

Joke: Aliens visit Earth. They come in peace and surprisingly , they speak English.

Obviously, all of the heads of government and religious leaders want to speak to the aliens so they set up a meeting with the new visitors. Finally it's Billy Graham's turn, and he asks: "Do you know about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?"

"You mean JC?", responds the alien. "Yeah, we know him! He's the greatest, isn't he? He swings by every year to make sure that we are doing ok".

Surprised, Billy follows up with: "He visits every year?! It's been over 2,000 years and we're still waiting for his second coming!"

The alien sees that the Billy looks somewhat confused and a little disturbed at this fact and starts trying to rationalize. "Maybe he likes our chocolate better than yours?"

"Chocolates? What are you talking about Billy says, what does that have to do with anything?"

The alien says "Yea, when He first visited our planet we gave him a huge box of chocolates! Why? What did you guys do?"

This is our final message in the Joseph series, meant for good. So far we've covered the Promise, the Process, Perfection, the

Procession, and the Path to Penitence. Today as we finish up we will be looking at God's Provision, and His Peace.

If you recall from last week Jacob was a bit apprehensive to allow Benjamin to go on the journey to Egypt for fear of not having him return just like Joseph.

And while in Egypt the brothers meet up with Joseph and even though they don't recognize him Joseph recognizes them. He tells them to leave Benjamin behind but Judah makes another suggestion.

Let's pick our story up there.

Genesis 44:32–34 (ESV): For your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life.'
33 Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers. 34 For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father."

Judah is effectively saying to Joseph, "Don't punish Benjamin -- punish me instead."

Joseph is seeing the change of character that he was hoping to see in his brothers.

And as we will see, this changes the entire spirit and objective of their interactions with Joseph. The goodness of Joseph, just like

the goodness of God has drawn him to repentance and now with the repentance we move into Provision and Peace.

Genesis 45:1–3 (ESV): Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, “Make everyone go out from me.” So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. 2 And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. 3 And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

Joseph finally reveals himself and the restoration process between Joseph and his brothers gets incredibly emotional. So much so that Joseph cries loud enough that the Egyptians and Pharaoh hear him.

Joseph can contain himself no longer. and all the emotions of the last decades come to the surface.

And the response of his brothers? They are dismayed at his presence. Dismayed, terrified, shocked. Why?

It's because they didn't recognize him, and they still don't know his intentions.

Decades have passed, and they have no idea what kind of man he is. Is he going after revenge for all they did? They have no clue that Joseph isn't bitter, but better.

They don't know that he will become a ransom for his entire family, so that they can survive the famine.

They don't know the character that the years have worked into him, and rather than bitterness he has betterness. I don't think that's a word but there it is anyway. Betterness.

All they know is that Joseph has the power, the motive, and the opportunity to do them great harm.

Can you imagine? They don't know if this revelation is the end of them. They don't know if what they deserved is coming for them.

And worst of all, they know they are 100% guilty and totally without excuse deserving anything that he wants to do.

And church we are 100% guilty but Jesus came in our place and paid our debt so that we might live free of the regret and shame. And Scripture tells us perfect love casts out all fear.

But I don't know if you have noticed what happens when people throughout scripture come into the presence of God, or even the presence of an angel, but the reaction seems to always be fear and dismay?

Even prophets and righteous men fall down like dead men in His presence.

And the response of these brothers was no different. Dismay.

The brothers thought that their time of getting what they deserved had arrived. And many today feel like God can't love them, or forgive them because of some of their sins, or choices they've made.

But here's the truth church if it wasn't for His grace that would be what we deserve. But thank God that His grace is sufficient.

Joseph is, in this moment, a type of God, his brothers are having the natural reaction of dismay, as they look at their spiritual bank account and find themselves bankrupt, with nothing to say in their own defense. They know what they deserve because they now what they have done.

They are the hopeless defendant standing in the courtroom after all the damning evidence against them has been presented. They are waiting for the verdict that they know is coming: Guilty, Guilty, Guilty.

Genesis 45:4–8 (ESV): So Joseph said to his brothers, “Come near to me, please.” And they came near. And he said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. 5 And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8 So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

And it's at this exact moment, at the pinnacle of their fear and shame, that Joseph says, "Come near to me, please."

I'm sure they were thinking, wait what you want me to come close.

And that's just like our Heavenly Father. When we've messed up, sinned against God he doesn't come with what we deserve He tells us draw close to Him and He will draw close to us.

God says, I want to be close to you. I am greater than the things you have done. I will provide for you. My grace is sufficient for you. Come close to me.

And the next thing Joseph says is, "I'm your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt."

In other words, yes, the terrible things you've done have caused harm. They are true, and the consequences are true. But I am not bitter my desire is to be close to you.

The fact of your guilt is not weightier than the fact of my love and forgiveness.

And church God offers His grace and forgiveness, He desires to be close to you. God calls to you even when you mess up. He did it in the garden and He does it still today.

And now comes the mic-drop moment. Joseph says, "Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life."

This is everything. When I talk about Provision, this is what I mean. It all comes down to this. Joseph has clearly stated that they did do this: "I am your brother, whom you sold."

He's not denying what happened, he's not reminding them in case they forgot, and he's not mentioning it to make them feel guilty.

But he tells us that in spite of all of it there's a greater truth. That greater truth is. . .But God.

It's true the brothers did it all. But the greater truth is that God was also doing something; God had a plan. Joseph was in the place where he was able to see God's purpose of healing and deliverance, looming so large in his vision, that it made his brothers offense insignificant in comparison.

Genesis 50:20 (ESV): As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

In fact, God loomed so large in Joseph's vision, that it swallowed up his brothers' sins in love. Joseph was God's provision. Joseph was God's chosen sacrifice. Joseph could see, at last, that his story is not a tragedy. His story is a story of redemption and salvation and forgiveness and the unbelievable love of God that transcends all things.

And church your story isn't over yet. Your story is His story as well, God has a plan for your life.

And here we are thousands of years later, and we can see even more -- God was making a show of Christ through Joseph. Joseph was a type and shadow of the coming atonement. Joseph suffered as an innocent man for the deliverance of his people from famine. And Jesus suffered as an innocent man for the deliverance of the whole world from the power of sin.

In this story Joseph we get to see God's provision through his life, In ours we see God's ultimate provision, given to us in the form of the crucified son of God himself.

What I hope to bring home to you today is how God is on a complete different level. His ways are higher than ours. His forgiveness is unbelievable. His love is absurdly ludicrous.

If it doesn't seem too good to be true, if it doesn't seem downright scandalous, then it's something less than the gospel.

We get a beautiful glimpse of the ridiculous love of God through the story of Joseph. And it's just getting started.

Let me give you an illustration. Billy Graham was once pulled over for speeding in a small town. He ended up having to go to court and while standing before the judge was asked if he was guilty to which Billy Graham said yes. The judge gave him a fine of \$10.00, \$1.00 for each mph he was over. After the fine was given the judge noticed who he was and said that the fine still had to be paid, but the judge took \$10.00 from his own wallet and paid the fine for him and then took Billy Graham out for a steak dinner.

That's what God does for us. He paid our fine, forgives us and lets us eat at His table.

Back to our story. . .

Genesis 45:9–15 (ESV): Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. 10 You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. 11 There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.' 12 And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. 13 You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." 14 Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. 15 And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

In Scripture there are many attributes of God that we see. . .we have Jehovah Jireh which means "The Lord is my Provider." Jehovah Shammah which means "The Lord is Near." Just to name a couple. .

And we see both those attributes of God clearly present in this story.

The first provision is that God has provided Joseph who has willingly chosen to absorb the penalty for their sin, not exercising his right to judge and punish.

Much like how Jesus provided our salvation by taking our place and giving us not what we deserve but what we didn't.

Here's the thing church, grace is getting what we don't deserve, mercy is not getting what we do deserve.

Next, Joseph provides for them physically. He says go and bring his father, and their children, and the whole family so he can provide for their needs during the famine.

And now, there's something even greater than the physical provision: There's a peace and it happens because of intimacy.

There's the nearness. Joseph grabs them, holds them, and weeps over them. He is not just giving them things. He is giving them himself -- and with that comes peace and intimacy.

Maybe you never gave it much thought but we are the brothers in this story. We are the prodigal sons of Jesus's parable. We are the ones who are receiving the opposite of what we deserve. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and our distance from perfection demands judgment.

But God. . .but God sent Jesus to absorb the penalty of our sin, so that we could dwell with God in perfect peace, totally unmerited by us, through faith.

This is the gospel. It's not just not getting the punishment we deserve. It is also getting the reward we don't deserve. And that reward is not just God's things -- it's God himself. It's Christ in you, the hope of glory. It's intimacy, nearness, and perfect peace with the most powerful and beautiful being in the universe.

I know in my life there have been numerous times when it seemed like all hell was coming against me. Yet I had a peace about it that passed all understanding.

Maybe someone here didn't know how you were going to pay a bill, or had a situation that was difficult, a surgery you were concerned about yet in it all you had peace.

In verses 16-24, Pharaoh and his household hear the commotion, and even Pharaoh starts handing out blessings as well. He lets Joseph know that they can have the best in all the land of Egypt.

And it's this massive celebration, culminating with Joseph sending his brothers back home to retrieve the family.

Genesis 45:25–28 (ESV): 25 So they went up out of Egypt and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. 26 And they told him, “Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” And his heart became numb, for he did not believe them. 27 But when they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. 28 And Israel said, “It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

Jacob's response to the news that his son is alive? His heart becomes numb, why because he can't believe it, it seems too good to be true.

There's something so rich and special here. This good news is all true, but Jacob initially can't enter into the joy. Why? He doesn't believe it. It's too good to be true. And he risks losing out on the experience of the good news because of a wounded heart and an unwillingness to believe.

And what does this unwillingness do? It makes his heart numb.

What's the solution? When they tell him all the words of Joseph, and show him the wagons that Joseph sent, then he believes. And when he believes, his spirit revives. He enters into the celebration.

What did it take to activate the blessing in his life? He had to stop believing that it was too good to be true, and believe that it was true. Then he was able to enter and have his spirit revived.

Here at the end, not only of this sermon, but of this series, I want you to see the display of God's amazing gospel intentions through this ancient text.

We are both Joseph, the innocent son on a rugged path to glory, and we are the brothers, who must confront their own evil to enter into their redemption story.

All of these experiences have relevance to your Christian walk. God gives us the Promise, and takes us through the Process. His goal is Perfection, or maturity, and maturity sometimes comes with pain. But then he displays us to the world in the Procession. At times we must enter into Penitence, as we wrestle with the ramifications of our own wrongdoing. But through it all, we ultimately find God's Provision, waiting to bring us into the place of Peace and intimacy.

I want you to know that God has provided for you. Just as he provided Joseph to be the sacrificial deliverer of the fledgling nation of Israel, He has provided Jesus for you, as the all sufficient sacrifice for all of your sins, past, present and future.

His love for you is insane. Infinite. Lavish. Scandalous even. His love is the exact opposite of what you deserve, and has nothing to do with what you do or don't deserve. His love for you is the most supernatural thing in your life.

And you and I might be missing out on some -- or all -- of the most powerful reality available to us, the overwhelming love of God, because we instinctively think it's too good to be true. We are waiting for the other shoe to drop. Our hearts are numb. God will love me when I get my act together. God will love me when I stop doing X and start doing Y.

How long did the Prodigal son need to starve, in order for his hunger to bring him home? And once home, after his daddy ran out to him, and received him, and put a ring on his finger, and a cloak on his back, and slayed the fatted calf, how long do you

think it took for the old voice to creep in: Oh, Prodigal, when will the other shoe drop? You wasted your whole inheritance on prostitutes and wild living; someone's going to have to pay for that. When will you get what you know you deserve? Isn't this forgiveness just too good to be true?

I'm here to tell you that you and I who are in Christ don't get what we deserve. And thanks be to God, we never will. We have been given the treasure of ages and generations -- the Lord Jesus Christ. God has given us the best of Himself, which is Jesus. This is His guarantee that He will ultimately withhold nothing from us.

Romans 8:32 (TPT): For God has proved his love by giving us his greatest treasure, the gift of his Son. And since God freely offered him up as the sacrifice for us all, he certainly won't withhold from us anything else he has to give.

Will you believe? I ask the Lord to awaken every numb heart in this room -- wholly numb, or even partially numb. I pray that our God will cause your heart to rejoice in the unrestrained intimacy and peace with God that we get to revel in for the rest of our lives, and for eternity. I call you to say aloud what is true, and set your heart to believe that there are no strings attached between your deserving and his generosity. He gives to the needy, not the deserving. It's sick people who need a doctor, not the well.

You may be afraid to embrace this, because you think the only thing that keeps you from sinning is your fear of punishment.

But do you really believe God glorified by your fear that his promises are too good to be true? You may be afraid of your capacity for failure and sin. You may think you need your fear to make you a good person. Your fear once protected you from doing the bad things you wanted to do. But perfect love casts out all fear. Love is a greater force in your heart than fear could ever be.

Could you let go of the fear and let the love take its place? Lord Jesus, help us to receive, not 10%, or 50% of the potency of your love and your sacrifice, but 100%, all of it, all that it means, and all that you intended to give to us when you paid the ultimate price by sending Your Son to take upon Himself our sins and what we deserve as the sacrificial lamb of God.

Transform us, redeem us, and showcase your glory in us and through us as we bear witness of Your love to those around us.