**God Gives Us Compassion**

***15****When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him.”****16****So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, “Your father gave this command before he died:****17****‘Say to Joseph, “Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.”’ And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him.****18****His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.”****19****But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?****20****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.****21****So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. (Genesis 50:15-21, ESV)*

 God gives us compassion in the response to evil done to us.

 Greetings in the Lord as we talk today about God’s compassion, which he bestows on us according to our needs. All of us are familiar with Joseph’s story and how he saves his brothers from famine in the end, despite the evil that they did to him. We are going to talk about Joseph’s reaction when Jacob (his father) dies and his brothers throw themselves at his feet, asking to be his slaves. What does that moment mean, and how can we understand Joseph’s expression to them today, for our lives? So today, we are going to deal with that kind of compassion – remember, it is God who supplies the compassion we need, the kind words and the merciful expressions when they are needed. So, let’s talk about the above, and especially man’s role in this kind of challenging situation.

 Even in the face of the evil deeds of the worst people, God gives us compassion. As you know very well, Joseph dealt with many ups and downs before he got to the point where his brothers were prostrate in front of him, waiting for an answer to their offer to be slaves to him. Let’s recount the ups and downs: first, the brothers sold him when he was young. They broker his father’s heart into a million pieces with their lie that he was dead. Then, Joseph became a servant in Egypt and saw the favor of the Lord. Then that favor was blown into smithereens again when Potiphar’s wife had him imprisoned with one lie. Even in that prison, however, the warden appointed him to take care of everything like a manager in charge of the prisoners. In that place, God opened a door, and he interpreted the dreams of two important people in government. However, the blessing got delayed, since the cupbearer forgot Joseph when he was reinstated to his position in Pharaoh’s court. Eventually, Joseph experiences God’s favor once again, and he is promoted to governor of all of Egypt. So, when his brothers came to him after their father’s death, Joseph had already experienced the blessings of the Lord. In that moment, he expressed his faith, which is right for a Christian also to emulate. What he says is essentially the following: It is God’s job to right other peoples’ wrongs. He says that there is Providence even in mankind’s evil deeds. Especially powerful is his forgiveness and practical affection in the face of evil, instead of repaying evil with evil.

 There is an interesting episode in the life of an American President about a century or so ago that is instructive here. President Coolidge was once staying at a hotel, when he suddenly woke up one morning and saw that a thief was going through his pockets. The president spoke up and asked that the thief not take his watch chain because it contained an engraved charm he wanted to keep. Then he began to calmly speak with the thief, and it turned out that the young man was a college student who had no money either to pay the hotel for his bill or to get a ticket to go back to campus. Coolidge pulled out the equivalent of today’s $605 dollars out of his wallet, the latter of which he had already convinced the thief to give back, counting the money as a loan. Then he showed the young man how to escape out of the hotel without being caught by his own Secret Service. Amazingly, even the loan he gave was paid back…

 What mercy – both from Joseph and also Coolidge! Both could have punished those who wronged them quite severely. Both of them could have been merciless but still fair, with a stern response to what had happened to them. If God, however, had brought these men (Joseph and President Coolidge) to their stations in life, then to whom did they owe their positions?

 In our case as well, it may be that we have had a long-life journey, full of ups and downs, with both good and evil having crossed our path. Perhaps the good events were unforgettable, but the evil deeds and their perpetrators are still around, still having a negative influence in our lives. We are we going to do with those people? The example of Joseph would say to us that the evil that people have intended for us, God has turned into good. Coolidge would speak to the thief and even take care of his needs. Thus, God’s answer, which was really Jesus Christ’s answer in the face of evil, was compassion. It was steadfast love – longsuffering patience, a gentle manner of dealing with them, instead of sternness, dryness, and revenge that is full of punishment.

 Therefore, we see that God gave Joseph compassion – and that He can give that to us as well, in the face of every injustice, because His plan of salvation did not finish with Joseph’s family, but continues on through Jesus with us…

 Everyone needs to have a chance to be rescued, to be blessed – and God has called us to be compassionate toward others, to feel their pain.

 Even in the face of the worst of evils done to us by the most evil people, God gives us compassion for them.

 May the Lord wake us up to the compassion that He has for people, especially for the lost and the evildoers. May the Lord bless you all. Amen.