Genesis (The Promise-Keeping God)

Week 8/8 "The Good God"
by the Rev'd Michael Marklew (22/11/2026)

Bible Passage: Genesis 49:29-50:26 (cf. Genesis 46:1-4)

Loving Father, we thank you, that you are with us and that you seek to use us to build your kingdom. Open our hearts and minds to your word, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Jacob is on his way down to Egypt with the news that his beloved son Joseph is still alive. In the background the famine continues to rage, and the patriarch's fear is surely growing.

A fear that is possibly driven by the doubt and worry of what will become of them, but more likely it is a fear that he may never return to the land promised to Abraham and his descendants by God. A fear that God would not fulfill his promises.

It is into this situation that God speaks to Jacob for the last recorded time.

'Jacob! Jacob!' said God. 'Here I am,' Jacob replies. 'I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes.'

It is reassurance and hope, and it comes before a very special reunion.

In Genesis 46:29

As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time. Israel said to Joseph, 'Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive.' (Gen 46.29-30)

The text doesn't record any bowing down as implied in Joseph's second dream (although that's hotly debated), but it certainly marks his rise over his family, for his father will soon bless him and his two sons as his.

Three things as we wrap up the book of Genesis.

1-FINISH WELL.

Jacob had a rough start and a difficult life, but he finishes well and is honoured with all the pomp and ceremony that Egypt has to offer.

2-FORGIVE GENERIOUSLY.

With Jacob having passed on, Joseph graciously accepts the brothers and reassures them that they are forgiven even though they don't deserve it.

3-HAVE HOPE.

What was intended for harm, God used for good and this same hope rests on us.

What is more for us Anglicans is that this is Christ the King Sunday, where we remember and look forward to the hope that we have for his eternal reign.

As usual we will run through the passage, looking at the context and the larger biblical narrative and we will land, asking the Spirit of God to put on our hearts what this might mean for our walk with Christ today.

1-FINISH WELL.

In Genesis chapter 49 verse 29, Jacob gives the final instructions for his body when he dies, and the details are elaborate, it is a tongue twister of places and names and it is clearly providing much more than a mere location.

Chapter 49 verse 29.

Then he gave them these instructions: 'I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite. There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah. The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites.' (Gen 49.29-32)

Again, this is more than a set of burial instructions; it is a deliberate rehearsal of the promises of God on his deathbed before his sons.

The land, the seed, the great nation and blessing it is all here.

The land. It isn't yet complete, as Jacob owns but a small plot, the field of Machpelah. Yet he recounts his tangible foothold in the land that God swore to give.

The seed promise. Jacob names those who have gone before him. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Leah. He places himself in that unbroken line.

The great nation promised. It is visible in the very act of giving these instructions to his sons. Sons who he just spent most of a chapter naming as the twelve tribes of Israel. They are the seeds of that great nation.

And the blessing to all nations. The line that begins with Abraham passes through Jacob, and is now gathered in Egypt, will one day reach the one through whom every family on earth is blessed. Jesus of course.

Land, seed, a great nation and blessing.

Jacob's final words are not so much about where he wants to be buried, but are a confession, a trust and a hope that the promises of a good God are already taking shape.

It is a liturgy if you will, a liturgy of hope, but let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Verse 33

When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people. (Gen 49.33)

With a hope and a faith that looks forward, Jacob dies. He is embalmed, mourned and taken to his homeland to be buried.

Bringing to an end 147 years of struggle, infirmities and many sins. It is a story of a man who fought with God, learned to trust him and in the end passed on with a deep piety and a faith in the one who will deliver his people as promised.

Yes, Jacob finished well.

The text now details the most elaborate funeral recorded in the Bible. It has all of the trimmings, the pomp and ceremony of Egypt itself. It is a fitting end of a patriarch, whose life-story covers nearly half of Genesis.

It is a burial fit for a king.

Except this has nothing to do with finishing well. Finishing well, is resting in the security of the promises of God. Finishing well is standing before Christ and hearing good and faithful servant, finishing will is leaving a legacy of fruit for his glory.

Finish well and

2-FORGIVE GENERIOUSLY.

With Jacob now passed on, the brothers are clearly worried about the future, which at first feels a bit odd considering the lengths Jacob went to, naming the 12 tribes and pointing to promises of God.

Except their concern is sadly in keeping with a very dysfunctional family. I mean, we only have to turn back to Esau in Genesis 27:41 where we are told he held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given, and planned to kill him once their father died.

Genesis 50:15

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?' So they sent word to Joseph, saying, 'Your father left these instructions before he died: "This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly." Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.' When their message came to him, Joseph wept. (Gen 49.15-17)

The alleged speech of Jacob highlights the brothers' desire for forgiveness or at least the desire to save their own skins, let's go with forgiveness.

A forgiveness that we can only assume had not yet been made explicit. Sure, he had attributed his situation in Egypt to the will of a good God to save many lives, but no explicit forgiveness is recorded.

But why the weeping?

Is it a recognition that God is at work?

Is it empathy for their continued pain?

Is he remembering everything that has happened?

We don't know, but it is clear that Joseph forgave them, reassured them, and offered to care for them and their families in an interaction that stands in stark contrast, or as a bookend to their first encounter back in Egypt seeking food.

Back then, they bowed to him. He spoke harshly to them and they paid for the food.

Here, they again fall down before him (this time offering themselves as his servants out of fear), yet he speaks kindly to them, tells them not to be afraid, and freely offers to provide for them.

Everything has changed and God gets the glory.

Let's read it, from verse 18.

His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. 'We are your slaves,' they said. But Joseph said to them, 'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.' And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. (Gen 49.18-21)

Finish well, forgive generously and.

3-HAVE HOPE.

Genesis 50:24

Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, 'God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place.' So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt. (Gen 49.24-26)

Two things.

Firstly, Joseph finishes well, Joseph forgives generously and Joseph passes on with a sure and certain hope that his bones will see the promised land, and they certainly will, for in a short while (God's timing, what's a few hundred years between friends?).

In a short while Moses will take his bones from Egypt and his people will deliver them into the promised land.

Secondly, God will surely come to your aid.

Joseph's words summarise the hope expressed throughout the entire Old Testament, as well as the New.

Brothers and sisters, God has come to your aid. Joseph lived it, Jacob before him lived it and all those who put their trust in the Lord Jesus, who came to die for us and restore us to God, will know it too.

Hope for the Christian is not a "I hope I'll win the lottery" kind of hope. It is a sure and certain hope in the promises of God, and key to finishing well.

Joseph had no doubt that God would keep his promise to one day bring the Israelites back to their homeland.

And You my family, you can have no doubt that by faith in the Lord Jesus, God will bring you home.

Let's wrap up.

1-FINISH WELL.
Finishing well is not about how hard you try, but about who you know.

Jacob had a rough start and a difficult life, but he finishes well.

At this point, I could give examples of famous people who claim to have finished well; I could draw from 19 years in business and I could easily turn this into a motivational speech about working hard and saving money.

In fact I once heard it said that the person who dies with the most money wins.

It is a croc, a shallow idea for the faithless and the hard of heart.

What matters is not how hard you try, but who you know. How do you get into a club that's full, it's who you know. How do you get that top job, it's usually who you know.

Finishing well is not about how hard you try, but who you know. Don't get me wrong, there is plenty of work to do as we seek to hear those words, "good and faithful servant".

But finishing well is not about us, it never was. It is about Jesus, for all those in Christ are guaranteed a perfect finish. Eternity in the presence of God.

Knowing Christ, receiving forgiveness for our sin, and the hope of eternity. This is how we finish well, and along the way I hope we.

2-FORGIVE GENERIOUSLY.
In Christ all are forgiven, in Christ all are restored.

Joseph wept at their request for forgiveness, and you know what I think? I think he wept because they didn't know that he had already forgiven them.

I think he wept because he hadn't told them, and in the asking he realised the pain that it had caused them all these years.

So let me ask, have you received the forgiveness offered in Christ? Have you let go of the sin that weighs you down?

In Christ all are forgiven, in Christ all are restored. It is explicit, clear and the promise of a good God for all those who believe.

The past sins are no more and your future awaits.

3-HAVE HOPE.

What was intended for harm, God used for good and this same hope rests on us.

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. (1 John 3:2-3)

There is no greater hope than to look forward to the day that we will see our Lord and saviour, for on that day we shall be like him.

Washed clean for the sin of this world and living the freedom that we can only have when we are in Christ.

Thank you for the good example of all those who have come before us, and help us to walk in the faith and share with others the love that is in us. In Jesus' name. Amen.
