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**Summer Preaching Series:**  
*Characters of the Bible*  
**Joseph**

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A Sermon By  
The Rev. Richard D. Meadows, Jr.

July 1, 2018  
The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost  
Grace Episcopal Church  
Silver Spring, Maryland

# Summer Preaching Series

## *Characters of the Bible: Ruth & Naomi*

The Rev. Amanda Akes-Cardwell  
Grace Episcopal Church  
The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost  
July 15, 2018

Judges 16:4-21  
Psalm 56:1-6, 10

1 Corinthians 13:9-12  
Matthew 15:21-28

One of my favorite shows on television is the ID 20/20 series. This show most of the time has sad endings. Yet, every once in a while it will have a good outcome. The stories of persons who went missing years before for whatever reason, have been found. I especially love the stories of children who were adopted as infants and later in life are reunited with their siblings. The mother/father who had not seen the child since they gave them to be adopted are amazed by the child's ability to love and forgive them. The children held no animosity, but the parents may have carried the guilt and pain. For some parents it was the decision they had to make, to give the child a chance at better life than they could have provided. It is always the reunion that brings me to tears. Alright it doesn't always happen, but I love a happy endings.

This story in Genesis 45 of Joseph and his eleven brothers, is the beginning of the greatest story ever told with a happy ending.

This is a story of love, forgiveness and salvation. It is the Soteria (deliverance, preservation, safety, salvation) of the New testament, the story of the Cross, as revealed in the Torah. It is a story that spans years. It begins when Joseph, no older than a very young lad. He and Benjiman are the two sons of Rachel and Jacob. His brothers are the sons of Leah and Jacob. This is one cause for division between brothers. The order of birth is also a means of contention. This son named Benjamin, is youngest. Youngest children always seem to find favor with parents more so than older siblings. Joseph was a dreamer and a boy with inspired imagination. His dreams were inspired by God. His father Joseph loves him and makes a coat of many colors. You may have heard of the musical On Broadway called Joseph and the Technicolor Dream Coat well this is the same story .

The other ten brothers hatred is manifested following one of Joseph's dreams when he tells his brothers and they interpret the dream as them the older brothers bowing down to and serving the younger as his servant.

Knowing that the father Jacob loves his son strongly and deeply, they plot to destroy him but are afraid to kill him. They believe very strongly that with the disappearance of this brother the Jacob would strengthen his bonds and love for them, the ten. Their plot includes selling him to a passing caravan headed to Egypt. This sale means that the brother Joseph would never be heard from again. The sale instead of murder means they'd not have the blood of the brother on their hands. They tell Jacob that he was attacked by wild animals and the blood stained coat of many colors was proof of his demise. The father believed them. End of story.

Joseph's life was filled with all the trouble of one who's been sold into slavery. His story went from bad to worse. He went from the pit that held him until he was sold him, to slavery then on to a prison. His life was filled with surrendering to the life of a servant, falsely accusations and finally placed into prison. He was held captive but the whole time he knew that the Lord was with him. It says it over and over and over throughout the chapters, that the Lord was with him. Through his mistreatment and betrayal by his brothers, The Lord was with him. Through his stint as a slave in Potiphar's house, The Lord was with him. After being falsely accused of attempted rape by Potiphar's wife he is placed in the prison, the

Lord's was with him. Finally in the palace as the second in command over all of Egypt and the business of the pharaoh, the Lord was with him.

The love of the father Joseph, his life with the father and his memories of love proved to be stronger than hate. In the midst of it all he loved his brothers. He found the power to forgive.

Most psychologists recommend mustering up genuine compassion for those who have wronged us and moving on from the past, instead of allowing bitterness and anger toward others to eat away at us. Although burying the hatchet usually brings peace to the soul.

Joseph exemplifies Colossians 1: 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the foretaste of glory in the NT when the words were uttered from the mouth of Jesus, "forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."

Phillip Brooks said "When we stray from His presence, He longs for you to come back. He weeps that you are missing out on His love, protection and provision. He throws His arms open, runs toward you, gathers you up, and welcomes you home."

Joseph demonstrates the unrelenting, always forgiving, persistent, life giving power of real love. That's the wonderful part of translating this very story into the every day life of the 21st century. In the midst of tragedy, murders, modern day slavery and trafficking, the abuse of the poor who are breaking laws but there are some who want a better life for their children and themselves. There are a lot of us who know you overcome evil with good. They know that in order to be forgiven by their heavenly Father, they must forgive first. That when they forgive the trespasses of others, theirs are forgiven too. Let us pray.