

## #6 – JOSEPH: CHARACTER & CALLING (Bill Cahusac)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

### Genesis 37:1-11 (NIVUK)

*Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. This is the account of Jacob's family line. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them. Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, 'Listen to this dream I had: we were binding sheaves of corn out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered round mine and bowed down to it.' His brothers said to him, 'Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?' And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. 'Listen,' he said, 'I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.' When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, 'What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?' His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.*

The story of Joseph has a great deal to teach us about how God wants to shape our character in order to sustain the calling he has placed on our lives. And, as Bill said, God's call, and the ways by which he refines our character, are all 'bespoke'. Each of us must walk our own path as we follow Christ. Bill spoke of **Four Lessons We Can Learn from the Story of Joseph**:

1. **Listen to your heart and attend to your secret life.** Look out for the things that trip you up...
  - *Jacob's favouritism towards Joseph clearly didn't help his relationship with his brothers, but is there anything he could have done to have improved the situation?*
  - *Why do you think Joseph told his brothers and then his father about his dreams in the way he did? Was just being immature? Arrogant? Foolish?*
  - *How do you think you would react if your younger brother had told you about a dream like this? (Or, perhaps we just don't take dreams that seriously today)*
2. **Run from sin.** This comes from later in the story (Genesis 39:12), when Joseph, as a trusted slave in the house of Potiphar, a high-ranking Egyptian officer, is propositioned by Potiphar's wife. Joseph, quite literally, runs. Jesus taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation", but, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "Moral man... calls out evil, his daily prayer is – Lead me into temptation, that I may test out the power of the good in me... But all this has nothing to do with the temptation of which Christ speaks... The Christian knows that in every hour of temptation all his strength will leave him."<sup>1</sup> Bill reminded us that, so often, we flirt with temptation because it promises to bring comfort or masks an insecurity.
  - *Do you know what your struggle is? (you don't have to share it with your collective, but it might help to share it with at least one trusted friend)*
  - *Why do we find it hard to be honest with ourselves about our struggles?*
  - *How do we avoid situations which make us vulnerable to temptation?*
3. **Remember God's Calling on your life.** Joseph made the most of every situation in which he found himself, firstly as a slave and then as a prisoner.
  - *How can we choose to be available for God to use us – especially when we aren't where we want to be?*
4. **Let God fulfil his call on your life in his time.** In **Jeremiah 29:11** God promises his exiled people, "I know the plans I have for you, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." But the promise would be fulfilled in God's time, in his way – as it was for Joseph.
  - *What can we learn from the ways in which Joseph dealt with betrayal, false accusations, injustice, neglect, delay, and disappointment?*
  - *How did all these experiences shape him to 'save the world'?*

<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Temptation" from *Creation and Fall. Temptation: Two Biblical Studies* (SCM Press, 1959)