

Genesis 37:5-11

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more.⁶ He said to them, “Listen to this dream I had:⁷ We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.”

⁸ His brothers said to him, “Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

⁹ Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. “Listen,” he said, “I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”

¹⁰ When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, “What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?”¹¹ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:

MONDAY: GENESIS 37:5-77—DREAMS

Joseph shares his dream with his brothers. Their response is not positive. Even Joseph's father does not respond well.

- Joseph's dream was a literal dream it seems. However, it set in his mind a future for himself. We do not know how Joseph approached his brothers and father. Was he excited? Timid? Curious? How do you share your dreams of your life with others?
- In this story none of Joseph's family responded positively to Joseph's dream. Have you had such experiences? What has been your response? Do you rethink your 'dream'? Do you press on?
- How do you know if your 'dreams' or ambitions are from God or aligned with God's vision for you and for the world?

TUESDAY: ACTS 9:1-6—OURS OR GOD'S?

This is the first of three re-tellings of Paul's encounter with the living Jesus on the Damascus road.

- Before his conversion, Paul had a sort of 'dream' for his life. It was something like this: to preserve the sanctity and holiness of God's people Israel. He believed with all his heart that this dream, this mission, was fully aligned with God's purposes. How does God in Jesus Christ respond to Paul's 'dream'?
- What is the main thing that Paul seems to have been doing that was contrary to God's vision in Jesus Christ? Is there a point when the trajectory of some dreams or ambitions simply is not going to align with God's? How does one sort this out?

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 26:1-19—KICKING THE GOADS

Paul tells his story again, for the third time in Acts (the other is in Acts 22:1-16). The stories are not told in exactly the same way.

- Jesus tells Saul that what he has been doing is “kicking against the goads.” A goad is a sharp pointed stick used to move cattle in a desired direction. To kick against it is both counter-productive and harmful. Paul thought he was moving in God’s desired direction, but really he was fighting with God in way that was counter-productive. Have you ever had such an experience where you thought your ambitions were in line with God’s dream for you and the world, only to find out that you were actually “kicking against the goads”?
- God could have let Saul continue on his path toward his own destruction, but he did not! What does God give Saul to replace his old mission or dream for life? What hope or encouragement does this give you for yourself or for others?

THURSDAY: MATT. 5:13-16; 28:16-20; MICAH 6:8; 1 COR. 1:10; 2 PETER 3:9

To align our vision with God’s we need a sense of what God’s vision is! These are three of MANY passages in Scripture that point to some sort of “dream” or vision God desires of us, his people. There’s a small problem: there is no one single “thesis statement” that describes God’s vision for us. We must be attentive listeners of Scripture’s witness, participating in God’s community, to sort this out!

- From these passages describe what is involved in God’s dream (1) for us and (2) for the world. Try not to fall back onto what comes out most easily because of what you might have grown up hearing or learning. Try to listen carefully to these passages and to one another as you sort out God’s dream?
- Is God’s dream for us, Jesus’ disciples, different from God’s dream for the world? If there is a difference, how do you describe it?
- Are there any other passages that come to your mind? Drawing on Scripture, can you think of some important ‘pillars’ of God’s dream?

FRIDAY: GENESIS 37:18-28; 50:20—GOD WORKS FOR GOOD

The story of Joseph goes on for some time in Genesis. After his brothers sell him, Joseph becomes part of the ruling class in Egypt. In Genesis 39 it says that the Lord was with Joseph and he was successful. Joseph goes on to work for the furthering of God’s grand purposes for Israel and the world, in witness to God.

- In Genesis 50:20 Joseph makes a significant point. Since Joseph’s first sharing of his vision in Genesis 37, quite a lot has happened. And the way that the dream was fulfilled probably did not look like what Joseph or his brothers expected. Can God’s plans be thwarted? Do appearances of things really reveal the truth of what God is doing?
- Is it possible that fulfilling God’s visions and plans involves some level of discomfort, hurt, or challenge for us? Read Hebrews 12:1-4. The author of Hebrews says to those experiencing significant difficulty that Jesus’ path to fulfilling God’s plans involved suffering and death. How do you relate this to your own life?

SATURDAY: MATTHEW 6:19-20; PROVERBS 19:21—HEARTBREAK & HOPE IN GOD

God’s vision and desires are not always the same as ours or the world’s.

- We’ve been over Matthew 6:19-20 before. Jesus talks about ‘treasures’ in the context of talking about money and earthly goods. But, can ‘treasures’ be like our ‘dreams’ and ambitions as well?
- What might be the cost of putting too much stock in *our own* dreams and ambitions rather than God’s? Might it be painful at times to learn the lesson of putting God’s vision first?
- How does Proverbs 19:21 speak to you and your vision of your life? Is it hopeful? A subtle warning? A challenge?