

YOUTH AND SOME OF ITS PROBLEMS

Gen. 39:1-6

INTRODUCTION:

We find from this story that Joseph, a young man, had some of the same problems that young people today are confronted with. He also is a great example of how to deal with these problems. And if young people could remember, his great motto in the 9th Verse, how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God. There were three or four things about this story. First, there was the battle of the voices. Second, there was the matter of living with others. And third, there was the problem of how to tell right from wrong. And fourth, there was the problem of getting his best into action.

I. THE BATTLE OF THE VOICES V.10

Joseph had been taken by his brethren - sold to the Ishmelites for twenty pieces of silver. Gen. 37:28. They brought him to Egypt. There was a battle of the voices going on within him.

One day a man was waiting for a train in Boston. He remembered that there was something to be broadcast at that hour which he was deeply interested in. A message from the President of the United States. Hurrying up the street, he stepped inside a radio shop. On the chance that others might be listening to the same thing that he had in mind. The place was a perfect hub-bub. On opposite sides of the aisles, two loud speakers were going full tilt. One was swinging a jazzie song. While the other shouted an inspiring appeal. The two voices were trying each to put the other down. All the time, he said, my right ear was turned to the appeal. The left ear was filled with the jazz.

That situation, common place, easily becomes a picture of life.

In every human consciousness there are two voices. A high voice and a low voice. Each struggles desperately to silence the other. Each contemplates some sort of action. There is a contest.

Deep in the heart of Joseph, the voices were battling. Take the cheap road, grasp at quick results, give your God-given powers to your own advantage, compromise. But oh God help us if we take the low voice and listen to the low voice.

God helped him and he won. Now the inward battle is not confined to the pages of the Bible. All history is full of such.

Columbus, at the wheel of his ship on the sea, as his crew gathered to threaten him, back cries the low voice - turn back error it be too late. On urges the high voice - push on. They were telling him as he sailed off the edge of the world he would plunge down into Hell.

This battle of voices is as old as life itself. This was the thing that spoke in Adam and we ought to beware of the cry of the low voice. Simply by drinking what the tide brings to you. What better do you want.

Albert Schweitzer, someone said ^{he} had thrown away his best opportunity. Because he could have become the most famous man in all of Europe. But he gave himself to the natives of Africa. We asked ourselves, how could he do it. How could he in terms of this great challenge - he heeded the high voice.

You remember a short time ago, we had a lady by the name of Minnie Mangom because she embezzled thousands of dollars. Now it was awful. And yet, was she thoroughly dishonest. Her family knew her as a model person. Her friends knew her and admired her. Even in her church, she held respect. Among her business associates, they trusted her word.

The woman was 90% good. She never meant to commit the crime. She just listened from that whisper within. Take out of the savings what you need. You can easily make it good later on. It seemed a trifle thing. This yielding to the low voice rather than the high, to make that choice.

It was like the Boston radio shop - the two loud speakers. One calling up - the other calling down. This is life as we have it to live. And I bring this matter to your attention - but you must face this as a young person. Some are already seriously involved. Some live at home. Some have broken the restraints of home. You have made your own choice. You have set up your own code. Everyday of your lives - there is something, somewhere involved in the battle.

Within the next 24 hours each of you will be sentenced by the high call as well as the low. Make the most of it - something will say. Do the best that you can. Or it will say, I can get by. That's enough. Another voice will say, if you keep your ideals and stand up to life, what if they do call you queer. Travel with the crowd - don't oppose them. It will cost you too much.

A young girl will hear the voice saying, cut that fellow out. He is a bad influence, in the wrong direction. But then, there is another voice saying, well, don't be a fool. What if he does lead you in this way.

The final vote

To every man there openth

A way, ^{PH}ways, and a way

And the high soul climbs the high way

And the low soul gropes the low

And in between is on the misty flats

The ~~rest~~ drift too and fro.

And to every man there openth

A high way and a low

And every man decideth

The way his soul shall go!

✓ II. LIVING WITH OTHERS

Now, this was another problem which Joseph faced, of living with these strange people. How was he going to get along with them. One of the major difficulties of existence lies in adjustment to the people with whom life must be lived.

Many years ago if a man didn't like his neighbors, and couldn't get along with them, he was free to put a pack on his shoulder like Daniel Boone and leave the whole wilderness and go somewhere else. Or he could load his family into a covered wagon and move into the Western wasteland. Today, with our congested cities, our system of transportation and communication, to get away from the crowd is physically impossible. If you try to run away from your neighbor, you may find him taking the same bus.

We shall not have some more space in which to live as the years pass, we shall have less, and less of it for our private lives. Our lives will become increasingly

entangled with the lives of our fellow mortals.

Now the rights of one person ends where the rights of another person begin. We are likely to think of freedom as an individual matter. For illustration, a college student lived on an inner court of a city apartment. He was getting ready to go on a trip to a sporting event. He opened the window in the lateness of the hour, he loaded his record player with a long program of hot jazz, finished his packing, and locked his door and hurried off to his midnight train. Well toward morning, the people tossed sleeplessly on their beds. Because of blaring music they couldn't escape. On the traveler's return, the superintendent of the building took him to task about it. What of it, he said. My rent is paid for my room and what goes on in it is nobody's business. He forgot that each person in that apartment house had the right to a night of reasonable quiet. And that his own rights ended where his neighbors began.

A lineman on one of our Eastern college football teams was being reprimanded by the coach for an infraction of training rules and he played in a different fashion all through an important game. He allowed the opposite team to break through again and again. His fellow team mates protested. What business is it of yours how I play. He had forgotten that he was part of an organization and that ten other men who were doing their best - had a right to expect of him, the best that he could give.

A clerk, with important papers, came in late from his lunch. When he arrived at the office, he found a conference in session. And the President of the concern met him with these words - twenty of us have been compelled to wait for you. Each of us has lost five minutes by your tardiness. That means you have consumed 120 minutes of the company's time of which you had no right. Five minutes may seem to be a petty thing to make a fuss about. But this matter of trespass - is very vital.

Think about your morning routine. When people trifle away time - even in the bathroom, while other people wait outside. Or you remember the unnecessary questions at the ticket window while other people stand in line. Or the failure to return a borrowed book. Or the persistent conversation while a roommate tries to study or write. Things like these, spark off anger.

And living with other people is a problem. A farmer once examined a fruit tree - there was not a perfect apple on the whole tree. The blight was in the orchard. Throughout the whole race of man, people are now living in this world and there is not a single perfect individual. And we must live with other people. And this, Joseph set out to make social adjustments. We, little mortals, are not only imperfect - but we generally speak of particular sins of omission and commission. Our likes and our dislikes - the faults in another we condemn.

But we never establish a harmonious relationship with others. On such a narrow basis of this - each of us would do well to get into the habit of seeing ourselves as we really are. If I am asked to forgive others - it is no more than they are called on to do in my behalf. Jesus said, forget us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And a trespass that is committed against us.

A man once went to a meeting and the host in the hall outside the door, warned all of the guests as they arrived. Now whatever you do - don't mention baseball or mad dogs. We have a guest here at present, who at the mention of either subject, sets off an endless tirade that makes conversation for the rest of us utterly impossible.

Did you ever know a person like that. All that you had to do was mention the word Democrat - or the word Republican - or something - and it turns them on. Now it may be poor control of temper, or a lack of humor that cannot see a joke.

But Paul said, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise - think on these things.

The third things is -

✓ III. HOW CAN YOU TELL RIGHT FROM WRONG

This was Joseph's problem - how to tell the right from the wrong. Here he had been transplanted into a foreign land, and into a foreign family. And he was having social contact with these people. And the situation was very complex - how do you tell right from wrong. There he was in a foreign land. And no one really knew him. There was no pressure from the family, looking on, at this point - there was nothing at all - he could possibly abolish all the rules. And all the regulations that govern the past. He could have turned it into a moral holiday.

There are certain things which one must do - and certain attitudes which one must take. Honor, duty, integrity. These are not mere catch words of a day that is gone. They are elements that are working and worth living. There is only one way that leads to happiness. And the wrong choices and the wrong decisions can only lead to one thing. And that is disaster.

Fortunately the situation with Joseph -

First, the test of universality. What would be the consequence of this contemplated action. If everybody behaved in this fashion. This is a trivial matter.

Think it over. Driving through a red light on the street corner. What would that do for public safety if everybody respected traffic lights in that way.

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If I tell a lie to get out of a difficult situation - what would happen to society. No man's word could be trusted.

What sort of a world would this world be.

If every person were a person like me.

What kind of a town, would this town be - if every citizen was a citizen like me.

What sort of a family would my family be, if every member were a member like me.

Now many a deed seems highly desirable from the standpoint of the performer. But if we stand on the receiving end and think about it, then what.

The old game of putting men on the spot. There are court records in this country - the story of a judge who met every issue brought before him with a stock formula. What does the law say and second, let justice be done.

Then one day he looked up to see his own son, a confessed criminal - standing in the prisoners box before him. Suddenly the old formula seemed entirely inadequate - and he realized for the first time that justice can only be truly done by the judge who sees law not as an end in itself - but as a means for better living for men. It made all the difference in his point of view - just to be put for a short time on the receiving end.

Jesus had this in mind. As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even to them. "

Third, Joseph put it to (the publicity test) How would I feel about this thing - I want to do, (if) I was certain that tomorrow morning everybody would know about it, And suppose this problem should be known by all. Who of us wants to be photographed at his worst. How will this thing look if it is found out.

Fourth, Joseph thought of it from the angle of admiration. Those who looked up to someone. Can I then take the thought of this - my father with me, who is back in the land of promise.

They tell us that when the American soldiers once was cleaning the battle field in France, they came across four dead German soldiers in a shell crater - three of them showed that they had died violently - but one of them seemed to have some (inward light). They examined him more closely. They found tightly clutched in his hand the photograph of a young woman - whose face shown with purity and sweetness. That was his secret. He had come through the heat of the ordeal with the reverence and admiration of that one he loved.

Fifth, Joseph put it to the test of self-respect. If conscience be only a flickering light, every man with his heart of hearts wants so to live. That he can look himself in the face - unashamed. Whether our wrong doing is discovered or not, nothing is surer than this. We shall have to live with the things we have done as long as we last.

The final agony of the soul is to be haunted by the memory of wrong.

There is no substitute for self respect. As Cyrano said, I have kept one thing unspotted from the world. In spite of doom - my own, and that is my white plume. Now this to him was a life of satisfaction.

But Joseph asked the question, what sort of a thing will this be to live with.

We may be shipwrecked on the seas of moral confusion - but this was a problem, of how can I tell right from wrong.

V. 9 - He says, how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God. God was the answer that he searched and he found helping him.

IV. GETTING OUR BEST INTO ACTION

Y.G.B.

Last Thur. Night The Boys from large Area City gathered. Roy C. King Said There were about 300 present. Being Same There Boys gotten. Last Action.

Joseph is a wonderful example for getting people to meet their problems and getting his best into action. Now this was the inspiring thing that we need today.

A generation ago a young man lived in Maryland and had the ambition to be a tennis player. While hunting, he had his right arm blown off at the shoulder. It seemed to end his hopes but he refused to submit to the handicap. He put years of practice until he could hold both the ball and the racket in his left hand. He developed a new set of muscles. Capable of delivering a powerful serve. This struggle followed. And then in 1929 this one armed player won the national play-off. For veterans in the tournament at Forrest Hills, Long Island. He was then 45 years old. He had only one arm - and that the wrong one, but he won the championship at last. He got his best into action.

A few years ago a mother and father died in a New York apartment. They left 3 penniless children behind. The problem of the oldest son, about 14 years old seemed simple. He immediately left school and secured a job as an office boy with a downtown concern. His income was sufficient to cloth him and maintain him - but

nothing could be done for his little sister and brother - except to go to an orphanage. But this 14 year old boy refused to listen to this. They are my brother and sister - he argued. Well, they will not be separated and grow up as complete strangers to each other. While I have a bone left in my body. He found a good woman who would take the children to board. He, himself, moved into a lodging where he paid 5¢ a night. For his double-decker bed in a dorm. He paid 5¢ for each of his meals. And had for his associates, the skum of the New York streets. Year after year, cheerfully and uncomplaining - he met his burden and responsibility. Denying himself of ever pleasure and often the very necessities of life.

Carl Elmore said, he once had the privilege of shaking hands with that young man. And he said, I remember it as one of the big moment in my life.

This sort of thing is magnificent. And yet we cannot too often remind ourselves that these people who rose to the heroic are not in any sense (super men). They were not people with protection. They were just plain everyday people, with the ability to get their best into action, at an important time in life.

One of the main (problems) of youth is how to get his best into action. Jesus was talking about this same thing when he exhorted us to get our light out from under the bushel and on to the stand where it would brighten all the room.

There is that old battle within us that goes on and on. And one does not have to wait until he is old to make an utter mess of his life. All is needed is to let the wolf inside him run riot for a short while.

Have you ever visited a penitentiary. If you have, you have made this very important discovery. The inmates in such a place are not all rotten, wicked through and through. In some instances, they are people just like you and me. Who unguardedly

let some passion to break loose. Some appetite to run away with them. And as Whitman said, it was the body dragged me in. Though long I strove courageously - the body was too much for me.

All this confronts us with the fact, that the most important consideration in life is how to get our best in action. What ever be our aim or our ambition in life.

Whatever step we take must be in that direction. Michael Pupin, a great scientist landed in this country, an orphan lad. He had 5¢ in his pocket and he did not want to become a burden to the country. The examiners asked him if he knew anyone in this country. Oh yes, he said, I know Benjamin Franklin, Abe Lincoln. And this was unusual but they decided to admit him. And he soon convinced people that he was going to put his best to work.

In the New Testament, we find a great story about some men who are ordinary men - but they were trying to do their best in a whole city and that was wicked. And they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus,

Great living is contagious. We don't get it by girding up our loins. We catch it from other people.

When the Spanish conqueror Pizarro came to Peru, on one occasion his men were discouraged. He step forward, drew a line on the sand, he said on this side of the line lie home, country, wealth, ease, and comfort. And the other side, toil, hardship, suffering, even a chance of fame or death. Choose. Every man the record tells us - stepped across the line.

This was the same story that (Sir Ernest Shackleton) set out on an expedition - men wanted for hazzardous journey to South Pole. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Recognition in case of success. Later in speaking of this ad which he put in the newspaper, that the appeal, reponse seemed that every man in Great Brittain wanted to accompany him on that journey.

Jesus one time talking to a crowd said, ye therefore shall be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect.^{!!} Did he hope for these Galileans to reach such heights. That was the biggest and yet it was the most impossible.

But this is the most important matter of exercise. And this long experience. The handicapped body and mind, make some things difficult for you. But remember the trust committed to you. There is faith and love and confidence, to go on. And this is what Joseph had.

In the New York Harbor there was a light-house - Mrs. Katie Walker, a widow. One day a newspaper reporter visited her, and came back with a story. My husband brought me to the lighthouse as his bride. The day we came, I said to him, I cannot stay here. The sight of the water, wherever I look, makes me too lonesome. I refused to unpack my trunk and my boxes.

One night my husband contracted pneumonia while attending the light. They took him to the infirmary and I stayed behind and watched the light, in his place. A few nights later, I saw a boat coming, and they called out in the dark - we are sorry, but your husband is worse. You mean he is dead - she answered. And they made no reply. She said they buried him on the mainland over there - sometimes the hills were sometimes brown, sometimes, green, and sometimes white with snow where he sleeps - but they always bring me a message from him. Something I heard

him say more than anything else - just three words. (Mind that light.) And now for 40 years I have been minding it.

Who could go back on a trust like that. And many a hard pressed corner - if we remember the faith that others have in us. If we remember the trust committed to us. If we remember, Jesus said, let your light so shine. It will help us to deal with the problems we have.