

Well, I'm actually in Bonclarken this week speaking at the family conference in the evening sessions and you may be wondering why did I choose to come back down when I have to wheedled myself all the way back up to Bornklarken after I'm done. And the reason is not because of you, but today is our 48th wedding anniversary. So, The reason I agreed to schlep it all the way down from Hendersonville and encounter the traffic on I-26 was because I needed to take my wife to lunch today to celebrate 48 years. Now, the text today On Monday evening, I opened my Bible, looking for my sermon notes, and looked down and realized I'd brought the wrong sermon notes. And for an instant, I thought I would say to them, you know, just sit here quietly while I run back to the room and find my notes. And I thought, no, I can't do that. So Lord, just help me wing this and say something that's helpful. The text today was chapters 40 and 41 And I thought there's no way that Judy can fit chapters 40 and 41 in the bulletin. So we're just picking up the tail end of the story. I'll be referring to bits and pieces of the story that isn't in the text that goes before it. But let's pick it up in chapter 41 at verse 37. This proposal, this is 41:37. And the proposal is that, that food be allocated to preserve food for seven years because a famine is coming. And this is what Joseph has proposed to the Pharaoh. This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, can we find a man like this in whom is the spirit of God? Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards to the throne will I be greater than you. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, see, I have set you over all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, bow the knee. Thus, he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without your consent, no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphonath-Paniah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphar, priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt. Joseph was 30 years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Remember, he was 17 when he was sold into slavery. So 13 years now have gone by. Many of them, of course, in prison. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. During the seven plentiful years, the earth produced abundantly. And he gathered up all the food of those seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it. And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured. Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphar, a priest of On, bore them to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. For, he said, God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house. Now you may think that's a little harsh, but remember it was his father's house that sold him into slavery. The name of the second he called Ephraim, for God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction. The seven years of plenty that occurred in the land of Egypt came to an end. And the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the lands, but in the land of Egypt, there was bread. When the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, go to Joseph, what he says to you, do. So when the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the

storehouses and sold to the Egyptians for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain because the famine was severe over all the earth. Now, we left Joseph last time. We can't fully discern the chronology here. How long had he been in the service of Potiphar? Potiphar was the one who served Pharaoh. He was the chief officer. And Joseph lands as a slave in Potiphar's house. And you remember his wife tried to get him to sleep with her on multiple occasions. And in the end, he ran from temptation, leaving his multi-colored garment, or whatever he was wearing at the time, in her hands, which she fondled until the husband came home. And then, of course, the story was believed. And even if part of her, thought otherwise, for the sake of his wife's integrity, Joseph is sent to prison. And he's in a special prison, he's in Pharaoh's prison. There were other prisons, but these were people who had been put in prison at Pharaoh's command. And something happens in the house of Pharaoh. So you put your Egyptian minds on, Egyptian dress, Egyptian language, and you're the Pharaoh. And of course, one of the ways you disposed of leaders in the ancient world, and not only in the ancient world, but in the more modern world too, is that you poison them. So the Pharaoh has a special cup bearer, remember Nehemiah was a cup bearer, to the Assyrian king, and he's the wine taster. I'd say he would take a sip of wine, Pharaoh would wait for five, 10 minutes, and, oh! And, no, we're not, get some more wine and take the body out. So there's a cup bearer and there's a baker. A baker, I think in the Hebrew is a general word, he's in charge of the food. And most of the food, I mean, the staple diet in Egypt, obviously, as we read this story, is bread. I love bread. It's my feeling. You know, you go to a restaurant, and they'll say, do you want some bread first? And of course. And you eat so much bread, you're not hungry anymore. Well, I don't know what the cupbearer did, and I don't know what the baker did. We're not told. But they did something bad that landed them in prison. Maybe they were accused of trying to poison the Pharaoh. Maybe they just weren't doing their work properly. But they end up in prison. And in verse 15 of chapter 40, we have a kind of a summary. For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into this pit. So God had made a promise, a covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob. That he would redeem his people, that Abraham's children, his spiritual children, would be as numerous as the stars of the night sky and the sand on the seashore. That was the promise that God had given to Abraham and repeated it to Isaac and repeated it to Jacob. And the question that Moses wants you to consider as he tells the story, and he's a great storyteller, the question that arises in your mind as you read this story, I mean, you know the story because you've read the end. But imagine that you didn't know the end of the story. Imagine that you were reading this for the first time. The question, and there's a big question and there's a little question. The big question is, what has happened to the promise? How is that promise now going to be fulfilled? And Moses is telling you, there's something about this guy Joseph, even though he's in prison, even though he's in despair, and prison life must have been awful. He's in his 20s, prime of his life, and he's falsely accused and imprisoned. And Moses is saying, watch this guy. Because instead of sulking in prison, instead of getting angry, instead of thinking about how he could get back at his brothers, a spark of faith ignites in him. And do you remember in the reading, even Pharaoh saw it. Even this Egyptian Pharaoh saw that there was something in Joseph that was true faith. What's happened to the promise? And what exactly is happening to Joseph? Now, in chapter 40 and verse 23, The chief

cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. He forgot him. There comes a point when the cupbearer and the baker have dreams. And we'll talk about the dreams in a minute. And Joseph has this gift that he's able to interpret these dreams. Whatever the baker did, it didn't end well because Pharaoh hanged him. But the cup bearer is restored into the palace of Pharaoh. But the cup bearer forgets about Joseph. I want us to see three things. First of all, that Joseph is tested to the point of seeming annulment. Time goes by, time to brood, time to doubt, time to get angry, time to get bitter. I've seen that. You know, something bad happens, something unfair happens, and you can do one of two things. You can let it go, or you can brood on it and make you bitter and make you twisted. I remember a lady, she was the wife of an elder, and she would always talk, every time I saw her, she would talk about an event that had happened 40 years in her past. And every single time, she could not let this thing go, and it spoiled her life. It robbed her of joy and contentment. And the butler and the baker have dreams, as I said. The cupbearer is restored, the baker is hanged, and promptly forgets Joseph. Two years go by, and Pharaoh has a dream. Lots of dreamers in Egypt. And it's the kind, as Moses tells the story, as Joseph must have handed it down to his children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren 400 years later to Moses, this oral testimony of Pharaoh's dream. It was one of those dreams where you wake up in a sweat. You ever had those dreams? The kind of dream where you wake up and you're actually out of bed, and who knows where you're going. Mercifully, I haven't had many, but I've had some. I've locked myself out of the house once. I was dreaming. I was sleepwalking. And I had to wake up my wife and say, I'm locked outside. Can you let me back in? And there was a moment of silence. So two years go by, and Joseph is now 30. We're told in the text, not the text that we read, but in the previous part of the text, we're told that he's 30. So he's been in prison 10 years maybe. And Joseph must have been asking himself the question, What is God doing with my life? What is the purpose of all of this? Why am I in this condition? And you know, Joseph's had dreams too. You know, he told his brothers about sheaves of corn and his was bigger than the rest of them and then the moon and the stars all bowing down to the sun and he was the sun and it irritated the brothers no end. But you remember we read last time, several times in the text that God was with Joseph. God was with Joseph. It's a little literary thing that Moses is saying, you need to keep your eye on this guy. Yes, he's in prison. Yes, things are dark. Yes, the mother of all storms has broken out on his life, but keep an eye on him because God was with him. Now, in prison, the chief warder, saw something in Joseph that he didn't see in anybody else. And he put Joseph in charge of everything. The running of the whole prison was in the hands of Joseph. That is not just a little extra to the story. It's a little telltale sign that God is at work in this guy. He's over, he is trusted so much. He's a man of such integrity. Where did this come from? Where's the pompous, proud, arrogant 17-year-old brat? Well, God has tested him. He's put him in the oven, in the fires, the fiery trial. to burn off some of that dross and to refine him and bring out that latent faith that he had in the Lord God Almighty. He must have thought of Psalm 13, how long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? Sinclair Ferguson has a book on lament Psalms, and it's called Deserted by God. Deserted by God. It's the only way you've read the book. It's a book for a season in your life when you might feel deserted, when trials abound, when life has turned south. So Joseph is tested to the point of seeming annulment. Secondly, he's tested to bring you where God needs you to be. God needed someone in the eyes of Pharaoh that Pharaoh would trust. And the whole issue is the famine. Because

there was famine in Egypt, but there was also famine in all the land, in all the earth, Moses says. So Jacob and his sons are about to be wiped out. And God needed to make sure, I don't know who bought this cheap thing. Who's in charge of purchasing these things? You need a better one. He's tested to bring you where God needs you to be. Well, let's go off track for a second. Moses is talking here about guidance, but he's talking about it in a way that you and I probably don't think about guidance. When you're making a crucial decision, and you want to make that decision for the glory of God, and typically there are four factors at work. First, there's a biblical factor. The Bible sets guidelines, rules, regulations. There are things, should you work in a brothel? No. Turn the page. All right, that's an easy one. So there are biblical guidelines, biblical factors at work. Secondly, there's the Holy Spirit. He indwells you. He fills you. Nudges you, brings to bear certain graces and gifts. There's an ecclesiastical factor, by which I mean you ask your friends in church, is this a good idea? Your best friends, the friends you trust. Sometimes it's best to ask somebody that you don't trust, because then you're probably going to get a good answer, a more honest answer. And the fourth factor would be circumstantial providence. He brings people into your life. He opens doors of opportunity. Now Joseph is being led, he's being guided. And he's being guided in a mysterious way because the guy's in prison. But his integrity has been such that the chief warden of the prison has put him in charge of the entire prison. And he's been able to interpret dreams of the cupbearer, who's now in Pharaoh's service, and the baker, who's now in the ground. Trials prepared him for this moment. Do you remember the words of Mordecai to Esther? For who knows whether you will come for the kingdom for such a time as this? for such a time as this, God's providence, for such a time as this. Could Joseph have written this story? No. And if he'd been allowed to write the story, he'd have written a very different story, I'm sure, as you and I might have done. I'm ministering in a church in Mississippi. and there are 40 or 50 people there. But there are horrendous stories in their lives. A young man who's just graduated from high school and athletic football scholarship at Ole Miss and He celebrates with his friends, as seniors do, in a car that his parents had bought him. And he was going too fast and collided with a pole, a tree, and he's quadriplegic. And they live with that every day. Would they have written that story? No. But there they are in church every Sunday, and with words of grace and hope and assurance and there's a burden on their back and God has brought them low. Maybe that's what God is doing in your life right now. Bringing you to the place where he wants you to be. A place where there's going to be an opportunity for you. Oh, you say I'm 85, what opportunities are there left for me? Well, I heard a story this week of someone who is in that age range who spoke to their, who's been speaking to their neighbors for years, and this week that neighbor came to Christ for such a time as this. Maybe that's the opportunity that God is giving you. Well, thirdly, he's tested to underline our need to depend on the Holy Spirit. Who is in charge here? Well, from one point of view, Joseph seems to be in charge. He's in charge of the prison, and Pharaoh will have a dream. One of those, as I said, one of those dreams that just wake you up in a sweat. And the dream was interpreted as, you know, seven fat cows, seven thin cows. Seven fat ears of corn and seven thin ears of corn. When I learned Hebrew, this is 19, 74, when I learned Hebrew, 74, 75. We were told at one time that the exam would be that we would have to translate Genesis 40 and 41, the text I'm preaching on, from the Hebrew text. So you walk in and all you have is your Hebrew Bible, that's all you have, and you have to translate this thing. So what

did I do? I learned the King James Version of Genesis 40 and 41. And of course the professor realized that he was reading the King James Version translation. Seven fat cows and seven thin cows. And suddenly the cup bearer remembers, I know a guy. I mean, I know a guy who can interpret this dream. He's in prison, he's in your prison. I'd forgotten all about him, but you know, Joseph comes, interprets the dream. There's going to be seven years of plenty. And I mean, Moses really ratchets up the plenty. storehouses filled with grain, so much that he can't even weigh it anymore. Enough not only to feed Egypt in the seven years of famine, but also to feed the surrounding nations that were coming to buy this corn and wheat and barley or whatever the grain was. Including of course, eventually Jacob and his sons. Well, Pharaoh loves this interpretation. I mean, and he loves the fact that not only does he have an interpretation, but he has a plan that they store enough grain in the years of plenty that will last them through the years of famine. What a great plan. You wish you'd have done that in preparation for retirement. Ouch. I feel your pain, as a president once said. Who's in charge here? Well, Joseph seems to be in charge. I mean, he's in charge of the whole country. And he's dressed in these Egyptian robes, and he's in a chariot, and people are bowing their knee. Hail Joseph. This 15-year-old brat, 17-year-old brat is now next in line to the Pharaoh of Egypt. Imagine, who'd have thought that story? Who's in charge here? No, it's not Joseph. Joseph couldn't make up this story. God is in charge. Three times in verse, 25, verse 25, then Joseph said to Pharaoh, the dreams of Pharaoh are one. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. Then in 28, it is as I told Pharaoh, God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. And then in verse 32, and the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God and God will shortly bring it about. Joseph is witnessing to the Pharaoh of Egypt. And there's a point in the text where the Pharaoh of Egypt acknowledges the validity of Joseph's God. Imagine, who'd have thought it? that Joseph would be an instrument of witness to the Pharaoh of Egypt, who puts him in charge of everything. This is huge. This is an encounter between Jerusalem and Athens. you know, different clashing worldviews, except here it's Jerusalem and Cairo. Who is the God who is in charge of the plethora of Egyptian gods? It is the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. and the God of Joseph. You see, you can't make this story up by yourself. Joseph can't make up this story by himself. This is, as we sometimes say, a God thing. This is the Lord God Almighty acting in providence. God loves the little sparrow that falls and he loves me Two. Abraham Kuyper, who lived 125, 130 years ago in Holland, in the Netherlands. And Abraham Kuyper was one of these multi-talented people. For a season, he was the prime minister of the Netherlands, but he was also the professor of systematic theology at the seminary in Amsterdam. And he was the editor of the Dutch newspaper, Dagblad, which for a season was sent to me every day. For about seven or eight years, every day I got this Dutch newspaper in the mail. I don't read Dutch. But I could not get them to stop sending this newspaper to me. The Nederlands Dagblad, it was called. Same newspaper as Kuiper. Kuiper once said, there is not a square inch of this universe over which Jesus does not say, mine. Not a square inch where he doesn't say, mine. Even in a prison cell, where you might have thought God had forgotten him and abandoned him, but he was the right man, in the right place, at the right time. Because that's our God. Nothing happens without God willing it to happen and willing it to happen before it happens and willing it to happen in the way that it happens. This is Moses' story of Romans 8, 28, that God works all things together for the good of those that love him. Well, remember that, Christian, if you're passing through

trials and difficulties. God has not forgotten you. God loves me too. And let's pray. Father, we thank you. Thank you for your sovereignty, that you order events and circumstances that are way beyond our control. And we pray that we might be sensitive to those doors of opportunity that might open even in the midst of dark and difficult circumstances. God bless us the rest of this day. For Jesus' sake, amen.