

Session 3

February 6, 2022

THE PITFALL OF INJUSTICE

Genesis 39:21-23; 40:4-8, 20-23

Several years ago, there was a palm tree (shrub?) growing too close to the house. I'm not a native Floridian, so I don't know what kind it was (anything with spikey fronds is a palm tree in my book). It didn't look good anyway, so my wife said it had to go. So I dug it up, hefted it into a wheelbarrow, and dumped it in the edge of the woods out back. Just last week, while cleaning out some brush, I came across that discarded little palm, and lo and behold, it had rooted and grown right there where it had been dumped. That's a real-life example of the popular exhortation to "bloom where you are planted."

Sometimes (maybe all the time?) life isn't fair. But the unfairness of one's circumstances need not lead to unfaithfulness because of them. Joseph is an example of a man who trusted His God and decided to "bloom" in the place in which he was planted.

Blessed by God regardless of circumstances (39:21-23). The Lord's watch-care over Joseph continued regardless of where Joseph went. If every cloud has a silver lining, Joseph found his in keeping favor with God and man even in the worst of circumstances. He was still imprisoned but was blessed with a ranking position within the prison. Like Potiphar before him, the jail's warden saw both his prowess and his potential and rewarded him with both liberties and responsibilities. With little to work with, Joseph succeeded in whatever he did, because "the Lord was with him" (v. 23). For reflection: *Do you think that God favored Joseph arbitrarily? Do you think that Joseph responded to this special favor by testifying of his God to all who would listen? How does 1 Pet. 3:15 relate to Joseph's situation?*

Busy for God regardless of the circumstances (40:1-8). Here, the dreamer of dreams becomes the interpreter of dreams. It seems that two of the king's personal servants had offended the king and found themselves thrown into Potiphar's prison (v. 3). Hence, Joseph, the former servant to Potiphar, was charged with serving these two attendants. As if being imprisoned wasn't depressing enough, both had dreams the same night that left them both even noticeably more distraught (v. 6). Joseph picked up on their anxiety the next morning and asked them about it. Notice Joseph's sensitivity to these fellow prisoners. Rather than ignore them, or become embittered about serving them, he ministered not only to their physical needs, but their emotional needs as well. Once again, Joseph is actively "blooming" where he had been planted. For reflection: *Do you find it hard to do good work under bad circumstances? How do you think Joseph kept a positive attitude while all of this was going on?*

Believing in God regardless of the circumstances (40:20-23). In the intervening verses, Joseph interpreted their dreams. The king's butler (or cupbearer) was restored to his position in Pharaoh's court (v. 21) while the king's baker was hanged (v. 22). While Joseph's remarkable ability and accuracy interpreting the dreams should have been unforgettable, the entire ordeal was indeed forgotten once the cupbearer had been restored. The redundant statement in verse 23 highlights the isolation of Joseph. "Yet the chief cupbearer *did not remember* Joseph; rather, he *forgot* him." Sadly, it would be two more years before Joseph would come to his mind. For

reflection: *What evidence can you find that God was still favoring Joseph? How do you think Joseph coped with being alone and forgotten?*