

## **Mercy has a meal plan**

*09/11/2025 Genesis 42-43 – George Kawalek*

When it comes to food, there are certain ways of doing things. I had this one friend always ate his pudding before eating his main course! Who eats pudding first?! It's just not done! It's not the order of things! When it comes to restoration, there are certain ways of doing things too and that is what we see here. So far in our series in Joseph, we've seen this 17 year old lad hated by family, thrown into a pit, sold into slavery, accused of what he did not do, thrown into prison, forgotten by people he helped, rise to power and now he faces his own family. Here he faces his scheming, treacherous brothers who caused him to spend his 20s in prison and suffer greatly. But God has been at work through all of this so Joseph doesn't treat them as they treated him or give them what they deserve. He extends mercy as he starts the journey of reconciliation. Joseph dealt with his brothers the same way God deals with us. In their undeserving state he reached out in mercy and then, in gracious love, showed them their sin and their failings so they could come to a place of conviction and then, outrageously, gave them a seat at his table. Mercy has a meal plan. Some courses are easier to stomach than others but they are all needed. Until we grasp our depravity, we won't know our need for mercy. Like my mate at school, we can't start with our pudding. We start by facing our sin.

### **1. Facing Sin (ch42)**

Since being thrown into the pit and depending upon how long into the famine before Jacob and his sons felt the pinch, Joseph would have been about 37 and his older brothers well into their 40s. These fully grown men were still living with their dad and being treated like children. "When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" He continued, "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die." (42:1-2) had no initiative, no leadership and were moping around like wet drips. This is probably a combination of Jacob's poor parenting and the brothers' failure in maturing. On top of that, baby Benjamin (who is probably at least 30 with a wife and children) is banned by his daddy from going on the trip. Welcome to the 12 tribes of Israel folks! These are the kind of people God calls to himself. Failures like you and me. By God's providence, they arrive at the very place where Joseph was overseeing the sale of grain. I want you remember here that Joseph was human, he was an actual person, with actual feelings... this is no Disney story. If he had been harbouring resentment, anger, unforgiveness and bitterness, or if he had demanded an apology, the next few chapters would be very different. What follows is Joseph, by God's grace, having already forgiven them, working out whether they can be trusted again. Forgiving

someone and trusting them again are two different things. But as Joseph investigates to see if his brothers have changed, and for transformation to come, they needed to face their sin. As Joseph accuses them of being spies (v13) .” They cough up their complex family situation. They mention Joseph in a casual way. They’re not pretending he never existed, yet they’re not yet facing what they have done. It’s important that they mention Benjamin who was the son of Rachel, the woman Jacob really loved. Had Benjamin, the new favourite, been dispatched in the same way as Joseph? At the next test in verse 15 no one steps up to take responsibility as Joseph puts them in prison for three days, not the ten years he had to endure. As he releases them, he says something that must’ve made the brothers pause. Joseph says, verse 18, “Do this and you will live, for I fear God.” They are being shown up by what they think is an Egyptian pagan! This breaks them. Verse 21, “They said to one another, “Surely, we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that’s why this distress has come on us.” The horror of that day lives on with them. “Reuben replied, “Didn’t I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn’t listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood.” They are 09/11/25 confronted with their wickedness and now are owning it among themselves. We cannot repent of sin we don’t know. We cannot repent of sin we’re refusing to own. If you make an excuse, you’re not truly repenting.” God has brought them to a place where they can see their sin. This is mercy, painful mercy but kind. This is a meal that is hard to stomach but without it there is no dessert. Until we grasp our depravity we can’t know our need for mercy. To make excuses for your actions is false repentance. We are to own our sin in full. Own your own actions and thoughts and leave those of others to God. Pray God will help you to love them truly. We own our sin; we repent of it and then we own it no more. It is paid for, it is forgiven, “He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross” (Col 2:14). Unwarranted mercy is extended to the brothers, as Joseph gives them their money back for the grain. In verse 28, “Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, “What is this that God has done to us?” These men are strangers to mercy. When they are shown kindness, they are fearful. Interestingly, this is the first time that the brothers mention God. They are slowly being transformed. When they get home Jacob is annoyed that they have mentioned Benjamin. With little thought for Simeon in prison in Egypt they wait as long as they can before returning to buy more food. God causes them to face forward.

## **2. Facing Forward**

In His providence, God moves the family forward from their sinful past and into the covenantal promise he has for them in two ways: the use of Jacob’s covenantal name and the raising up of Judah as a leader. In verse 6, Jacob is called ‘Israel.’ This is significant. It is the name God gave Jacob when he made a covenant with him and now,

as God moves them forward into this promise, he is referred to by this covenantal name. (Gen 28:10-36) Joseph loved Rachel and her children, but Jacob and Benjamin are not the children of the promise. Joseph is lost to him, so the question for Jacob 'is risk the life of Benjamin and trust God's promise for his family or hold tightly onto Benjamin to the demise of the family'. Faith or fear, face forward into God's promise and into the days appointed by God. In His mercy God is in the business of taking down walls and barriers of fear and distrust and establishing us on new foundations of faith in him. Again, his mercy is kind, but it is also difficult. Reuben's awful input is to offer up his own children as a sacrifice in place of Benjamin if he is lost. But instead of offering his children as a pledge to his father, Judah steps up and offers himself. (v. 8) God had used Tamar (ch38) and now He was using Joseph and the famine to shape Judah into the man God is calling him to be. Responsibility. Leadership. Maturity. God is at work. Church, if there is hope for Judah, there is hope for you. Face your sin, face your failings, bring them before God and ask for him to work in you and "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:6).

### **3. Facing Grace**

As soon as they arrive in Egypt, Joseph gives instruction for them to eat at his house. They are told to keep their silver. Their feet are washed and their donkeys fed. Grace upon grace. These murderous men are shown mercy undeserved. Joseph has been kind to them in ways that they could never have imagined. But Joseph was not playing games with them. There is real emotion here. "He [Joseph] turned away from them and began to weep" and again, 43 verse 30, "Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there." (43:30) God's glorious work of restoration, the work of transformation is no game. It is emotional, costly, painful but also glorious! These brothers are still very much a work in progress. So, what would you do if you were Joseph? Are you treating others with mercy undeserved or are you harbouring hurt and resentment? Joseph served his brothers a great banquet. Is this not like the table that we have been invited to? A table for all who love and trust the Lord, who repent of their sin and depend solely upon the atoning work of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection into new life. This table is for us. And what are we? We're a ragtag, bunch of sinners. "Whilst we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Mercy is costly. Eating the Lord's supper is a privilege we don't deserve. but that is the point of mercy