



Sermon Text: Genesis 43:26-34

Contextualized in the story of former refugee Selena Suljozic

The Rev. Hector Hoppe, Concordia Publishing House, LCMS

This particular portion of Joseph's story is the fulfillment of the dreams he had when he was a teenager.

These dreams were not Joseph's daydreaming, but a revelation of what was going to happen.

In chapter 43 we find Joseph as the Prime Minister in Egypt, one of the most powerful empires in the world. It was not his choice, though. He was not a regular immigrant, nor was he a refugee. He ended up in Egypt as a slave. As such, he was very responsible in his duties until, falsely accused, he ended up in jail.

During these "Joseph's adventures," the writer of this portion of Holy Scripture testifies, "The Lord was with Joseph" (Genesis 39:2, 23).

It was because the Lord was with him that Joseph earned a governing position, meeting face-to-face with his brothers for only the second time in two years. Joseph does not reveal to his brothers who he is.

Like many family moments, this encounter is filled with emotions. Joseph slips away to cry in private, and his brothers are submissive under pressure. They can't let their father down. Judah is especially responsible for Benjamin.

The dialogue between Joseph's brothers and the head of the servants reveals their fear and their amazement. "So they went up to Joseph's steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. 20 'We beg your pardon, our lord,' they said, 'we came down here the first time to buy food. 21 But at the place where we stopped for the night we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver—the exact weight—in the mouth of his sack.

So we have brought it back with us. 22 We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don't know who put our silver in our sacks.'

23 'It's all right,' he said. 'Don't be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.' Then he brought Simeon out to them." (Genesis 43:19-23)

They are in a foreign land. They don't plan to stay. They just want to get their food, get their brother Simon back, and get out of there! And they are willing to pay big time!

In the meantime, Jacob is left at home with none of his sons.

Immigration – even forced immigration – offers unimaginable, unforeseen opportunities. Immigration raises emotions to the highest level and can provide a healthy space for repentance and reconciliation. Immigration also provides food for starving families abroad.

Immigration provides an opportunity to share the faith and to learn about the true God. The servant's witness is strong and impressive. He says to Joseph's scared brothers: "Peace to you; do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father must have given you a treasure" (v. 23). Commenting on this verse, Luther states, "It is evident that [the servant] was imbued with the doctrine of godliness by his master" (AE 7:333, quoted from The Lutheran Study Bible).

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Benjamin, Joseph's only full brother, also born from Rachel, who did not join his brothers' first trip to Egypt, now has Joseph's full and special attention: Joseph gave Benjamin a portion of food five times greater than everyone else's! Will his brothers be jealous of the youngest now as they were jealous of Joseph in the past? It doesn't seem so.

"Joseph, motivated by love for Benjamin and his other brothers, tests his brothers to learn whether they will be jealous or abandon their youngest brother, as they had Joseph. Joseph's conduct is like God's. He displays

both generosity and severity, seeking repentance. The brothers' fear comes from the alienating power of sin. When we do not rightly fear God, we fear other things (Matthew 20:28). Joseph's banquet displays kindness and generosity, independent of his brothers' recognition of his love. So also God blesses His people, even when they doubt His goodness. Jesus, like His earthly ancestor, Judah, offered Himself to His Father for us." (The Lutheran Study Bible final summary of chapter 43).