

New year message2021

Genesis 50 : 14-20

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Mature Faith

Hello, everyone. Happy New Year!

I am very honor to give you a New Year's message even while I am still studying. Thank you for our God's grace and all your cooperation. Last year was a very special year because of Covid-19. Time changes drastically, and people's hearts are full of confusion and anxiety. Last week we talked to each other about how we lived in this historic year. We were really thankful that God gave us a lot of grace. Until last year, I was celebrating New Year without any excitement, but this year is different. There is a feeling of excitement like I felt when I was young. This year, I am very excited about how God will guide us and our church.

Today I would like to learn about Joseph's faith through his profession in his final period. For the past three months, we have been studying Joseph's life in Genesis in three parts. Today is the last part of the three. First, we learned about the dreaming Joseph. Unlike the dream given by God, Joseph had a great deal of trouble. He was sold to the great power of Egypt by his own brothers and was imprisoned for false charges. However, God was with Joseph no matter what the circumstances. And Joseph explained and solved Pharaoh's dream. Highly praising Joseph's wisdom, Pharaoh appointed Joseph as Prime Minister. At that time, Joseph was 30 years old and was sold to Egypt at the age of 17, so he had a hard time for 13 years. But it was a huge success that no one could achieve before and after. From prison, Joseph became prime minister of the great power of Egypt. It's as if a boy who had been a refugee in the United States and in prison until yesterday, but today he has risen to the position of a Vice President. There is such a miracle in history. God has done wonderful things in Joseph's life. After that, Joseph settled with his brothers who sold him as slaves and invited his father Jacob's all family to Egypt, where

he began to live happily. Finally, his father Jacob was called to heaven. After that, it was a conversation between Joseph and his brothers. The older brothers became very anxious after their father Jacob died. The brothers are groveling and begging before Joseph. "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. We are your slaves. Please forgive us." The brothers are begging in the name of their father Jacob for fear of Joseph's revenge. How is Joseph's reaction to this? Joseph had pity on his brothers and cried, saying: "Don't be afraid. Why am I in place of God? You have intended evil against me. That is true. It is really true. But God has intended it for good. It was to keep a lot of people alive as it is today." Joseph's profession is wonderful. You can find mature believers in him here.

Today I would like to learn two things from these wonderful faith of Joseph. First, Joseph professed that God had turned evil thing to good. Joseph's life was a real struggle. Joseph was sold because of the jealousy of his brothers, who should love him the most. Joseph's older brothers were always bad at doing things. The work of the shepherd was also unscrupulous. When they sold Joseph, did they sell their younger brother because he would be the prime minister in the future? No. They just sold their younger brother with the malicious intent of wanting to kill him out of their selfish heart and jealousy. This situation certainly involves evil and crime.

The same goes for Potiphar's wife, who seduced Joseph, who was trying to live holy, put on a false accusation, and locked him in prison. Joseph suddenly experienced the perpetrator of his boss' wife, whom he trusted very much. And also it certainly looked like a bad guy is doing it. And the King's cupbearer who had his dream solved by Joseph and completely forgot about Joseph for two years. Joseph suffered because of the ungrateful person. From these all sufferings, normally, Joseph would be easy to become misanthropic and diagnosis with a PTSD, and may need to take tranquilizers.

However, Joseph sentences like this: "God has intended the bad measures of his brothers for the good." His faith is really wonderful. Can you response this like Joseph did? Can you believe in God who turns evil into good when you are suddenly experiencing a crime such as a car accident, accidental death of a relative, disability, illness, or fraud? This is a very high level of faith. I think this is the reason why Joseph has been respected for generations. Matured Christians are those who make such confessions of faith.

It was a difficult move for me to make this confession. No matter how much I wanted to think so, I didn't think so for a long years. I thought my life was destroyed because of the people who perpetrated me. I thought so for 14 years. But the Bible says in the famous Romans 8:28, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose." Paul was a leader at the church of the first generation. He was persecuted because he was preaching the gospel by God's plan as a Gentile evangelist. But he was convinced that all this hardship was used to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. All the masters of faith have confessed and proclaimed that even our hardships are under the authority of God.

In fact you know that I failed to reconcile with my ex-husband last month. He suddenly cancelled the trip of my Kids to meet to their father first time since 14 years. My kids had counted the date every day with joy and excitement to see their own father for the first time. But their joy was destroyed by their father. This was a big shock for me and my children. Really this is bad for me and my kids. But it's amazing. Through this matter, I came to know that God has revealed to me a spiritual secret. God is very pleased with me, who was obedient to God's word to forgive my offender. The result wasn't what I wanted, but I'm sure God is working perfectly on this terrible thing. I will testify to this story in the next message of forgiveness, so please look forward to it.

Next, Joseph interprets his life from God's point of view. "It was to preserve the lives of many people alive as it is today." Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream and told God that he will have a bad harvest for seven years, and he will be in abundance during a good harvest for seven years. He needed to make stockpiles. It was to save not only Egypt but

also foreigners. Of course, he was able to save all of his relatives. God had given Joseph a dream from a young age and made a plan for his life. What is God's plan? This can be called God's calling and God's purpose.

In the Bible, there are various faithful people. God's plan to make Abraham the father of many peoples like stars in the sky. And God has guided his life in that way. Abraham, who believed in God's plan, overcame the challenges of having no children, and finally experienced that God's plan was fulfilled as God had told him. Abraham at that time experienced a little fulfillment of God's plan through his eldest son Isaac, but now we see that so many modern Christians have spread to the world. God's plan is great. If Abraham realized this he will be surprised at God's plan and he would not be able to close his mouth.

And God called Peter and Paul with different callings, and God made them accomplished His plan throughout their lives.

Recently I pray hard about God's calling for me. Although I entered JTJ Mission Seminary two years ago, my calling was vague. The desire to become a missionary at the age of 13 and go all over the world to tell the gospel has diminished. By the way, I was really surprised when everyone at the Mennonite Japanese church talked to me. I had little faith, and when I heard Rie san's prayer task at that time, I thought: "God, Rie san's prayer sounds like throwing eggs at the rock." But suddenly Zoom's worship began in April of last year, and I was preaching a message once a month like this. I never imagined that this would happen in my life!! You may be surprised that the prayer that was like throwing an egg on a rock turned out to shape like a sunny egg, but I was even more surprised than you were. I am very much looking forward to God's guidance in the future. Now God is showing to me and you one egg. From now on God will raise this small egg to a chicken in his time. I'm looking forward to seeing how God's plan will be done for us.

So what is your calling? Please pray earnestly about your calling from God this year. I'm not saying that everyone should be a missionary or a pastor. I believe that there is absolutely a unique and great plan of God in your life that no one can imitate. Philippians 1: 6, "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to

completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Reading the words, the privilege of us Christians is to believe in our Creator and live a life that is guided by our Creator's plan.

However, some may think only young people have calling, I'm too old to do it. I don't have time to find a calling right now. You know for God, 1000 years is 1 year, and 1 year is 1000 years. Moses, who achieved Exodus, had a calling at the age of 80. It is a year when he retires at the age of 80 and take a rest at home. However, Moses responded obediently to God's calling and lived a wonderful life. If you still don't understand your calling, I hope this will be a year for you to learn about God's calling and God's plans in your life.

And what is God's calling for the Mennonite Japanese church? Like individuals, churches have their own callings. For homeless people, prison evangelism, for the elderly in our area, etc. are different. I can immediately say that the Mennonite Japanese church is "the love of Christ." For a single mother like me, it's a comfortable church to go to with noisy children. Besides, your environment is very special. You can worship in Japanese and English in an immigrant beautiful country Canada. I think this kind of environment that you have is very suitable for Japanese evangelism. Pastor Gerald is fluent in English and Japanese. There is no such person. People who are fluent in English and Japanese in church are not so many. When I was in Canada, when Kenta mischievously pushed the emergency bell in the church and the police came, Pastor Gerald talked to the police in fluent English and explained to me in fluent Japanese to solve the problem. I still remember that he helped me. In this way, the faith and gifts of Pastor Gerald are put to good use. In particular, Japanese people are more likely to have faith in foreign countries than in Japan. God loves the Mennonite Japanese church that has love overflowing. I pray for God's calling for our church this year.

What we can learn from Joseph's life is that God, who turns evil into good, has a wonderful plan in our life. Joseph firmly believed in his God. We Christians, like Joseph, should believe that God governs and control everything in the world and that each individual life carries God's great plan. Christian life is not something that lives desperately to

overcome the hardships that occur in daily life. We are not the one who need to keep pace to this world. We are people who live according to God's great plan. We can live on a much larger scale than this world. When you find this calling that can be given through dreams, visions, and prophecies from God, you can live in God's purpose. Even though if you have a car accident or get a corona today, don't worry. Oh, it's okay because God will make His plan for our life. If we realize that there is God's plan in our lives, we can believe in God who can bring benefit out of everything even if we sometimes experience evil. Our values are different from the magnificent values of God. Our narrow point of view can expand like the wide perspective of God.

This pandemic has given us more time to stay at home. Therefore, you can have plenty of time to pray to God, praise, and read the Bible. In your prayers, let us know God's plan in our lives. I pray that you will be a more mature Christian like Joseph this year and a fruitful year.

Let's pray together.