

DAILY DEVOTION – Thursday, March 26
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD

READING: Genesis 50:15-21 – “When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, ‘What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?’ So they sent word to Joseph, saying ‘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.’ When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. ‘We are your slaves,’ they said. But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You meant it to me for harm, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.’ And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.”

You undoubtedly remember the story of Joseph and his brothers. Their father, Jacob, favored Joseph because he was the firstborn of Jacob’s beloved Rachel. He was gifted with a coat of many colors, and he had not been at all reluctant to share with his older brothers the two dreams that had come to him. In one they were binding up sheaves of grain when his brothers’ sheaves bowed down to Joseph’s sheaf. In the second one, the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low to Joseph himself. None of this ingratiated Joseph with his brothers. In fact, they came to hate him, and when the opportunity came, they allowed him to be sold as a slave in Egypt.

In Egypt Joseph became the slave and manager for Potiphar, until Mrs. Potiphar made advances upon him. When he rejected her, she accused him of attempted rape and he was cast into a dungeon. There he befriended the Pharaoh’s butler and that led to Joseph’s interpreting two dreams of Pharaoh that warned of an impending famine. He became second in the land only to Pharaoh and oversaw the storage and later rationing of grain. During the famine, Joseph’s brothers came for grain, and after several tests of their character, he revealed himself to them. Then his father, Jacob, came to Egypt along with the whole family. Later, when Jacob died, his brothers feared that maybe Joseph had just been biding his time until Dad died to then wreak his vengeance upon them.

This is where we pick up the story today. Joseph is much affected by his brothers’ fear. And, when he says to them, “You intended it to me for evil, but God meant it for good,” he teaches us a very wise lesson. What sometimes is bad, or even seems bad, can in fact become a blessing in disguise. As you may have heard me say on various occasions, “When Satan throws poop into people’s lives, God can turn it into fertilizer and grow green things from it.” Sometimes we actually can look back and see that very thing. Sometimes the good is not obvious to us even in hindsight, but always God, “... works for the good of those who love him. (Rom.8:28)

In our present circumstances as difficult as they may be, as inconvenient as they are, as scary as they can be, we trust that the Lord is present working out his will in accordance with his overall plan and purposes. Who's to say but that this pandemic isn't a rehearsal for something that could be far worse in the future. This particular virus isn't especially deadly to a large segment of the population. And, when it has finally run its course, a great deal of study will be done on the world's response to it. Much will be learned, mistakes will be uncovered, better methods will be developed, and greater awareness of our interconnectedness will keep us mindful of the need for vigilance and cooperation should some other pestilence rear its ugly head.

Yes, it's been bad. Yes, it's been a pain. Yes, it's been frightening. But, again, only evil thrives on such things. Only evil glories in chaos. Only evil desires us to despair and turn to wrath. Remember, on Good Friday, Satan gloried in his greatest stroke of pure evil in all of his existence: the Son of God – DEAD! It was the utter epitome of evil. Jesus, DEAD, FINISHED, OVERCOME, and GONE! But, what did God do with that catastrophe? He raised the Savior from the dead on Easter morning and turned the greatest evil into the GREATEST GOOD for the GREATEST number of people EVER!

So, Christian, do not despair. God even now is working for the good of those who love and trust in his providence. This, too, shall pass, and down the road we may well see how God was directing and protecting his beloved ones. Joseph said, "You intended it to me for evil, but God meant it for good." There's much to learn from that statement. And, here's another one to think about: "All the time God is GOOD!" And the response to that is, "God is good ALL THE TIME!" Believe it! Amen!

LET US PRAY...

P.S. We'll continue to park the shopping carts outside near the main entrance. Since you're allowed to travel for food, keep in mind those who are most affected by current crisis: those unemployed and those with their children home every day and hard pressed to provide basic nourishment for them. Stop by on your way home and drop off your gifts in the carts. We'll take it from there. Remember, if you bring perishables, call the office and tell us about them so we can get them inside in a timely manner. Thanks, and God be with you.