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Faithfulness

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It was Easter Sunday and a mother had invited all of the grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins over for Easter dinner. The mother and father and 6 year old daughter were bringing all the delicious food to the dining room table. Everything looked perfect. The mother told everyone to please dig in. The daughter said, “ Mom aren’t you forgetting something. Aren’t you forgetting to pray?” The mother had been a little stressed out having so much company in the house so she told her daughter, “Why don’t you say the prayer sweetheart?”

“Ok, what should I say.”

“Well the Mom replied you just say whatever you hear me say when I pray to the Lord.”

So the little girl bowed her head and said, “Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to Easter dinner?”

Today we are continuing our thirty week journey through the Believe series as we learn how to think, act and be more like Jesus our topic for this morning is faithfulness. And one of the questions that I have for us to consider this morning is, “When we encounter something difficult, hard, stressful do we most often react in panic of faith?”

I want us to consider this morning the example of Joseph. You may remember from Sunday School that Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob and Jacob had made Joseph a beautiful robe of many colors. Which of course made Joseph’s brother pretty angry with him. As if that wasn’t enough one morning at the breakfast table Joseph tells his brother about a dream he

has had and tells his brothers that the dream means that they will all bow down to Joseph one day. Well that did not sit very well with his brothers as you can imagine.

So one day when Joseph is sent out to tend the flocks of sheep with his brother they see him coming and they beat Joseph up, take away his beautiful robe, and throw him into a pit. The brothers would have killed Joseph, but decided to make a little money instead and sell him as a slave to some travelers who were going to Egypt.

Joseph was a having a difficult time he was let down into a pit, put down and Genesis 39:1 reads, “ Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt and Potiphar an officer of Pharaoh bought him. The Lord was with Joseph and he became a successful man.”

So despite Joseph’s season of tragedy the Lord was with him and he became successful. Things were going well for Joseph, but one day Potiphar’s wife notices how handsome Joseph is and tries to have some hanky panky with Joseph. Joseph is having none of the hanky panky. God has been faithful to Joseph so Joseph shows his faithfulness by refusing the wife’s advances. Joseph did the right thing and is faithful, but he is not rewarded for it. Potiphar’s wife says the hanky panky was Joseph’s idea and so Joseph is thrown in jail.

Joseph’s faithfulness is not rewarded with success. But we hear that the Lord was with Joseph even in jail and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.

It turns out that serving powerful people can be dangerous and pretty soon Joseph has some company in jail. The cupbearer for the King of Egypt and the baker were thrown in jail for offending the King.

Joseph did the right thing and waited on both the cup bearer and the baker in jail and when they each had a dream Joseph interpreted it for them. For the baker the dream meant that the King would hang him in three days, but for the cupbearer his dream meant that in three days he would be released from jail and return to serve as the King's cupbearer. As the cupbearer was being released Joseph said, "Hey buddy could you put a good word with the King for me?"

The cupbearer forgets all about Joseph until 2 years later when Pharaoh can't sleep because he is having dreams and he doesn't know what they mean. Then the cupbearer says, "There is a man named Joseph who can interpret this dream." Joseph is called up from prison and tells Pharaoh the meaning of the dream is that there will be seven years of great harvests in Egypt and then seven years of famine in the land. Joseph tells Pharaoh he should store up food during the seven years of good harvests so there will be food during the seven years of famine. Pharaoh praises Joseph, but Joseph says it is God who has given the interpretation.

Joseph did the next right thing. He was faithful in interpreting the dreams and so Joseph becomes the prime minister of Egypt. God took Joseph on that journey and prepared and positioned him to be the person in charge when the famine comes. So people from Canaan and Midian and all the neighboring countries start to make their way to Egypt in search of food and guess who were the first in line with their hands out, bowing before Joseph hoping to receive food from Joseph? His brothers who had wanted him dead.

And at that point comes one of my favorite verses in the whole Bible, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Harm was coming, but God came in between. Harm was coming, but God used it for good. Do you have a but God moment in your biography?

When you look back on God's faithfulness to you do you have a but God moment? Something had come to harm me, but God came along. I had fallen spiritually asleep but then God woke me up.

The story of Joseph teaches us something about God's faithfulness. God was with Joseph when he was sold, when he was put in prison, when he was down in Egypt away from his family. God was with Joseph. No matter how down and out you are or feel God is with you. That is God's faithfulness.

So how do we remain faithful to God and faithful in our relationships when we don't know exactly how it will all turn out in the end? We look at the example of Joseph and do the next right thing. Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph and he did the next right thing and rejected her. Joseph is in prison and he cares for the other prisoners and interprets their dreams. He did the next right thing. The brothers come looking for food and Joseph didn't try to get revenge. He did the next right thing.

Our key idea for today is, "I have established a good name with God and others based on my loyalty to those relationships." So much of loyalty and faithfulness in relationships is simply doing the next right thing.

We have been blessed at SOC with a lot of people who are so faithful. Wonderful musicians and vocalists who practice every week and are here every Sunday to lead us in worship. That is faithfulness. Wonderful greeters, ushers, communion assistants and acolytes who commit to serving on Sundays. That is faithfulness. Lifetree Café volunteers, Sunday School teacher and Confirmation Guides who show up every week to have meaningful conversations. That is faithfulness.

Like Joseph most of us probably cannot imagine what the end of our story will look like, but God will be faithful and in the meantime all we can do is put one foot in front of another and do the next right thing.

Gracious God, your faithfulness to us is amazing. You have promised to never leave us or forsake us. Help us to be faithful and loyal in our relationships with other people and with you. Help us to step forward in faith and do the next right thing. IN Jesus name. AMEN.