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Mennonite Japanese Church in Vancouver

Genesis 37:1-11, 18, 19

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Dreamer of God

Hello! Everyone!

Recently did you dream a dream when you sleep? In Korea, when they have seen a pig in a dream, they believe that they will be rich. And if they have seen a dragon when they are pregnant, they believe that their baby will be a President.

Several weeks ago, NHK had reported about young people of 30s in US. The program's title was 'young people who lost their dream'. They were struggling because of Lehman shock in 2008 and now also they have troubles such as losing their job because of Covid-19. Sadly young people in US have been lost their American dream and they have no hope. Next week on 3rd of Nov, they will have election for the 46th President of US. We have to pray that God will give hope to the people in US. No exception for Japan, many students and employee from Asia also have been losing their jobs and they are getting lost their Japan dream. How about people in Japan? Nowadays many teenagers and young people have sent their message that they want to die through SNS. Their screams were used in a crime that one offender killed 9 people such as those people in Zama. This gave a big shock to all Japanese. That is why Japanese government is urging people to call counselling service and not commit suicide. Because of Covid-19, many people are losing their dream. How about us Christian? Do you have a dream?

In today's text, we can see a dreamer who is Joseph. Look at verse 1, Jacob and his family lived in Canaan where his grandfather, Abraham and his father, Isaac had settled. That place is Hebron where it is 45 km away from Jerusalem now (Genesis 35:27). Look at verse 2, this is the account of Jacob. From this week I will prepare the message about Jacob's family from chapter 37 to 50 in 3 series. From it we can learn about God's plan for Jacob's family and how God lead them even though they experienced a lot of trouble.

Verse 2 started by mentioning about Jacob's children and suddenly it is introducing about the 11th son Joseph. Generally a family tree introduces about the eldest son first

but the Bible didn't. We can see that Joseph had a lot of influence to Jacob's family and made them to expand all over the world to follow God's plan.

In Genesis 35:19, Joseph's mother Rachel passed away when he was little. He had just one younger brother from his real mom and there were 3 step-mothers, 11 step-older brothers and one step-older sister all around him. Wow what a complicated family! Gechtaman who is a researcher of Genesis said Genesis describe about family relationship between parents and their children and between siblings. We can see this is even in Jacob's family. If we have any family problem, we may be encouraged by their story.

And John RW. Stott said Christianity is basically historical religion. The Bible was written about the people of Israel which God had chosen and Jesus Christ was born from Israel. That is why it is called a 'sanctified history' (from Understanding the Bible, 1972). Sometimes it tends to glorify human history especially for dictatorship or monarchy to support their legitimacy. But the Bible is different from human history. We can find very unique things in the Bible that Jacob's family which was chosen as the Holy nation by God made mistakes and sins a lot. The Bible didn't hide their sins and even expose them frankly. Because the Bible was written about the history of salvation. The Bible teaches the great and graceful plan of God that sinful people could never be saved without Jesus, the Son of God.

Then let's see verse 4. Joseph's brothers hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. One of the reasons was that their father Jacob loved him very much more the other brothers. I think that is because Jacob felt sorry about Joseph, because he lost his mom Rachel when he was a little. But his brothers didn't give any compassions to Joseph and just continued to hate and were jealous of him. There is one more reason that he was hated by his brothers. That is Joseph's character. From verse 2, Joseph had been reporting his brothers' wickedness to his father Jacob. We can see that Joseph is very honest and diligent. He didn't tell a lie and did not compromise to injustice.

But there is an absolute reason why he was hated by his brothers. That is because he was a dreamer. He dreamed and told them about his dream several times to his brothers. By the way, what was his dream? From verse 7 and 9, one was where Joseph's sheaf suddenly rose and stood upright, while his brothers' sheaves gathered around his and bowed down to it. And he had another dream that the sun and moon and eleven

stars were bowing down to him. When his brothers heard about his dreams they got angry with that dreams. See verse 8, “Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he said.”

In ancient times when they searched for God’s plans, they used direction of the sun, the moon and stars. From this fact Joseph’s dreams involved in being a King or a leader of nations of which his brothers will be (The Study Bible, Japan Bible Society2014).

From verse 10 and 11, he also told his father Jacob about his dreams. Fortunately Jacob responded differently from Joseph’s brothers. He kept the matter in his mind. Why did he? As you know he ever had experienced of receiving a dream from God when he was in a very serious trouble because he had stolen the right of the First son from his brother Esau. According to the chapter 28 verse 12, he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching it heaven. Look at the chapter 28 verse 13 and 14, God promised him that He will make Jacob’s descendants be like the dust of earth and will give the land which he was lying. Also God will make all the peoples on earth will be blessed through Jacob. This promise was completed when Jesus came to the earth and crucified on the cross and resurrected about 2000 years ago. And through what Jesus had done for us, we have been saved from the sin and are blessed now. We can see that God’s plane and dream came true in our history.

Look at verse 19. “Here comes that dreamer!” Joseph’s brother mocked him and tried to ruin his dream. Even though people tried to stop the dream, God completed the dream earnestly. God protected him and made him Prime Minister of Egypt and Jacob’s descendants survived and God’s plan was continued to Jesus.

One thing I realized through preparing today’s message is that there is God’s dream which is different from my dream. Joseph had a dream that was not from himself, but from God. It is very interesting that God has a dream. God’s dream is to complete the salvation of all people from death through Jesus, His only Son. We can learn more about this dream of God which I am saying theologically as the covenant or God’s plan between God and Israel and between God and each one of us (Theological Dictionary of the Bible, published by Shinkyō syuppansya, 2004). But today I want to say that the covenant is God’s dream. We can find that God also gave us his dream when we believed in Jesus.

I Peter 2:9, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” God’s dream is that all people in the world will be saved and to

be his people and his nation. And God give us his dream. Look at Hebrews 11:39, 40, “These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.” This words was for Christian of the first generation. Now the Bible says to all believers who were saved by Jesus that they have a responsibility to make perfect of God’s plan. Because we know what Jesus have done for us. God wants us to declare his amazing grace to all people so they can be saved.

Then how can we make complete of God’s dream? Look at Acts 2:17, “ ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.’ ”

God will give the Holy Spirit to us who believe in Jesus. In order that the Holy Spirit can help us, so we can make complete of God’s plan and his dream. In Old Testament, especially prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah had received dreams and visions, but now we all Christian will have dreams and visions by the Holy Spirit. And to prophesy means to declare God’s words. We all Christian will have dreams, visions and prophesies. This is very special right from God.

By the way, when do we complete God’s dream, do we have to give up all our own dreams? No. When we think about this, we feel anxious. But don’t be worried.

Look at Matthew 6:33, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” We just need to keep priority to God’s plan and God prepares for us all things that we need. What a graceful promise!

As you know I had followed my dream for examples getting permanent residence, seeking a good job, going well with legal process, raising children and so on. Now I realized that I had been focusing only to all of my dreams, not to God’s dreams and plans for many years. Thankfully, God is showing me his dream again. Recently I pray and read the Bible every day because I need to prepare a message once a month. And I am getting well from my depressions and have found hope. According to the Holy Spirit, I am placing God’s dream and plans before mine.

When I have been changed like that by the Holy Spirit, did God taken away all my own? All the better God is giving me new hopes and new days every moment. And I can walk in peace and hope. I pray that we all come to be a dreamer of God. And I pray that we declare what Jesus have done for us to all people in the world. I hope that not

only young people but also all people can find true hope to live because of the gospel.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you. Please help us to find your dream not ours which is the new hope. If we are in trouble such like unemployment, illness and problems in our relationships, please give us your new hope and your dream through the Holy Spirit. We have been blessed because of Jesus and please lead us to declare and share the gospel. Because that is our responsibility to complete your dream. Please make us be one with you in unity. I pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

