

**Message: God's Good Purposes**  
**By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison**  
**Sermon Series: Shift**  
**May 3, 2020**  
**Genesis 50:15-21**

Set up **series**: Life is about learning how to shift. We must be flexible and make transitions to advance in life. However, nobody does it perfectly. It takes time to figure out how things work. We will look at how folks have gone from "A" to "C" by learning to shift through "B." We will study 3 examples of leaders who shifted well: Joseph, Moses and Joshua.

Have you ever mapped your spiritual chronology – the significant spiritual events in your life? Joseph was the 11<sup>th</sup> of 12 sons of his father, Jacob & was the favorite son from Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel. In a remarkably stupid display of parental favoritism, Jacob made a special multi-colored robe only for Joseph. His brothers were jealous and hated him. He told his brothers about two of his dreams. In one, his brothers bowed before him. In the other, the sun, moon & 11 stars bowed before him. This intensified their hatred. There are at least **shifts** in Joseph's life:

- 1.) At 17, brothers sold into **SLAVERY**. Ripped off his prized robe, killed a goat dipped its blood on it, gave it to Jacob and said his favorite son was. Jacob was devastated. Think how evil this was.
- 2.) He was taken to a new HOME in Egypt. Here he was a slave in Potiphar's house, not the favorite son. But he worked hard. When a catastrophic event happens, it's easy to end up in "**Learned Helplessness.**" 3 "**P's**" = **Personal** ("*I did something wrong*" may or may not be the case), **Pervasive** ("EVERYTHING is bad" –never true, always good things. Not pervasive bc his brothers could have killed him but Judah prevented it) and **Permanent** (this won't last forever – what WILL last forever is Christians will go to heaven). Control what you can control.
- 3.) **IMPRISONED**. Worked hard again while in prison. God also gave him the ability to interpret dreams.
- 4.) At 30, things shifted in his favor when he was elevated from prison to **GOVERNOR**. Joseph became the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest power in the land. Only **FAROW** 😊 was greater. He prepared Egypt for a worldwide famine.
- 5.) The famine brought his brothers to Egypt to buy grain for their families. How Joseph recognized them and revealed the TRUTH and was reunited with them is one of the best Bible stories. Because of God's provision

through him the future tribes of Israel survived the famine and began to flourish in Egypt.

### Genesis 50:15-21

***When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him" = "Projection."***

*"We know what we'd do if we were Joseph, therefore this is what Joseph will do to us. Payback.*

*<sup>16</sup> So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: <sup>17</sup> 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.'" And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Did Jacob really say this? At any rate, it impacted Joseph. <sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, "**Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?** <sup>20</sup> As for you, you meant evil against me, **but God meant it for good**, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. <sup>21</sup> So do not fear (Joseph says it twice.); I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

As a 5-year-old boy, Anthony Thompson remembers searching for coins on a Piggly Wiggly parking lot in Charleston, SC. He heard someone call his name –he looked around but saw no one. It happened a 2<sup>nd</sup> & then a 3<sup>rd</sup> time. Then he heard God say, "You'll be a preacher." He said, "What? Not me!" Anthony went home & told his grandmother. She was delighted, "Oh we're gonna have a preacher in the family." "Oh, not me. I don't know what you're talking about. From that day that's all I heard – every day – I was going to be a preacher."

On June 17, 2015, a 21-year-old white man entered the historic Emanuel AME church in Charleston. This was the first free-standing African American church in the south after The Civil War. He wanted to start a race war by killing blacks. That's why he shot & killed 9 people who were in a Bible Study, starting with their pastor, who was also a SC State Senator. Captured the next day, he appeared 24 hours later for a bond hearing. The small courtroom was filled w family members. The presiding judge determining bail, let family members speak to the murderer. Nadine told the shooter, "You took something very precious away from me. I will never talk to her again. I will never be able to hold her again. But I forgive you. May the Lord have mercy upon your soul."

Anthony, the little boy who at 5 years of age heard the Lord tell him he would be a pastor, was now a pastor. He heard the Lord speak to him in the same little

voice at that time. The Lord told Anthony, "I have something to say." *"I was like, 'Whoa! And I got right up.' the shooter, 'I have something to say. I forgive you and my family forgives you. But we'd like you to take this opportunity for you to repent. Repent. Confess. Give your life to the one who matters the most – Christ. He can change you. He can change your ways no matter what happens to you. You'll be okay. Do that and you'll be better off then you are right now'".*

One after another, family members stood and told the murderer they forgave him.

Another woman said, *"On Wednesday night, we welcomed you with open arms at our Bible Study. You killed some of the most beautiful people I've known. As we say in Bible Study – we enjoin you – may God have mercy on your soul."*

One victim's daughter said, *"A lot of people were angry with what I said – but I knew that's what my mom would want. Not to have hatred in my heart despite what people do to you."*

Not everyone could do so. One man who lost his sister said, *"I admired those who could forgive – but truly I'm a work in progress."*

When the shooting started, Felicia grabbed her granddaughter & muzzled her mouth – she had to keep her quiet or she'd get shot. Her son was with her – he was shot. Her son told the shooter, *"We mean you no harm. You don't have to do this."* When the shooter opened fire on her son, she felt every shot. "When I walked out of that church, I didn't walk out with anything. A couple of weeks later, they came with a white box. When I opened it, it was my Bible. From the pages that we started in, the Book of Mark 5 – it's pink. That's where the blood was splattered all thru & thru those pages. When I went up to speak to him, I wanted him to see what he had done. As I was speaking to him I pulled my Bible out and I said, "I have my Bible. It's bruised, it's battered, it's shot. Then all of a sudden, I started thinking about Jesus. And I said, This is my Bible. The blood that Jesus shed for you and for me. You didn't just try to kill people, you tried to kill the Word. But the word is still on the pages.

Chris Singleton was playing college baseball for North Charleston. He was riding in the bus and looked over at saw one of his best friends who was reading his Bible and writing a verse on his wrist. *"If I do that maybe God will give me a hit today."* He found this verse: Prov. 24:10 *"If you fail in the face of adversity, you are a man of little strength."* Or as the Message paraphrase: *"If you fall to pieces in a crisis, there wasn't much to you in the first place."* Chris said, there's a lot of adversity in baseball. He got 4 hits & made a diving catch – they beat Clemson. He wrote that scripture on his wrist for the rest of the season. On June 17<sup>th</sup> his mom was brutally murdered in cold blood. Chris didn't realize it at the time, but God had given him that scripture for that time until months later. Someone asked,

*“How do you feel about what happened to your mom? We already forgive him. His sister looked at him like, “What?” “I don’t know why I said – it just came out. Wow – it wasn’t me. That scripture I wrote on my wrist – that wasn’t for baseball – that was for the trials I was going to go through when my mother was killed.”*

## 2 results:

1) After these speeches, one who was hoping to organize the community in protest realized the power of forgiveness. He said, *“That was the nail in the coffin. We’re not going to be able to organize.”* Charleston didn’t riot over this awful racist act. Other cities exploded at a single murder – there will be a big reaction. After the shooting, over 10,000 people joined hands in one of the biggest displays of unity Charleston has ever seen.

2) They removed the Confederate flag from the South Carolina State Capitol.

An author said: *“When the media covered the response of families to what took place, it forced me to pause and try to understand what was going on. Some see their forgiveness as submission to hatred; but if we look closely, the act of forgiveness, demonstrated great courage. I don’t know any other religious belief system besides Christianity where an innocent man hangs on the cross suffering immeasurable pain, torment, torture – and prays for his accusers, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do. That act of forgiveness, even when they do what they do in ignorance, is the greatest act of love and the greatest act of release that one could ever experience. The beauty of forgiveness is whether he accepted responsibility or demonstrated remorse – it doesn’t matter. Those he offended can forgive him and can walk away free while he continues to carry the burden of his actions.*

*“What you meant for evil, God Meant for good.” “For I am CONVINCED that neither death/life, angels/demons, the present/future nor any powers height nor depth nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in X J our Lord.”*

I am convinced Love = stronger than hate. I am convinced

Forgiveness = stronger bitterness.

Maybe it’s time for you to forgive, too. Maybe it’s time for you to  
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