Sermon for Mid-Week Lenten Service, Week 2

# The text: Genesis 50:20

# Shadows of the Savior—Joseph

Tonight we want to look at Joseph in our series of Lenten sermons. In what happened to him and what God did with all that happened we have some definite shadows of the Saviour.

**Shadows of the Savior—Joseph**

**I. Greater Suffering**

***“You intended to harm me,”*** Joseph told his brothers as he looked back over the events in his life. Joseph’s dreams of prominence, and favouritism by his father, had led his brothers to jealousy, anger, and a hatred so intense they sold him as a slave.

In Egypt, Joseph ended up in the home of Potiphar, the captain of the king’s bodyguard, where he was eventually made the manager of Potiphar’s business. But that all fell through when, obeying God rather than man, he resisted the shameless advances of his master’s wife, who cried ‘rape’ and had him thrown into an Egyptian jail. Joseph the obedient, Joseph the willing son of Jacob and of his heavenly Father, received shame and pain, suffering and disgrace for his efforts.

And in all this we see parallels between the life of Joseph and the life of our Savior. Like Joseph, Jesus was a beloved Son who was envied, despised, and even hated by his own brothers, the Jews. Like Joseph, they plotted against His life. Joseph’s brothers received 20 pieces of silver in exchange for him; Jesus’ brother, Judas, got 30, the price of a slave as set in Scripture (Exodus 21:32).

But how much greater was the suffering of the Saviour, to whom events in Joseph’s life pointed like some shadow! For Jesus there was no rescue from His self-imposed slavery- He went all the way to the grave - for us. Drops of blood mingled with His sweat in the Garden, cruel whips and thorns tearing His flesh in the governor’s courtyard, a cross with three nails and pains beyond description out at Calvary—all that was part of the “harm” His brothers intended for him - brothers that include you and me, for our sins put Him there- and there was no way out.

**II. Greater Salvation**

***“You intended to harm me,”*** Joseph told his brothers in Egypt, ***“but God intended it for good.”*** Can we comprehend the incredible significance of such a statement? That even the evil intended by Joseph’s brothers was used by God that His will could be done through it. God can turn anything into good. In retrospect both Joseph and his brothers could see what good their gracious God had brought out of all these wrong deeds, namely ***“to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”***

But there is a far greater deliverance pictured here than just the rescue of the Israelites from famine. On Pentecost, Peter told the crowd, ***“You, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross.”*** But Peter reminded them, ***“this Man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge”*** (Acts 2:23). God did not *cause* the betrayal of a Judas, the denial of a Peter, the hatred of the Jewish elders, the cowardice of a Roman governor. But he used those sins to bring to completion what he had already planned in eternity—to accomplish the salvation of a sinful world through the atoning death of his Son.

When Peter preached this way to the Pentecost crowd, he was just repeating what Christ Himself had said to the arresting mob in Gethsemane’s shadows, ***“This is your hour - when darkness reigns.”*** (Luke 22:53). They were there binding his hands with hemp only because God allowed it. The arrest came only because it was necessary in the Father’s plan of salvation. To Pilate, the Roman judge, Jesus said it pointedly***, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above”*** (John 19:11). With all of this we can hear our beloved Savior saying, “You intended to harm me, BUT God intended it for good,” the greatest good ever, the salvation of the world.

How much God must love us! What a love, which already from eternity has been working in so many ways to save us! But oh, how we take that love for granted! How we boast of it in our sin, and yet, how faithless we become in times of our own testing and trials. “Why me, Lord?” we ask as if He hasn’t told us. For as the cross is the centre of our faith so it is the centre of the Christian life as we live in its shadow. So as we, like Joseph, encounter problems in our homes, as we feel the pains in our failing bodies, as the accidents and incidents, the woes and the worries, the sudden earthquakes in our lives shake us, exhaust us, make us fretful and fearful, we need to have firmly rooted in our hearts and minds these words of Joseph: “God means it for *our* good!” For the same loving God who brought the *greatest* good for our souls through the suffering of His own Son, has promised that He *will* take care of all our “lesser” needs.

So again and again we need to hear Joseph’s reminder to his brothers, ***“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.”*** Again and again we need to read those words of Paul, ***“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him”*** (Romans 8:28). Again and again we need to inscribe that little equation on the blackboard of our hearts, ***“Evil plus God equals good.”*** God help us to realize that what we call mercy is really God’s forgiving love. What we call Christ’s passion is really God’s proven love. What we call providence is really God’s caring love. What we call the will of God is really God’s unerring love. What we call eternity is really God’s unending love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.