

March 28, 2021

God and Man

"Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you." Genesis 45:4-5

"Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." Genesis 50:19-20

One thing that the book of Genesis shows us about our God is that nothing he does is ever haphazard. Everything that God does and everything that he allows to happen on the earth is a part of his plan and his purpose. The Apostle Peter will tell us that God *"...is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* (II Peter 3:9)

God's purpose is to bring all of mankind to repentance and every part of his plan is about making that possible so that all men may be saved. So, quite literally, everything that happens, even those evil things done by evil people will be worked into God's plan and will ultimately be used by God to accomplish his purpose.

This reality is really hard for us to fully understand isn't it? That is primarily due to our limited and often selfish view of our world. We tend to see what happens around us in terms of how it directly affects us. A cold, wet day makes us miserable or a bright sunny day makes us happy and we act like that is the only reason for the weather. We see the weather and everything else happening in the world at any given moment in those limited.

God sees all of creation and all of time at the same time. And from before the beginning he has had a plan that will ultimately give every single living human being the opportunity to come to repentance and to receive his grace.

In the story of Joseph we see this reality playing out over decades. Joseph was his father's favorite because he was born of Jacob's beloved wife, Rachel. That story of 'Joseph and the coat of many colors' is really a sad tale of a father showing favoritism to one of his children and its consequences.

Because he was the favorite, Joseph's brother's hated him and when he began to have dreams foretelling his rise to prominence over them, they hated him even more. Eventually they would sell their little brother into slavery because they hated him so. Their evil schemes even involved lying to their own father about Joseph's death.

Decades later these brothers come face to face with the consequences of their own evil. In the midst of a horrible famine they traveled to Egypt seeking food for their families only to discover that the brother they had betrayed was now their only hope.

Joseph clearly had come to understand God and his purpose far better than any of his brothers. They feared retribution but he understood that what has been done to him, even their evil plot to sell him into slavery, was part and parcel of God's plan to save them and to save a starving world.

Would that we, like Joseph, could learn to see God's purpose being played out in our lives day by day. The Apostle Paul's encouragement to the believers in Rome reflects this same thought.

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him," he writes, "who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28) When we are being tried by the struggles of this world, or when things seem to be going against us or even when the weather is less than we might want, God is at work in our lives for our good and for the good of the world. Joseph understood that. Do we?

