

HARVEST TALK 2016: 'Faithfulness' (Joseph) BCP

Theme is 'faithfulness' (intro fruit of spirit series) – story of Joseph all about faithfulness.

50:20 key verse (READ) – 2 simple pts:

God is faithful to us – story of Joseph might look like a series of disasters: Joseph is betrayed by his brothers, taken advantage of by Potiphar's wife, overlooked by the prisoners he helped, and ultimately a nation suffers a long drought.

But behind it all, a greater hand was at work. Joseph was never abandoned by God – God was there in all the ups and downs of life, keeping Joseph alive, teaching him humility, developing his gifts, and ultimately preparing Joseph for an important job. And God did this despite all those selfish human beings constantly getting in the way! 'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good.' God is faithful, even in the bad times of our lives.

Perhaps you're facing a difficult time at the moment, perhaps things aren't going well, or people are being difficult. Perhaps you wonder where God is in all this. The story of Joseph teaches us that God is there in unexpected ways. What feels like harm might ultimately prove to be for our good, if we can allow God to shape the future of our lives.

God used Joseph's difficulties to make him strong, wise, humble – basically someone who could change history. That what God does, if we'll let him. But he doesn't force that on us, we need to choose to trust him. And if we do, God is faithful, he'll always come through for us.

That's where Jesus' teaching adds something for us. Famous 'bread of life' passage. Primarily about salvation – but 'bread' has ongoing benefit. We pray for daily bread in Lord's prayer, and bread here can be taken in its broadest sense to be everything that sustains us, both physically and spiritually.

Jesus is our spiritual bread, he is the faithful Son who embodies God's faithfulness to us. And in his faithfulness he brings us life – and sustained by him we can enjoy true life.

We are called to be faithful to God:

- In our calling – e.g. Joseph's dream, which eventually came true
- With our gifts – e.g. Joseph's gift of interpreting dreams – note even when didn't work to his advantage
- In way we live our lives – most important of all – having integrity e.g. Joseph with Potiphar, pharaoh and forgiving brothers

Perhaps God is calling you to be faithful today in some way: maybe to listen to where God might be calling you; maybe to start using a gift which you've never really offered to God for him to use; maybe a situation where God needs you to stand up and be his witness.

Being faithful is challenging – but we do it knowing that we're not on our own, because our great God is always faithful to us, always there, and he doesn't, he never lets us down. Amen.