

The God of Our Fathers (11)

The Life of Joseph

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Bible Text: Genesis 46:1-7
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We turn in God's word this morning to Genesis 45 and 46. The text this morning will be the first seven verses of Genesis 46. I will not be rereading those verses. We're going to begin reading at Genesis 45, verse 25, and then after we read the first seven verses of 46, we're going to skip to the end of the chapter and finish the chapter as well. So Genesis 45, beginning at verse 25, and we pick it up here after Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and then he sent his brothers back to their father with wagons and with goods, telling them to come down to the land of Egypt. And then we pick it up at that point when they go, they're ready to go back to Egypt.

25 And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, 26 And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. 27 And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: 28 And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

1 And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. 2 And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. 3 And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: 4 I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. 5 And Jacob rose up from Beersheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. 6 And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him: 7 His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.

Now in the next verses you have a listing of all those who went down into Egypt. We're going to jump down to verse 26.

26 All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six; 27 And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten. 28 And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. 29 And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. 30 And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive. 31 And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; 32 And the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have. 33 And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? 34 That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

Thus far we read God's word.

Let's ask God's blessing on the preaching now in prayer.

Father in heaven, for thy word to move from our heads into our hearts, we need the working of the Holy Spirit, and so we pray for that working of the Holy Spirit this morning, that this word would live in our hearts, that it would strengthen us so that we would know thy covenant goodness and faithfulness in the line of generations. And we pray that thou wilt use this word to teach us to think generationally as well in a day in which there is an attack upon that kind of thinking. We pray, O Lord, that thou will give strength to thy servant, that he may bring this word in power and in truth in the power of the Holy Spirit, and that we may receive it in the power of the Holy Spirit as well so that this word would refresh us and renew us. All these things we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

As we've considered the life of Joseph, we have learned that this history is not about Joseph. This history is about the providence of God as he is using Joseph and all the things in his life for the generations that will lead to the coming of Jesus Christ. We've taken notice of the fact that in the link of a chain of the generations that leads to Christ, Joseph's not in that link, that chain. He's not one of the links in that chain. It's Jacob and before that it was his father Isaac, before that it was his father Abraham, and then after Jacob, it's not Joseph but Judah and from him in the generations will come King David, and from David in the line of generations comes our Savior Jesus Christ. What we see in this history is that God is using Joseph and the circumstances of his life for the coming of Jesus Christ. God providentially rules over all things in this history for the coming of Christ, so this history is not about Joseph, it's not about how he went from being a slave

to a rich and powerful man in Egypt, and that's the best of the story, no, we've seen that that was one of the most perilous times for Joseph when he was powerful and when he was rich in the land of Egypt, no, this history is about Christ and our salvation in Christ.

The text that we consider this morning doesn't even have Joseph in it yet it's still an important passage in the life of Joseph because in the words that God speaks to Jacob in this vision at Beersheba, we gain an understanding of the purpose of God in this history, the covenant purpose of God. Remember where this falls in the history of the life of Joseph. Remember that Joseph has revealed himself to his brothers when they came down to Egypt the second time, and Joseph wept. He wept not simply because he sees his brothers, he weeps because God changed them. He weeps tears of joy, rejoicing not only in the fellowship he can have with them but the work that God has worked in their hearts. And so Joseph not only sees that change in his brothers, but then Joseph forgives his brothers for all the sins that they had committed against him. He forgives them because he looks at what they've done through the right lenses, the lens of God's providence and the lens of God's mercy and grace.

After fellowshiping with his brothers for a while, Joseph then sends his brothers back to Egypt with wagons and with supplies so that they may return to Egypt with their father and with their families. It was evident to Joseph that it was the will of God that they come down to Egypt, that they be preserved alive there in the land of Egypt, and so the entire family was planning to go down to Egypt and live there for a while. We see and understand from the text that this is different from the times when Abraham went down to Egypt and God showed him he shouldn't be there. No, now God wanted his people in the land of Egypt to show what he was going to do for his people in the line of Christ.

Now one of the things that we don't read of and I've mentioned before, we probably all wish that there was something more about, is what happened when Joseph's brothers went home and had to tell Dad, "Joseph's alive. We've known it all along." And they had to explain to dad what happened. We don't read anything about it, not even a hint. Although it's evident that Jacob's not mad at his sons, we don't see that at all either, and we'd like to know what happened there, but that's not important for the history, and probably that's not there so that we don't get focused just on that. But Jacob when he hears that Joseph is alive, he's thrilled. We read that at the end of chapter 45, "It is enough. Joseph, my son, is yet alive, I will go and see him before I die."

So Jacob is glad that he can go and see his son Joseph before he dies because Jacob knows he's old and he could die very soon, but the question for us in all of this is why does God allow this move to Egypt? What is God's purpose in this? Well, we have that revealed in the text that's before us this morning. The text that's before us this morning emphasizes this: that God is the God of our fathers. Jacob says that when he gets to Beersheba and he's going to worship God, he's going to worship the God of his father Isaac. And then God says that to Jacob in response in that vision which he comes to him and he says in verse 3, "I am God, the God of thy father." What is that emphasis in the text, "the God of thy father"? What this says to us this morning is that God is a God who works generationally. He works in the line of generations and that's what we see in this

history in this revelation of God, that God is faithful in the line of generations, not just in saving in the line of generations but working in the line of generations for the coming of Jesus Christ.

And that's what Jacob learns here, that God is a God who's faithful in the generations, that's what we learn here as well and that's going to be our focus. The theme of the sermon is "The God of Our Fathers," emphasizing that emphasis of the text. But then each of the three points uses that word generational. There's a generational concern that Jacob has. There's a generational promise that God gives. And then there's a generational purpose that God has in this history. So that's what we want to look at this morning, the God of our fathers.

We notice, first, that generational concern. Jacob packed up all of his belongings and began to move to Egypt, excited even in his old age to see his son Joseph before he dies, but before he leaves the land of Canaan on the very southern border of the land of Canaan, Jacob stops to worship God. That's what we read in verse 1, he "came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac." Now, why does he do that? Why does he stop to worship? Why does he stop to offer sacrifices unto God? Well, he does this because he has a concern. He has a concern and that concern is evident from the fact that God comes and addresses him and says, "Fear not, Jacob." That indicates that Jacob was afraid of something. Jacob did have a concern and his concern was a generational concern. The concern is this: in the light of God's covenant promises that he knows that his father and his grandfather had taught him, ought he to go down to the land of Egypt? Jacob is at this time an old old man. He's weak and he's frail. He's so old that age doesn't matter anymore to him. He knows that death is coming soon for him and he sees everything in the light of that. Even seeing Joseph, "seeing Joseph once yet before I die." He's that old. He's weak and frail and he's wondering should he leave the land?

Now we should understand something about being old and we see and understand that too when we see others in our families and so on who are old, usually when people are old, they don't willingly move. They don't willingly in their very old age which they have a hard time getting around, move from one end of the country to another. They don't really like to move from their house in which they live to another place, sometimes they have to be forced to do that in their old age. Now Jacob is making this move and he really doesn't want to. He wants to see Joseph, but in his old age does he really want to move? I would say no, especially not from the land of Canaan, which the land is the land of promise. And you see, that's the struggle for Jacob. He wonders if this is right because his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham taught him the promises of God that were tied to the land. What's even striking about the text is that the promise that God gives to Jacob is very similar to what he said to Isaac and to Abraham. In verse 3 we read, "for I will there make of thee a great nation." So God says to Jacob, "It's in Egypt I'll make of thee a great nation."

Now this is the concern that Jacob has, because if you turn back in Genesis, go back to Genesis 12, the first two verses when God calls Abram out of the land of his fathers to go to the land of Canaan, this is what God said to him, beginning of Genesis 12. "Get thee

out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." That's the land of Canaan. "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing." Jacob knows that promise of God. God said to Abram, "Go to Canaan. There I will make thee a great nation." Then you have it as well in Genesis 28. This is what God spoke to Jacob. Genesis 28:12, 13 and 14. This is when Jacob dreamed. He's on his way out of the land of Canaan. "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac," notice that, the God of thy fathers, "the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." So again this idea, the land of Canaan and a great seed that will occupy that land of Canaan. That was the promise of God to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, and now Jacob is in the process of taking his entire family, 66 people now because Joseph and his family were down there already, taking them to the land of Egypt out of the land of Canaan.

In addition to that, no doubt Jacob remembers the history of his grandfather Abraham, who left the land of Canaan for Egypt in time of famine and God did not bless him down in Egypt in those two times that he did that and told Abram, "Get back, go back to the land of Canaan. That's where I will take care of you." And this is why Jacob is now afraid, will God bless his family in the land of Egypt? God had promised to go with him. God had promised to give him the land. God had promised him a great seed. "What happens when I go down to Egypt?"

In addition to that, his concern is for his family in the line of generations, would his children and their children lose their identity in this wicked land of idolatries going to the land of Egypt with his entire family, would they be swallowed up by the wickedness of that land and culture? Would this be a good environment for his children and for his grandchildren?

But this is how Jacob looks at it. He's looking at the future with the knowledge of what God said and did in the past. He's not just looking at his circumstances right now, he's looking at what he faces right now in the future in the light of the past. You see, Jacob knows God. We shouldn't forget that. With all of his weaknesses, Jacob knows God. He had the limp and the name change to prove it. Remember why he limped? He wrestled with God. He wrestled with God just before he was going to meet Esau. And whereafter he wrestled with God and God put his hip out of joint, and he limped for the rest of his life as a reminder of it. God also changed his name from Jacob to Israel. That shows us that Jacob knew God and he wanted to live by the covenant promises of God. That's why he stops and he worships God here in Beersheba. It's a beautiful thing that Jacob stops and worships God in Beersheba. It shows that God's working on Jacob too, and changing him, even in his old age, with all of his favoritism and all the rest, and he wants to go see Joseph, his son, he doesn't forget who's first in his life. Many times it was Joseph but now he sees the knows it's God.

Before we go on and hear the answer of God to this generational concern of Jacob, there's something we have to learn from this, we learn an important biblical and Reformed truth: to go forward in our own lives, we must understand and appreciate what God has done in the past. We must learn to think generationally ourselves, but often when we think of looking at things generationally, we think of from this point on me and my children and their children. That's an important way to look at things. We ought to look that way. When young people are thinking about marriage and the husband or wife they might have, they ought to be thinking about their children, that this spouse is going to be father and mother to children and that they have to be taught. When you're thinking about church membership, one of the things that's important to think about is to think about generations. We could be thinking about generations in that way, but when we think about future generations, we must not forget the past generations, what God has done in the past. You see, that's what Jacob does here. He doesn't forget the past. When he thinks generationally, he's remembering the God of his fathers and that's the way we ought to think as well.

One of the great blessings of being in the Reformed tradition is knowing the Solas of the Reformation. One of the great Solas of the Reformation is Sola Scriptura. We especially love that doctrine of Sola Scriptura, scriptures alone, in contrast to the Roman Catholic Church. Their authority is a 3-legged stool. Their authority is based on tradition, the teaching authority of the church, and the scriptures, and really the other two can trump the scriptures, tradition and the teaching authority of the church. And so, in contrast to that, we're so thankful that we believe Sola Scriptura, that the authority, the only authority for us is the infallible word of God. But when we read and study the scriptures as Reformed Christians, Reformed believers, we don't approach the scriptures as if no one has ever read the Bible before and come to a right understanding of it. We don't start all over. To do so would be arrogant and it would be ignorant, and it would be a great danger for us as well. Instead, we understand that there are spiritual forefathers who have gone before us, they've studied the scriptures, they've even written down the fruit of their study of the scriptures. The Holy Spirit has worked through the church to give an understanding of the scriptures so that we can have an understanding today and we don't start from scratch.

The evidence of that is the Confessions that we have. What a blessing the Confessions are for us and that's why we study them. Some might say, "Yeah, but they're so old." Yeah, but they're a summary of the timeless truth of the word of God and we must not be arrogant and ignorant and thinking that we don't need the church in the past. That means we must be students of church history. We must not ignore what was done in the church in the past. We value the history of the church. We value the history of the church because it's the record of what God has done in the previous generations. That's why we value not only the scriptures but also the Confessions.

In fact, we value the Bible because of that very thing. What's the Bible? Well, it is the infallible word of God, the infallible word of God as he's given it to us through previous generations in the church as they have recorded through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit

the amazing works of God. When we're reading the Bible, we're looking at the past and what God has done faithfully as a covenant God. And so we understand the scriptures in that way, and the Confessions follow from that. Confessions aren't authority themselves, they stand on the authority of the scriptures, but they're the record of how the Holy Spirit has led the church to grow and develop in the truth of God's word. We must not cut ourselves off from the church in the past. We must learn to think generationally as Jacob did. The God whom we serve is not just God but he's the God of our fathers.

Jacob is on his way to the land of Egypt and he stops in Beersheba to praise and worship not just God, the God of his fathers. And so we worship the God of our fathers who is faithful to them and who will be faithful to us. The God who we worship is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If we don't serve this God, we're not serving God. If we don't worship this God, we're not worshiping God. We have to see we have a God who's worked in the past, he's not just about the present. That's so important in our day because there's so many who want to cut the church off from the past. They want to cut the church off from church history, basically. They want what's new and exciting, what's different from the past. They don't want a confessional church. They don't want a church that's talking about church history, they want to be forward-looking. Well, you can't look forward rightly unless you're looking backward rightly, and so many today aren't looking backward at all, they're not looking at what God has done in the past. They want a break because they want something new and exciting.

That's what Satan wants for the church, he wants a break with the past. He wants us to reject the past. He wants us to say those doctrinal differences of the past, they don't matter anymore. We need to all come together and ignore those differences. They want to reject what has happened in church history. That's what's happening in Emergent churches today. "Break with tradition. Break with that summary of the scriptures found in the Confessions. There's a new way of looking at things. Yeah, some of the Bible but some other things from the land and culture in which we live as well." May that thinking never be found among us. May we think generationally and have concerns generationally as well as we go forward, are we being faithful to what God has done in the past and what God has said in the past.

With that generational concern, God gives a generational promise. In response to the fears that Jacob has, God graciously comes to Jacob to comfort him with the promise of his covenant. "I am still the God of the covenant and I will fulfill my promises." That's what God is saying to Jacob, "I'm still the God of the covenant. Even though you're going down to Egypt, I'm going to fulfill my promises." Notice how God comes to Jacob here. He comes to him in the vision of the night and what is he saying? "Jacob, Jacob." That repetition of the name Jacob is significant. You find that 15 times in the scriptures where a name is repeated by God himself. And that's not God shaking his head at Jacob, "Jacob, Jacob." We can sometimes do that with our kids, repeat their name. No, that's not what God's doing here. This is an indication of his love for Jacob, his concern for Jacob, his tenderness for his people. He's not scolding Jacob, he's not shaking his head at Jacob, but he's loving Jacob, and he's coming to Jacob in his covenant love and Jacob needs to know that because of his own sin, his own unfaithfulness. Jacob was aware of his sinfulness

and weakness. That's the assurance we need, too, in our lives. Is there a change that takes place in our lives to know that God loves us, he comes to us? He's speaking to us this morning. He says to me, "Gary, Gary," and he says to you your names too. He's speaking to you in love this morning, assuring you of his love and his friendship.

And notice how he begins then speaking to him. He says to Jacob in verse 3, "I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt." He says, first of all, "I am God." We shouldn't just skip over that because we're so familiar with that, even that name God, what a name it is. This name points out to us that he is the powerful God. He's the sovereign God. He's the Creator God. He alone is God. This God is the beauty of all of his perfections. He's not a God who you can see and touch, but he's a God who is real, real in his perfections, his virtues, his attributes. That's who this God is. And so as God speaks to Jacob, he identifies himself as as the sovereign God, the powerful God, the God that Jacob knows, and the God of his father.

He says to Jacob, "You have the right perspective. I'm a God who works in the line of generations. I'm a God who's faithful to my covenant promises. I don't change. I'm glorious and perfect and beautiful as the covenant God." You see, this is another way of God saying he is a covenant God. Sometimes he uses that name "Lord, Jehovah." You don't find that name used here, but "God of thy father. I was a God to him and a God to his father, and I'm a God in the line of generations, and I've kept my promises in the line of generations."

That's what we need to hear, too, in the concerns that we have for our generations. We do have concerns, don't we? We have concerns as grandparents and great grandparents for our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren as they're growing up in the wickedness of the age in which we live. And things are changing so rapidly especially with technology and all of that does and what that can bring into the hearts and minds and lives of our children and our grandchildren. We have concerns about them. Will they continue to remain faithful in this wicked culture in which we live? Will they be set apart? Will the church remain faithful? Will the church proclaim the truth of God's word? Will they stay in the church where they ought to stay so that they hear the truth of God's word with all kinds of fears for the generations to come, and now God comes to us and he says, "I am God and the God of thy father, and his father before him." Or we see God working in the line of generations in the past and God reminds us this is how he's going to work in the future. That addresses our fears for the coming generations this morning. He will be faithful. He will be faithful to his covenant promises.

But now we see that in a very specific way as God speaks to Jacob and addresses his going down to Egypt and he says, "Fear not to go down to Egypt." God saying to Jacob, "Go ahead. You may go down to Egypt, you and your family, for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt and I will also surely bring thee up again and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." There are three promises of God that you find there. He says, "I will make of thee a great nation down in Egypt," he says, "I will be with thee there," and third he says, "You'll come out." But the main one, the focus of what God says is the end of verse 3 when he says, "for I will there make of thee

a great nation." That's the heart of God's promise to Jacob, "I will make of thee a great nation down in Egypt."

Now we might wonder about that. What about the promises that we read of earlier when it seemed that being a great nation, when he made that promise to Abraham and then earlier to Jacob, and even to Isaac, that that was connected to the land of Canaan. Well, it's not that God is changing his mind. It's not that God is deciding to do it in a different way now. God is not contradicting what he said earlier. What he's doing now is he's giving more details about how he will do that. He was saying, "First of all, I'm going to give you this land and I'm going to make you a great nation," that was his other promise, "and this great nation will live in the land of Canaan." He didn't give the details of how he's going to make them a great nation. Now he's giving more details about how he's going to do that. "I'm going to make thee a great nation down in Egypt." It was beginning. Abraham, his line, three people. Two generations later, 70. Generations later in the land of Egypt, millions.

God's promise is he would make them a great nation down in the land of Egypt. That's his promise there, and he promises that along with that now, "I'll be with you when you go down there. In fact, this is why you're going to be a great nation because I'll be there and I'm going to protect you and I'm going to preserve you." We can think of many ways in which he did that. One of the ways in which he did that and we find that detail later on now in Genesis 46, is that the culture of Egypt was that they despised shepherds. That was good for Israel. That was good for Israel. That's what God's doing here. He's taking his people out of the land of Canaan where the temptation would be that they would mix with the people of Canaan and marry the people of Canaan, because the people of Canaan really had nothing against them. But now here in the land of Egypt, they despise shepherds. They were an abomination to the Egyptians so they weren't going to want to take the people of Israel close by and have them live in their cities and right by them. No, here's this separate land for you and for your animals.

And so that was the plan of God, the work of God, the sovereignty of God, he would be with them to protect them. Then later on, remember, when that pharaoh arises who doesn't remember Joseph and he wants to get rid of the people, and so he makes them slaves, then he tells them that they have to throw their baby boys into the Nile River, all in an attempt to keep them smaller, and what happened? They grew. Why? The Lord was with them. He's promising here that he would protect them and preserve them there in the land so that they would become a great nation; just as he took care of Jacob's fathers, he would take care of his children.

And then thirdly, God promises in connection with that, "But you're not going to stay down in Egypt. I'm going to bring you back. By the way, Jacob, when that happens you'll be dead." That's part of what he's saying here, "Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." That's what's going to happen in Egypt. What he's saying there is, "Joseph's going to be there when you die." Now that was for the comfort of Jacob. We all know what a blessing it is when a loved one dies for family to be around that loved one. And so God's saying to Jacob, "When you die, when you close your eyes in death, Joseph will be

there." But notice what he says along with that, "I will surely bring thee up again. You'll be dead but you're going to be brought back to the land of Canaan." Well, it's not just his body. That's part of it but his promise is, "Your descendants will be back in the land, too. I haven't forgotten my promise. So I'm going to bring you down to Egypt, you're going to grow into a great nation, I'll preserve and protect you, and then I'll bring you back and I'll bring your descendants back as well and they will be a great nation and they will live in the Promised Land of Canaan," which we know, of course, is a picture of heaven.

One thing God doesn't do when he gives this promise to Jacob is he does not give him the details of how he will do this. That's important to understand here, too. Jacob trusts in the promise of God. He doesn't need to know all the details of what God would do. As I said, we have a little bit of the details later in the chapter in the protection God gives to them in the land of Goshen, but remember what happens in the history. God doesn't say to Jacob, "By the way, Jacob, your family's going to be down here for 400 years and then later on there's going to rise up a pharaoh who doesn't remember your son Joseph, and who doesn't look favorably upon him or his descendants. And so that Pharaoh is going to make you all slaves. Life's going to be awful. And then I'm going to send some plagues and your descendants are going to go through some of those plagues. And then I'm going to bring you out and then you're going to go through the wilderness, and then the people are going to be there for over 40 years." God doesn't go through all the details with Jacob. Jacob doesn't need all the details of what the future will be. God simply says, "This is what I will do. This is my promise, you'll go down, I'll take care of your descendants, they'll return to the Promised Land."

You know that that's the promise of God to us, this morning, a beautiful generational promise. He doesn't give us all the details of our lives going forward but he promises this, you'll journey here for a while, you'll die but this is where you'll go, the Promised Land. The heavenly king. God is faithful to his promises in the line of generations as he has been in the past and so it's important, then, as we see this generational promise of God, that this is what he will do, that we see the generational purpose of God in all of this. What happens here is a crucial step in the process of our redemption. Jacob leaving Canaan, going down to Egypt, is a crucial step in the process of our redemption. That's what God is revealing here in this passage, that there's a purpose for what he is doing here. God will do what he says that he will do and he's doing this for the fulfillment of his plan and the fulfillment of his plan is the seed of the woman that he's promised. You see, that's the seed that God promised would come. It's not just a bunch of children, it's not just a great nation, but it's the one who will save that great nation. And that great nation is not just the Jews, it's not descendants of Abraham, it's the elect of God, his children chosen from all eternity, and God's purpose and plan is he will save that people. He will save that people with the seed Jesus Christ who will come.

Jacob is part of that. What happens in his life and what happens in the life of Joseph is part of this plan of God. God uses Joseph and what happens in his life to preserve Jacob and to preserve Judah. We've already seen that, to preserve Judah so that David would come, so that Christ would come from this line of David. And that's what we want to focus on this morning, an even more amazing journey. Yes, there is this journey of Jacob

down into Egypt but there's a more amazing journey, it's the journey of the Son of God coming into this world to take upon himself our sinful flesh, to pay for our sins. The Son of God did come to this earth and he suffered the humiliation of growing in the womb of one that he had created. He suffers the humiliation of being born in a stable. He grows up and suffers the humiliation of having to obey not only sinful parents but parents that he had created. Then preaching to individuals to whom he gives life, but they would not obey him. He's been nailed to the cross that comes from a tree that he created. That's the humiliation that he went through and he bore fully the punishment for all of our sins. He's done that for the salvation of his people. And so what we learn is that God uses a weak, frail, dysfunctional family for the accomplishing of his purpose, the life of Jacob and Joseph and what we've been looking at. And so also God is able to use weak, frail, dysfunctional people and families for the accomplishing of his purpose in the line of generations.

Jacob goes down to Egypt not simply to see his son Joseph but in the confidence that God will accomplish his purpose through this. He doesn't need to see all the details. He doesn't ask any questions. He receives the promises of God and he goes. We learn here how we are to live our lives, too, in the midst of this journey that God has put us on. The journey is hard and difficult. There are enjoyable things about the journey, but there are hardships and difficulties, too. There's sickness. There's sin. There's unrest. There's dysfunction. There's abuse. There is doing things outside of our comfort zones. There are things that are new, things change, nothing stays the same. Our families change over time. Kids get married. Soon there's an empty nest, as it's called. Things are changing in our lives constantly, some of those things causing our stomachs to churn. We're nervous about those things. We don't want those things to change.

But now as we go through all of those things and all the sufferings and hardships of life, all the changes of life, the word of God this morning zeroes us in on the promises of God. God's put us here in this place in our lives and now the question is do we trust the promises of God? Do we trust that he's accomplishing his purpose in the line of generations? Do we trust that he will protect us and that he will preserve us in the generations because he is faithful? Do we trust? That's what Jacob did. He went down trusting the promises of God. May we go forward in our lives trusting in the promises of God, trusting in the God of our fathers, what he has done in the past, how he has protected and preserved his church, and that he will continue to do the same in the future. May we believe that and know that. Amen.

Let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, we are thankful that thou art the God of our fathers, a God who works generationally. We see that in the past, thy goodness and faithfulness in the past. May we know that then for the future as well, that thou art a God who will remain faithful to those promises, and bring us to our eternal heavenly home. May we not be afraid, to know that we have a Savior who has died for us and saved us from our sins and that's why we can be assured that thou wilt be faithful to us. All of these things we pray in the confidence that thou wilt hear us and answer us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Introduction

- I. The life of Joseph is not about Joseph, but about the providence and purpose of God.
- II. God reveals that He is the God of Jacob's father who works in the line of generations.

The Life of Joseph
11. The God of Our Fathers

I. The Generational Concern

- A. Jacob pauses to worship in Beersheba because he wonders if he should move to Egypt in the light of God's past covenant promises.

- B. We learn an important biblical (and thus reformed) truth - to go forward in our lives we must understand and appreciate what God has done in the past (in previous generations).

II. The Generational Promise

- A. In response to the fears Jacob has, God graciously comes to Jacob to comfort him with the promise of His covenant - I am still the God of the covenant and I will fulfill my promises.

- B. God is promising to fulfill His covenant promises specifically when He says, "fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there..."

III. The Generational Purpose

- A. What happens here is a crucial step in the process of our redemption.

- B. Joseph goes down to Egypt, not simply to see his son Joseph, but in the confidence that God will accomplish His purpose through this.