

When God is at Work

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Preacher: Dr. Daniel Heeringa

[0 : 0 0] Genesis chapter 4, I'll buy you lunch. How about that? When I was a kid, I had a cool toy. I had to tell somebody who was a guest with us this morning after the worship.

I said, that was my daughter I was talking to when I said I was going to buy that girl lunch. So anyway, if you don't know, that's my girl. When I was a kid, I had a toy that was quite therapeutic for me.

His name was Bobo the Bounce Back Clown. You punch him and he keeps coming back. And the best \$2.99 you could spend in the 70s.

I had two older brothers that if I hit them, they hit back and they were bigger than me. And so it hurt too much. I love my dog. I didn't want to hit him. But if I did, he would have bit me.

So I hit Bobo the Bounce Back Clown. And he just kept coming back time and time again. Well, I couldn't help but think about that when I thought about Joseph. A favored son, but a hated brother, sold into slavery.

[1 : 0 3] A successful slave that was then falsely accused and imprisoned. Then a successful prisoner, but easily forgotten by those of influence.

And that describes 13 years of Joseph's life. We're not sure what part of that time he was in Potiphar's house.

We know he was sold into slavery at 17. We know that sometime after he had been in Potiphar's house, he went to prison and served in prison. We know that after he had told somebody a dream interpretation that he had to stay two more years.

And now we know he's 30 years old. It's been a long time bouncing around. So we left him last week when we were talking about him in Genesis 40 verse 23 where it says, Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

What the cupbearer forgot was the dream interpretation that Joseph had given him about his release and about his restoration as the cupbearer in coming days.

[2 : 1 9] And it happened just like Joseph said it would. And when the cupbearer now was bearing the cup for Pharaoh, which means he was by his side daily, there was great opportunity for him to speak highly of Joseph, but he completely forgot him.

He never bothered to bring him up for two years. And two years later, when Pharaoh had a dream, he remembered.

Genesis 21, excuse me, Genesis 41 tells us that Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile when seven good-looking cattle came up out of the water.

That's the kind of cattle that if you ever go to a stockyard cattleman's restaurant, what you'll see on the walls are huge photos.

I mean six foot by four foot photos of prize cattle. That's the kind of cattle that was walking out of the Nile in that dream. It was followed by seven of the ugliest, scroniest, mad cow-diseased cows you'll ever see.

[3 : 34] And then suddenly in his dream, the seven ugly cows ate the good-looking cows, and Pharaoh was shocked and woke up from his dream. He went back to sleep.

This time he dreamed of seven plump, good ears of grain growing out of one stalk, followed by seven ears filled with blight and dying.

But the thin ears then swallowed up the plump and good ears, and again he woke up shocked. So he called together what the translation says were magicians.

In reality, those fellows that came up were astrologists that knew how to read the sacred writings, the sacred Egyptian writings.

Now when I say sacred writings, I don't mean like scripture. I mean to them it was sacred. And there were hieroglyphics that told them about the stars and those type things, and these pagans were very intelligent men that consulted others upon what they saw.

[4 : 50] They were the wisest in the land, and so Pharaoh brought them to him to interpret his dreams, and they had no clue at all. Now the dreams that Pharaoh dreamed were from God.

And worldly wisdom does you no good in the things of God. You don't get it. People led by the Spirit of God are the ones that interpret the things of God.

And it was about this time that nobody could interpret that dream that the cupbearer had that aha moment. Oh yeah, I remember a guy. And he remembers a dream interpreter from prison two years earlier, and he told Pharaoh about Joseph, and so they called for Joseph.

Now Joseph looked like he was on an episode of Duck Dynasty. That's what Hebrews looked like. Long beards, and plus he had been in what was described as the pit or the dungeon.

So he was dingy at that. And that is not what the Egyptians looked like. They shaved all the hair off and made sure they were ornate in their appearance.

[6 : 04] And so Joseph came out of that pit and shaved and became clean and got the dome shaver out and got his head right, you know.

Went out in new clothes. And Genesis 41, 15, 16 says, And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I've had a dream and there is no one who can interpret it.

I've heard it said of you that you hear a dream, you can interpret it. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, It is not in me.

God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer. Pharaoh explained his dreams and how no one could help him. And then Joseph interprets his dreams.

In verse 25, it says, Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, The dreams of Pharaoh are one. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years.

[7 : 09] The dreams are one. The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine.

And then he goes a step further. And he says in verse 28, It is as I told Pharaoh, God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do.

There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. But after them, there will also rise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt.

The famine will consume the land, and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe.

And the doubling of Pharaoh's dreams means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about. Now, therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt.

[8 : 17] Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land, and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years, and let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it.

That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish throughout the famine.

And so Joseph not only tells him what the dream means, but he follows it up with a four-part revelation. And the first part is, is a bountiful seven-year harvest will be followed by a depleting seven years of famine.

And then a three-step plan. One is, it's going to happen. It's not going to change. God has given you a dream in two different formats to show you that he's doubling down on this.

There's nothing you can do to stop it from happening. Two, you need to appoint a wise and discerning man to handle this.

[9 : 28] And three, you need to appoint tax agents to collect 20% of everybody's produce for the first seven years so that it will supplement the hard years that are about to follow.

And then he breathed hard and waited. And Pharaoh heard a proposal. In verse 37, it says, This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants.

And Pharaoh said to his servants, Can we find a man like this in whom is the Spirit of God? And then Pharaoh said to Joseph, Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you.

You shall be over my house and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.

Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck.

[10 : 34] And he made him ride in the second chariot. And he called out before him, Bow the knee. Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh and without your consent, no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

Bobo the bounce back clown is back, baby. He was a favored son that turned into a hated and sold brother, a servant leader that turned into a falsely accused prisoner.

He's now out of the pit and into the Pharaoh's palace. He was even given an Egyptian name to get rid of all the Hebrew in him. At least that was Pharaoh's concept.

And if you hadn't picked up on all this yet, this was all God at work. And I want you to understand how God worked here. And I want you to understand how God works when God is at work.

Because I believe there's some principles we can learn from it. First thing is when God's at work, it happens in God's timing. Which may seldom make sense at the time.

[11 : 59] Thirteen years, Joseph had dealt with the ups and downs of being a slave, being successful at that, and then being accused and being forgotten. Why did he have to go through so much?

I believe if Joseph was here today, and he's not, so don't hold your breath, that he would tell us that those years of suffering were to help him learn what he needed to learn about God's timing, about God's ways, and about God's purposes.

I want you to think about this. What we read today about Joseph getting thrust into the management position that he did means that he was thrown into the management position of not only the strongest nation in the world at that time, but also thrust into the management of all of the known world's resources.

It was a huge responsibility that he could not have done when he was a 17-year-old strutting across the desert in his cherished robe for 50 miles to catch up with his brothers.

He didn't have the ability in him to do it then. However, when he was sold into slavery, he was given the responsibility to manage a household, so he learned how to manage that household, and he did it very effectively.

[13 : 30] Potiphar gave him all the confidence in the world. It wasn't until he was falsely accused that he did anything wrong with that, so he managed a household. Then he got arrested, thrown into prison.

He rose so quickly as a prisoner that then he managed the prison. The warden hardly showed up. I just added that, but I bet he didn't. God loved him through all of that.

God gave him direction, led his path, prepared him for the monumental task, but it never would have happened the way we're reading about it happening if God hadn't spent, listen to me, more than a dozen years training the man for the position that he was gonna be in.

It was all about God's timing, and it was perfect. And you know what? It always is. It's seldom understood.

I like to say God throws curveballs. You don't know where it's gonna land. But when God's at work, it's about his timing.

[14 : 44] Not only that, but when God's at work, it also happens for God's glory. Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he said, I've heard it said that you, and Joseph went, uh-uh.

No, no, you got that wrong. It's not me. God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.

And when he means favorable, he don't mean the one you wanna hear. He'll give you the answer that's true about your dreams. And when Pharaoh shared the dream, Joseph said, God has revealed to you.

And later, Joseph said, God has shown you. And then later, he said, it's fixed by God. And then he said, and God will soon make it happen.

Every time Joseph opened his mouth, he said, God did this. God will do this. God will take care of this. It's all about God. It's not me.

[15 : 50] It's God. And it was God that always got the glory. Why was Joseph used in such a powerful way by the Lord?

Because he lived right, and he gave the glory to God. That has a powerful effect. I want you to notice something. When Joseph said he needed, excuse me, when Pharaoh said he needed a discerning man, excuse me, Joseph said, I need a, you need a, let me get this right.

Y'all got me teed up. Joseph said, Pharaoh, you're gonna need a discerning man to manage all this. And Pharaoh, Pharaoh, the leader of the most pagan nation in all the world, looked at his men and said, can we find a man like this in whom the spirit of God?

And then he answers his own question because remember the magician going, oh. Pharaoh said to Joseph, since God, I don't want you to miss out.

Since God has shown you all this, there's none so discerning and wise as you. Pharaoh gave God the glory.

[17 : 23] Why? Because a believer said, let me tell you how this is gonna work out. It's gonna be God. It was in God's timing.

It was for God's glory. Not only that, but when God's at work, it's about God's message. Joseph was not really a dream master.

He really wasn't. He was in fact, someone that walked with God and that God spoke through, God spoke to him through dreams and that God used to help fellow dreamers.

He knew what his own dreams meant. Even though it would take years to fulfill, he knew what fellow prisoners' dreams were because God used to be to put Joseph in the palace of Pharaoh after waiting what looked like too long for the opportunity to share what he knew.

At least, it sure didn't feel like it was too long. As I said, it was in fact perfect timing. And then he knew immediately the dream of Pharaoh.

[18 : 42] And I don't want you to miss that because it's easy to just gloss over this right here, okay? He heard the dream of Pharaoh. He had no premonitions about what that dream would be.

He heard the dreams of Pharaoh. Pharaoh gave it to him. And then what did Joseph say? That's interesting dreams. Let me go pray about this. There's no evidence in scripture of that.

Well, give me a minute. Let me ponder on this. There's no evidence of that at all. He didn't take a few days to figure this out. Not only that, listen, he had been through 13 years of ups and downs to get him to this moment and God was all over.

It was all God that gave him everything he needed. It reminds me of what Jesus told the disciples when he told them to go share the gospel and face whatever may come.

And this is what he said in Luke 12, 11 and 12. He said, and when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, don't be anxious about how you should defend yourself or listen to me, folks.

[19 : 48] Don't be anxious about what you should say for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.

It might be at the last second. I have spoke words to people that I didn't know what they were going to be until I was hearing myself say it, my friend.

But God will come through. This was not Joseph's message. This was God's message. And we can rest in it every time when we get the opportunity to speak up and be used by God.

When God is at work, speak of the Lord. Honor the Lord. It's not your message.

It's his. It's his message. When God's at work, stick to his message.

[20 : 49] Lastly, when God's at work, it can make for a God-sized venture. I say can make because I'm not going to tell you that every time God's at work, it's going to be major.

It's going to change the world. I'm not going to tell you that. Because he moves in the little things in life. In a few moments, somebody will close us in prayer.

And we'll leave this room. As you leave today, speak to someone. You say, well, that's little, preacher.

It may not be. Say a kind word. It's a little thing.

But God gets in that. When you leave here today, invite a friend.

[22 : 04] Invite a co-worker to come to church with you. Tell him or her you'll meet them on the outside. You'll meet them on the porch and usher them in.

Y'all are an intimidating bunch. So meet them outside. Usher them in. It's not a big deal. It's not a big thing.

It's a little thing. But do you know what big can come from that? When somebody asks you to pray for them.

Stop. What you're doing, no matter where it is, and pray for them. Let's quit telling people we'll pray for them and then forget what we told people.

Be honest. Pray for them on the spot because one thing it does is one, it makes you one of your word, but it also reminds you because you've already prayed for them one time. It actually is a better reminder than somebody just throwing something out to you.

[23 : 12] And it's a little thing, but God's all over it. He's all over it. So I say that it can be a God-sized venture because the reality is God works through little things.

It's not always big, but it can be. God's more than capable and he loves the praise of his people, so he often moves in big ways.

I'll tell you one way he moves that I just can't get past is God gave Joseph what he gave him instantaneously.

There was no way he could have known and prepared for a dream interpretation of a dream that he had not heard of. And not only did he interpret that dream for Pharaoh, but he instantly set up an infrastructure, a funding mechanism, organized a plan for storehouses and forecasted the next 14 years.

That's a long range plan, instantaneous for Pharaoh. The cities of storehouses that they built as a result of Joseph can still be viewed in Egypt today that held the grain that people brought in.

[24 : 42] All of that is seen in the moment that he interprets the dream. Friend, listen, that is nothing but God. That's just God. And that plan would not only change a nation, it will change the known world.

And Pharaoh knew it immediately. That's why he put his signet ring on him. You know what that means? Anytime Pharaoh was to sign his name to anything, instead they dropped a drop of hot wax there and he took his ring and put his seal in it.

And he took that off and said, you are my power of attorney. Whatever you sign, it's on my authority. Not only that, but he got his glorious robe back.

And man, this thing was royal. Got him a gold chain. You're not bona fide unless you got a gold chain. Rode in a chariot with only the Pharaoh in front of him.

When the president is riding in the beast, there's another one right behind him. And if something goes wrong with that vehicle, they'll take our president and they'll put him in the next car and keep moving on.

[26 : 11] Pharaoh had two chariots. He sat in one, Joseph sat in the other. And when it came by, people were told to bow the knee. That is the exact fulfillment of Joseph's own dream that he shared with his brothers and made them so mad that they sold him into slavery and counted him as dead.

God was in it all the time. Tell me God can't do big things. He does God-size ventures.

So what in the world are you worried about? What is it in your life today that's so big you don't even know if you want to turn it over to God?

Now you won't say that out loud. We're in a Baptist church. You won't say that. But when's the last time you took that big burden in your life and said, Lord, I can't control this.

And you know what my heart's desire is. But more important than my heart's desire is what you want. God, I placed it in your hands.

[27 : 36] Maybe it's been too long. Maybe you've struggled with a matter too long. When God's at work, it's not about our timing.

It's about his. It's not about we getting up what we want. It's about God getting glory in the midst of it.

Well, I don't like what's going on. And I don't like the way it's going on. But praise God, whatever I'm going to do in the midst of it, I'm going to try to give God glory for it.

God honors that. He honors that. And it's about his message. It's about his message. Let's stick to his message.

And let's believe in God-sized ventures. I want you to know he has went before us and he knows where we're going.

[28 : 44] And so what in the world are you worried about? When God's at work, he'll take care of it.

You just got to trust him. And there's nothing you can trust the Lord with anymore than with your own life. And if you've never trusted the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, Scripture tells us that if you'll admit that you've sinned against God, that you've wronged him, that you've disappointed him, and you'll ask God to forgive you and to cleanse you and to come into your life and change you, that he'll meet you where you are and he'll save your life both now and for eternity.

And if you've never done that, I'd like to share with you how to do that personally. Maybe you have done that, but it's a private decision. You've never shared that publicly with anybody.

And the reality is, by Jesus' example and by his commission, he tells us that we ought to acknowledge that publicly through baptism. And if you've never done that, I encourage you to obey God with that.

Baptism does not seal your salvation. Your salvation is only in the cross of Christ and your surrender to the Lord. Baptism is telling other people in obedience to God what he's already done in your life.

[30 : 18] And until you do that, it'll be a hindrance in your life. And when you do that, it'll be a great blessing in your life. It'll be a blessing in other people's lives. I'm seeing it again and again, folks, in a live time that when somebody obeys God in that way, somebody else follows.

And it's just like a domino effect of how God moves in that to just be obedient. God's blessing First Baptist Church. He's drawing people to this church.

And if you feel led to be a part of this church, I encourage you to come. I'd love to share with you what that means. But folks, for all of us, what in the world's going on in your life that you want God to work in the way only God can do it, whatever it is, hand it to Him.

Trust His timing. Give Him glory in the midst of it. stick to His message and trust Him. Trust Him.

He can handle it. Lord Jesus, I love you. I thank you for the example that you give us in Joseph, dear God. I pray, God, that you'll help us to trust you in all of our life with all of our matters, Father.

[31 : 57] In Jesus' precious name, Amen.