvest and stored it locally in each village and guarded them.

Then the famine came as God had warned!

Gen. 41:53-57. 53The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, 54and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. 55When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you."

56When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. 57And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.

Note verse 56! Joseph opened the store houses and sold grain to the Egyptians! He did not give a tax cut or tax credit. He basically exchanged the grain for cash and saved that cash! What great wisdom! Will our politicians ever learn from these stories? What will they do with that cash after they sell half of their gas reserve? I bet, it will be spent immediately for their pet projects! We started facing dumber and dumber policies as the days go by. They are just too busy reversing what the other party has done, and thereby they keep coming back to square one! Both the parties are just spinning the wheel! It is Unbelievable!

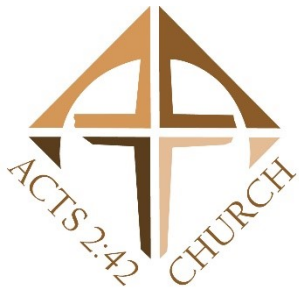
Joseph was a man of action! He not only planned carefully, he implemented his plan meticulously without any selfish motive! Can we be also like that in this church? Let us not be just hearers of the Word but the doers of the Word also!

Let us also:

Promote The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Promote the Acts 2:42 church

Promote becoming one joint God's family

Promote becoming disciples of Christ and the followers of Christ! Amen!



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Before I conclude, I would like to point out something very interesting, as a side note. Joseph received all the powers from the king. He could have become vindictive and destroyed the chief cupbearer, who did not care to pull him out of prison. But he did not do that. Instead, Joseph just forgave him!

There was a pastor I know, had rented a church for his worship services on Sunday. They had to set up everything and make sure that they really clean up before they left. The pastor was diligent in cleaning up. But unfortunately one Sunday, someone had dropped a baby diaper with poo in the trash. Unfortunately that day, the congregation forgot to throw that trash. The pastor of that church was very upset. He called my friend and started screaming at him. Afterward, every week he used to haunt him over this diaper incident. My friend could not take it anymore. One day he just gave back to the pastor! 'Well pastor, the diaper is gone, the smell is completely gone, but you continue to stink up this matter day after day! It is time you forgive!' Some of us keep harping on someone's mistakes. It is time we let it go and forgive that person. Love does not keep a record of wrong doing!

Joseph truly demonstrated the quality of Jesus Christ our Lord! He forgave his enemy!

Conclusion:

Let us pray fervently for this church. We are closed in a nonresponsive neighborhood, and we are forced to compete with 10 different churches within 2 blocks, It is time we move out of this building and go to a better location. Pray that someone will buy this building for a good price!

Persevere when we go through valleys just like Joseph.

Let us plan for the church concerning preaching, praise, and worship, retreats, outreach!

Let us promote that church plan and implement also.

I want to thank each one for your love and support for this congregation!

Let us continue to love one another and forgive one another! Amen!

Pastor Daniel Israel