



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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JUMP START #398

Gen. 37:34- “So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days.”

Today we will look at the incredible life of Joseph. His father, Jacob, favored Joseph more than all the other sons. This caused jealousy and hatred among them. They plotted to kill Joseph. Reuben would not consent to this and rescued Joseph and allowed them to throw Joseph into a pit. A band of Ishmaelite traders were passing by and the brothers sold Joseph to them. In turn, these traders sold Joseph to the captain of Pharaoh’s bodyguard in Egypt.

Much later in his life, Joseph will see the hand of God in his life and how all things worked out for the glory of God. We, too, see these things, much later. It’s the present that bothers us. Often we don’t see that God’s hand is in our lives, but he’s there. I can’t imagine the fear and horror as Joseph is first thrown into a pit and then sold, taken from his home and then sold again and is in a place he has never been before. He surely thought that his dad would come and rescue him. Days passed. Nothing. Days turned into weeks. His life was not going to return back to normal. This was his life now—in Egypt.

Back home, Jacob has been brought the coat of many colors that he had given Joseph. It was covered in blood, goat’s blood, but back then, who knew, who could tell? He thought the obvious, Joseph was dead, killed by a wild animal. The thought wasn’t out of line. It happened.

It seems that Jacob didn’t know or did not choose to know how much the other sons hated Joseph. He never thought that they had a hand in his disappearance. Is it possible that parents are so clueless to how the kids feel about each other? Jacob certainly was.

Our verse reveals the awful pain from the depths of a parent’s heart over a child that has died. Our news tells of children who drown or are taken and murdered. Children are not supposed to die before the parents do. That’s not how things are supposed to be. I have preached the funeral of many people whose parents sat in the audience. It’s a tearful experience to see the hearts of these aged people looking at their child who has died.

In our story though, Joseph wasn’t dead. Jacob had been fooled, deceived and tricked, by his own children. Jacob believed what wasn’t true. He had false evidence in his hands. With all his heart he believed, he believed that Joseph was dead. He tore his clothes, he put on sackcloth, which is like burlap. It’s rough, scratchy and uncomfortable. He wore that because that is how he felt on the inside. His child, was dead, he thought.

Faith is based upon evidence that is true and right. We don't fault Jacob. His emotions were genuine. He had no idea that his sons would lie to him. But the truth is, Joseph is alive. He was waiting for dad to come and dad wasn't coming. He didn't know.

What does this say about our faith? The foundation of Christianity is faith. This is the thread that is woven throughout the Bible, but especially in the New Testament. Jesus came with convincing proofs that he was the son of God. He was examined, questioned, and put to the test. He revealed signs and miracles to demonstrate who he was. He spoke as no one else had. He knew what others could not know. He cared and was compassionate upon all. He never stumbled. He never messed up. He never lost focus. He never sinned. Our faith is in Jesus Christ and his words.

Is it possible for someone to bring us a bloody coat and convince us of things that are not true? Is it possible for us to believe something that didn't happen? Yes. Many religious beliefs are founded not upon a consistent study of God's word, but on the ideas of man. Many assumptions can be turned into truth if one does not examine carefully what God says.

The answer is the Bible. The Bereans were hearing new and different things from the apostles. They searched the Scriptures every day to see if the things said were true. The Scriptures were the proof. The Scriptures were right.

What Jacob didn't have was a body. He had a bloody coat, but no body. Had he found the body of Joseph, that would have confirmed what the boys were trying to get him to believe. "Our body" today is the Scriptures. This is God's proof. This is the standard. This is where we go for the verification, proof, evidence and authority.

Folks believe all kinds of things, some of them really off the wall and way out. They read it in a book or they hear some guy preach it or they just always wondered about such things. Could be? Is it possible? That's as far as some will go with these ideas. STOP. Look in the Bible. Do some studying. What saith the Scriptures? This is what Jesus did. This is what the Bereans did. This is what God wants you to do.

Crazy ideas about the origin of life, about mortality, about human sexuality, about aliens, about life after death, about Heaven, about angels, about messages from beyond---these fill the shelves of many bookstores, they attract interest on blogs and web pages. Tales from folks who died and came back...stories about encounters with angels and demons....miraculous adventures---these all fall into the category of the bloodied coat of many colors. Seems possible, but where's the body? Open the Bible. Look at it carefully. Many of these things are the imaginations of some who have not looked carefully in the Bible.

Poor Jacob mourned for a boy that was still alive. Wicked brothers. Poor Joseph. Gone and no one looking for him. Forgotten by all, except one, God. He is still with him. He has plans for him. God always does.

Roger Shouse

