

**Genesis 37:1-4**

Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan. This is the story of the family of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

**Genesis 45:4-15**

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. And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. 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. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 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. 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. 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. I will provide for you there - since there are five more years of famine to come - so that you and your household, and all that you have will not come to poverty." And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. You must tell my father how greatly I am honored in Egypt, and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

Very Tall Mouse and Very Short Mouse  
by Arnold Lobel

Once there was a very tall mouse and a very short mouse who were good friends.

When they met Very Tall Mouse would say,

“Hello, Very Short Mouse.”

And Very Short Mouse would say,

“Hell, Very Tall Mouse.”

The two friends would often take walks together.

As they walked along Very Tall Mouse would say,

“Hell birds.”

And Very Short Mouse would say,

“Hello bugs.”

When they passed by a garden Very Tall Mouse would say,

“Hello flowers.”

And Very Short Mouse would say,

“Hello roots.”

When they passed by a house Very Tall Mouse would say,

“Hello roof.”

And Very Short Mouse would say,

“Hello cellar.”

One day the two mice were caught in a storm.

Very Tall Mouse said,

“Hello raindrops.”

And Very Short Mouse said,

“Hello puddles.”

They ran indoors to get dry.

“Hello ceiling,” said Very Tall Mouse.

“Hello floor,” said Very Short Mouse.

Soon the storm was over. The two friends ran to the window.

Very Tall Mouse held Very Short Mouse up to see.

“Hello rainbow!” they both said together.

## Sermon

Joseph's story is a marvelous story that you simply should read every year or two. The details are marvelous. If you have the chance, you should get tickets to see the musical, "Joseph and the Technicolored Dream Coat" as well. A funny and wonderful retelling of the story.

This week, while I was rereading Joseph's story again, I got to thinking about the pit and the servanthood, and the dungeon. And though I have never been in Joseph's exact circumstance, I think we can all think of times where we have been in a pit or two ourselves. Life knocks us down, friends turn away, we feel isolate or alone, the direction we thought our life was heading has now taken a hard right turn and we feel lost. It could be the lose of a family member, a mentor, a special person. It could be that time in college or just out of school when we realize that we no longer feel called to the area we have worked and studied to be. Those early stumbling blocks and curve balls that catch us off guard and cause us to question everything.

But maybe Joseph needed some time in the pit. Oh, I don't think God cause his brothers to almost kill him, but God new that the pit would come. And Joseph had to check his teenage ego, he could no longer go around flaunting his special coat or his beautiful dreams. That time was gone, and who knows what would come next.

And, after being taken from the pit, Joseph had to learn a new way of life. His brothers sold him into slavery and Joseph became a servant to the captain of the guard in Egypt. What a change for Joseph, no longer the beloved, no longer the favorite, now he was the least among them, a slave to his master. And so Joseph had to learn to listen to direction, to take on menial tasks, and to think about the needs of others above himself. It wasn't the life that Joseph had dreamed of, but he did his job well and grew accustomed to his day to day tasks. That is, until Potiphar's wife asked him to do what he knew was wrong.

I wonder if this rings true to you as well. That moment in life where we have realized that work and family and life in general isn't the great adventure that we thought it would be when we were a teenager, but you fit into your routines and begin to adapt to all the things that have to happen to put food on the table, take care of family and home and self, and find some satisfaction in a job done right. And then temptation hits us as well. Maybe it is the temptation at work to cut corners, or at home to find a new relationship with the hopes of bringing back the adventure. Maybe it is the little things, like overspending what we have or taking our families or self for granted. Maybe we are able to say no to the temptation and still we feel like we are punished for it. Someone else gets promoted even though they cut corner. Things are difficult at home and relationships are in peril, even though you have been faithful and worked hard for those you love.

But maybe Joseph needed to face his temptations. Maybe he needed to encounter what it meant to serve, to do well, and still stand his ground and face the consequences. Joseph needed to learn that just because something might seem better, doesn't make it right. More money, more power, more love, isn't worth the loss of faith and self that comes with it. That sometimes it is better to choose the negative consequence above the easy but wrong path.

And so Joseph is thrown into the dungeons, into darkness and misery. But it is here that Joseph encounters the dreams of others. The cupbearer and the baker. One's dream is good, the other is not so good. But Joseph interprets them both faithfully. He is able to share the happy news of new life with the cupbearer and the difficult news of death with the baker. In some ways, Joseph is like the doctor who both shares the message of life and of death with patients each day. Joseph encounters the reality that life is fragile and death is a reality. And knowing the truth is powerful. It is telling the truth that finally puts Joseph in front of Pharaoh and it is the truth that allows Joseph to save all of Egypt and his own family. It is the truth that preserves life.

We too are called to be bearers of truth. Truth of life and death, of love and faith, of beauty and hope. For truth is like the multi-colored coat of Joseph, it wants to be seen by all who are around.

So let us rise above the pits we find ourselves in, above the temptation that we encounter, and let us share God's truth that will set us free and give life to all that we meet. Amen