

0023 Joseph Forgives His Brothers

MEMORY VERSE: "If you forgive..., your heavenly Father will also forgive you." Matthew 6:14

SCRIPTURES: Genesis 44, 45

AIM: To teach that we should forgive each other.

Joseph's silver cup wasn't like any other cup. It was very special. Only the most important people in the kingdom had one and to steal it was a serious crime.

"I'll put the cup in Benjamin's sack of grain to see what their reaction is," thought Joseph. When the brothers were ready to leave for home, Joseph told his servant to fill each sack with as much grain as each brother could carry. Joseph had the silver cup put in Benjamin's sack of grain.

The brothers started on their way, happy that 'everything had gone well and that Benjamin was safe.

Suddenly, from behind, they saw a horseman galloping toward them. As he came nearer they recognized the rider as a servant of the governor of Egypt.

"Why did you steal my master's silver cup?" asked the servant. "He has been so kind to you!"

"What in the world are you talking about?" they demanded. "Why do you accuse us of such a terrible thing? We are so sure that we are not guilty that if you find the cup with any one of us, let that one person die and make the rest of us your slaves."

"Only the one who stole the cup will be a slave," said the man. "The rest of you may go free."

All the sacks of grain were searched. The last one to be opened was Benjamin's. To the brothers' shock, out fell Joseph's silver cup. In despair they reloaded their sacks and headed back to the city. What a sad journey that was.

Joseph was waiting for them. "What have you done?" he asked, pretending to be angry.

"We will be your slaves," they said as they bowed low before Joseph.

"That won't be necessary. Only the one who had my cup in his sack will stay," said Joseph. "The rest may go home." Joseph was testing to see if his brothers were still mean and selfish and would let Benjamin suffer if they could go free.

Judah stepped forward and pleaded with Joseph. "Please let me be your slave instead. My father will die if my youngest brother Benjamin does not return home. Our father has already lost one son."

How different Judah was now from the time when he convinced his brothers to sell Joseph as a slave, and then lied to his father about what happened to Joseph! Now Judah was so concerned for his father and youngest brother that he was willing to die for them.

Joseph now knew his brothers were better men. Their hearts were changed. Joseph could stand it no longer.

"Servants, leave the room," said Joseph quickly. "I want only these men to remain." He pointed to his brothers.

Then Joseph started to weep! He sobbed loudly and his brothers didn't understand why.

"I am Joseph, your brother!" he cried out. "Is my father still alive?"

The brothers were too stunned to answer.

"Come close to me," said Joseph and he held out his arms to his brothers, especially to Benjamin.

"Don't be angry that you did such an evil deed to me so many years ago; for God had it all planned," Joseph said. "Now I am here to save your lives. God has seen to it that I became a counselor for Pharaoh and ruler of all the land of Egypt."

What a wonderful time the brothers had, talking and hugging each other and weeping for joy.

"Now hurry home to my father. Tell him I am alive! And bring him back to me," said Joseph.

Pharaoh heard about Joseph's brothers and said, "Tell them to hurry to their home and then come back to Egypt to live."

When the brothers arrived home, Jacob couldn't believe Joseph was alive. But when he saw the wagons filled with food that Joseph had sent, he began to believe.

"It must be true," he said. "Joseph my son is alive. I will get to see him before I die!" What happiness there was in that home that night.

We too must learn to trust God and His perfect timing for our lives. Joseph did, and great was his reward.