

ULC Sermon Study Resource

The Gospel According to Joseph // Joseph Mistreated

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Prayer: Pause for a few moments to go to the Lord in prayer. Ask that He would draw near to you in this time, and open your heart and mind to hear His Word.

Icebreaker: What is your favorite part about summer?

Reading: Gen 37:2-13, 23-36

Outline:

- I. Jacob's Partiality (v. 2-4)
 - A. In verse 2 we are told this story isn't just about Jacob and Joseph, but also the rest of Jacob's sons. Jacob loved Joseph more because he loved Rachel more. Jacob's partiality divides him from his sons and his sons from one another.
 - B. In particular here we see just how harmful Jacob's partiality is. His favoritism turns his entire family against one another. However, favoritism is contrary to the Gospel. God chose us not on the basis of qualifications, but his mercy.
Q: *When have you seen favoritism go contrary to the Gospel message?*
- II. Joseph's Pride (v. 5-8)
 - A. We see Joseph's pride displayed when he tells his dream to his brothers, where in his dream they bow down to him. However, Joseph only gets special treatment from Jacob because of his mom. Everything he has is because of his father's favor.
 - B. Christianity categorically rejects the notion that any of us have pulled ourselves up by our bootstraps. Everything is seen as a gift. And when everything is seen as a gift, what reason do any of us have to be prideful or arrogant?
Q: *How do you remind yourself that everything is a gift from God?*
- III. His Brother's Contempt (v. 23-28)
 - A. Between Joseph's pride and their father's favoritism, his brothers responded with contempt. So they beat him, sell him, and lie to Jacob. This story should function not as a window into the lives of awful people but as a window into our own hearts. Each and every one of us is subject to the kind of contempt that leads to it.
 - B. Yet, the story of Jesus shows us a son who had favor with his father and instead gave up his status as a sacrifice for all people. In the brokenness and mess of Joseph, his family, and the entire world, may you remember Jesus who has come to rescue us.
Q: *When have you felt or seen contempt in your own life?*

Reflection/Application Questions:

- 1) How do we address favoritism in our communities?
- 2) How do we remain confident in the Gospel without becoming prideful?
- 3) How do we address pride in the church?
- 4) How do we prevent ourselves from falling into contempt for others?

Suggestion for further study:

- James 2:1-5: How do these verses show us how favoritism is contrary to the Gospel?
- Matthew 10:8 Q: How does this verse show us the importance of avoiding pride and boastfulness?

Closing Prayer:

Gracious God, we see our own pridefulness and contempt in the story of Joseph. Help us to remember all we have is given to us by you, and not by our own merit. Teach us to walk humbly as Jesus did, and to avoid prideful boasting, so that we may become more like your son. Amen.