

Sermon for August 16, 2020 by Pastor Hanberry "Faith and Forgiveness" at Trinity UCC Genesis 45:1-15 and Matthew 15:21-28 (Ser20-33)

Greetings to you in the name of the one we follow, the one who loves us, the one who tells us stories that shape our lives: Jesus Christ. Let me say to you all that I miss you! I miss the personal contact, the personal interactions of conversations and stories and jokes and laughter. I miss the hugs and hand-shakes and jokes some of you tell. In missing you, I find it a challenge to write a sermon that includes your images and your lives, or should I say I struggle with writing a sermon knowing full well that I will not be able to see you face to face when I give the sermon in worship. All that's the truth of our lives together in these days.

For some of you who join us for worship by zoom.com each Sunday I do get to see you and witness your head-nodding and smiles and eye-rolling when I try to crack a joke and miss the mark. Or when I forget to hit the "unmute" button on my laptop when I speak. All that's part of the new normal of our lives together in worship and other activities of being church.

If we were in coming Sunday you called Director of Cammeron Williams. and a little bio is this Sunday. She has she will sing a solo in I am excited for you Cammeron come as has a deep faith in faith informs her life message she offers faith in God's working lives and how she



worship together this would meet our newly Music Ministry, In addition to her picture included in the bulletin a beautiful singing voice; our service this Sunday. and the church to have our music director. She the power of love. Her and music and her the through her music. Her her life shapes how she ministers through music. that is the call we all notice how God is

In many ways, have in our lives: to working in our lives. So, I am wondering how God is working in your lives in these challenging times? How is your faith helping you cope? How is your faith getting you up in the mornings? How is your faith leading you to and through the choices you're making in how you respond to others, especially those who you might not like, might not agree with? You might be "on the outs with" in your relationships?

The story of Joseph reconciling with his brothers in our lesson from Genesis for this Sunday gives us a powerful example of how God worked in the lives of the sons of Jacob in the Hebrew scriptures. Do you remember the story of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor coat, the coat of many colors? Jacob gives his "favorite" son this amazing coat, which upsets his other brothers, big time. The brothers get so upset that they trick Joseph and throw him into a pit and hold him in that pit while they sell him to some bad guys, who end up taking him to Egypt.



But God works in Joseph's life in ways that bring him to a position of leadership in the Egyptian government. A famine comes upon the land and Joseph is appointed to head up the program for feeding the hungry. As it turns out Jacob sends his sons to get food and Joseph sees his youngest brother, Benjamin in the crowd and has the authorities take him into custody. And Joseph can hardly stand it:

*<sup>4</sup> Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. <sup>5</sup> And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. <sup>6</sup> For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. <sup>7</sup> God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. <sup>8</sup> So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. <sup>9</sup> Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. <sup>10</sup> You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. <sup>11</sup> I will provide for you there...*

God is the one working all this out. That is God's promise to us in these days of "famine" of good health and stability. In faith Joseph overcomes his resentment and longing for his father and family. In his longing, Joseph forgives and is reconciled with his brothers.

Faith and forgiveness are powerful means for renewal and hope.

*25 "Then the woman came back to Jesus, went to her knees, and begged. "Master, help me." 26 He said, "It's not right to take bread out of children's mouths and throw it to dogs." 27 She was quick: "You're right, Master, but beggar dogs do get scraps from the master's table." 28 Jesus gave in. "Oh, woman, your faith is something else. What you want is what you get!" Right then her daughter became well."*

Faith also shapes and informs how we deal with a crisis in our lives, like right now with Covid 19. Faith encourages us to persist.



Did you notice the Canaanite woman in Matthew's gospel for today? She is stubborn in her faith. Indeed, she persists to the point that Jesus has no choice but to respond to her. In the modern vernacular of "The Message" Matthew has Jesus say, *"Oh, woman, your faith is something else. What you want is what you get!"*

There are a few characters in the Gospels who persist and pushback against Jesus sometimes. They may do this out of a sense of a strong faith. I would suggest it is out of their great need and their desperation that they push back against Jesus' initial response to their need expressed in a plea for help.

How persistent are you being these days in keeping hope alive in your spiritual life? Indeed, how faithful are you in your daily practices of prayer and contemplation? It is out of such spiritual practices that our faith is not only deepen but our faith is strengthen in ways that bring us to a stronger conviction of what God is calling us to be and do in these days.

My friends in Christ, God does not just call pastors and musicians to their ministries these. No, God calls each one to us a place of faith, faith that forgives, faith that persists, faith that opens us to God's call upon our lives.

My most sincere prayer this day is that you not give up, that you persist in these challenging times to allow God to work in your lives, to work on your faith, to deepen your faith, to expand your faith.

Yes, for sure, may it be so in your lives and in mine. Amen.