

Last week we left off in a season of ambiguity. Joseph learns of this dream and considering the circumstances of his life, it's just not making any sense. But I want to remind you that "Life is lived forward, but understood backwards." It's the invitation for us to be ok with not being able to figure everything out immediately. This invitation pushes us to reflect on how God has moved in our lives in order to help us make sense of what seems to be these random unconnected dots in our lives.

The reason these dots or moments in his life seem so random and unconnected is because this dream God's gives him is one without many details. It's possible that one of the reasons why we don't always get the full picture is because we might get too overwhelmed. **This story is proof of that fact!**

Here's how the story goes. Joseph's brothers were out in the fields putting in a hard days work. For whatever reason Joseph was excluded from this kind of manual labor. He was however sent by their Father to check in on them and report back. This doesn't sit too well with the older brothers.

They see Joseph coming in the distance. "*Here comes that dreamer!*". *Here he comes Joseph with his fancy coat, his warm coffee and clipboard ready to spy on us again.* The anxiety of their ambiguity leads them to make an impulsive decision. And believe it or not, they devise a plan to kill him. There are several other options available...to ignore him. Not to scare him or teach him a lesson but to scare him. But they devise a plot to kill him and had worked out the cover up story.

They rip his coat off and throw Joseph into a pit. Side note: God did not mention this as a part of Joseph's Dream. There is nothing in this story that hinted at Joseph ending up in a pit and fighting for his life. This detail was left out.

Have you ever felt like Joseph? Have you ever had moments in your life when you felt like you were in a pit? Times where it felt like life pushed you into a deep dark place. In fact here are three characteristics that defined Joseph's pit that may define our as well. You know you are in a pit when.....

1. **No exit doors.** Sounds like they threw Joseph in an old well. But it indicates those moments in our lives that we can't escape. We want to leave but there are no exit doors.
2. **Can't be nourished.** In fact the Bible reminds us there was no water in the cistern they threw him.
3. **Invention is necessary.** The only way we are getting out is through some intervention.

This was clearly the part of the dream that God left out.

Setup Up for Pits

For most of us our first response is to understand and make sense out it. Does this sound familiar. Why me? Why now? What are you trying to teach me? These are valid questions... sometimes.

Now one thing that we don't get from Joseph at this point is a lot of commentary. We don't get a lot of questions about why he's in this pit. Why doesn't his brothers like him? Why is this

happening to him now? God why did u have me in this pit? What lesson is God trying to teach him? Nowhere do we get access to his thoughts. Remember this was an aspect of the dream that's not connecting.

Maybe it's because he's not at a place where he's seeking to understand it, he's just trying to "survive it." When you are in a pit, we are not always the most introspective. It's hard because all we see is what we are experiencing in that moment. We are not always the most understanding. But Joseph reminds us that you can survive those moments that can always understand. Promise me this even if you can't understand it just commit to surviving it. **You can survive even what you can't always understand.** Comprehension does not have to come before survival. Its ok to survive it first and understand it later. You can survive the dots in the sky that don't make sense in that moment.

As they were sitting down eating, they hear a caravan off in the distance and of his brothers has the great idea of selling him off into slavery. So they return to the scene of the crime and pull Joseph out. He's a survivor!

Joseph is lucky to alive. Things weren't looking good for Joseph. He has survived a plot to kill him. He has survived being trapped in a pit. There was actually a plan to take his life. It was 10 against 1. There was no way out. There was nothing there to nourish him. He needed help getting out. He could have easily died in that well. But he didn't. He made it. **Which means survival by itself is a success. that's they win!**

I think Joseph's survival invites everyone to think back and remember all of the things you have survived just to get to this point. (type into chat) Joseph was a survivor and so are each one of you. "You made it." You survived. Think about the obstacles that you've overcome in your life. Think about the challenges, the disappointments, the let downs. Buried loved ones. Suffered abuse. Lost jobs. Lost homes. Lost marriages. Health concerns. Accidents. Addiction. Family Drama. Maybe you've had private pits that no one knows about. Anyone or a combination of those things could have easily killed our spirits. Let that sink in. You made it! The pit was not your final resting place. And that alone has to be enough. By itself, the simple fact that you made it, is a success. But we have such a misguided understanding of what success looks like that we

These are the dots you can't overlook because they are these little reminders of not what happened but what we are able to make it out of. We miss this aspect of who we are. It's not just what they did to him, its about what he was able to survive.

Because we are so close to the Olympics, Im reminded an unforgettable story that occurred In Barcelona in 1992. Derek Raymond from Great Britain was running the 400m race at the Olympics in Barcelona. They train years for a race that will literally take seconds to finish. And for many of them, its their dream to make it to they Olympics. But in the middle of the race, he pulls up because he pulls his hamstring. Collapses. All the runners finish the race and still back laying on the track. He gets up, starts limping down the track. Crowd rises to their feet. Father runs unto the track, guy is just in tears. He finishes race being held by his father, tears in his eyes and worse time he's ever ran.

Now let's talk about it. How many people would say he failed? How many people would call him a failure? Are you sure, he's at the Olympics? He came in last place. His running form looks terrible. He's limping. He's in tears. Did you notice what the crowd was doing. They are cheering

him on? They were celebrating the fact that They are routing for this running. Would you say that the runner was a success? Why? Simply because he made it.

And here's why I think this is an important conversation. We get so hard on ourselves when we face these difficult dots and can't always come in first. It's because we have a misguided sense of success. Reframed our understanding of success. We measure success by the things we can measure. We don't say it, but it's normally how we live our lives. What if we reframed it. dots are not just things that have happened to us, but things we made it out of. Things we survived. There are some seasons where you thrive and others where they success is simply in surviving. But some dots can't be measured in numbers. There are some dots that simply reminded you of what you've been able to survive. And that alone has to be enough.

Point 2.

Now, we would be underestimating the true meaning of pits if we just stopped there. Even when they pull him out, there is another pit that Joseph must survive. Its one that we don't often name, but it certainty affects us in different ways. Remember the characteristics. 1. No exit door. 2. Cant be nourished 3. Intervention

There are some pits that are dug and others that are around us everyday of our lives. There is a physical pit, but the spiritual ones can even be more suffocating. Just bear with me...**They pull him out of the physical pit, but there is no way that he can go back to the same environment!** That would be a slow death. His brothers are going to let him dream. They aren't going to let Gods vision for his life come to pass. The one in the ground would only last a few days, but this one could last for decades. He can't go back there! He just can't! If it doesn't kill him physically, it will kill his confidence. It will kill his joy. It will his dreams.

The real pit is that he's at a place where he can't be who God created him to be. He's a dreamer that cant dream. It's unfortunate but the only place he can't dream is in his own home. This is not a situation that's going to get any better. 1. He's stuck at a place where there is no way out. There are no exit doors. 2. He's stuck at a place where he's not going to be nurtured. 3 And sooner or later hes going to need an intervention. He's in a pit.

God doesn't just rescue us from things, but rescues us from people. And people create environments. This is difficult one because you can be in a pit for years and never know it. Here's what some people take years to figure out, "**everything can't grow everywhere.**" _

We just hired a landscaper to do some work in our backyard and he had to do some calculations on where the sun rose, when the sun set, and how long would this area get direct sunlight. We had our own suggestions of what we wanted planted. We did a little research online. We knew the colors we wanted. We saw things in other people's yard. And we gave him our suggested list to which he politely shot down. He affirmed the selections, but acknowledged the reality that everything can't grow in every environment. For the rest of his life Joseph would have to suppress the best parts of himself just to fit in and make everyone around him comfortable. That's a pit that's hard to live in.

Can I prove it!?

Jesus gets to a place in his ministry where people cannot see past his humanity. They can't get over the fact that this person they known their whole lives is doing all of these miracles. Isn't this Mary's son? Isn't this Josephs son? Where's he getting all of this? Isn't this the carpenter? The guy that used to make our chairs? The same guy that worked on our house? Its at this point,

where Jesus, the son of God decides that he can do no more miracles there. Everything can be planted everywhere. So God rescues us from the pits we are pushed in and those we are forced to live in.

Point 3.

They thought they were derailing his dreams. So when the caravan is passing by they sell Joseph away and he ends up in Egypt. Joseph isn't the only that rescued or that is in need of being rescued.

So often we place ourselves in the position of Joseph. And we should. We've all been there or will visit a pit at some point in this journey. But everybody can't be Joseph all of the time. We can't always be the people that are casts into the pit. Someone had to make the suggestion. Someone has to rip his coat off.

I think if we are honest we oscillate between Joseph and being his brothers. Sometimes we are the ones that have been pushed in and at other times we have done our fair share of pushing. Sometimes we were looking up and at other times we were looking down. At some point in time all of us have thrown someone in a ditch. Maybe it was something that we didn't do intentionally. Maybe it was something we said or didn't say.

It could have been something that we did or didn't do. There have been people whose dreams we have suffocated. There has been people that could not grow around us. People that God had to rescue from us. Let that sink in. **God sometimes has to rescue others from us.** We are all guilty of doing something that should have disqualified us from a second chance. And most of the time we tend to hurt the ones closest to us.

His brothers have done nothing deserving of a second chance. They tried to kill him. They've mocked him. They tried to cover it up. And yet they survived their own sins and mistakes. This is as much about them being rescued as it about Joseph. They aren't even aware what God is doing for them.(remember this when we get the final sermon) Maybe the same is true for you and I. Our sins and mistakes could have discounted us. Simply because you are here today. Simply because you made it, you are deserving of a second chance. We are here today because we have survived our sins. You are a survivor.

Closing.

The most familiar survival delineation we use if often associated with cancer. I have a mother that's a cancer survivor and its really a great model of how that can become part of one's identity. One of the things about the process that I think its so admirable is when some patients depending on their treatment get an opportunity to ring the bell.

For a lot of people it's really a big deal. Some people invite their families and friends. It's this moment of celebration that the person gets to experience as they complete a portion of their treatment process. Its believed that the tradition of ringing the Bells started in 1996 when an rear admiral in the US Navy was undergoing radiation therapy for head and neck cancer.

He told his doctor that he wanted to follow the Navy tradition of ringing a bell to signify "when the job was done." So he brought a brass bell to his last treatment, rang it several times and left it as a donation. They mounted it on the wall and other head and neck cancer patience followed suit. Then it spread to other parts around MD Anderson. Then it went to different hospitals and

now it has become common practice. Now in some cases it doesn't mean that you are totally done, it just means that you made it through this part of the journey. In an article, referencing the tradition one woman put it like this, "It was a celebration, but it was more about a powerful sense of relief.

I was celebrating my staying power and getting through the hardest thing I'd ever done. But was mostly just relieved to be done with it and getting out of there. I thought it would be a good idea to borrow from that tradition today. You are a survivor. You have survived things you never imagined. So, as you look back at your own life, I hope you can celebrate the simple fact that you made it. So, for all the survivors, this is for you.