

Here we are at the end of the book. For 50 chapters and 21 weeks, we've followed God through Noah and Abraham, Isaac and Joseph. We've had floods & sacrifice, long journeys and more children than we could count. And here we are at the end of the story when Joseph cannot wait any longer to reveal his identity to his 11 brothers. This is the climax. It's what we've been building to for months. And the emotions are great. Joseph attempts to keep this a private moment but he is so overcome he weeps so loudly that those he has just sent away cannot help but hear all that is revealed in this moment.

But did you notice that even in the revealing of his identity that there is not reconciliation? That doesn't happen here. That takes more time. We still hear the lord and servant language. Joseph is caring deeply and dearly for his brothers and provides for his father all that they need. Joseph using language much like the angels do in the Gospel – he identifies God at work, calming fear and announcing all that God has done, despite their past actions. Despite the hate. Despite the anger. Despite the harsh words– Joseph declares that all will be well.

In our reading from Chapter 45, Joseph is saying that God used the bad situation to bring good news for the family of God. Joseph invites his brothers to see their stories from a different point of view. He invites them to see that everyone is alive and now will be cared for even through the famine. God has taken over human actions and brought good from it. Their actions become God's actions. It's important to note here – that as our text reads “so you see, it wasn't you who sent me here but God,” is not saying that this was part of God's plan. The Hebrew describing the brother's actions against Joseph is “hata” which means sin and “ra a” which means evil. The brother confess and claim their actions as sin & evil. And we know that God is not capable of sin or evil. That leaves us to see that while God can use it, God does not cause it.

Joseph's theology involves life – not promise. Joseph could have chosen to do anything with his brothers. Joseph could have punished them, but he did not. Joseph could've yelled and been angry, but he did not. And while there was grace and mercy things were not yet solved. Joseph is desperate to see his father alive and sets his brothers out with all of the supplies they could possibly need or use to bring their families to Egypt. The next 3 chapters chronicle their move to Egypt. They arrive and live for 17 years as Pharaoh through Joseph provides all that they need. And when Jacob at last dies, the brothers are worried.

The reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers only occurs after a great deal of time. 17 years to be exact but those 17 years were not uncomfortable. They had found a peaceful existence to say the least. All that they needed was provided. We see that God has brought this story, our story, full circle. God started with creation that was good to goodness at the end. There was a lot of pain, anguish, sorrow, anger, suffering, deceit and yet God was always working for good in the world. God has been active since the beginning. God never tired. Great is God's faithfulness throughout our story.

So what does this tell us for today? That anger, bitterness, deceit, jealousy, sorrow, pain is never the end of the story. That if we are patient good will rule the day. But not always when we are ready for it. We might be willing or wanting to say, why did we have to go through all of this to get us here? Why couldn't it have worked out faster? And while these questions are interesting, they ultimately do not bring us to where God's heart is. God is love. "And love is love is love is love is love" is love that can never be thwarted. God will win. And our call in all of this is to always be working for love and goodness in all that we say and do.

It's all too easy right now, to follow the examples of those with the loudest microphones, to respond in kind. And yet, that is not God's way. God's way is steady. God's way is lifting up those

who are weak. God's way fills us until we want no more. God's way compels us to "lift up our voice – o praise ye, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia." God's way is for us to dwell in the house of the Lord where we fear no evil for God is with us. God's way is for us, even when "sorrow comes, to say, it is well, it is well, with my soul." God's way takes the path through the seasons, "summer and winter, and springtime and harvest, sun, moon and stars in their courses above, join with all nature in manifold witness, to Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love." In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.