Genesis (The Promise-Keeping God)

Week 6/8 "The Revealing God"
by the Rev'd Michael Marklew (8/11/2026)

Bible Passage: Genesis 40-41

Loving father, be with us as we open your word today. Grow us and shape us to be like your son Jesus. Amen.

From powerless to powerful, Josephs' story may well be the greatest rags to riches story ever told. In just two short chapters, he goes from prison confinement, to leader of the prison and then to leader of all of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself.

Someone should make a movie of this! Oh wait, there are at least 20 film and television adaptations of this story. It's that good.

And it is good, not just because of the rags to riches, the drama and the suspense, but because God is continually at work achieving his purposes through Joseph.

In this story God is revealed in the

1-Good and the Bad.

A good dream, a bad dream, through feast and famine, God is revealed.

He is revealed in the

2-Forgotten.

Joseph is left in prison, left with little hope, yet God's hand is there.

And He is revealed in

3-Truth and Glory.

The dreams come true and even Pharaoh himself recognises God.

First up.

God reveals himself in the

1-GOOD AND THE BAD.

I doubt that there is any argument that Joseph has had a rough trot. Thrown into a pit, sold as a slave, tempted and lied about and now in prison, and to make matters more worse, God hasn't been so obvious in his journey thus far.

Yes, he had dreams, but was it God? Yes, he survived when others wanted him dead, but was it God? And yes, he is in prison, when the death penalty was the expectation, but was it God?

Yes, it was.

And by the end of the chapter we are left without a doubt that not only was God with Joseph, as the narrator has reminded us of, four times in the previous chapter, but that God was also at work through Joseph.

But what about Joseph? Was he aware of God's hand in the good and the bad?

Well Let's find out.

Genesis chapter 40 verse 1, and we enter the story after Joseph is falsely accused of trying to "make sport of" his master's wife.

Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined. (Gen 40.1-3)

Two things.

Firstly, these titles "chief cupbearer" and "chief baker" reflect the titles given to high-ranking officers. It is kind of like the "Secretary of State".

These men were central to the royal court and responsible for the king's food and drink. A mistake or corruption on their behalf could kill a king, which means they were important and trusted.

Secondly, the word offended used in our modern translation is understated for two reasons.

One the Hebrew is 'offended against', meaning there were grounds for Pharaoh's anger, a legitimate reason for the imprisonment.

And two, it is the same word used by Joseph back in chapter 39 verse 9 when he refuses to sleep with Potiphar's wife, that act would be a sin, an offence against God.

These men sinned and ended up in prison, while Joseph refused to sin and ended there too.

And as luck would have it, no, this is not luck, this is God's plan, God's purpose, God's promise being carried out.

And as providence would have it, they are assigned to Joseph's care.

Verse 4.

The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them. After they had been in custody for some time, each of the two men – the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison – had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. (Gen 41.4-5)

From the outset we are told that these dreams are no ordinary dreams, that they have meaning and purpose in the story, that interpretation is not just required, but expected.

And we know this because these men are sad that "there is no one to interpret them." Clearly, in the palace they had access to people who interpret dreams, but not here.

Joseph notices their sadness and enquires about it, leading to an offer to interpret the dreams on behalf of God with these words "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

Now on a side note, it is worth pointing out that we need not, and should not, go around interpreting dreams today, for this is not doctrine, it is narrative.

It is Joseph's story of what God did in that place, at that time, and I for one find it no surprise that God would use the vessel of dreams, something that these people saw as spiritual to reveal his plan here.

That said, Joseph clearly has a clear confidence, a faith in God that will not be misplaced. But still, I can't help but see the risk of such a claim. I mean, what would be said of God if Joseph's interpretations didn't come true?

I mean, he is not about to offer some vague astrological reading or a prophetic word so obscure as to be true for snyone, no. He will not only be specific, but give the interpretation a deadline of just 3 days!

I guess **faith is spelt RISK.**

Joseph steps up, shares that God has given one good interpretation and one bad interpretation.

In the good, the cupbearer is told, verse 13.

Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. (Gen 41.13)

But to the baker, it is not so good, verse 19.

Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and impale your body on a pole. And the birds will eat away your flesh.' (Gen 41.19)

This is not just a death penalty; this is an execution of the worst kind, for this treatment was designed to prevent the spirit from resting in the afterlife.

It is shocking and surely impossible to forget.

Yet God is revealed in the
2-FORGOTTEN.

Our second point

How our cupbearer could have forgotten Joseph after seeing these events come to pass, just 3 days later, we don't know. The text simply and unremarkably says that he "did not remember Joseph; he forgot him".

But what is anything but unremarkable, is that Joseph correctly interpreted the dreams, that he gave God the credit from the outset, and that his faith appears unchanged, even though he spends two more years in prison.

This is remarkable, and it speaks volumes to how we might wait on the Lord. It is his timing and his plan, and that we must be faithful while we wait. If Joseph can spend two more years in prison waiting on the Lord, what does that say to our prayers and our plans?

;; Tim Keller? Quote, The best thing about social media is that it will remove any excuse for being slack at prayer on the last day.

Are we being patient? Are we being persistent? Are we trusting the Lord's timing? Does our faith waver when we don't see immediate results?

God has not Forgotten Joseph, and he hasn't forgotten you either.

Next, Chapter 41 takes us through Pharaoh's dreams and Joseph's call to leadership. The seven fat cows eaten by the seven thin cows, the seven healthy ears of corn eaten by the seven thin ears of corn.

In these dreams Pharaoh is troubled, he sends for magicians and wise men, but no one could interpret them for him.

Verse 9.

Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, 'Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was impaled.' (Gen 41.9-13)

The cupbearer's account of events in the prison is particularly revealing.

Firstly, he admits his own offences, his own sin, for this is what it means by shortcomings, and this is revealing because it is a big risk to admit anything before a king who has the power to imprison or kill.

And Secondly, it wasn't what Joseph said that was forgotten by the cupbearer, for he just repeated it, but Joseph himself that was forgotten.

No longer is Joseph forgotten, all those years of struggle, the persecution, the false imprisonment, his rock solid faith, all of it is coming to a head.

Our rags to riches story is coming to a head in Joseph's rise to success, but is Joseph? No, it is God's faithfulness at work and bringing about his purposes in and through Joseph.

Well our Joseph is cleaned up, shaved, dressed and brought before Pharaoh where he says.

Verse 15.

Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.' (Gen 41.15)

The most powerful person in the land has just made a claim of Joseph. To fail at this point would surely mean death for him and likely our cupbearer too.

But Joseph does not disappoint. It is as if everything that has happened to him so far, the good, the bad, the forgotten, all of it was to give him the strength, the confidence, the faith to speak up here in this moment before the most powerful person in the land.

If Joseph wasn't forgotten, then this could not have happened. If Joseph wasn't discarded by his family, this could not come to be, if Joseph wasn't faithful this would be a different story,

Our Joseph, he does not disappoint. He speaks truth and gives God the glory, our 3rd point.

3-TRUTH AND GLORY.

'I cannot do it,' Joseph replied to Pharaoh, 'but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.' (Gen 41.16)

Pharaoh shares his dreams again with a little more detail this time as he notes that the thin cows were not improved by the consumption of the fat cows, remaining just as ugly as before, and he also shares that none of his magicians could explain the dream.

To this, Joseph said to Pharaoh

Verse 25.

Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, 'The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears of corn are seven years; it is one and the same dream. The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterwards are seven years, and so are the seven worthless ears of corn scorched by the east wind: they are seven years of famine. (Gen 41.25-27)

The interpretation is as detailed as the dream itself, with one difference. Where most people would point to themselves, Joseph points to God.

God has revealed to Pharaoh,
God has shown Pharaoh,
God has decided, and
God will do it soon.

Now, this is way more cool than we might realise, and this one may be for the Bible nerds in the room.

Unlike other parts of the text, Joseph is using the definite article in his speech here. Meaning it is "the God", instead of just God. The God has revealed, the God has shown, the God has decided.

Now we can't take this too far, but it is at the very least, it is a hint that Joseph is proclaiming a God who is distinct or unique from the Egyptian deities.

Was that a bit nerdy? Not really?

At this point, one would expect Joseph to plead his case as he did with the baker and cupbearer when he told them back in chapter 40 verse 15, that he was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and had done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.

But no, he proceeds to tell Pharaoh what to do, talk about a bold truth teller! Although, we did see plenty of that back in Canaan with the dreams and the giving of unfavourable reports.

It's in Verse 33.

'And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.' (Gen 41.33-36)

It is bold, it is clear, and it is from God, so what now? Well it appears that Joseph has made a believer out of Pharaoh?

Verse 38
So Pharaoh asked them, 'Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?' (Gen 41.38)

The definitive article is missing in Pharaoh's response (see my nerdiness had a point), and no doubt his phrase is coloured by the polytheism of Egypt, yet it is remarkable isn't it?

Remarkable that Pharaoh of all people, appears to have recognised the Spirit of God at work in Joseph. He is speaking more wisely than he could have possibly known.

And as they say, the rest is history as Joseph is given near unrestrained power to prepare for and supervise the famine relief. It is more than rags to riches, it is an unexpected power.

But then again, this is Joseph's story as God directs his path.

Unexpected power in his household (he was not the older brother)
Unexpected power in Potiphar's household (he was a slave)
Unexpected power in the Prison (in their minds he was a criminal)

Now at 30 years of age he is given unexpected power in the service of Pharaoh. At 30 years of age, his public ministry begins.

I wonder who else was 30 years old when their public ministry began?

I wonder who else was 30 years old when the Holy Spirit descended on them in bodily form like a dove and a voice from heaven spoke "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Who is it? It's Jesus.

As a child, his wisdom was beyond his years, and as an adult he saves not just his family, but everyone. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

As God is at work through Joseph to achieve his purposes — he's also pointing us to Jesus who will ultimately fulfil God's purposes for salvation.

Let's wrap up.

God is revealed in the

1-Good and the Bad.

Of course we all want things to go well, and ultimately everything will go well into eternity for those in Christ.

But in the meantime and to quote Paul.
Fight the good fight and finish the race.

Joseph fights the good fight, his integrity, his boldness and truth telling recorded as evidence of God's good work regardless of his struggles.

So let me ask.

Are we being patient?
Are we trusting the Lord's timing?
Does our faith waver when we don't see immediate results?

Our walk with Christ is not a sprint, a jog or a jump, it is a walk. So lets walk with Christ as he walks with us.

God is revealed in the

2-Forgotten.

Yes, at times it can be difficult to see God at work, and at times we can feel forgotten. Fortunately, our faith doesn't rely on feelings, it relies on the finished work of Christ.

His death and resurrection with the certainty that he will bring all things to completion when he returns again.

Jesus who says. **I am with you always, to the very end of the age.** (Matthew 28.20)

Yes, I quoted this last week, and I will keep quoting it, because I need to hear it again and again.

And lastly God is revealed in

3-Truth and Glory.

The dreams come true, and even Pharaoh himself recognises God, sort of.

And this can happen when sharing the Gospel, even when people are miraculously healed, they don't always choose to follow the healer.

I mean, Jesus himself rebukes the Pharisees for wanting signs.

God is truth, and we must give him the glory, lest we become conceited.

Think of Saul, chosen and anointed by God, how he shows humility, was initially obedient, courageous and showed mercy. Yet through impatience and disobedience he admits "I have sinned. I violated the Lord's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the men and so I gave in to them."

The truth is.

God was with Joseph and he is with every follower of the Lord Jesus, so we can fight the good fight and finish the race.

The Lord be with you.

Let's pray.

Thank you Lord that you are with us in valleys and on the mountain tops. Guide us and give us straight paths. In Jesus Name, Amen.
