UPC Family Devotional

November – Week 3

Memory Verse of the Week:

Now the Israelites settled in Egypt and the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number.

Genesis 47:27

Nov 14 Monday Genesis 47:1-12

Five of Joseph's brothers are to face the most important interview of their lives with the most powerful ruler in the known world. But they passed the interview with ease for they are already prepped by Joseph, an insider who has acquired a lot of wisdom in his years of working with Pharaoh. When we find ourselves in unfamiliar territory, it is wise to lean on the expertise of those who have more knowledge in the area. Rather than trying to figure things out for ourselves, we should be humble and rely on our teachers, leaders, and mentors to guide us. Ultimately, we should lean on God who has all the wisdom we need to navigate through life.

Where is the first place you go to for guidance when you find yourself in a tough situation? What kind of wisdom have you received from God in such times?

When Jacob is presented to Pharaoh, this old and ailing shepherd blesses the mighty ruler of Egypt. This might seem unusual to us because we usually expect the blessing to be given in the opposite direction, from the more powerful man to the lesser. But Pharaoh simply accepts Jacob’s gesture and continues in conversation with him. This interaction shows us the respect Pharaoh has toward Jacob, the father of the man whose divine wisdom helped save his nation from devastation. It also shows that Jacob recognizes Pharaoh's need for God's favor and help. Let us not forget the leaders and rulers of the world in our prayers. They need God just as much as we do- perhaps even more, given their influence over the world.

How can you bless those who occupy the highest positions in your country? List some specific ways that you can pray for them today.

Nov 15 Tuesday Genesis 47:13-22

Joseph's calling to preserve the people of Egypt during this devastating famine does not end after he collects, stores, and sells the grain from the seven years of abundance. As the famine rages on and the people run out of food and money, Joseph continues to act as a mediator between the people and Pharaoh, applying his wisdom to find the solutions that will ensure the survival of the nation. This is one of the many ways that Joseph's story mirrors that of Jesus, whose work did not finish on the cross where he secured our salvation. Jesus continues to intercede on our behalf today, and He's always working to help us in our battles against the spiritual forces that try to destroy our faith.

What work has Jesus been doing in your life recently? What spiritual forces pose the biggest threat to your faith?

With no more money or livestock left to trade, the people become desperate and offer their land and their own selves in exchange for food. Joseph accepts, and the people are reduced to servitude. This sounds like a rather dismal turn of events, and some might even think that Joseph is taking advantage of the people's situation. But we must remember that servitude is not inherently a bad thing- it all depends on who the master is. Joseph has proven himself to be a wise and gracious leader, and there's no doubt that he took care of the people's needs. As Christians, we can rejoice in our identity as servants of Christ because we have a loving and generous Master who provides for our every need.

What other masters have you served apart from Jesus? How has Jesus shown Himself to be a gracious and loving Master in your life?

Nov 16 Wednesday Genesis 47:23-31

Joseph uses his God-given wisdom to save the nation of Egypt from starvation. He also buys up land for Pharaoh from the Egyptians in exchange for food and the seeds and imposes a twenty percent tax on their produce. Joseph knows that God is the one who has made him ruler over Egypt, so he seeks no profit for himself but faithfully works for the kingdom he has been called to serve. Believers in Jesus have been chosen by God and are called to serve Him and one another as faithful stewards of His gifts. Let us honor the Lord by serving Him and seeking the advancement of His Kingdom and not our own interests.

What responsibilities has God called you to do? What are you doing to steward this calling well?

Jacob's family, which later grows to become the nation of Israel, settles in the region of Goshen in the land of Egypt. Jacob, who is by now well advanced in years, knows that he will most likely die in Egypt. So, he tasks Joseph with ensuring that he is buried Canaan after he dies. Although his family has prospered in Egypt, Jacob remembers that it is not their home. He and his descendants after him are sojourners who will eventually leave Egypt to return to the Promised Land. Similarly, the word of God tells us that we live in this world as pilgrims. Our real home is in heaven. Therefore, our lifestyles and choices must always reflect our longing for our true home.

What helps you remember that you are a pilgrim in this world? What difference does the promise of heaven make to how you live today?

Nov 17 Thursday Genesis 48:1-11

Joseph comes to visit his father, having heard that he is ill. The news about Joseph's visit revives the frail Jacob as he retells the story of Jacob’s blessing and promise, testifying to God's enduring faithfulness. Although he is about to die in Egypt, Jacob is sure that God will fulfill His promise that his descendants will inherit the land of Canaan. Although God might work in ways that we may not expect or be familiar with, He always accomplishes what He promised to do. One way we can keep our faith strong is to remind ourselves of His promises and to how he has carried us over the years. Sharing stories of God's goodness with those around us also helps sustain us.

How has the Lord blessed you over the years? With whom do you usually share stories of God's faithfulness?

Jacob is pleased to welcome Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of Joseph, among the children of Israel. They will be counted among the twelve tribes who will inherit the promised land. They have attained this special status purely on the basis of their grandfather's will. Likewise, though we were once estranged from God, He adopted us out of His grace. We are now His children and share in His Son's inheritance. There is absolutely nothing we could have done to earn our place in God's family, but God brought us in, and He will guide and protect each of us until we reach our eternal home. God's unmerited favor toward us is our primary motivation to live for Him.

What does being adopted into God's family mean to you? What are some benefits we gain from this adoption?

Nov 18 Friday Genesis 48:12-22

Joseph strategically positions his two sons in such a way that the older will be nearer to Jacob’s right hand and the younger to his left. But Jacob crosses his hands and lays his right hand on the younger son's head and his left hand on the elder’s. He then blesses Joseph by evoking the blessing of the God of his forefathers, Abraham and Isaac, the God who has watched over him like a shepherd and delivered him from all harm. He places his grandchildren under the care of the same God. God's blessings flow from his unchanging character. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is also our God today, who watches over us and guides us in His righteous ways.

What names of God remind you of His unchanging nature? What aspect of God's character has impacted you the most in your walk with Him?

Joseph is displeased that his father has given Ephraim, the younger son, preeminence over Manasseh. But Jacob asserts that he knows what he is doing. As we have seen in Jacob’s own life, God's blessing does not conform to social norms or personal preferences. He does not bless us on the basis of our status but on that of His grace. Left to ourselves, we would be doomed to eternal death. But God, in His mercy, has brought us into His family and lavished His blessings on us even though we were His enemies. Knowing that God freely offers His salvation and the spiritual blessings that come with it, let us confidently tell others of the good news of His amazing grace.

What evidence of God's grace do you see in your everyday life? Why should God's unconditional grace encourage us to tell others about Him?

Nov 19 Saturday Genesis 49:1-7

Jacob gathers all his sons together so that he can bless them before he dies. This is a solemn and defining moment, not only for each son but also for the future nation of Israel. People usually leave a will to provide for their children's future after they are gone, which sets out the material possessions to be bequeathed to each child. Jacob's prayer, however, is not focused on the material possessions he will leave behind - though he had an abundance of them- but on the spiritual direction of his descendant’s future. Let us not lose sight of the importance of our spiritual destiny as well as that of the children God may give us.

What is the greatest impact your parents had on your spiritual journey? What influence do you have on the faith journey of each person in your family?

Jacob's blessings to his first three sons seem rather strange. One might even wonder if they can be called blessings at all. Jacob recalls their past failures in which Reuben dishonored his father by sleeping with one of his concubines, and Simeon and Levi slaughtered the defenseless people in the city of Shechem. Their father's blessings now outline the consequences of those actions. Our actions, too, have their consequences. Although God forgives all our sins when we repent, we still have to live with some of the regretful consequences of our mistakes. This warns us to live wisely and carefully by submitting to the leadership of the Holy Spirit so that He can guide us on the right path.

How do you deal with negative consequences of your choices? How do you submit to the Spirit’s guidance every day?