

Just keep moving. That's what I imagine Joseph kept saying to himself in our readings today. Just keep moving. I imagine that Joseph kept saying that because if he started to think about what was really going on he wouldn't be able to keep moving. I had pages and pages of notes on this passage. I had illustrations but I could not find the hook. I'd been working on this sermon all week and while I had lots of words – there was not much there. I tried changes of scenery and posture. I tried doing something else and coming back to it. Nothing. So I sat at the computer and just started typing anything that came out. And I went on a string about how I am not a writer, I am a preacher and somewhere around page 4, it dawned on me that Joseph just kept moving. I'll explain.

Chapter 37 begins with Joseph, age 17, who has gone to help his brothers with the flocks but comes home to Dad to tell him what a bad job they were doing. Because clearly at 17 you know just how everything should be, right. That did not endear him to his brothers. In fact, it caused them to take a closer look and when they did, they discovered that Joseph was his favorite. Now, logically we know this but it is nonetheless startling. We know that Jacob only truly loved Rachel and that Joseph was his only child from her. We know that Leah had child after child, hoping that Jacob would love her but in the end found the love of God instead. In the midst of this complicated family, Joseph had a dream and being 17 and excited told his brothers all about it. We don't know how Joseph felt about the first dream, perhaps it was just a hey, you'll never guess what I just dreamed. Or maybe he was very serious about it but when it happened again, even his beloved father was not happy. And here begins the story when Joseph just kept moving.

I remember being younger and I knew that I did not have ALL the answers but I did have some for sure. Believe it or not I was more timid and wasn't always able to confidently share what I knew to be true. I kept thinking that when I was older that people

would listen to me. In my head I would answer the question to the problem but wouldn't speak up, instead saying "but what do I know, I'm only a seminarian, what did I know; or I was a new pastor, what did I know or I'm just a ..." But even when I didn't speak, I kept working. I remember being told that when I got older I would change my mind and I wouldn't always see the world the way I did then. And while I have changed my mind on few things the core of who I am is the same.

I think the same can be said of Joseph. He may have learned to keep his mouth shut but he just kept moving. Brothers sell him off, he just kept moving. Potiphar's wife accuses him of something inappropriate, he just kept moving. It wasn't that the presence of God kept bad things from happening to him. We can all agree being sold into slavery or wrongfully accused are bad things. We also know that Joseph was in the chosen family. But Joseph kept moving.

Joseph had big dreams and kept moving. The 10 older brothers had no idea how important it was for their youngest brother to have that big dream. They didn't know what was coming and Joseph really did not either. But Joseph paid attention to his dreams and kept moving doing whatever needed to be done at that moment. Those dreams seemingly brought disaster to Joseph – it certainly wasn't pleasant. And God didn't cause it but God certainly used it!

We never want to have to go back and do the painful parts of our lives again. But we cannot shut them out of our lives either. Sometimes all we can do is keep moving until we have the time and ability to process what happened. I think back to 1 year ago when we used what we learned from Harvey to respond better to Imelda. We made different choices and tried new things. We don't want to use what learned from Imelda but we were ready to. I have a friend and colleague who's in the wilderness right now. To say things are hard is an understatement. And my heart is

with them. When they asked me for some direction with something simple, I gave what I could. I followed up the next day to see if anything was better, they shared this: “Can I just say I admire the place you are at!? You’ve been thru hell in a variety of ways, and you are at a place of being a great friend.” I was surprised and taken aback. I don’t feel that I’ve got it all together at all but I will share what I know and never leave someone alone.

None of us are alone. God is with us in the dreams and the disasters. God is with us in the work and the rest. We are called to live into God’s dreams. When things are hard we can focus on God’s call to just keep moving, moving in love. God continues to work in & through us, not overwhelming power & might but constant motion in and through God’s world.

I am reminded that as Joseph just kept moving, of the power of water. Sometimes it’s a gentle flow in the bayou and we dream about sitting in a boat, gently flowing on down the way. Sometimes, it’s a raging river and even the most experienced river rafter knows not to get in the water. But if we look closely in the water, we see that the water is not alone. The water is filled with life. The water is filled with objects, hopefully all natural. And I am reminded of the rocks and the stones that we find along the banks. The difference between the rocks and the stones, water and time. Stones are simply rocks that have been in the flow of water, slowly being made smooth with the constant motion of the water. Joseph, like his father Jacob and his family before him continually let the presence of God flow in and through them so that when the time comes they could lead.

My friends some of us are dreaming big dreams, waiting for the time when we can get to work. Some of us feel as if we are in a big disaster, holding onto the presence of God. Some of us just keep moving letting the presence of God work on our rough edges. But no matter where we find ourselves, we hold fast to the

promise of God, that we are loved and will never be left alone.
Thanks be to God. Amen.