

God's Great Deliverance | Andrew Kitcatt | Genesis 45:1-15

Welcome and Intro

A very warm welcome to you all. For those of you who don't know, I'm Andrew Kitcatt, the worship and young adult's pastor here at All Saints. And I get to preach the gospel today. And right here, right now, I want us to join together in paying attention to this calling for every one of us in this room. I wonder if you caught it as we were reading. This is going to be where we're tracking as we navigate this part of Joseph's life.

Point 1 – Come Closer To Me

Point 2 – Do Not Be Distressed

Point 3 – Do Not Delay

Even now, I wonder if we hear this. And for those who get the transcription of this talk, this would be a good place to pause. "Come closer, do not be distressed, do not delay". That calling is for us, we need to hear it, and heed it, and let's start living the dream.

Recap

Let's start with a catch-up. Joseph put on this very cunning disguise of someone who is in charge of Egypt. He's hoodwinked his brothers - hook, line and sinker – "Joseph has framed his brother Benjamin for the theft of a prized goblet. Now, as Benjamin faces the prospect of remaining in Egypt as a slave, his brother Judah confronted Joseph in Benjamin's defense. Imploring Joseph (whom the brothers still do not recognise) to free Benjamin, Judah explains that Benjamin is Rachel's only remaining son."¹ Rachel was Joseph's mother.

Commentary

And so we find ourselves at verse 1, Joseph is unable to keep up the charade any longer. He's had a lot to take in – he's had to control himself to not reveal himself to his brothers, and he's been informed of his beloved father's distress at home. And he starts to weep.

I wonder what Judah must have been thinking, when this Egyptian grand vizier, who has seemingly been quite prepared to enslave an innocent young man, starts weeping so loudly that the whole of Pharaoh's palace can hear it. "Joseph, though ruler of Egypt, was tremendously pained by his separation from them."²

And *finally* at verse 3 we get the climax of the story. Three beautiful words "I am Joseph." And in verse 4 a beckoning – "come closer to me".

And you can only imagine what must be going through his brothers' heads. I doubt any words running through their heads would be appropriate to say in church. You can imagine them turning to each other whispering "Do you reckon he's forgotten the whole "we sold you into slavery" thing we did that one time."

And then Joseph speaks again, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!". He hadn't forgotten. They must have been thinking "that's it, we've had it. Lifetime in prison if we're lucky." Can you imagine? It would be like being a school bully - a really *really* nasty piece of work. And then several decades down the line, finding themselves in an operating theatre, and they suddenly realise that the surgeon is the kid they bullied. Imagine that, but rather than a surgeon, you're before the one who is effectively in charge of Egypt, that you sold into slavery. And he hasn't sworn any Socratic oath.

The REAL Surprise

They've already had one surprise – Joseph revealing himself. But now the greater surprise! “Do not be distressed.”

What???

Stood before them is a man who has twice been cast into a low place, first the pit by his brothers, and then the jail cell by Potiphar, despite Joseph being innocent and underserving of those events. Yet here he is, with every right in the world to - quite literally - *execute* judgement. But instead, Joseph calms all their fears just like that - “do not be distressed.”

Verse 8 - “So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.” You see how Joseph understands that he has been elevated by God and is given dominion, so he can grant his brothers, his people, permission to live with him.

I'm sure many of you can probably see where I'm going with this by now.

And in response, Joseph tells them to bring his father: Verse 9 - now hurry back to my father and say to him...Come down to me; don't delay.” Do not delay! There's no need to fear, and every need to hurry, to get away from the famine that still has another 5 years left to go. And it will be because of Joseph that they are provided for, rather than succumb to destitution.

And after a further exchange, there's an embrace (v.15), and Joseph and Benjamin can't help but weep for joy.

Message

So again, did we get those callings?

Come Closer To Me
Do Not Be Distressed
Do Not Delay

These are callings of

Now in the grand picture of the Bible, this story is *packed* with theological richness as, it tells the story of the salvation of God's people, the Jews. Again and again, we are told that God will restore sight to his people, the Jews, Abraham's descendants. In our New Testament reading, Paul told the Christians in Rome that "Israel has experienced a hardening in part."³ And to put it simply, some Jews don't believe in Jesus, others (like the two Marys and Salome, Paul, the Disciples) do believe in Jesus. And Paul takes Jewish believers as a promise from God that he will return for them. And, he says that one day there will be amongst God's people, the Jews, a great revelation. And to prove this he turns to his old friend - the Old Testament prophet Isaiah. Quoting,

"The deliverer will come from Zion;
 he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.
²⁷ And this is my covenant with them
 when I take away their sins."

And you might be thinking, "well that's all alright for the Jews. But what about me if I'm not Jewish?" Don't worry, Paul has you covered. What's the reason this temporary blindness is taking place? Paul tells us, "Israel has experienced a hardening in part ***until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.***" If you're not a Jew, you are a Gentile.

**IN OTHER WORDS, GOD HAS ALLOTTED TIME SPECIFICALLY FOR YOU TO BE
 SAVED THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS.**

And this is the *exact* pattern we see with Joseph. Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, gathers them to himself, forgives them and saves them. But he doesn't just save them, he saves Egypt through the abundance he provides. These guys weren't descendants of Abraham, they are not Jews. They are gentiles, like me.

So that threefold calling is for *everyone* in this room. **Come Closer To Me. Do Not Be Distressed. Do Not Delay**

Come Closer To Me

Do you understand that Jesus *wants* you near him. I'm sure we've all been through times in life where we've felt like singing "Nobody likes me, everybody hates me, I'm going down the garden to eat worms." Because of Jesus, the first two lines of that song will *always* be a lie. Even if you feel imprisoned, unwanted, rejected (just as Joseph was when he was thrown in a pit by his brothers and later chucked in jail), let Jesus prove to you that he is always available. If you're not sure how to do that, give prayer a chance. Talk to God, even if it feels like talking into thin air, into the void. You wouldn't be the first to have that feeling. But what we feel isn't the point, it's just talking to God that matters. I can't tell you what will happen, but you're talking to the best thing ever, how bad can that be?

Listen to Jesus: "28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28). Not "I *won't* give you rest, loser! Who do you think you are coming to me in that state." Or, "you think you've got it all figured out Mr or Mrs. big shot. Who do you think you are, coming at me with that kind of pride". It's not even, "I *might* give you rest, if I feel like it, if I'm not busy, if it works with my schedule." It's "I *will* give you rest."

And what's more there's no limit to how close we can get. There's no "that's close enough" with Jesus. Romans 11:33 "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" – Jesus is the only true that never runs out. There's no Jesus-shortage.

Do Not Be Distressed

And following the call to come closer, we hear “do not be distressed”. Maybe like Joseph’s brothers, we’d think about what we’ve done in our lives, and recoil. I don’t know if you’re like me, but I have memories that make me react *physically*. Things I’m so embarrassed by or ashamed of that I twitch or even make a noise. My wife will turn to me and say, “are you alright?” and I’ll just say, “bad memory”.

Many of us will have seen the footage of the couple at the Coldplay concert, who were allegedly having an affair. The camera falls on them, caught in the act. And you may have heard the sound rippling across the nation of us preachers rubbing our hands together in delight as we plan our next talks on Genesis 3.

Joseph knew his brothers’ sin, because it was directed at him. In the same way, Jesus knows ours. We might think that our sin light because “it didn’t really hurt anyone.” Not true I’m afraid. All sin is against an infinitely perfect God. And against that, we all fall short every day.

And we might think to recoil just like the couple on Coldplay cam. But it was Joseph’s brothers’ sin that led him to Egypt, to save them and the Egyptians. And it was our sin that led Jesus not to shame us, or condemn us, but led him to the cross. 2 Peter 2:24 - “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” Romans 5:8 – “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

You want proof of God’s love, look no further.

Do Not Delay

And finally, after the comfort, we hear “do not delay”. So, if we know that we can come close to Jesus, and need not be distressed, we can come to him with confidence, what’s the hold up? Maybe there isn’t any for you, and that’s great. If there is a hold up, obviously I won’t know what it is, standing here. I can’t read your minds.

I can only share with you what I think the Lord is wanting me to share, and it’s this. In verse 11 of our reading, we get “I will provide for you there.” And what this tells me, is that when it comes to Jesus, there is a glorious feast waiting. Rich abundance. I’m not talking health, or wealth, a blissful marriage, a pat on the back. I’m talking about Jesus himself. He’s got so much he wants to give you. I had a sense as I was writing this, that there may be people here, who feel like they are going through life ‘starved’. Just like Joseph’s brothers you are at risk of, or are experiencing, a famine in your life. Work has dried up, thoughts for your family weigh heavy on you, your self-esteem is in tatters. I don’t know. What I do know, is that the solution to those things is not good work, an easy family life and high self-esteem. That can all come and go at the drop of the hat or the stroke of a pen. The answer is more Jesus. Go to him, do not delay.