**JOSEPH’S BROTHERS REPENT (True Love leads to Repentance)**

 June 10, 2018

Genesis 42:1-44:34 / Key Verse: 44:33, “Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord’s slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers.”

Joseph is known as the fruit of Genesis in a sense that he reflects the image of our Lord Jesus Christ such as innocent suffering, redemptive and forgiving love, and saving of many people, especially God’s chosen people. Today we see another fruit of Genesis. It is the true repentance of Judah. Judah’s repentance shows a very good example of true repentance that God wants to see from each person’s life in Jesus Christ. Judah’s repentance was possible because of Joseph’s true love. His love was not easy love but very tough and redemptive love with much pain and suffering. Today God wants us to know his redemptive love in his Son Jesus’ sacrifice to redeem us from our slavery to sin and death. By knowing such amazing love, God wants us to bear fruit of true repentance; the fruit of love. This is most beautiful, meaningful, and valuable fruit that we can bear in our lives. So, I pray that through today’s passage, we all may receive the spirit of repentance and the spirit of true love which leads people to repentance. Amen.

1. **Joseph remembers his dreams (42:1-38)**

As we learned in the last chapter, the seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end and the seven years of famine began just as Joseph had said. There was famine in the whole world and this famine reached to Jacob’s family in Canaan as well. Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, so he sent ten of his sons to buy grain. He did not send Benjamin, Joseph’s brother because he was afraid that harm might come to him. Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all the people. When his brothers arrived there and was ushered into his presence, he immediately recognized them. But he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. “Where do you come from?” They replied, “From the land of Canaan to buy food.” Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Then he remembered his dreams about them. How angry and upset they had been when he innocently told them about how, in his dreams, their sheaves had bowed down to his and the sun, moon and stars had bowed down to him. He had not understood the meaning of the dreams at that time, but he had never forgotten them. They were like God’s word of promise to him. They were hidden in his heart during all those years of suffering, and they kept him from losing hope. Now, God was fulfilling the prophecy of those dreams exactly. Joseph must have realized that his life had a clear purpose and that everything that had happened to him was a part of fulfilling God’s sovereign plan and purpose. Now the purpose was becoming clear. It was that God wanted to use him not only to save the physical lives of his brothers from starvation but also to redeem them spiritually. God wanted to work in them to change from evil murderers, full of jealousy and hatred into godly men of God who can bear God’s blessing and become the pillars of God’s holy nation.

For this purpose, Joseph did not reveal himself to them now but deliberately spoke them harshly and accused them of being spies. By this, he questioned them about his father and younger brother. Then he put them in jail as suspicious characters and kept them there for three days. He agreed to release them only if their youngest brother came to Egypt to prove that what they had said was true. Finally, he released all of them but Simeon, whom he held as a hostage. He sent the others home with grain for their hungry families. He told them not to come back unless they brought Benjamin.

It looks like Joseph was giving his brothers a hard time in order to get revenge for the terrible crime that they had done to him in the past. But as we carefully see the whole chapters 42-44, we can come to know that he was not just harassing them for his own pleasure. He frequently felt real pain and turned aside and wept, suffering with them. Joseph was carefully leading his brothers, step by step to repent of their sins. Joseph created many problems for his brothers to lead them toward repentance.

Look at 42:21, “They said to one another, ‘Surely, we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that’s why this distress has come on us.’” Their trouble stirred their guilty consciences deeply hidden in their hearts and they began to talk about what they had done. They confessed to one another the evilness of their deed. This was a giant step toward true repentance. Their guilty consciences made them interpret even the good things that Joseph did for them (giving the money back to them) in a negative way. When they discovered that their money had been put back in their grain sacks, they were terrified. They turned to each other trembling and said, “What is this that God has done to us?” They had never been aware of God’s presence when they had done terrible thing to Joseph. But now they themselves began to be aware of God. When they returned home with the grain and reported to their father all that had happened, Jacob was deeply distressed and he did not agree to send Benjamin even though Simeon was a hostage and they needed grain in order to survive.

1. **Judah’s great change (43:1-44:34)**

In chapter 43, Joseph’s brothers make their second journey to Egypt. The famine was still severe in the land. They had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, and Jacob finally suggested that they go back and buy more food. It had become a matter of life and death. (43:8) The brothers refused to go without Benjamin. Reuben’s emotional and irresponsible offer had been ignored by Jacob (42:37). Now Judah came forward. See 43:8,9. “Then Judah said to Israel his father, ‘Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die. I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life.” Jacob relented. They prepared a double amount of money and gifts for the terrifying man they must meet again and set out. When they arrived in Egypt, they were invited to Joseph’s house for lunch. This luncheon invitation also terrified them. They suspected his motives. They thought they would be arrested for failing to pay for the grain they had previously gotten, and their donkey would be taken. When guilt and fear occupied their heart, even act of kind serving was interpreted as harassment. Joseph’s steward assured them that he did not want their silver. He said, “Don’t be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.” Then he restored Simeon to them. When they sat down to eat, they were truly mystified, for they were seated in the order of their age-from the firstborn to the youngest. How could this great prime minister of Egypt know so much about them? They looked at each other in astonishment. Joseph had them served with royal food from his own table. Benjamin was given 5 times more than anyone else. Perhaps Joseph wanted to see if they hated Benjamin as much as they had hated him in his youth. They didn’t show any sign of hatred toward Benjamin. They just feasted and drank freely with Joseph.

There was one final and climactic event. Joseph sent his brothers home laden with grain, but he had his own silver cup placed in Benjamin’s grain sack-and, as before, he returned their money. Then he sent his steward after them. They were stopped and searched and there was Joseph’s silver cup in Benjamin’s sack. There were 2 options: Just leave the guilty man and go home; or go back to the city and take responsibility with him. They all loaded up their donkeys and went back together. After a quick hearing, the prime minister decreed that the guilty one must remain and serve as a slave, and the rest of them could go back to their father. At this, Judah stepped forward. When he saw the silver cup in Benjamin’s sack, he was thunder-struck. Now he stood before the fearsome Egyptian and pled for his youngest brother. He laid his heart before Joseph. He spoke of his father’s love for Benjamin; he mentioned the brother who had been snatched away and presumably eaten by wild animals, and his father’s sorrow. He said, “If the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy’s life, sees that the boy isn’t there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow.” (30,31) He went on to say, “Your servant guaranteed the boy’s safety to my father. I said, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!’” Then he said, “Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord’s slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father.” Here, Judah volunteered to take Benjamin’s place and serve as a slave in Egypt in his stead. What an amazing change! Judah’s unselfish act was the fruit of real repentance.

Judah had been the ring-leader in their terrible crime of selling his brother Joseph as a slave. He had brought unspeakable sorrow to his father around 20 years. He had tried to escape the responsibility for what he had done by leaving his family for many years. By God’s grace, he had come home. Now he became a different person who thought about his aged father more than himself and who took full responsibility for his promise. He was a sinner who had truly repented. This was the very goal for which Joseph deliberately gave his brothers hard time and he himself waited suffering together with them. Once Judah had been a ring leader for terrible crime but now he became a man who truly cared for his aged father and his youngest brother. And by his true repentance, he became an influential man of God to his brothers and very good example from whom many people can learn about what the true repentance is. Because of his true repentance, now he could become the honorable patriarch of God’s holy nation Israel, the covenant son, the bearer of God’s redemptive history, and the ancestor of David and Jesus.

Judah’s repentance was possible because of Joseph’s love. Joseph’s love also teaches us what real love is. Real love is not self-centered but redemptive; making us free from slavery to sin. It is loving from God’s point of view. Rea love is to help the loved one to repent. Joseph endured much personal pain in order to lead his brothers to repentance. He saw how they suffered from their guilty consciences, and he wept. He didn’t know when his old father would die, and he wanted to see him so much, but he waited. (43:27) He wanted to hug Benjamin, but he waited. Real love is always accompanied by pain. Man’s problems are really love problems. Like Potiphar’s wife, people try to satisfy their desire for love by satisfying their lust, but this doesn’t work. Jacob’s love for Joseph seemed to be real love, but it was human love, and it was selfish love. Real love is helping the one we love to come to God and repent and live in a right relationship with God. Our Lord Jesus shows real love for human beings when he said in his first message in his public messianic life on earth, “Repent and believe the good news.” (Mark 1:15b)

Our Lord Jesus’ death and resurrection is the good news because it is about the love of God who forgives our sins and save us from our sins. But when we see Jesus’ death and resurrection carefully, we come to know that Jesus’ death and resurrection demands our different life-style; namely repentant life; the good news of Jesus demands us to die to our sins and live for God’s righteousness and love. Here, there is no compromise. This is absolute truth that no one can change. We must choose either to obey to repent and live or disobey and perish.

Personally, I have studied Genesis many times for a long time and learned about the story of Joseph’s redemptive love and Judah and his brother’s repentance many times. But as we know, the bible was not written just to inform us of truth but to demand us to obey. This demand is not the demand of a tyranny but the demand of our heavenly loving and holy Father who really loves us; who really wants us to be free from the slavery to sin and Satan. As time pass by more and more, I come to think about the fruit of my life more and more. In my life, there are still unanswered prayer topics and various challenges in bearing the fruit of repentance and love. In my life there are always constant spiritual battle against our enemy Devil’s scheme. But fundamentally, I am very thankful about my life, my family, and each member of our St. George ubf church and everything which have happened in and around my life because I believe in God’s love and his good and sovereign ruling over everything. And I want to concentrate on the life of bearing fruit of repentance and love more thoroughly by being faithful to small things such as personal bible study and prayer life to serve God’s people and to prepare myself to serve God’s people eventually to be found as a fruitful man of God before him.

In conclusion, today we learned that Joseph’s redemptive love led his brothers to repentance; especially Judah to repentance. Our Lord Jesus’s love is also redemptive love which leads us to repentance; not just one-time repentance but life time repentance so that we can grow to bear abundant fruit of love which gives us true joy, meaning, and satisfaction and which eventually lasts forever. I pray that God may bless each of us to know Jesus’ redemptive love more and more and bear fruit of love more and more so that the kingdom of God can advance in and through us. Amen.