



KNOW • GROW • CONNECT • SERVE • GLORIFY

## Eastminster Worship Services

Sunday, October 25, 2009

### Never the Same: When the Word Changes You

#### *Feuds and Dreams*

Genesis 37:1-11

Rev. Dr. Steven M. Marsh, Senior Pastor

The Joseph narrative depicts a generation that wasn't enamored with the modes of faith from earlier generations. The old idiom of faith had become unconvincing. What we have in the Joseph narrative is a sophisticated literary response to a cultural, theological crisis. The intention of the Joseph narrative is to articulate that in the contingencies of history the purposes of God are at work, although in hidden ways. The dreams Joseph dreamed in chapter 37 are fulfilled in chapters 39-47. The Joseph story develops the theme of the Pentateuch by showing the gradual fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3.

Joseph was the second to the youngest of Jacob's twelve sons. He was the firstborn of Rachel after God opened Rachel's barren womb. Joseph was loved of his father more than any of the other boys. He was sold into slavery by his brothers who told their father he was attacked by a wild animal. Joseph was imprisoned in Egypt for a crime that he did not commit while serving as a slave. He was ignored by the Butler and Baker after meeting them in prison and interpreting their dreams, but recognized with the position of governor for interpreting Pharaoh's dreams. Joseph was reunited with his family during a seven year famine in Egypt, and his bones were carried out of Egypt and buried in Canaan when the Israelites went back to Canaan four hundred years later.

Joseph was a man after God's heart. He was focused on being God's person. Joseph was the premier dreamer of all the characters in the Bible.<sup>1</sup> Many dreamed dreams. However, no person seemed to have his entire life altered by dreams, positively and negatively, the way that Joseph did. First, positively:

*Joseph dreamed of being a person of influence: Gen. 37:7 "We were binding sheaves of grain out*

---

<sup>1</sup>I credit Toby Powers, senior pastor of Truth Baptist Church in Bremen, Georgia for encouraging me in my

in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.”

*Joseph dreamed of his influence extending throughout the known world and beyond:* Gen 37:9  
“Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. ‘Listen,’ he said, ‘I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.’”

Second, negatively:

*Joseph’s brothers despised him:* Gen. 37:8 “His brothers said to him, ‘Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?’ And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.”

*Joseph’s father rebuked him:* Gen. 37:10 “When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, ‘What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?’”

*Joseph was sold into slavery:* Gen 37:28 “So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.”

*Joseph was stripped of his ornamental robe:* Gen 37:31-33 “Then they took Joseph’s robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, ‘We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son’s robe?’ He recognized it and said, ‘It is my son’s robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.’”

*Joseph was banished from his homeland:* Gen 39:1 “Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.”

Dreaming did not seem to work out too well for Joseph. His brothers hated him. They were angry. Joseph’s brothers sold him to the Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt. But the LORD was with him in

Egypt. God put his hand on Joseph. All would surely be well now, correct? No! Joseph was accused of raping his master's wife and imprisoned, but he was not guilty. Yet, God was with Joseph in prison and he allowed him to interpret a dream for the Butler of the king who promised to remember Joseph. All would surely be well now, correct? No. God forgot Joseph. It was not until the king dreamed that Joseph's dreaming paid off. Joseph had dreamed of being a person of influence. But as a slave, foreigner and convict in a strange land he had ten thousand times bowed his head to others. But when God promoted him and his dreams came true, he was bowed to time and again.

No person seemed to have his entire life altered by dreams, positively and negatively, the way that Joseph did. Having a dream and dreaming God's dreams change the world. Both come from God. If you dare to dream, your life may be as it was for Joseph. Joseph resisted being angry at his brothers. He could have become angry. But he did not. Aim at anger and miss the target of the dream.

Dreams create tension in that they confront reality and asked it to be reframed:

*You may watch your life revert back to circumstances that existed prior to the dream.*

*You may not be appreciated by the persons with whom you would like to share the joys of your dreams.*

*You may not find that the road to your dreams is an easy one at all.*

*You may even find yourself wondering if your dreams will ever come true or not, or wondering if it was worth it to ever have dreamed at all.*

*You may want to forget it all and go back to life before you dared to dream.*

Dare to dream. Since my arrival in July 2006, I have dreamed and continue to dream:

*that the mission statement, "Being and Making Disciples" is our DNA.*

*that the elders, deacons and staff are unified in implementing the mission statement.*

*that the personnel budget is never more than 43% of the operating budget.*

*that we practice tithing.*

*that as a congregation, we stand on both legs of the gospel; speaking and doing the good news of the gospel.*

*that every member grows, serves and worships.*

*that small group ministry is the bedrock of our ministry.*

*that reformed theology permeates our life together as a knowing, growing, connecting, serving and worshipping community.*

*that one hundred percent of EPC's elders and deacons attend Christian education classes on a regular basis, modeling for the congregation that growing in Christ is a priority.*

*that Eastminster is a congregation that cares deeply for one another and has a deep hunger for the lost.*

*that preferences are not substituted for biblical truth.*

*that our behavior as followers of Jesus not be driven by the economy but the principles in God's Word.*

*that the Presbyterian Church (USA) affirms its historic, orthodox and apostolic roots.*

*that Eastminster value risk over safety, change over stability, expansion over preservation and adventure over predictability.*

I dream. I will keep dreaming. Why? If you never dream, you will not participate with God in his dream, a dream that is transforming and changing the world. Dare to dream.

*Dare to dream of a family that is converted and saved and children who grow up to the honor and glory of God.*

*Dare to dream about souls that will hear the Gospel, be converted and become committed disciples of Jesus Christ.*

*Dare to dream about gaining knowledge of God's Word.*

*Dare to dream about a country where freedom is truly free and captives are set free.*

*Dare to dream about a land where there is no more heartache, terrorism, sorrow, death, crying, sickness, sin, Satan, war and tragedy.*

*Dare to dream about every human being acknowledging that they are beloved in Jesus Christ.*

*Dare to dream about living out of your passion, confidence and calling.*

Dare to dream.

Never the Same: When the Word Changes You. The Word asserts that God is the author of life; that sin is deadly, but God has a way out of the predicament; that there is a way for a new beginning; that

God's intent for you and me is other than we deserve; that God will accomplish incredible things through you; that God remembers you even when you forget him; that God will wipe away your fear and enable you to go through anything in life with courage; that God's tests build your faith like nothing can; that the broken parts of your life provide the best opportunities to have an encounter with God; that God uses circumstances to change you; that if you aim at anger you will miss the target of the dream.

God is the dream maker. We're seeing the dream unfold by studying God's Word, particularly the Old Testament; from God speaking into the void and changing it forever to using Joseph to keep the dream advancing. The dream is for humanity to be reconciled to God. Positive and negative stuff happens in life. Anger can disrupt a dream. Aim at anger and miss the target of the dream. Let us pray!

Copyright © 2009  
Steven M. Marsh  
All Rights Reserved.

E A S T M I N S T E R P R E S B Y T E R I A N C H U R C H

1958 N. Webb Road • Wichita, Kansas 67206-3404 • p 316.634.0337 f 316.634.1496 • [www.eastminster.org](http://www.eastminster.org)