

# New Kilpatrick

Sermon

Genesis 45:1-18

28th October 2018

***Spirit... with all the imagination that shaped creation... and with all the energy that evolved a universe... and with all the poetry that birthed faith... may we meet you in word... in bread... in wine... here... that we might turn those words... into flesh... So be it... Amen***

We have great stories to tell... as part of our faith... stories that are thousands of years old... and still they can be as fresh as the first day they were told... but... who listens to them now... who pays attention to them unless they entertain like some musical theatre extravaganza... or a Hollywood blockbuster... where all the visuals are on screen... and not in our imagination where faith plays with them...

Perhaps... we tell our stories in the wrong way today... and they have ended up having little real value except to entertain... Yet deep down we know... there is nothing childlike or glossy about... The dysfunction... injustice... revenge... prejudice... of God's chosen and the grace that transforms them... appear in not just Joseph... but so may of our faith stories...

These stories once shaped the values of the world... but they seem to have lost that value... They simply come across as morality tales... rather than as the mirror they are... into our human condition... and the hope they bring...

And this last episode of Joseph... and the great reveal... is case in point... It's the part of the story I want to recount to Mr Putin... Mr Trump... Mr Assad... to pipe bombers... to synagogue killers... and all those who rise through the division of our world today...

It doesn't take much wisdom or insight to strip the value or humanity out of people... to treat them all as less valuable than your own prejudices... Speaking divisively... creating division... is easy...

Wisdom is found... in the folk who can lead without being divisive... recognising instead the value of others... regardless of who they are... or believe... or what they have done...

Which is why I would want to give them Joseph's story... because right there... is one of the great examples in leadership... He was thrown into a pit... sold into Egypt... all but forgotten by his brothers... who conspired... and then profited from what they did to him... and yet... at the very moment when the tables turned... Joseph chooses to bring them back together...

He had a choice... He could win the day by keep the divisions going... and easily amplify them by taking revenge... which seems to be the underlying tone of much of where we are in the world at the moment... a passive aggressive kind of revenge on immigrants... one country not respecting another... through trade war or NATO... rebels against governments and the forgotten in the middle... east against west in spying and influencing elections...

This is very costly and dangerous... because it has no natural stopping point... Just think about the Capulets and Montagues... You strip the value out of another... and you divide...

However... instead of the path to revenge... Joseph takes a different path... and it is the first recorded example of it in human literature... Joseph forgives...

Now the word forgiveness is there in the bible earlier than Joseph... but each example is more about appeasement of anger... Jacob and Esau... Laban and Abraham... each simply accepts an excuse... and there is a restless peace... always teetering on the brink of revenge...

But here is something different... Joseph foregoes all thought of revenge... Forgiveness means to fundamentally affirm the worth of the other person... you have value... you are important... life is less without you...

When you see the world like that... and people in the world like that... then revenge is not possible... and that is what brings Joseph's family back together... that moment... the first moment in literature... that recognises another's value beyond what they have done... or believe... or are in the world... and before personal revenge... It's a story for a white supremest... an anti-semite... a a political opponent... and each one of us called to be neighbour to others...

And so... it is a story to tell today... not as some mega-episode of Long Lost Families... but a faith story... that holds up as a mirror to what we like... and becomes a story that can change the world again...

It is a story that brings things back together again through Joseph's unique style of leadership... But it isn't the only story of that... It's the first... but once that story starts being told... in our faith... they start coming along more often... until we meet it... right in the heart of our salvation story...

There Jesus is... at the table... with his disciples... and he breaks bread... with them... reflecting on the brokenness and revenge the world wants to take on love... and what it will do to him...

But Jesus doesn't return the revenge... The whole story is quite the opposite... this is a forgiveness story... and what does he say... "Do this in remembrance of me"... Re-Member me... bring the pieces back together...

This is what forgiveness does and revenge doesn't... Re-member... bring the body back together again... And when we break bread as we shall do shortly... the bread is held up... and it is broken... and the words are repeated as they have been... since that very first time... "Do this to re Member me"... and the two broken slices are brought back together again...

It is there... right in the central moment of our faith story... re-member... bring the pieces back together... let there not be division... revenge... these are too easy to do... Re-member... bring the broken pieces of the body back together... re-member... This is the story for our world and her leadership today...

So here at this table this morning... we offer the world the very story it needs most to hear... and for us to live... beyond this table... to re-member the body of Christ... re-member that which is broken... re-member our humanity... which Joseph first gave the world in that moment he admitted the value of his brothers was greater than what they did to him... a truth God built the whole of salvation round...

Let us gather at the table... to remember the story... and re-member the body...