

Explore the Bible: May 26

Revenge? • Genesis 50:15-26

By Laura Lee Leathers



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Last week, we ended with Joseph and his brothers involved in conversation and on the road to reconciliation. They also planned to return to Canaan to tell Jacob his son Joseph was alive and well.

Before you read any further, I highly recommend you open your Bible and read Genesis 45:16 through Genesis 50:26. Read slowly. Note the words of Jacob, his reaction when he heard the news about Joseph (45:26). When it was time for his last words to his sons (49:1-27), he bestowed curses on Reuben, Simeon, and Levi; blessings on the others. Pay attention to the blessing on Judah (49:8-12).

One more time, we learn about God speaking to Jacob “in the visions of the night.” God affirms His promise, “I will make of you a great nation there (Egypt), and “I will also surely bring you up again” (46:2-4) – Jacob closed his tired old eyes at the age of 147. Jacob’s seventy family members settle in the land of Goshen.

As the famine continued, the Egyptians used all their money, turned over their livestock, and sold their land in exchange for bread. Then, when harvest did come, the people would turn over one-fifth to Pharaoh. He owned all of Egypt.

Jacob provided instructions on where he would be buried, "with my fathers in the cave that is in the Ephron the Hittite" (49:29-33). This is where Abraham and Sarah and Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah are buried. Jacob's wishes were implemented.

Message Sent (Gen. 50:15-18 NKJV) – Joseph's brothers focused on what would happen when the family returned to Egypt. Would Joseph want revenge? He had the power, authority, and freedom to act against them.

The brothers send Joseph a message. They state that Jacob had given a command to be relayed to Joseph after his death. Notice the reference to "your father" instead of "our father." Was it a sign of respect? More than likely, it was an attempt to divert the attention away from them.

We don't know for sure if Jacob left the message or if this is something they contrived. They wanted forgiveness based on their blood relationship and God's mercy.

Joseph wept. Why? Because they still saw him as a threat, even after all he had done for them. And once again, they bow before him and declare, "We are your slaves!"

Truth Declared (Gen. 50:19-21) – Wisely Joseph gives the following council. They were not to be afraid. The question, "Am I in the place of God?" is to make them think about who is in control.

"Even if he had wanted vengeance, such plans were overruled by the plans and purposes of God. Time and time again, the Bible demonstrates that God is sovereign, and His ways are not our ways" (Isa. 55:8-9) (Lifeway).

Joseph voices the truth in verse 20. What the brothers intended for evil, “God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people” (NKJV). God is the only one who can take the evil and the harm it brings to His people and bring good out of it (Rom. 8:28).

In the final verse of the passage, he states again for them not to be afraid, he will take care of them, and then comforts and speaks kindly to them.

Promises Assured (Gen. 50:22-26) – Joseph lived to be 110 years old. After his death, “his family remained in Egypt” for four centuries (Gen. 15:13-16). He lived to see Ephraim’s sons to the third generation.

Just like his father, Joseph tells his brothers he is about to die. He affirms the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; their descendants would enter the promised land.

Joseph had one final request, “When God comes to your aid, you are to carry my bones up from here.” The brothers were asked to take an oath to give their sacred word that they would fulfill the promise regarding the request. When Joseph died, he was also embalmed. He and Jacob are the only ones mentioned in the Bible to be embalmed.

God grants forgiveness. He keeps His promises. He is faithful to His people. We have the responsibility to tell others the Good News.

Leathers is a member of First Church, Lexington.