Sermon Series: Joseph: Trusting through Trials

Sermon Title: A Blessed Life

Scripture: Genesis 48 & 49

Big Idea: A life well lived leads to a life well blessed

Introduction:
Have you ever had something that was unexpected happen to you? I am sure you have. But have you ever had or experienced an unexpected blessing? When I was little I loved my brother. I still love my brother, but when I was little I LOVED my brother. I loved the music he listened to. The sports he played. Where he went to college I wanted to go to college. For all I know he was the best brother in the world. With that background… I remember there was a time in Middle School when I was in 6th or 7th grade that I received an unexpected blessing. At that time my brother was currently in the Naval Academy away from home. Every now and then on a rare occasion they would let him come home. This is why I loved holidays as a kid because it meant I got to see my bro. Now, do you ever remember sitting in class and the office aid would walk into your classroom carrying a note to the teacher? That was always a good thing because 9 times out of 10 someone in your class was going to be leaving class early. Well, I was sitting in class and I remember an office aid came in with a note and handed it to my teacher. Sure enough after reading the note the teacher excused me and told me that someone is here to pick you up from school early!!! I was shocked what a blessing that was. Well, then when I left the classroom I walked out and sure enough it was my BROTHER surprising me that was another unexpected blessing. Not only that he then took me to ice cream, which was another unexpected blessing. And we then traveled to Sam’s Town, which was another unexpected blessing. It was a great day, it was a day filled with unexpected blessings.

Have you ever had something unexpected happen to you that was a blessing? Pastor Brian told me of a time when he was sitting at the airport and he got upgraded to first class. I am sure all
of us have put on jeans and have found that unexpected 20-dollar bill? Don’t you love that feeling?

TRANSITION: Well today we are going to be reading about something that happened to Joseph that I would argue was an unexpected blessing, well actually was an unexpected series of blessings. Before we do, let’s take a step back and rehash all that Joseph has done and navigated through up to this point.

Historical Background/ Context:
All throughout this series we have witnessed Joseph live a life that trusted God in the midst of trials. As a result we have seen him trust God through dysfunction in his family as his brothers sell him into slavery. We see Joseph trust God through temptation as he ran from Potiphar’s wife. The next week we witnessed Joseph trust God through being let down by the cupbearer. As we see Joseph trust God through refining moments in his life we see God preparing him for those defining moments, as he becomes a great leader in Egypt. While being a leader in Egypt we see him trust and depend on God as he works on bringing reconciliation and unity with his family and through guiding Egypt during a season of famine. As a result of all these things that we have witnessed and have learned from Joseph’s life we have in a nutshell seen Joseph live a life that was well lived. We are now at a place where Joseph has been reunited with his family and they are living in Egypt. The trial of the famine is over but soon we see Joseph having to navigate through another trial let’s read what that is.

(Read 48 v. 1)

Joseph after navigating the nation of Egypt and his family through the famine has now received news that his father has become ill and is on the verge of dying. Therefore, Joseph grabs his two boys and they run to the bedside of Jacob. This scene is somber but it is what I believe to be a very special moment in the life of Jacob and his two sons. Death seems to be a very foreign concept to many of us here living in America and this culture today it is so foreign that
that at times we don’t know how to handle it or approach it. However during this time I would argue that death and witnessing one die was not something they were scared of shunned from but rather it was something that was special... something that needed to be embraced, it was a thing that wouldn’t be missed. Swindoll in his book titled “Joseph: a Man of Integrity and Forgiveness” put it this way:

“We have fallen upon strange times, Birth has become more and more of a family affair, often with the entire family being present in the “birth suite” when the baby is born... on the other hand, death has become relegated more and more to the cold and sometimes uncaring comfort of professionals and the sterile environment of a busy hospital, and late, the funeral home, or graveside chapel... Yet even with this resurgence of personal, familiar presence, how seldom it is that we see anyone die.... Only on the rarest occasions do individuals die with family members (including grandchildren).... Death is not something to be feared, shunned, or avoided. It is something to be shared with those family members and friends who have accompanied us through life’s sojourn”

Death for the believer, just like the birth of a child should be something to be celebrated. It is there where we get to witness our loved ones literally leave this place and enter into the presence of our heavenly father.

As a young pastor I have had only a few exposures where I have gathered alongside individuals in the hospital or home as we patiently waited for their loved one to pass on. It is a special moment, it is a vulnerable moment, it is a high moment where 100% of our focus and trust is on God. It is a beautiful / heart breaking moment where we get to see our loved one transition out of this world.

For Joseph death was not something to be feared. Witnessing a family member die was not a rare occasion, but instead it was something that was embraced it was something that was special. Now, the death of a patriarchal father in particular was even more of a special moment because it was normally during this time where the father would pronounce a final blessing upon his children. As a result I think it is safe to assume that Joseph knew when he was rushing

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1 (Swindoll 1998) pg 196-197
to his father’s bedside that this was going to be a very special time and place where final blessings well be delivered. The types of blessings however which Joseph was about to receive is something he did not expect.

TRANSITION: What we are going to see throughout this passage is Joseph being blessed by his father in a variety of ways. And what we are going to find is that a life well lived leads to a life well blessed. Now before we actually dive into the ways in which Joseph gets blessed in this passage it is important that we have a clear understanding what a blessing is and how it was used.

Unfortunately, today, I think we often abuse the word blessing. We at times will say, “God bless you” with out ever understanding the depth and significance of that statement and word. The Hebrew word for blessing is pronounced Barak, which can mean a variety of things like: “to kneel” or “to bless,” but it was also used in some cases as a euphemism meaning “to curse.” Individuals living in the Old Testament would use this word Barak to bring solidarity within the individual, to express a wish or thankfulness for something or someone, which only God could fulfill. A blessing was something that was in direct connection to God therefore it required that the individual who was giving it to also be in connection with God. Further, blessings were given by fathers before a journey, the birth of children, a wedding, and when one is nearing death as we see today.  

TRANSITION: Now that we have a good grasp of what the word blessing means and how it was used. Lets look at how Jacob blesses Joseph.

(Read v. 3-4)

SLIDE: Jacob blesses Joseph within the context of God’s promise

Jacob immediately moves the conversation and focus from his illness to that of God and reminds Joseph of his promise, which God gave Jacob back in Chapter 35.

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2 Old Testament Theological Dictionary
Why does Jacob do this? I submit to you he is setting the scene the background the context for the blessings he is about to deliver to Joseph. Jacob is about to reveal to Joseph how God is going to fulfill this promise through these blessings, and as a result Joseph receives something that is unexpected. Actually, he receives a series of unexpected blessings.

TRANSITION: Lets look at what the first blessing is which Joseph receives. (Read v. 5-7)

SLIDE: Joseph gets blessed through his son’s adoption.

On face value… I know for me this didn’t seem very significant. I actually saw it as how rude you just took Joseph’s boys. Man was I wrong. This was special… Joseph’s sons where made equal to Joseph’s brothers. “This literally meant that Joseph was being treated as two sons by Jacob.” Therefore, they will each be recognized as part of the 12 tribes of Israel. The way in which God is going to carry out his plan and promise for the foundation and the deliverance of the nation of Israel these boys will play an active part in. In fact, as we look back into the history of Israel many great things occurred in the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. For instance “When Moses selected helpers from each tribe to assist him in numbering the people in the wilderness of Sinai, he selected one each from Ephraim and Manasseh.” When Moses selected spies from each of the tribes to spy out Canaan, he selected one each from “the tribe of Ephraim”(Joshua the future leader of Israel) and the “the tribe of Manasseh.” See God used these tribes and people from these tribes to help accomplish his goal and mission in the world. And even though these exact events didn’t take place yet, Joseph knew that they would and he knew that his sons would play an active part in the future of the nation of Israel. What a blessing this is to Joseph.

3 (Butler 1976), pg 160
4 (Butler 1976), pg 160
The second blessing that Joseph receives from his father during this special moment is found in (v. 9-20).

SLIDE: Joseph Gets Blessed Through his Kids Benediction (v. 9-20)

(Read 9-13)

Why is there all this detail about left hand and right hand? The right hand is a synonym for “goodness” and “brightness,” “Majesty,” while the “left” for “badness,” “awkwardness,” and “clumsiness.” In addition, there is significance in being the first born during that time as well. The first-born was seen as the beginning of strength and would normally receive double the inheritance and be greater and more powerful, As a result it was common during that time that the first born would be blessed with the right hand and the other son with the left. So that is why we see Joseph set it up that way. But something happens:

(Read 14-20)

Jacob is making a statement here with the hands switched. He is stating and reminding the readers that it is not our genealogy nor human tradition that makes a nation or a man great but God alone. In fact, we see God being countercultural skipping over the firstborn all throughout Genesis. Seth instead of Cain, Shem instead of Japheth; Abraham instead of Haran. Isaac instead of Ishmael: Jacob instead of Eau. And repeatedly you see God choosing the weak things of the earth, those who are despised, to carry out his plan.

Now it is important to remember that even though Ephraim was placed ahead of Manassch, both of these boys will become great and they will both be under the protection of God. And it is because of these benedictions to both of these boys that we see Joseph being blessed in a second way.

TRANSITION: In verses 21-22 you see the third way in which Joseph is blessed.

SLIDE: Joseph gets blessed through the allotment of Land. (v. 21-22)
Jacob Blesses Joseph through the allotment of land. Now if you look at a map of the tribes of Israel you see that Joseph doesn’t have a tribe named after him per se.

\textit{(SLIDE Show Map)}

However Joseph’s tribes are considered that of his two sons and he is in reality given two lots of Land through his boys. Over all Joseph is given two portions of land and not just one.\textsuperscript{5} In summary Joseph is blessed not just through the adoption of his sons to Jacob and through their benediction but he is blessed through land as well.

**TRANSITION:** That fact that Joseph gets mentioned and blessed again In Chapter 49 clues us into the final way in which Joseph gets blessed.

**SLIDE:** Joseph gets blessed with a double portion.

So what do I mean by double portion? The double portion blessing was one of the two blessings that make up the birthright. The other blessing is what we call the Divine Prince blessing. The double portion blessing means that the recipient received twice as much of the family’s inheritance as anyone else received. The divine prince blessing means the recipient gets the privilege of being in the direct line of Christ. Because Joseph gets blessed again in chapter 49 v. 22-26 we see him in a sense receiving the double blessing therefore indicating that he is the recipient of the double portion blessing. Now why is this significant? Well this is significant because the birthright normally goes to the firstborn male. In this case that would have been Reuben. But Reuben does not receive this because of his character which is what we find out in 1 Chronicles 5:1-2 and in chapter 49 v. 3-4.

It is clear that Jacob gave each child in chapter 49 a blessing that was within the accordance of each Childs character. In doing so he was not only explaining the destiny of the individual he was explaining the destiny of each tribe of Israel.

\textsuperscript{5} (Butler 1976)
Conclusion:
If there is one thing that we can take from these two chapters it is this. **A life well lived leads to a life that is well blessed.** The reason Joseph received the blessing through his kids adoption, through his kids benediction, through the allotment of land. The reason Joseph received the double portion blessing is because he lived life well. And he lived life well because he trusted God through all of it. Therefore, as a result Joseph was well blessed.

Application:
So how does this apply to me today? What principles can I take from this scene in Joseph’s life?

- **SLIDE: The way in which you live your life matters.** We are all sinners and all of us are imperfect, notice all of the sons received a blessing and are part of the 12 tribes of Israel. However some of the sons got some extra blessings because of their character. And those extra blessings had an affect on those around Joseph. Look at Joseph’s kids for example, the reason they were elevated to the place they were was because of the character of their father. So fathers and mothers know that the way in which you live your life matters not just to you but to also your children.

- Practically this week, I would go back and review some of the sermons in this series and pay attention to some of those practical applications that both pastor Brian and I have laid out and start implementing them in your life.

- **SLIDE: Make sure you take time to put yourself in a place where you can be blessed.** Notice Joseph grabbed his sons and ran to his father’s bedside. If he didn’t show up none of those blessings would have taken place. So surround yourself with individuals who can bless you.

**TRANSITION TO PASTOR ROY BLESSING OVER FATHERS**
Because it is father’s day and the major theme in this passage was one of blessing, I thought that it would be fitting for our pastor Emeritus to stand up here and to pronounce a
blessing over the fathers of our congregation. Fathers will you please stand and pastor Roy could you make your way up front.