

Sunday, January 20

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Genesis 41:17 - 42:17

41 17 So Pharaoh told Joseph his dream. "In my dream," he said, "I was standing on the bank of the Nile River, **18** and I saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. **19** But then I saw seven sick-looking cows, scrawny and thin, come up after them. I've never seen such sorry-looking animals in all the land of Egypt. **20** These thin, scrawny cows ate the seven fat cows. **21** But afterward you wouldn't have known it, for they were still as thin and scrawny as before! Then I woke up. **22** "In my dream I also saw seven heads of grain, full and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. **23** Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were blighted, shriveled, and withered by the east wind. **24** And the shriveled heads swallowed the seven healthy heads. I told these dreams to the magicians, but no one could tell me what they mean." **25** Joseph responded, "Both of Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. **26** The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity. **27** The seven thin, scrawny cows that came up later and the seven thin heads of grain, withered by the east wind, represent seven years of famine. **28** "This will happen just as I have described it, for God has revealed to Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. **29** The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. **30** But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten in Egypt. Famine will destroy the land. **31** This famine will be so severe that even the memory of the good years will be erased. **32** As for having two similar dreams, it means that these events have been decreed by God, and he will soon make them happen. **33** "Therefore, Pharaoh should find an intelligent and wise man and put him in charge of the entire land of Egypt. **34** Then Pharaoh should appoint supervisors over the land and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years. **35** Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh's storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so there will be food in the cities. **36** That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt. Otherwise this famine will destroy the land." **37** Joseph's suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials. **38** So Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?" **39** Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. **40** You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from

you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours.”**41** Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt.” **42** Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and placed it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck. **43** Then he had Joseph ride in the chariot reserved for his second-in-command. And wherever Joseph went, the command was shouted, “Kneel down!” So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all Egypt. **44** And Pharaoh said to him, “I am Pharaoh, but no one will lift a hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval.” **45** Then Pharaoh gave Joseph a new Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah. He also gave him a wife, whose name was Asenath. She was the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. So Joseph took charge of the entire land of Egypt. **46** He was thirty years old when he began serving in the court of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And when Joseph left Pharaoh’s presence, he inspected the entire land of Egypt. **47** As predicted, for seven years the land produced bumper crops. **48** During those years, Joseph gathered all the crops grown in Egypt and stored the grain from the surrounding fields in the cities. **49** He piled up huge amounts of grain like sand on the seashore. Finally, he stopped keeping records because there was too much to measure. **50** During this time, before the first of the famine years, two sons were born to Joseph and his wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. **51** Joseph named his older son Manasseh, for he said, “God has made me forget all my troubles and everyone in my father’s family.” **52** Joseph named his second son Ephraim, for he said, “God has made me fruitful in this land of my grief.” **53** At last the seven years of bumper crops throughout the land of Egypt came to an end. **54** Then the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had predicted. The famine also struck all the surrounding countries, but throughout Egypt there was plenty of food. **55** Eventually, however, the famine spread throughout the land of Egypt as well. And when the people cried out to Pharaoh for food, he told them, “Go to Joseph, and do whatever he tells you.” **56** So with severe famine everywhere, Joseph opened up the storehouses and distributed grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. **57** And people from all around came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe throughout the world.

42 1 When Jacob heard that grain was available in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why are you standing around looking at one another? **2** I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there, and buy enough grain to keep us alive. Otherwise we’ll die.” **3** So Joseph’s ten older brothers went down to Egypt to buy grain. **4** But Jacob wouldn’t let Joseph’s younger brother, Benjamin, go with them, for fear some harm might come to him. **5** So Jacob’s sons arrived in Egypt along with others to buy food, for the famine was in Canaan as well. **6** Since Joseph was governor of all Egypt and in charge of selling grain to all the people, it was to him that his brothers came.

When they arrived, they bowed before him with their faces to the ground. **7** Joseph recognized his brothers instantly, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. “Where are you from?” he demanded. “From the land of Canaan,” they replied. “We have come to buy food.” **8** Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they didn’t recognize him. **9** And he remembered the dreams he’d had about them many years before. He said to them, “You are spies! You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become.” **10** “No, my lord!” they exclaimed. “Your servants have simply come to buy food. **11** We are all brothers—members of the same family. We are honest men, sir! We are not spies!” **12** “Yes, you are!” Joseph insisted. “You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become.” **13** “Sir,” they said, “there are actually twelve of us. We, your servants, are all brothers, sons of a man living in the land of Canaan. Our youngest brother is back there with our father right now, and one of our brothers is no longer with us.” **14** But Joseph insisted, “As I said, you are spies! **15** This is how I will test your story. I swear by the life of Pharaoh that you will never leave Egypt unless your youngest brother comes here! **16** One of you must go and get your brother. I’ll keep the rest of you here in prison. Then we’ll find out whether or not your story is true. By the life of Pharaoh, if it turns out that you don’t have a younger brother, then I’ll know you are spies.” **17** So Joseph put them all in prison for three days.

Matthew 13:24 - 46

13 **13** That is why I use these parables, For they look, but they don’t really see. They hear, but they don’t really listen or understand. **14** This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah that says, ‘When you hear what I say, you will not understand. When you see what I do, you will not comprehend. **15** For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes— so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.’ **16** “But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. **17** I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but they didn’t see it. And they longed to hear what you hear, but they didn’t hear it. **18** “Now listen to the explanation of the parable about the farmer planting seeds: **19** The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don’t understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts. **20** The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. **21** But since they don’t have deep roots, they don’t last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God’s word. **22** The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God’s word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life

and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced. **23** The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!" **24** Here is another story Jesus told: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. **25** But that night as the workers slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat, then slipped away. **26** When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew. **27** "The farmer's workers went to him and said, 'Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds! Where did they come from?' **28** "An enemy has done this!' the farmer exclaimed. "Should we pull out the weeds?' they asked. **29** "No,' he replied, 'you'll uproot the wheat if you do. **30** Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn.'" **31** Here is another illustration Jesus used: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. **32** It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches." **33** Jesus also used this illustration: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough." **34** Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables. **35** This fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet: "I will speak to you in parables. I will explain things hidden since the creation of the world." **36** Then, leaving the crowds outside, Jesus went into the house. His disciples said, "Please explain to us the story of the weeds in the field." **37** Jesus replied, "The Son of Man is the farmer who plants the good seed. **38** The field is the world, and the good seed represents the people of the Kingdom. The weeds are the people who belong to the evil one. **39** The enemy who planted the weeds among the wheat is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the harvesters are the angels. **40** "Just as the weeds are sorted out and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. **41** The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will remove from his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. **42** And the angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **43** Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand! **44** "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field. **45** "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. **46** When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!

18 **1** I love you, LORD ; you are my strength. **2** The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety. **3** I called on the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and he saved me from my enemies. **4** The ropes of death entangled me; floods of destruction swept over me. **5** The grave wrapped its ropes around me; death laid a trap in my path. **6** But in my distress I cried out to the LORD ; yes, I prayed to my God for help. He heard me from his sanctuary; my cry to him reached his ears. **7** Then the earth quaked and trembled. The foundations of the mountains shook; they quaked because of his anger. **8** Smoke poured from his nostrils; fierce flames leaped from his mouth. Glowing coals blazed forth from him. **9** He opened the heavens and came down; dark storm clouds were beneath his feet. **10** Mounted on a mighty angelic being, he flew, soaring on the wings of the wind. **11** He shrouded himself in darkness, veiling his approach with dark rain clouds. **12** Thick clouds shielded the brightness around him and rained down hail and burning coals. **13** The LORD thundered from heaven; the voice of the Most High resounded amid the hail and burning coals. **14** He shot his arrows and scattered his enemies; great bolts of lightning flashed, and they were confused. **15** Then at your command, O LORD, at the blast of your breath, the bottom of the sea could be seen, and the foundations of the earth were laid bare.

Proverbs 4:1 - 6

4 **1** My children, listen when your father corrects you. Pay attention and learn good judgment, **2** for I am giving you good guidance. Don't turn away from my instructions. **3** For I, too, was once my father's son, tenderly loved as my mother's only child. **4** My father taught me, "Take my words to heart. Follow my commands, and you will live. **5** Get wisdom; develop good judgment. Don't forget my words or turn away from them. **6** Don't turn your back on wisdom, for she will protect you. Love her, and she will guard you.