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# Blessed and Forgiven

Joseph's brothers are dismayed. Joseph reconciles with them without revenge. God secures Jacob's salvation and Israel's future through Joseph. Compassion and forgiveness overcome evil; such reconciliation is possible because God is involved. God cares about the people beyond Israel, too. God's saving love is for everyone.

## Focus Scripture Genesis 45:1-15

Additional Scriptures

Psalms 133

Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

Matthew 15: (10-12),

21-28

How long, dear God, how long? Must those who are oppressed and cast out remain forever excluded? You promise life and justice. In compassion, answer their cry. From your loving heart, enliven your people. Through us, extend your saving hand. Amen.

## Focus Scripture: Genesis 45:1-15

Joseph's reunion with his brothers is dramatic. There is a lot of movement in this scene. People are sent away. The brothers move closer. Joseph sends his brothers to Jacob. Jacob is instructed to come down to Goshen. The storyteller also describes various emotions. Joseph struggles to control his emotions. Joseph weeps. The brothers are distressed and dismayed. Joseph and Benjamin weep together.

Curiously, Egyptian records of the time are not aware of Joseph. It is helpful to recall that in this text, the Israelites are retelling their history.

Joseph's survival and well-being are intentional, as Joseph's previous dreams reveal that God is the saga's director. God acts through Joseph and the events of that time to secure Israel's future. God intends to maintain the covenant made with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:5).

Reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers is contrasted to his brothers' animosity. The brothers' short-term plan got rid of Joseph, the dreamer; Joseph's long-term plan secured the brothers' future well-being.

Justice issues are raised by the brothers' previous action. They are accountable for their behaviour, but justice is found in Joseph's compassion and forgiveness – grounded in his relationship with God. There is no place for vengeance. Joseph's amazing compassion and generosity model God's grace for the people of Israel. God's providence will be vindicated. God's grace secures the future.

Throughout his time of struggle, Joseph was aware of God's sustaining presence. The storyteller skilfully shifts the focus from Joseph's leadership to God's provision for the benefit of Jacob's family. Jo-

seph provides food, safe passage, a family reunion, and land. Joseph secures a positive future for generations to come. Joseph's wisdom is evidence of God's great saving intention. God does call and "ordain" individuals to specific purposes. They become catalysts for God's redemptive acts.

The stories of these ancient leaders in Genesis were written down when many of Jacob's ancestors were living in exile in Babylonia around 586-536 BCE. Joseph's story likely encouraged them and reassured them of God's continuing care for them. God would bring about their liberation and provide for their return to Judah. They would have a future as a nation.

God's people are to live in just relationships. This way, they will maintain the integrity of the covenant relationship they have with God. **Psalm 133** rejoices in the blessings of sacred unity among many people.

Although God's gift of new life through Jesus appeared to some as only for Israel, in **Matthew 15:(10-12), 21-28** Jesus teaches otherwise. God's saving love and justice are for all people, everywhere. In **Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32**, Paul affirms that God has not rejected the people of God. Rather, God intends new life in Christ for all people.

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Human relationships are often difficult, and events might seem to conspire against healthy and fulfilling life together. God empowers us to restore fractured relationships. God's presence in reconciliation brings a new, sacred unity to community. How do you, as individual and as church, embrace opportunities for reconciliation and forgiveness?

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