

A Dream Come True Genesis 40:1-23

We sometimes refer to people with big ideas or innovative processes as dreamers. They are the ones who invented cars, looked at the flight of birds and thought of a way to combine automation and aerodynamics and put man in the air. Then one day he dreamed of going to space and then the moon. They dreamed of making farming easier, manufacturing faster and using different materials that would enable structures to stand over a half mile high. People with such dreams have been branded as heretics and lunatics. Scoffers mocked at their pie in sky dreams as never happening, yet now on this side of those dreams we can say that dreamers are essentially realists with a vision big enough to see their ideas happen. They have the drive, the determination and the discipline to see their dreams become reality. The dictionary defines this kind of dream as an aspiration.

It's the kind of aspiration that drove a kid who was cut from the High school basketball squad to become one of the all-time greats. We know him as Michael Jordan.

It's the kind of aspiration that drove an Air Force pilot named Chuck Yeager to be the first person to break the sound barrier.

Dreamers like Gutenberg, a German goldsmith, created the printing press. Eli Whitney made the cotton gin. Henry Ford began the assembly line.

I'm not a dreamer in that regard. I'm more the kind of dreamer who has a sequence of random thoughts and images passing through my mind while I sleep. They tend to border on the bizarre or weird combining fragments of people, places and events, both past and present, some real, some not, that somehow have been pieced together in a subconscious thread that makes me wake up and wonder how in the world all those things got connected. Truth be told, when I wake up, I rarely remember my dreams. At times when I do remember and it's so weird or funny I have to share it with Robyn after which we both get a big laugh. There is the occasional dream in which after I wake

up I question if it's one I had before. To my knowledge none of my dreams have ever come true. I have never been to a dream doctor for an interpretation and I have never been so distraught over a dream that I'm mentally, emotionally or even physically shaken by it where it sets me on edge or where someone asks me what's bothering me.

That's not the case in our passage today. We read about it in **Genesis 40**. Any one of us could have a dream like these on any given night. But what we read here isn't the result of the chili we ate hours earlier or even slivers of our imagination pieced together in a fantastical story. These are prophetic in nature allowing us to see the sovereign hand of God in the events that transpire. They are a way of showing us that God hasn't forgotten about Joseph and what happens in this chapter continues to demonstrate his faith in God.

As these chapters are about Joseph, I see first that Joseph had direction. We read about it in **vs. 1-8a**.

I. JOSEPH HAD DIRECTION – vs. 1-8a

Let's remember something of utmost importance that was true for Joseph and is true for us. In **chapter 39** there are two separate life events we would do well not just to remember the principle plainly spelled out for us. It is found in both **verses 2 and 21**. **“And the Lord was with Joseph”**

I have mentioned such verses as **Isaiah 41:10** where God says **“I am with you.”** It's written in a tense that means not only right here, right now, but He is with us in all our nows.

When tomorrow becomes a now, He is with us.
When next month becomes a now, He is with us.
When five years from today becomes a now, He is with us.

There isn't anything to fear or be dismayed over when we remember that He is with us right now. He will give us His strength in all our nows.

Hebrews 13:5 says He won't forsake us or abandon us. He won't leave us to face our hardships alone.

Psalms 23:4 reminds us He is with us in our valleys.

He's not just with us on the sunny days, the summer days, the oh, so happy days.

He is with us in the summer storms of life. He is with us in the winter of life when the bitter, cold days of some event leaves us chilled to the bone.

So when we begin **chapter 40** and read this happened "**some time later**", the fact of God's presence with Joseph is assumed, that reality has never changed. Joseph is still in prison and God is right there with him. We learned at the end of **chapter 39** that Joseph had separated himself from all the other prisoners in regard to integrity, attitude and work ethic. He didn't complain or criticize or become contrary because of his circumstances. We read that because of his character he caught the eye of the warden who placed everything under the care of Joseph and didn't concern himself with any of it because of the integrity Joseph displayed.

Some time later. We don't know how much time had lapsed. Scholars estimate that Joseph was 17 when he became a slave and that he was 30 when he began to rule in Egypt. **Chapter 41:1** tells us two years had passed since **chapter 40**. So that puts him at 28. He's been in Egypt 11 years.

We notice first of all that his oversight is clear.

A. His Oversight Is Clear – vs. 1-4a

Kent Hughes gives us something to chew on for a bit when he writes "**we must not imagine that his position put him above the junk. Rather, it put him in the middle of it.**" Simply put, his responsibilities required him to deal with all the problems of prison.

Just because he had the favor of the warden who put him in charge of the prison and of the prisoners didn't mean that he somehow was treated any differently than the other prisoners.

He didn't get a softer cot or nicer sheets.

He didn't get a better meal or more privileges.

There wasn't a first-class prison section for some and a coach section for the general population.

This was still prison and he was still a prisoner.

Remember from **Psalm 105:18** where we read that his feet were bruised from shackles and his neck

was put in irons. As far as the Egyptian courts were concerned, he had committed a crime, the punishment for which at the very least was imprisonment. But while he is there serving his time, two new prisoners are put under his care. They are the chief cupbearer and the chief baker of Pharaoh himself.

Though we aren't told what they did, we read that whatever it was angered Pharaoh enough that he threw them in prison, the very prison Joseph was in. And we read in **verse 3** that they were put in the house of the captain of the guard. It's none other than the prison Potiphar was responsible for. Often in ancient times, the house where the captain of the guard lived was adjacent to or a part of the prison. If trouble broke out, he was right there. Potiphar put these two men under the care of Joseph.

These two guys were the head of their departments. The chief baker made sure the food was always to the liking of the king.

The chief cupbearer, although he was a servant of the king, was perhaps the most trusted person the king had. He tasted everything before the king ate or drank it to make sure it wasn't poisoned.

Cupbearers were called "pure of hand" meaning he must be a man of loyalty and integrity. He had to be trusted, and I think Pharaoh had to treat him well otherwise, you never know what the cupbearer might let slip by.

But these two high profile prisoners had done something that greatly angered Pharaoh so he threw them in prison. Maybe the baker burned the biscuits or the veal pate' wasn't up to Pharaoh's standard. Maybe the cupbearer tripped while taking the cup of wine to Pharaoh and spilled it all over the royal robes or maybe a piece of moldy cheese somehow made it to the table.

Some scholars I read suggest that there was a conspiracy on Pharaoh's life involving the food so he had them both tossed in prison until the whole matter could be investigated and sorted out, the findings would be revealed on his birthday. It's been discovered from documents that either on his birthday or the anniversary of when he came to

power that Pharaoh would exonerate someone. Sort of like the presidential pardon.

Verse 4 tells us that Joseph had the responsibility of their care by attending them. Some think that he was a servant of the prisoners, but I believe based on what we read in **39:22** that he was in charge of them, had the oversight of them, was responsible for them in every respect. In these verses we not only see that his oversight is clear, but that his observation is keen.

B. His Observation Is Keen – vs. 4b-8a

We read that they had been there for some time learning to eat the diet of prison food rather than the delicacies of Pharaoh's table that each had a dream on the same night. Each dream had its own interpretation. But what they both dreamed had them dejected. In the morning when Joseph was making his rounds checking on each of the prisoners, he noticed they were both looking quite sad, so he asked what was bothering them. Both had a dream in the night.

Now here's something I want you to understand. It wasn't what they dreamed that bothered them. What caused their sadness was that there was no one in prison who could interpret their dream for them.

In Egyptian culture dreams were significant. They were important. They placed a lot of value on dreams and their interpretation because they believed that while sleeping dreams were a way their gods spoke to them. Dreams that came in pairs were of even greater significance because two dreams indicated the certainty of their fulfillment. So they had people who were dream interpreters who had books to help with the symbolism of dreams, but there was no one like that in prison to unlock the meaning of their respective dream. So they were greatly troubled, perhaps even fearful if they couldn't get their dream interpreted.

I believe that Joseph was responsible for the total well being of the prisoners – their physical state as well as their emotional and mental state, so he asked them why they looked so sad.

It reminds of the scene in Rudolph when the head elf, who was responsible for the toy production of the other elves, asked Hermei "what's eating you boy?" because he was moping around while he was supposed to be building toys. He wasn't happy in his work. The dreamer wanted to be a dentist.

"What's got you down in the dumps today guys?"
"We've both had dreams and there isn't anyone to tell us what they mean."

Joseph had direction.

His oversight was clear, and his observation was keen.

It is then in **verses 8-22** that we see Joseph had dedication.

II. JOSEPH HAD DEDICATION – vs. 8b-22

It was not by chance or luck that these two high profile prisoners came to be under Joseph's care. It wasn't fate. It was by divine intervention, choreographed by the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Jehovah God. The same God who knows the plans He has for us, plans to prosper us and not harm us. Those plans are for the person who calls on God, who seeks Him with the whole heart. That person will find God. That person will know God. That person will have faith in God (**Jeremiah 29:11-14**).

According to **Hebrews 11:6**, God rewards those who diligently seek Him in faith, believing He exists. That, I believe, was Joseph because we notice first in **verse 8** his reliance was on God.

A. His Reliance Was On God – v. 8b

"Then Joseph said to them, 'Do not interpretations belong to God?'"

He didn't say "Oh, what a bummer, we had a dream interpreter in here last month, but he was released."

He didn't say "Well, sorry, I can't help you."

He didn't say "You could go to the prison library and see if they have some dream books that you can check out and find the answer yourself."

He didn't say "have you prayed to your gods about it? Maybe they can give you an answer."

Instead he took them straight to God, to the only one who could rightly and accurately interpret their dream, after all, I believe He was the one who gave them their dreams on the same night because He had a plan and it included them. Keep in mind that God can use those who do not follow Him to fulfill His purposes. He is not limited or confined to how His plan is implemented or by whom it is done.

In this case Joseph went straight to God. That's a good principle for us to follow. **Is He the first One we turn to when we don't have answers, when things don't look clear, when circumstances seem way out of our control?**

There is a God who can!

Do you trust God enough that he is your first and only clear choice?

I speak as an expert on the matter and I think some of you are as well. There are times I trust in my own understanding rather than trusting God with my whole heart. Let's face it. There have been times we have gone to the Lord in prayer and He has been silent. We have not heard a clear direction one way or the other so we take matters into our own hands and move ahead and we end up getting into trouble. It reminds me of King Saul being told by Samuel to go down and wait for him. Instead of waiting and obeying, King Saul took matters into his own hands and offered the burnt offering and God stripped the kingdom from him. Joseph waited on, Joseph relied on, Joseph trusted in God and God was the first place he went when he needed council.

When Elijah prayed for rain after a 3-year drought, he sat with his head bowed between his knees, he didn't even look up to see if the answer was coming. His servant went and came back and said there wasn't any sign of rain. Elijah didn't give up and say, well I guess God didn't hear me or God is too busy or God doesn't care. Elijah told his servant to go and check seven times, all the while he sat with his head bowed between his knees praying. Then the servant saw a small cloud and got bigger and darker and the rains came. **James 5:16** tells us that the effective prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much.

I'd like to believe that Joseph was a praying man, a man who cast all his cares on the Lord, believing that the Lord cared for him (**I Peter 5:7**).

“Why are you so sad?”

“We don't have an interpreter for our dreams.”

“Don't dreams belong to God?”

He wasn't asking them whether they believed God could give them the answers they sought. He was telling them God could answer their questions. In effect, he was telling them that all the dream interpreters with their dream books filled with symbolism were inadequate and ineffective, that there was only one source of truthful interpretation and that it was his God.

When an unbeliever comes to you with a question, don't be reluctant to point them to God, don't be embarrassed to point them to God, don't hesitate to turn their attention to God. These pagan idolaters needed to know that there was a God who could give them an answer. This is an affirmation of Joseph's faith. It stemmed from his belief in God that some day his own dreams would also come true. That's what we call faith.

Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

Joseph didn't know when or how his dreams would come true. He just believed that they would.

Joseph's reliance was on God.

From **verses 9-22** we learn that his response was from God.

B. His Response Was From God – vs. 9-22

Since the interpretation of dreams comes from God, he wanted to know their dream. So the chief cupbearer went first. It's been suggested that he went first because he knew himself to be innocent of whatever charges were brought against him that landed him in prison and he believed his dream would bear that truth. In his dream he saw a grape vine and that vine had three branches. On each branch were buds and blossoms that became clusters of grapes. In one hand he held Pharaoh's cup and in the other he held some clusters of those

grapes. He squeezed the grapes so that the juice flowed into the cup after which he gave the cup to Pharaoh.

Acting as God's agent, Joseph gave his response to the dream. The three branches referred to three days. On the third day Pharaoh would restore him to his old position as chief cupbearer. When that happened he wanted the cupbearer to give a good word to Pharaoh about him because he too had been wrongly put in prison. Maybe Pharaoh would hear his case and set him free. Put in a good word, especially since the interpretation was favorable.

That response sounded really good to the chief baker, so he told Joseph his dream. He had three baskets on top of his head. In each basket were all kinds of baked goods. An Egyptian dictionary lists 38 different kinds of cake and 57 varieties of bread. As he was taking them to Pharaoh, birds flew down and ate up all the baked goods in the basket that were on his head.

At that point you have to wonder if there was a bit of hesitation in Joseph's response knowing the outcome was not like that of the chief cupbearer. As in the first dream, the three baskets represented three days. But instead of being exonerated like the chief cupbearer, Pharaoh was going to hang the baker and the birds would eat his flesh. What a graphic depiction of his doom. Talk about a showstopper message. He was sitting in death row. No appeal. No commuting the sentence. And three days later just as Joseph had predicted based on each of their dreams the cupbearer was restored to his position and the baker was hanged.

Joseph followed God, trusted God, believed in God and in that we see his dedication. He has high hopes in the chief cupbearer. Surely in three days he wouldn't forget about his new best friend who revealed his restoration as chief cupbearer. But it is in **verse 23** that we see Joseph had disappointment.

III. JOSEPH HAD DISAPPOINTMENT – v. 23

Disappointment may be an understatement. **“The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.”**

Let those last three words sink down deep. Dwell on them for a moment. Feel the disappointment. Days turned into weeks that turned into months. I can't speak for Joseph, but for me I feel the despair, the dismay, the discouragement, maybe even a bit of disdain for the cupbearer. “After all I did for him, how could he forget me? After all I did for him, why did he forget me? God, I've got dreams too. When are my dreams going to come true?” That's how I would feel.

Now remember how we began the message, looking back at **chapter 39** and that all-important reminder that **“the Lord was with Joseph”**. Never forget that while others may not remember us, God never forgets.

A couple of weeks ago I read something that has challenged me and I hope it does you as well. I'm not sure who said it, but the truth of it bears our consideration and application.

“Every highway of life descends into the valley now and then and everyone must go through the tunnel of tribulation on the highway of triumph.”

Joseph has been in the valley. To him it may appear that there is no road leading out, but along the road he has in mind that the Lord was with him.

Maybe he was beginning to wonder if his dreams would be on hold forever. I would. Maybe you've felt that way as well. We'll see next week that it will be another two years. Maybe you have felt the delay from God. Remember that God's timing is not our timing. In a microwave society it's hard to wait for God's slow cooker process of making us ready. God's slow cooker is still working to make us turn out just as He wants. Remember that one of the characteristic fruits of the Spirit is patience.

Proverbs 14:29 “A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly.”

Proverbs 19:21 “Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.”

Romans 12:12 “be patient in affliction.”

James 1:2-4 “Consider it pure joy, my brothers,

whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete (whole), not lacking anything.”

Like King Saul, I get myself into a lot of trouble when I run ahead of God. I get myself into a lot of trouble when I don't let God finish His work in me, to complete me, to mature me. Joseph needed a little more time in God's oven to produce in him the qualities that would be necessary for the task God was about to assign him.

Lamentations 3:21-32

When you are disappointed at how things are going or how things seem to be turning out in your life, draw your attention back to these verses. Jeremiah began the chapter by saying he knew affliction. We can all camp on that for a while, can't we?

Affliction may have been in a marriage.

Affliction may have been from children.

Affliction may have come at work or through illness or some other hardship. Read the first 18 verses and you feel the despair of the prophet walking what seems to be a lonely and troubled path.

Verse 19 “I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.” No wonder he is called the weeping prophet. He's the Eeyore of prophets. But read the next words carefully.

“Yet (underline that word) Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope.”

“Yet (underline that word) Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope.”

His hope was in God's unending love, a love he said was great and in that love or by that love he wouldn't be consumed by all the afflictions that plagued him.

He had hope in God because of His unending compassion.

He had hope in God because that compassion was new every morning.

He hoped in God's daily compassion because God was faithful.

Because God was his inheritance, the prophet would wait for Him. I can hear Joseph say that. “God, I don't know what or when, but I'll wait.”

God is good to those who both hope in and seek Him.

Then the prophet says, notice this in **verse 26**, **“it is good** (circle that word) **to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.”** There is a sense of peace, a sense of contentment, a sense of joy and a sense of love in that word good and to do so quietly.

Underline **verses 31-32**. **“For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, He will show compassion, so great is His unending love.”** Why will He show compassion? Because He is faithful.

John 16:33 is of comfort to us when the waiting seems unbearable. **“I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”**

When you are disappointed remember that **“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18)**

When you are disappointed remember to trust in God and not be afraid **(Psalm 56:11)**

In his book *Where Is God When It Hurts?*, Philip Yancey tells the story of Christian Yeger who knew all too well the horrors of Dachau. While he will tell you those stories, he will end by sharing his faith. He once stated “Nietzsche said a man can undergo torture if he knows the why of his life. But I, here at Dachau, learned something far greater. I learned to know the Who of my life. He was enough to sustain me then, and is enough to sustain me still.”

Joseph knew the Who of his life and could wait quietly, patiently, obediently, hopefully.

Maybe today you're in a similar place as Joseph. Whatever the affliction might be for you, remember that God has not abandoned you. He has not forgotten you. Take your trial and wait, trusting God in it and He will see you through it.