

**Week 11, Sunday: Joseph Revealed**  
Genesis 45

**For Journaling or Discussing with Another:**

Read Genesis 45:1-3

- What do you sense Joseph is feeling?
- What emotions are stirred in you as you read this?

Read Genesis 45:4-15

- Recall a time when you received forgiveness from someone else. How has that experience shaped your own willingness and/or ability to forgive others?
- Joseph who has been known as the “interpreter of dreams” is now interpreting his own life story. Joseph interprets that, though hidden, God has been active (“*It was not you who sent me here, but God*”); that God has been gracious (“*God sent me before you to preserve life*”); and that God is, in some way, in control of this story. How strongly do you believe that this is still true of God now? What evidence do you have?

Read Genesis 45:16-28

- As the brothers are preparing to return home to share the news with their father, Joseph instructs them not to quarrel along the way. Imagine their trip home as they strategize how to break the news to Jacob, news that will include the good news of Joseph being alive and the painful news of their two decades long deception. What do you imagine they decide?
- Recall a time when you strategized about making a painful confession. How did it go, and what did you learn?
- The brothers return home and begin recounting the story. The first word out of Jacob’s mouth is, “Enough!” followed by, “Joseph is still alive, I must go.” What do you imagine Jacob, the brothers, and Joseph still back in Egypt are all feeling in this moment?

For further reflection:

We can hear echoes of this story in the Gospel accounts of Jesus. For example, in Mark 9:33, Jesus confronts the disciples for *quarreling along the way*. In Luke 22:38, the disciples bring two swords with the futile desire to try to defend him and Jesus cries, “*Enough!*” On Good Friday, we announce that like the brothers in this story, we have mistreated our brother Jesus, and are complicit in the world’s suffering.

- How does this story of Joseph and his brothers expose us?
- How does this story give us hope?

Continued blessings engaging Genesis, Tom Maehl, First Lutheran Church, Waltham, MA

## Week 11, Monday: Promises Fulfilled

**Scripture:** Genesis 46:1-7; [genealogy in 46:8-27 omitted]; 46:28–47:12

*When Israel set out on his journey with all that he had and came to Beer-sheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. God spoke to Israel in visions of the night, and said, 'Jacob, Jacob.' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again; and Joseph's own hand shall close your eyes.'*

*Then Jacob set out from Beer-sheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him. They also took their livestock and the goods that they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and they came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him, his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters; all his offspring he brought with him into Egypt.*

*Israel sent Judah ahead to Joseph to lead the way before him into Goshen. When they came to the land of Goshen, Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to meet his father Israel in Goshen. He presented himself to him, fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. Israel said to Joseph, 'I can die now, having seen for myself that you are still alive.' Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, 'I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and will say to him, "My brothers and my father's household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me. The men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have." When Pharaoh calls you, and says, "What is your occupation?" you shall say, "Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our ancestors"—in order that you may settle in the land of Goshen, because all shepherds are abhorrent to the Egyptians.'*

*So Joseph went and told Pharaoh, 'My father and my brothers, with their flocks and herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan; they are now in the land of Goshen.' From among his brothers he took five men and presented them to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to his brothers, 'What is your occupation?' And they said to Pharaoh, 'Your servants are shepherds, as our ancestors were.' They said to Pharaoh, 'We have come to reside as aliens in the land; for there is no pasture for your servants' flocks because the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now, we ask you, let your servants settle in the land of Goshen.' Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land; let them live in the land of Goshen; and if you know that there are capable men among them, put them in charge of my livestock.'*

*Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob, and presented him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Jacob, 'How many are the years of your life?' Jacob said to Pharaoh, 'The years of my earthly sojourn are one hundred and thirty; few and hard have been the years of my life. They do not compare with the years of the life of my ancestors during their long sojourn.' Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from the presence of Pharaoh. Joseph settled his father and his brothers, and granted them a holding in the land of Egypt, in the best part of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had instructed. And Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their dependents.*

**Reflection:** The story of Abraham and Sarah and their descendants began back in chapter 12 with God calling them to “Go,” and promising them protection, land, a great name, and the assurance that through their descendants all the families of the earth would be blessed. Now, as we approach the end of Genesis, we are witnessing a growing fulfilment of God’s promises. Note in particular:

- God said, *“I will make of you a great nation,”* At this point they have grown from a couple, to a clan of 70.
- *God said, “I will bless you.”* Now through Joseph’s rise to power, the clan (now named Israel) are finding food and protection during a time of famine.
- *God said, “I will bless those who bless you.”* Here Pharaoh welcomes Jacob and provides for his extended family. In return it is twice noted that Jacob blesses Pharaoh, which is symbolic of Israel blessing Egypt.

At the beginning of the passage above, we have the last occurrence of God speaking in Genesis. God’s last words are intimate and reassuring. The narrator tells us that God is addressing Israel, but when God speaks, God repeats his personal name twice, “Jacob, Jacob.” God then repeats words of reassurance: *“I am God, do not be afraid ... I will go with you ... even unto death!”*

**To Ponder:** *“I am God, do not be afraid ... I will go with you ... even unto death!”*

In what particular aspect of your life might God be calling you to trust these promises ever deeper?

**Prayer:**

The King of love my Shepherd is,  
Whose goodness faileth never;  
I nothing lack if I am his  
And he is mine for ever.

Where streams of living water flow  
My ransomed soul he leadeth,  
And where the verdant pastures grow  
With food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,  
But yet in love he sought me,  
And on his shoulder gently laid,  
And home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill  
With thee, dear Lord, beside me;  
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,  
Thy cross before to guide me.

(Henry W. Baker)

## Week 11, Tuesday: Politics

**Scripture:** Genesis 47:13-31

*Now there was no food in all the land, for the famine was very severe. The land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. Joseph collected all the money to be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, in exchange for the grain that they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. When the money from the land of Egypt and from the land of Canaan was spent, all the Egyptians came to Joseph, and said, 'Give us food! Why should we die before your eyes? For our money is gone.' And Joseph answered, 'Give me your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your livestock, if your money is gone.' So they brought their livestock to Joseph; and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the herds, and the donkeys. That year he supplied them with food in exchange for all their livestock. When that year was ended, they came to him the following year, and said to him, 'We cannot hide from my lord that our money is all spent; and the herds of cattle are my lord's. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. Shall we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land in exchange for food. We with our land will become slaves to Pharaoh; just give us seed, so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate.'*

*So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. All the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe upon them; and the land became Pharaoh's. As for the people, he made slaves of them from one end of Egypt to the other. Only the land of the priests he did not buy; for the priests had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh, and lived on the allowance that Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their land. Then Joseph said to the people, 'Now that I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh, here is seed for you; sow the land. And at the harvests you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh, and four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and as food for yourselves and your households, and as food for your little ones.' They said, 'You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be slaves to Pharaoh.' So Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt, and it stands to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth. The land of the priests alone did not become Pharaoh's.*

*Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the region of Goshen; and they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied exceedingly. Jacob lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years; so the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were one hundred and forty-seven years.*

*When the time of Israel's death drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, 'If I have found favor with you, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal loyally and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt. When I lie down with my ancestors, carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.' He answered, 'I will do as you have said.' And he said, 'Swear to me'; and he swore to him. Then Israel bowed himself on the head of his bed.*

**Reflection:** Distribution of scarce resources, land ownership, taxation policy - this is politics! Politics among sinful human beings is never pure, always a bit messy. Perhaps this is why the narrator tells the story in a way that leads many readers to an ambiguous mix of negative and positive judgments.

On the negative side, we are told that the hungry people first trade all their money for food, then all their livestock, then their land, and finally their very selves becoming slaves to Pharaoh. Joseph orchestrates this, seizing everything and putting it into the hands of one supreme ruler. We know from history this is dangerous, and in only two generations Joseph's own grandchildren will become slaves themselves.

On the positive side, however, it appears that after seizing everything Joseph then turns the land back over to the people, not for ownership, but for cooperative farming and living. Of whatever they produce they may keep 80%, that corresponds to a 20% flat tax. The people respond, "You have saved our lives!" Though the politics are still messy, there is truth in their words. Toward the end of this section we are told that in this land, amidst the messy politics, the descendants of Jacob multiply exceedingly. The fulfillment of God's promises continues.

**To Ponder:** Consider your own political leanings, including views on tax policy.

- How have your family, social class, and experiences shaped your politics?
- How has your Christian faith helped to shape your politics?
- Where do you sense God calling you to more deeply engage in a political issue?

**Prayer:** Look with mercy, gracious God, upon people everywhere who live with injustice, terror, disease, and death as their constant companions. Rouse us from our complacency and help us to eliminate cruelty wherever it is found. Strengthen those who seek equality for all. Grant that everyone may enjoy a fair portion of the abundance of the earth; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. ([Evangelical Lutheran Worship](#), page 79)

## Week 11, Wednesday: Preparing for Death

**Scripture:** Genesis 48

*After this Joseph was told, 'Your father is ill.' So he took with him his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim. When Jacob was told, 'Your son Joseph has come to you', he summoned his strength and sat up in bed. And Jacob said to Joseph, 'God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and he blessed me, and said to me, "I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers; I will make of you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your offspring after you for a perpetual holding." Therefore your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are now mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are. As for the offspring born to you after them, they shall be yours. They shall be recorded under the names of their brothers with regard to their inheritance. For when I came from Paddan, Rachel, alas, died in the land of Canaan on the way, while there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath' (that is, Bethlehem).*

*When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, 'Who are these?' Joseph said to his father, 'They are my sons, whom God has given me here.' And he said, 'Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.' Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, and he could not see well. So Joseph brought them near him; and he kissed them and embraced them. Israel said to Joseph, 'I did not expect to see your face; and here God has let me see your children also.' Then Joseph removed them from his father's knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand towards Israel's left, and Manasseh in his left hand towards Israel's right, and brought them near him. But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands, for Manasseh was the firstborn. He blessed Joseph, and said,*

*'The God before whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac walked,  
The angel who has redeemed me from all harm, bless the boys;  
And in them let my name be perpetuated,  
and the name of my ancestors Abraham and Isaac;  
and let them grow into a multitude on the earth.'*

*When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. Joseph said to his father, 'Not so, my father! Since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head.' But his father refused, and said, 'I know, my son, I know; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations.' So he blessed them that day, saying,*

*'By you Israel will invoke blessings, saying,  
"God make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh."'*

*So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. Then Israel said to Joseph, 'I am about to die, but God will be with you and will bring you again to the land of your ancestors. I now give to you one portion more than to your brothers, the portion that I took from the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow.'*

**Reflection:** We now are coming to the end of Genesis and the story is preparing for the death of Jacob. Jacob is preparing too. In ritual fashion he gets the family affairs in order, declaring that Joseph's two sons (born of an Egyptian mother) are to be counted as Jacob's when, later, territory is divided. Once again he laments the death of Rachel, and then calls for Rachel's (and his) two grandsons. When the grandsons approach him, Jacob crosses his hands and blesses the younger over the elder.

Why do you suppose he did that? Was he choosing to play the role of trickster one more time? Or, having walked with God for so many years, had he come to some internal sense that this was what God was calling him to do? Or, did he intuit that if this family is going to fulfill the promise of being a blessing to all other nations, certain cultural expectations will need to be resisted? Whatever the reason, no explanation is given. Perhaps the narrator assumes that, having come this far in the story, we the readers will not be surprised at a younger son being chosen once again; and that for whatever the reason, we will firmly trust God to be at work through it.

**To Ponder:** Consider preparations for your own death.

- Who is included in your will?
- Whom else might you desire to bless?
- What would you want to say to those who come after you?

**Prayer:** O Lord, support us all the day long of this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, page 284)

## Week 11, Thursday: Jacob's Final Words

**Scripture:** Genesis 49:1-28

*Then Jacob called his sons, and said: 'Gather around, that I may tell you what will happen to you in days to come.*

*Assemble and hear, O sons of Jacob;  
listen to Israel your father.*

*'Reuben, you are my firstborn,  
my might and the first fruits of my vigor,  
excelling in rank and excelling in power.  
Unstable as water, you shall no longer excel  
because you went up on to your father's bed;  
then you defiled it—you went up on to my couch!*

*'Simeon and Levi are brothers;  
weapons of violence are their swords.  
May I never come into their council;  
may I not be joined to their company—  
for in their anger they killed men,  
and at their whim they hamstringed oxen.  
Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce,  
and their wrath, for it is cruel!  
I will divide them in Jacob,  
and scatter them in Israel.*

*'Judah, your brothers shall praise you;  
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;  
your father's sons shall bow down before you.  
Judah is a lion's whelp;  
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.  
He crouches down, he stretches out like a lion,  
like a lioness—who dares rouse him up?  
The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,  
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,  
until tribute comes to him;  
and the obedience of the peoples is his.  
Binding his foal to the vine  
and his donkey's colt to the choice vine,  
he washes his garments in wine  
and his robe in the blood of grapes;  
his eyes are darker than wine,  
and his teeth whiter than milk.*

*'Zebulun shall settle at the shore of the sea;  
he shall be a haven for ships,  
and his border shall be at Sidon.*

*'Issachar is a strong donkey,  
lying down between the sheepfolds;  
he saw that a resting-place was good,  
and that the land was pleasant;  
so he bowed his shoulder to the burden,  
and became a slave at forced labour.*

*'Dan shall judge his people  
as one of the tribes of Israel.  
Dan shall be a snake by the roadside,  
a viper along the path,  
that bites the horse's heels  
so that its rider falls backwards.*

*'I wait for your salvation, O LORD.*

*'Gad shall be raided by raiders,  
but he shall raid at their heels.*

*'Asher's food shall be rich,  
and he shall provide royal delicacies.*

*'Naphtali is a doe let loose  
that bears lovely fawns.*

*'Joseph is a fruitful bough,  
a fruitful bough by a spring;  
his branches run over the wall.  
The archers fiercely attacked him;  
they shot at him and pressed him hard.  
Yet his bow remained taut,  
and his arms were made agile  
by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob,  
by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,  
by the God of your father, who will help you,  
by the Almighty who will bless you  
with blessings of heaven above,  
blessings of the deep that lies beneath,  
blessings of the breasts and of the womb.  
The blessings of your father  
are stronger than the blessings of the eternal mountains,  
the bounties of the everlasting hills;  
may they be on the head of Joseph,  
on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers.*

*'Benjamin is a ravenous wolf,  
in the morning devouring the prey,  
and at evening dividing the spoil.'*

*All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them,  
blessing each one of them with a suitable blessing.*

**Reflection:** Jacob is prepared to die and now the story of promise will be fully entrusted to the next generation. Having blessed his two grandsons, the story now has Jacob speaking a word of blessing, or prediction, over each of his sons. We can sense that this material most likely comes from much later in Israel's history, describing the tribes after they have settled. Nevertheless, we can still listen to Jacob's words and wonder at how they resonate with our own story.

Look again at the description of the sons. Reuben: vigorous, but unstable; Simeon and Levi: violent, angry, and cruel; Judah: strong, regal, handsome, a leader; Issachar: strong but mastered by others; Dan: a good judge, but in some way dangerous; Zebulun, Gad, Asher, and Napthali: probably quiet and reserved for there's not really much to say; Joseph: fruitful, brave, agile, faithful, strong and blessed; Benjamin: hungry for more. If someone were to describe you what might they write?

In 1888, Alfred Nobel was confronted with this question and was horrified by the answer. When his brother died, a French newspaper erroneously published his, Alfred's, obituary. Alfred was the inventor of dynamite, and in his published obituary he was labeled a "merchant of death" and condemned for having made a fortune from his invention. As Jacob once described Simeon and Levi as "violent and cruel", so now the newspapers were describing Alfred. So appalled by what he read, Alfred decided to change his legacy and set aside the majority of his estate to fund the now famous Nobel prize. He is now remembered not as the explosives man, but rather as the man behind the peace prize; and the world has been blessed by his gift.

**To Ponder:**

- If the story of your life had a narrator, how might she describe you?
- What of your characteristics are you most grateful for?
- Where do you wish for change, and what one concrete step might you make?

**Prayer:** God, give me grace to accept with serenity  
the things that cannot be changed,  
Courage to change the things  
which should be changed,  
and the Wisdom to distinguish  
the one from the other.

Living one day at a time,  
Enjoying one moment at a time,  
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,  
Taking, as Jesus did,  
This sinful world as it is,  
Not as I would have it,  
Trusting that You will make all things right,  
If I surrender to Your will,  
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,  
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.  
Amen.

(Reinhold Niebuhr)

## Week 11, Friday: The End of the Beginning

**Scripture:** Genesis 49:29 - 50:26

*Then he charged them, saying to them, 'I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my ancestors—in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave in the field at Machpelah, near Mamre, in the land of Canaan, in the field that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite as a burial site. 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 that is in it were purchased from the Hittites.' When Jacob ended his charge to his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.*

*Then Joseph threw himself on his father's face and wept over him and kissed him. Joseph commanded the physicians in his service to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel; they spent forty days in doing this, for that is the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him for seventy days.*

*When the days of weeping for him were past, Joseph addressed the household of Pharaoh, 'If now I have found favor with you, please speak to Pharaoh as follows: My father made me swear an oath; he said, "I am about to die. In the tomb that I hewed out for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me." Now therefore let me go up, so that I may bury my father; then I will return.' Pharaoh answered, 'Go up, and bury your father, as he made you swear to do.'*

*So Joseph went up to bury his father. With him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, as well as all the household of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's household. Only their children, their flocks, and their herds were left in the land of Goshen. Both chariots and charioteers went up with him. It was a very great company. When they came to the threshing-floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they held there a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he observed a time of mourning for his father for seven days. When the Canaanite inhabitants of the land saw the mourning on the threshing-floor of Atad, they said, 'This is a grievous mourning on the part of the Egyptians.' Therefore the place was named Abel-mizraim; it is beyond the Jordan. Thus his sons did for him as he had instructed them. They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field at Machpelah, the field near Mamre, which Abraham bought as a burial site from Ephron the Hittite. After he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt with his brothers and all who had gone up with him to bury his father.*

*Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, 'What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?' So they approached Joseph, saying, 'Your father gave this instruction before he died, "Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you." Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father.' Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, 'We are here as your slaves.' But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.' In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.*

*So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's household; and Joseph lived for one hundred and ten years. Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation; the children of Machir son of Manasseh were also born on Joseph's knees.*

*Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am about to die; but God will surely come to you, and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.' So Joseph made the Israelites swear, saying, 'When God comes to you, you shall carry up my bones from here.' And Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.*

**Reflection:** We have come to the end, or shall we say the end of the beginning, for there is much more to come for this people and for God's unfolding story of blessing. Of course there is more to come, however there is great satisfaction at arriving at the end of this book, fifty-chapters, and here at the end we find a measure of completion: Jacob dies and is buried, the brothers are re-forgiven for their own sake and for the sake of the promise, and then Joseph dies and the story concludes.

At first glance it seems a rather neat ending; all is forgiven, and the wise old leaders die in dignified fashion. Yet, there is one unsettling dynamic running through this conclusion, the pervasive influence of Egypt. Consider these details:

- Jacob the Hebrew is embalmed in Egyptian cultural fashion. (Why is that?)
- The mighty and powerful Joseph must carefully ask permission from Pharaoh to travel to Canaan. (Have the seeds of Hebrew slavery already been planted?)
- When Joseph travels to bury his father, a large company of Egyptians go along, including chariots and charioteers. The Canaanites note that these Egyptians make a great show of mourning. (Are they really there to express grief, or to keep a watchful eye?)

Finally, it is important to note, that the last word of Genesis is “Egypt”. The first book of the Bible, Genesis gets God’s chosen people into Egypt for provision; the next book, Exodus, will need to get them out.

Egypt is synonymous with Empire. Powerful empires can provide food, land, and opportunity; and they can also enslave and oppress. Empires consistently do both. In Jesus’ day, Rome was the embodiment of Empire. Rome professed to bring peace (the Pax Romana), and at the same time brought crushing debt and massive oppression. Unlike the story of Exodus, Jesus does not focus on getting people out of Rome, but getting Roman oppression out of the people. Jesus came proclaiming a new kingdom; unlike Egypt and Rome, this kingdom would be marked by the release of debts, forgiveness, and provision (daily bread) for all. Jesus teaches his followers to pray for, work for, and expect the inbreaking of this kingdom coming on earth.

**To Ponder:** We live in the USA, the modern embodiment of Empire, a land of rich opportunity for some, and great oppression for others. This is the land in which we engage our story.

- How has your view of the characters in Genesis influenced your view of people now?
- How has the narrator’s view of God, always at work behind the scenes, strengthened your faith?
- How might your engagement with Genesis effect your engagement with the world now?

**Prayer:** Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art,  
dear desire of every nation, joy of ev’ry longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a king;  
born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;  
by thine all sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.

(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, #254, text by Charles Wesley)