

AM I IN THE PLACE OF GOD?

(Genesis 50:15-21)

Intro: An elderly woman went to a photographer.
-To get her portrait taken.
#She was very anxious.

Photographer said:
-"Relax, ma'am."
-"I will take a picture that will do you justice."

Woman replied:
-"It's not justice I want."
-"It's mercy."

When it comes to ourselves.
-It's not justice we want.
-It's mercy.

When it comes to people who:
-Hijack airplanes.
#Fly them into buildings.
#Crash them into the ground.
*Killing thousands of innocent people.
-It's not mercy we want.
-It's justice.

Our lessons for today are about forgiveness.
-How do you forgive someone who has done such great evil?
#As Joseph's brothers did to him.
-How do you forgive someone who is so unforgiving?
#As the first slave in our Gospel reading.

I. How Could Joseph Forgive His Brothers?

A. Do You Remember The Joseph Saga?

1. Genesis 37-50.
2. Joseph.
 - b. His father's favorite.
 - Coat of many colors.
 - Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.

- b. Dreamer.
 - Dreaming:
 - #11 sheaves of wheat bowing down to another sheaf of wheat.
 - Telling his brothers:
 - #“This means you will be bowing down to me.”
- 3. His brothers were jealous.
 - a. They were going to kill him.
 - Couple of older brothers.
 - #Reuben.
 - #Judah.
 - Said:
 - #“Let’s not kill him.”
 - #“Let’s just send him off somewhere.”
 - b. So Joseph’s brothers:
 - Jumped on him.
 - Beat him up.
 - Tied him up.
 - Threw him in a pit.
 - Sold him to the Ishmaelites.
 - #Who took him to Egypt.
 - #Where they sold him into slavery.
 - *To a man by the name of Potiphar.
- 4. Joseph was:
 - a. Good.
 - b. Loyal.
 - c. Trustworthy.
 - Slave.
 - d. Well built.
 - e. Handsome.
- 5. Mrs. Potiphar had the “hots” for Joseph.
 - a. She kept trying to seduce him.
 - b. He kept resisting.
 - Saying:
 - #“No, no, no, no.”
 - #“I can’t do this.”
 - #“I cannot betray my master’s trust.”
- 6. One day they were home alone.
 - a. Joseph.
 - b. Mrs. Potiphar.
 - She came on to him.
 - #He resisted.
 - She grabbed his robe.
 - #He ran out of the house naked.
 - She cried, “Rape.”
 - #Joseph landed in jail.

7. While he was in jail, Joseph met:
 - a. Butler.
 - b. Baker.
 - Who worked for the king.
#Pharaoh.
 - They had dreams.
#Joseph helped them understand.
 - Joseph said:
#"When you get back in the good graces of the king,"
#"Remember your old buddy Joseph."
 - Baker.
#Never did get back in the good graces of the king.
 - Butler.
#Promptly forgot his jailhouse buddy.
8. Until one day the Pharaoh had some dreams.
 - a. No one could interpret.
 - b. Butler remembered:
 - "That time you had me in the County jail."
 - "There was this guy who could interpret dreams."
#"Guy by the name of Joseph."
*They sent for Joseph.
 - c. One of the dreams.
 - Seven fat cows.
#Came up out of the Nile.
 - Seven skinny cows.
#Came up out of the river.
#Ate the fat cows.
 - d. Joseph said:
 - "This means there will be seven years of good harvest."
 - "Then there will be seven years of famine."
 - "What we should do."
#"During the good years we should save up,"
*"All the extra food we can."
#"To tide us through the lean years."
 - e. Joseph was put in charge.
 - Made Secretary of Agriculture.
#For all of Egypt.
9. Meanwhile back in Canaan.
 - a. Where Joseph's brothers were.
 - b. There was also famine.
 - They were hungry.
 - They heard that there was food to be had in Egypt.

10. They go to Egypt.
 - a. They have to deal with their brother Joseph.
 - Although they don't recognize him.
 - b. They do bow down to him.
 - Just as he had dreamed.
 - Joseph pulls their chain a time or two.
- B. Now Comes The Climax Of The Story.
1. Our First Reading for this morning.
 - a. Genesis 50:15-21.
 - b. Question of forgiveness.
 2. Joseph's brothers ask for forgiveness.
 - a. Or do they?
 - They say:
 - # "On his deathbed dad told us to tell you:"
 - * "You should forgive us."
 - Is that another lie?
 - # There is no place in the Biblical account
 - * Where Jacob said any such thing.
 - # After the brothers sold Joseph into slavery.
 - * They covered his Technicolor dreamcoat in blood.
 - * Told their father that Joseph had been killed.
 - b. Are they genuinely remorseful for what they did to Joseph?
 - Or are they afraid Joseph might still be holding a grudge.
 - # After 22 years.
 - c. It's not justice they want.
 - It's mercy.
 3. Joseph says to them:
 - a. "Am I in the place of God?"
 - Is that forgiveness?
 - b. Or is this Joseph's way of saying?
 - "You have not only sinned against me."
 - "You have sinned against God."
 - # When Mrs. Potiphar was trying to seduce Joseph,
 - # He said:
 - * "How could I do this great wickedness,"
 - * "And sin against God?"
 - + Genesis 39:9.
 - c. Or is this Joseph's way of saying?
 - "Your sin is so evil."
 - "You're going to have to take this up with God."

II. Are There Sins That Are 10,000-Talent Offenses?

A. Gospel Lesson (Matthew 18:21-35).

1. Best Biblical commentary on the petition in the Lord's Prayer.
 - a. "Forgive us our sins,"
 - b. "As we forgive those who sin against us."
2. First slave owed a debt of 10,000 talents.
 - a. Talent.
 - Equivalent to a common laborer's wages.
 - #15 years.
 - b. 10,000 talents.
 - 150,000 years' worth of income.
 - c. Slave's plea:
 - "Just give me more time."
 - "Give me to the end of the month."
 - "I'll pay you everything."
 - #Joke.
 - d. He couldn't repay that debt.
 - In a lifetime.
 - In 5,000 lifetimes.
3. Events of 9-11-01.
 - a. Probably seem:
 - To many of us.
 - To all of us.
 - b. Like a 10,000-talent offense.
 - Beyond calculating.
 - Beyond comprehending.
 - Beyond forgiving.

B. Am I In The Place Of God?

1. No.
 - a. Not even close.
 - b. Nor are you.
2. But Jesus was. Jesus is.
 - a. Grace of God.
 - b. Grace on steroids.
 - c. Grace on rocket fuel.
 - d. Grace on a cross.
 - e. Grace for the 10,000-talent offenses.

3. Aren't all of our sins 10,000-talent offenses?
 - a. Maybe not in our eyes.
 - We may tend to think in terms of:
 - #Big sins.
 - *Little sins.
 - #Felonies.
 - *Misdemeanors.
 - Ours, of course, in our eyes.
 - #Little sins.
 - b. But in God's eyes.
 - No:
 - #Little sins.
 - #Big sins.
 - Are they not all 10,000-talent offenses?
 - #Beyond our capacity.
 - *To calculate.
 - *To repay.

C. It's Not Justice We Want. It's Mercy.

1. We get both.
 - a. Not retributive justice.
 - Punishment.
 - b. But restorative justice.
2. Recently I received an email from Pastor David Frerichs.
 - a. Until January.
 - Pastor at Bethany in Tulsa.
 - b. Now.
 - Pastor at Zion Lutheran Church in Albion, Nebraska.
 - c. He was asking me about restorative justice.
 - Something he had heard me talk about.
 - #In a pastors' Bible study.
 - #Once upon a time.
 - Specifically he wanted to know about:
 - #Steps.
 - #Distinctions.
 - *In the restorative justice process.
 - d. I outlined the difference between:
 - Forgiveness.
 - Reconciliation.
 - Restoration.
 - e. I used the example.
 - Church treasurer.
 - #Who embezzles church funds.

- Can we forgive that offense?
 #I hope so.
 *Easier if the offender:
 +Confesses.
 +Asks for forgiveness.
- Can we be reconciled with that offender?
 #Maybe.
 *Easier if the offender agrees to make restitution.
- Are we going to restore that person to the treasurer's office?
 #I don't think so.

3. In the mercy of God.
 - a. We are forgiven of our sins.
 - b. We are reconciled to God.
 -Through Jesus Christ.
 - c. We are restored to our position.
 -Forgiven.
 -Forgiving.
 #People.
 -In:
 #Water and Word.
 #Bread and wine.

Concl: Are we in the place of God?
 -No.
 -But Jesus was.

By the grace of God.
 -We get:
 #Mercy.
 #Justice.
 *Restorative justice.

How is that for a pretty picture?

Two pithy sayings about forgiveness I came across this week.
 -There is no use burying the hatchet,
 #If you're going to put up a marker on the site.
 -To forgive is to set the prisoner free,
 #And discover that the prisoner was you.