

Success and Failure
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Gen 39:1-23
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Synopsis

“The LORD of Hosts is with us” proclaim the Psalms.

Jesus says, “Lo I am with you always to the end of the age.”

What does it mean for God to be with us?

Success: It’s easy to see God when things go well.

Failure: Does this mean God has left us?

In our story today we learn what it means to say God is with us. Let me tell you the end of the story: God is with us in success and failure. “Lo I am with you *always* to the end of the age.”

I.

Is God with Us?

Gen 39:2a “The LORD was with Joseph”

READ Gen 39:1-2a = “The LORD was *with* Joseph”

Is God with you?

Is God with us here at Geneva?

How would we know if God were with us?

How would we know if God weren’t with us?

I find I wander between two poles:

When I’m up: There you are Lord?

When I’m down: Just where are you Lord?

Like the psalmist: Ps 30:6-7

As for me, I said in my prosperity,

“I shall never be moved”

You hid your face; I was dismayed

Ever feel like that? If so this sermon is for you

II.

God is with Us: Take 1

Gen 39:2b “And he became a successful man”

READ Gen 39:1-6

READ Gen 39:21-23

Notice:

4x the LORD is with Joseph (relational)

3x success

2x bless

2x favor

1x steadfast love

8x LORD shows up (Yahweh = relational presence)

How do we know God is with us based upon these two texts?

S-U-C-C-E-S-S that's the way you spell success

An overwhelming sense of God's goodness for us

God is with us means the American Dream

-Go back and airbrush your life:

born first son into a Doctor's family

did well in sports

graduated from University of Tennessee

Met wife

Did a Ph.D.

Had two children

Live in South Orange County

*God must be with us, look at all the successes.

If we read only the good parts we're tempted to believe that success means God is present with us. Many people live here.

Ps 30: 6 “As for me, I said in my prosperity . . .”

What's wrong with this picture?

III.

God is with Us: Take 2

Gen 39:14 “My husband has brought among us a Hebrew slave to insult us”

READ Gen 39:7-20

Where is God in this section? 1x (v9) (generic *elohim* = god)

Notice: Egyptian religion = about Pharaoh, not personal

Lust

Boredom of lonely wife

Temptation

Evil and sin

Lies

Injustice

Racism: “This Hebrew” (low class)

Anger

Bondage

God is not really with us: the American Disaster

Go back and tell the ugly scenes of your life

Dad was an alcoholic, violent

Felt abandoned

Family broke up

Fled Tennessee

Came West with little confidence

Sister killed in an auto accident

Still live with unresolved family scars, lack confidence

*God can't be with me, look at the failure. If we read only the bad parts, we're tempted to believe that God has abandoned us. Many people live here.

Ps 30:7 “You hid your face, I was dismayed”

What's wrong with this picture?

IV.

God is with Us: Take 3

Gen 39:21 “But the LORD was with Joseph”

I started by asking how we would know if God were with us?

Success

Failure

Biblically, God lives in both.

The story of Joseph contains both success and failure.

God is with us in our success and in our failure.

This is the witness of Scripture:

Ps 27:13-14

Ps 30:4-5

John 16:33

Romans 8:38

Phil 4:12-13

*Here’s the point for us:

-Joseph doesn’t know yet what you and I know

-Text never says, “Joseph *knew* the LORD was with him”

-He does not know the end of the story (Gen 50)

-Only the narrator and readers/we know God’s presence

We need a *narrator* = Holy Spirit (Jesus says, “I will send”)

We need a *we* = be this for one another

We now know the end of the story:

You meant it for evil, God meant it for good

God is present in success and failure

He will never leave us

Call upon your narrator (Holy Spirit)

Call upon your readers (we)

Live courageously = “Lo I am with you always”