

Our Place at His Place

Off Kilter
August 16, 2020

Welcome to where we're learning how to stand strong when being seduced by this world!



Are you conquering lust or feeding it? Last week we talked about our master desire; the supreme desire that forces all desires to fall in line behind. Because, everything begins and ends with God's love for *us*, and ours for *Him*. But **lust always fights for the front of the line.**



This sermon is rated *SM* for spiritually mature. It contains sexually explicit Scripture, graphic language, and partial (blurred) nudity. Typical for the Bible; unusual for churches seeking to understand it. So now, Previously on The Seduction of Joseph: Scripture says that ...



Joseph is of a fair form, and of a fair appearance. And ... his lord's wife lifteth up her eyes unto Joseph, and saith, 'Lie with me;' **[Wait. How'd that translation sneak into the sermon?]** – Genesis 39:6-7 YLT



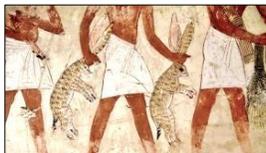
[The Good News translation says] Joseph was well-built and good-looking, and ... his master's **[Potiphar's]** wife **[a.k.a. Mrs. P]** began to desire Joseph **[a.k.a. Lil' J]** and asked him to go to bed with her. – Genesis 39:6-7 GNT



But **[as we read in the NIV]** he refused. ... “[How] could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. **[He could be around her, just not alone; knowing it'd lead to going to bed. But]** One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, **[organizing the servants]** and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his *cloak* and said, “Come to bed with me!” But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. **[Saying, “What is it with me and coats?!” That's what got him in hot water with his brothers; because of the favoritism of his father, Jacob]** – Genesis 39:6-12 NIV



But, *was* it a cloak or a coat or a robe as some translations say? This 1630 painting of Joseph and (a strategically blurred) Mrs. P (still in the royal collection, by the way), has Lil' J decked out in the latest 17th century European fashion. Why's he concerned about his cloak? He's got about eight more layers to keep him warm in the frigid climate of Egypt – not to mention the feather in his cap, puff-sleeved shirt, nylons, and slippers!



Not the apparel we general see on statues and paintings in tombs from Joseph's time (c. 2200^{BC}). this is. **They had a very specific style:** short skirts and tall rabbits with *huge* ears! (Look close)



Now, Lil' J lived at the tail end of the *Old Kingdom*, when **men, from kings to slaves, wore short, linen, wrap-around skirts/kilts, called Shendyt**, that tied in front by an extended hem. And, it wasn't until the *Middle Kingdom* that men began to wear undergarments.



So, now-knowing Old-Kingdom Egyptian men wore short kilts, commando style, with a rip cord, and probably *not* foppish-dandy fancy-pants, pirate shirts, and *cloaks*, we return to our Bible story already in progress. And although several translations, for whatever reason, say coat, cloak, or robe, *most* simply say, clothes, clothing, or garment. But, good ol' Wycliffe wins, for *most* literal *and* insightful.

She took the hem of his cloth, and **[whatever it is, Mrs. P's now holdin' it, and lil' J's not wearin' it!]** she said, sleep thou with me; and **[after an unspecified amount of time, whether sudden or not-so]** he left the mantle [lit. surrounding cover; and "he left" "his cloth"] in her hand, and he fled, **[from her, the situation, and any desire competing with his deepest desire]** and went out. – Genesis 39:12 Wycliffe Bible

Last Sunday I said **when our desires are out of order everything is**. Just look around down here.



When our desires are in order, absolute devotion is the goal – first to God, and then to a mate, and sex becomes an ongoing expression of our deepest love. But, **when our desires are out of order, sex is the goal, devoid of devotion**, leaving a void that leads to an ongoing, soul wrenching, search for true intimacy in all the wrong places.



Mrs. P can't stop herself. **What began as a diversion becomes a diminishing of her sexuality-based self-esteem**. Now she *must* conquer Joseph, or accept his *rejection*. Poor Mrs. P placed *her* hope for happiness in a tryst with a well-built *body*.

But she grossly misjudged Joseph through the steamy lens of her own desire. But *what* throws her into a murderous rage? What are we *missing*? We're not told when or how that cloth came off, just that he suddenly "left it in her hand". And, that "and went out" is *very* significant *and* separate from "and he fled". Because that "went out" was the one thing she *hadn't* planned on; and in fact, had *counted* on Lil' J *not* doing.

Whatever we lust for – money, sex, or power – we're either conquering it or feeding it. No in-betweens. And **the more we feed it, the stronger it grows, the hungrier it gets, and the emptier it leaves us. The first day it calls you master, the second day, friend, and the third day slave.**

She thinks she can use Lil' J's own goodness against him. By taking *his* clothes in *her* hands, she puts *her* reputation, marriage, and very life, in his. *She* knows that *he* knows that he can't leave sans clothes without exposing *her* and destroying the home he's vowed to protect. She's sure he won't leave her or forsake her; but in a flash (literally), she's left holding the rag, and, ironically, feeling betrayed, and humiliated, devastated, and dishonored; because, he's become her master desire, so his reaction is the ultimate rejection.

He can't care about the consequences – no time – or who sees; he just flees, and goes out of the house, making Mrs. P's seduction, failure, and humiliation, very public! And, **it's in our fallen nature to self-justify;** so you can bet she sees herself as the victim. Ya got'a feel a *little sorry* for her ... since *this* is the lethal game we *all* play, whatever the desire 'du jour'. But, **when feeding some lust is our highest hope for happiness, we've been badly conned by our own deceitful heart and disordered desires.** By the way, *great* sex, as an expression of godly love, is still a *mere foreshadow* of what can only be found in Christ. That's why one of His Scriptural symbols is a wedding night Bridegroom! So, **when sex takes the place of that infinitely greater, intimate joy, it fails us miserably.** The magnitude of what just happened quickly dawns on Mrs. P; and Joseph's righteous reaction just turned her wretched rendezvous into a death-match.

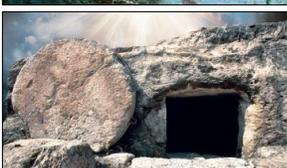
When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run *out of the house*, [That **"when she"** is key: *when she* saw he streaked **"out of the house"**, is *when she* knew she'd be known as the *winch she'd* become! *Then she* got an idea, an *awful* idea; the winch got a wonderfully awful idea! "I know what I'll do." The winch sneered as she spoke. "I'll lie with his *kilt* – that you all call a *cloak*!" *Then*] she called [i.e. *screamed for*] her household servants [who were sent out, but kept near]. "Look," she said to them, [holding up the official cloth of their Chief of Staff] "this *Hebrew* has been brought to us [by my own husband"] to make sport of us! – Genesis 39:13-14 NIV

She plays on their pride and prejudice against a young boss who's foreign, handsome, and highly favored by Potiphar. **This way they'll want to see what she wants 'em to see!** She's saying: "By foolishly putting that *Hebrew* over you, Potiphar's made fools of us *all*!" And I like to think Joseph yells from outside: "What is it with me and *favoritism*?!" Now watch Mrs. P weave fact and fiction to spin the servant's perception into corroboration.

He came in here [FACT] to sleep with me, [FICTION! Though, they probably had an office pool going on how long *Mr. Morals* would hold out] but I *screamed*. [FACT! She called 'em] When he heard me scream for *help*, [FICTION] he left his *cloak* [FACT! But let's call it a *cloth*] beside me [FICTION] and ran out of the house." [FACT] – Genesis 39:14-15 NIV

You see, **the best lies are always woven with truth.** But, one of Mrs. Potiphar's *biggest* lies here is actually true ... just in a way *she's* unaware of: it *was* a cry for help. Last Sunday I ended by saying that many a marriage has failed because one or both partners were under the delusion that the *other* was somehow supposed to be their *master* desire and *supreme* love. One of the huge reasons we're in the mess we're in down here, is because **so many are looking for so much love in all the wrong places.** Freud said that *spiritual* longings are just frustrated *sexual* desires. What if he got backward? **What if our sexual longings are frustrated spiritual desires?** Ever notice how romantic love is always described in eternal terms that make no sense down here?

"*Longer than* there've been fishes in the ocean; higher than any bird ever flew; *longer than* there've been stars up in the heavens, I've been in love with you." And we all go, "Ahh". Why don't we go, "Huh?!" Because, **unbelievers (and believers) unconsciously project the attributes of the One who should be our Master desire onto the object of their affection:** "You are the *sunshine* of my life. ... *forever* you'll stay in my heart." "Unforgettable in *every* way, and *forevermore*, that's how you'll stay." "You're *everything* I hope for; you're *everything* I need." "Fill my heart with song. Let me sing *forevermore*. You are *all* I long for, all I *worship* and *adore*."



This world unwittingly writes about His love, and sings about His love, because let's face it: we're all lost without His love. Every creature is wired to instinctively desire what it needs most. Ducklings desire water; there's a pond. Piglets long to suckle; there's a sow. And cats long to condescend; there's us. But *us*, **the thing we're hardwired to most desire is the most unobtainable down here, apart from Christ: endless love.** Then ... Potiphar ... came ... home. That's how I picture the Captain of the palace guard, which was made up of the roughest, toughest, most experienced soldiers.

She kept his [cloth] beside her until his master came home. Then she told him this story: [part blame, part threat, part diversion] "That Hebrew slave *you* brought *us* came to me to make sport of me. But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his [cloth] beside me and ran out of the house." ["I have proof and witnesses"] – Genesis 39:16-18 NIV

Poor Potiphar knows he's been badly betrayed, either by the trusted steward who vowed to *serve* him with all his heart, or the bride who vowed to *love* him with all hers ... which no one can actually do, except **the One and only with the power and authority to say, "I am with you always," "I will never leave you nor forsake you," and mean it!** (Mat 28:20; Heb 13:5) The One who, according to Revelation (1:16, 10:1, 21:23, 22:5) *is* in fact the sunshine of our *eternal* life!

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 8:38-39 NIV

In other words: **"Ain't no mountain high enough!"**

In the deepest depth of our soul, we really, really need the glorious Light of Life itself to look at us, with lights *on* and clothes, masks, and pretense off, and say ... "You are so beautiful to Me." And *mean* it, without reservation, forever into eternity, for real. **Who else but Jesus could do that? Who else but Jesus would? I mean, just look at us! What a mess.** Which is why Jesus did all that He did to help us find what we ultimately, intimately, deeply desire most: *Him*.

[You know] When his master heard the *story* his wife *told* him, saying, "This is how your *slave* treated me, [your wife]" he burned with anger. – Genesis 39:19 NIV

Yeah? Well, there's an old Henny Youngman joke: "My best friend ran away with my wife, and let me tell you, I *miss* him!" This verse is what you call "a setup". It doesn't say who he's angry with, while making it sound like it's Joseph. The next verse is the punch line; but, after 4,000 years, we miss the humor. That's why I'm pointing it out in advance ... of next Sunday.