

# Son of Joseph

## Just Between Two Criminals

February 8, 2026



**Today we're gonna find the criminal who healed Jesus' heart on the cross!**

**Know what drives me nuts?** When I get an *exciting new insight* for a sermon, and I'm writing it, and it's *going great*, and I can't wait to *share it* – and I realize it'd make a great *Easter message!* And if I *had any sense*, I'd put it on *pause*. So ... *all I can say to you today is: Happy Easter!*

It all *started* when I started this *message* on *what to do* when it *feels* like God *abandons* you. And I was *in the process* of reworking a *sermon* from my *Joseph series*, some *14 years* ago, called: The Butler Didn't Do It. Now, *Joseph* has *long been* my *favorite OT story*. And when it *begins*, **he's a prideful punk who pictures true power and greatness totally backwards**. Like how *Paul* says we all view *truth* and *greatness* through a *dark mirror*. (1 Cor 13:12) Whereas, as *Jesus* said:



"Whoever wants [dreams or wishes] to become *great* among you must be your *servant*, and whoever wants to be *first* must be *slave of all*. For even the Son of Man did not come [down here] to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." – Mark 10:43-45 NIV



[Therefore] "The *greatest* among you will be your *servant*. For whoever *exalts* himself will be *humbled*, and whoever *humbles* himself will be *exalted*." – Matthew 23:11-12 NIV



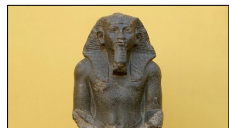
Because, God *opposes* the *proud* but gives *grace* to the *humble*. Humble yourselves, therefore, *under God's mighty hand*, that He may *lift you up* in *due time*. [And that's the story of little Joe's journey] – 1 Peter 5:5-6 NIV



Cuz the Lord *turns* little Joe's *backward life upside down* to *humble* him, to *prepare* him to *save the world*, in *due time*, by *serving the world* during a *7-year famine*. See that *shadow*? *Upside-down* in a *mirror*, it spells: *Jesus*. Cuz **Christ came to fulfill the law**, (Mt 5:17) which was a *shadow of things to come*. (Heb 10:1)



[And] This [law, God] *established* in *Joseph* as a *testimony* – Psalm 81:5 NKJ



[And as] [Philip said] "We have *found Him* of whom *Moses* in the *law*, and also the *prophets*, wrote—*Jesus* ... the *Son of Joseph*." – John 1:45 NKJ

Under God's *mighty hand*, *Moses* wrote the *50 chapters* of *Genesis*. The *first 36* cover *2,000 years*. But **the last 14 chapters just cover Joseph's life!** And it's *quite a story*. As you may know, *little Joe* is *despised* and *rejected* by his *brothers* (the *tribes of Israel*) for *sharing* how God showed him that **God destined him to be their savior**. But *before* he can *rise in power*, he's gotta be *betrayed* and *thrown* into a *dry cistern* (that little Joe in there is *true-to-scale*), *sold* into *slavery*, *falsely accused* of a *capital crime*, and then *shut up* in a *tomb-like dungeon* – in the *kingdom of Senusret II*, the *god of that world*. But:

Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker [allegedly] committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. [A crime so heinous, it received eternal suffering: after death, the corpse is deprived of mummification for afterlife preparation, and is instead fed to vultures!] And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer [responsible for tasting and guaranteeing the king's food and drink to be poison free] and the chief baker, and he put them in custody in the house of [Potiphar] the captain of the [palace] guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. – Genesis 40:1-3 ESV



Why not just *execute* 'em? Because the *crime* was obviously *discovered* in the *process* of being *committed*, before it *killed* the *king*. So the king's *not* *sure* which suspect – or *both* – are *guilty*! Spoiler alert: the *butler* didn't do it. That's how *King James* translates *cupbearer*. He's a *good* guy. And the *royal cupbearers* were *treated* as part of the *family*. Picture *Mr. French* from *Family Affair*. It was *funny* to see him *carrying* *Buffy's* doll for her. I *keep* it *fresh* for the *kids*. But, know *why* I'm reaching *back* to the *1960s* to use *Mr. French*? So I can *tell* you that *Pastor Nick* *arrested* him, *back* in the *day*. Kind of. *Officer Harris* gave him a *speeding ticket* in *Anacortes*, and *Mr. French* (a.k.a. *Sebastian Cabot*) wanted to be *taken in* to *pay* it off.

And then there's the *baker*. He's a *bad* guy. So, here's *Joseph*, *left alone* and *imprisoned* and *feeling abandoned* by *God*, when *these two accused criminals* suddenly *show up*. And *guess* who would've been in *charge* of *investigating* the *crime* – the *Captain of the Palace Guard*: *Potiphar* *Schwarzenegger*. And *guess* what *Potiphar's big plan* was for *getting* to the *truth* of the *innocence* and *guilt* in the *matter*: *Joseph*! So:

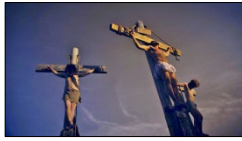
The *captain* of the *[palace]* guard *assigned* them to *Joseph*, *[so he can get to know 'em]* and he *attended* them. *[And]* After they had been in *custody* for *some time*, each of the two men—the *cupbearer* and the *baker* ... had a *dream* the *same night*, and each *dream* had a *meaning* of its own. – Genesis 40:4-5 NIV

*One* from a *good conscience* and *one* from a *guilty one*. But *both* apparently *prompted* by ...

Pharaoh's *birthday* *[which]* came *three days* later, and *[as everyone knew]* he gave a *banquet* for all his *officials* and *household staff*. – Genesis 40:20 NLT

*[So]* When *Joseph* came to them the next morning, he saw that they were *dejected*. So he asked ... "Why are your faces so sad today?" "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then *Joseph* said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? *[Who knows the thoughts and desires of the hearts and minds of all mankind; and I know Him, so]* Tell me your dreams." – Genesis 40:6-8 NIV

Says the *guy* who's trying to *come to grips* with *how* a *dungeon* is part of the *interpretation* of the *dreams* that *God* had given *him*. And *this* is where my *mind* began to *wander* to the *cross*. Because *Joseph is assigned to judge the hearts and minds of these two criminals* – one who *dreams* of *serving wine*, and one who *dreams* of *serving bread*. And *just* before the *Son of Joseph* is *crucified* between two *criminals* to whom *He* was *assigned*:



The Lord *Jesus*, on the night *He* was *betrayed*, took *bread*, and when *He* had *given thanks*, *He broke* it and said, “This is My *body*, which is for you; do this in *remembrance* of Me.” ... [Then] *He took* the *cup*, saying, “This *cup* is the new covenant in My *blood*; do this, whenever you *drink* it, in *remembrance* of Me.” – 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 NIV



[You know, the *One* who said] “I am the *true vine*, and ... *you* are the *branches*. Whoever *remains* in *Me* and I in him will *bear much fruit*” – John 15:1-5 NAB

[And also said] “I am the *Bread of Life*; [because] whoever comes to *Me* will never *hunger*, and whoever *believes* in *Me* will never *thirst*. – John 6:35 NAB

For *righteousness*, for they will be *filled*. (Mt 5:6) And *true* to His *Word*, *one of the criminals* who hung *beside* Him turned to Him and *was restored to eternal life through the Son of Joseph*. But *that’s* not the *part* I’m so *excited* to *share*. But first, let’s *get* those two dreams *out* of the *way*.

So [with a *clean conscience* and without *hesitation*] the chief *cupbearer* told Joseph *his* dream. ... “I saw a *vine* in *front* of me, [as did the *criminal* on the *cross*] and on the *vine* were *three branches*. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its *clusters ripened* into grapes. ... and I took the grapes, *squeezed* them into Pharaoh’s *cup* and put the *cup* in his *hand*.” ... Joseph [having *known* him for “*some time*”] said to him. [The king’s *feast* is in *three days*, so] “The *three branches* are *three days*. Within *three days* Pharaoh will *lift up* your *head* and *restore* you [because *this* is going in your *report*, cuz your *clean conscience* is *clearly telling* you that] ... you will put Pharaoh’s *cup* in his *hand*, just as you used to do ... But when *all* goes *well* with you, [when you *take* the *cup*] *remember* me and ... *mention* me to Pharaoh and get me *out* of this *prison*.” – Genesis 40:8-14 NIV

And *true* to *his* word, *on the third day, the cupbearer receives a life sentence* (the *good* kind) *when his head is lifted up*. Sound familiar? Cuz the *true Vine* in *full view* at the *cross* had said:

“And I, when I *am lifted up* ... will draw *all* people to *myself*.” – John 12:32 ESV

And *He* is the *head* [after *all*] of the *body*, the *church* – Colossians 1:18 NIV



Then comes the *baker*. Now, Joseph *knows*, as *part* of the baker’s *daily routine*, he *carries* *baskets* of *bread* on his *head*. Cuz *that’s* how they *did* that. And when crossing the *courtyard*, *the bread had to be covered and protected from Pharaoh’s Chickens (Egyptian vultures) and other sacred, filthy birds*, that *hung* out at the *kitchen*. And Joseph *knows* that *one* of ‘em *committed* this *crime*, and that ... the *butler* didn’t do it! So, could Joseph’s *pleading* be *part* of a *plan* to get that *guilty baker* to *open up* about *his dream*? Because:

When the [traitorous] chief baker saw that Joseph [seemed desperate for favors, and] had given a *favorable* interpretation, he said ... “I too had a dream: On my *head* were *three baskets* of *bread* ... for Pharaoh, but the *birds* were *eating* them *out* of the *basket* on my *head*.” [His *guilty conscience* clearly *confessing* to *causing contamination*] ... [Joseph said] [Looking around like, “*Seriously?* It was the *baker* with the *poison* in the *kitchen*.”] “Within *three days* [when Pharaoh *lifts up* his *head*] Pharaoh will *lift off* your *head* and *hang* you [by *impaling* you] on a *tree*. And the *birds* will *eat* away your *flesh*.” – Genesis 40:16-19 NIV

Because **he partook in the bread of death!** Whereas we *partake* of the *body* of:

Christ [the *Bread of Life*, who] *redeemed* us from the *curse* of the *law* by *becoming* a curse for us, for it is written: [in the *Law of Moses* and *established* in the *testimony* of *Joseph*] “Cursed is everyone who is *hung* on a *tree*.” – Galatians 3:13 NIV

And in *fact*, on the *third* day ... [Pharaoh] *restored* the chief *cupbearer* ... but the chief baker he [hung] *impaled* [on a *tree*] – Genesis 40:20-22 NAB

But *what* I’m excited to *share* is **a new addition to what took place on the cross!** Cuz we know that:

[People] *kept insulting Him* ... the *chief priests*, *experts* in the *law*, and *elders* ... even the *criminals* who were crucified with Him *kept insulting Him*. – Matthew 27:39-44 EHV

And *John* (19:28-29) says that *Psalm 69:21* was *fulfilled* on the *cross* when: “They gave Me *poison* for *food*, and for My *thirst* they gave Me *vinegar* to *drink*.” But *look* at the *verse* just *before* it:

“*Insults* have *broken My heart*, so that I am in *despair*. [As in: “My *God*, My *God*, why have You *forsaken* Me?” (Ps 22:1)] I *looked* for *pity*, but there was *none*” – Psalm 69:20 NRS

**Their insults broke His heart.** That’d be the *saddest addition* to the *story* of the *cross* if it *ended there*, and Jesus *died* in *despair*. But **it takes three crosses and three hours to tell the whole story.** Because *one cross* speaks of **profound sacrifice**; and *one depicts* **defiance and rebellion**; but *one is* a *demonstration* of **deliverance and restoration**. Including Jesus’ own *broken heart*. Because *later*:

*One* of the *criminals* who hung there *hurled insults* at [Jesus] ... [and] the *other* criminal [suddenly *pitied Jesus* and] rebuked *him*. [The *other criminal!* saying] ... “We are punished *justly* ... but *this Man* has done nothing wrong.” – Luke 23:39-41 NIV

But *what’s* he *referring* to? **Three hours of physical and verbal abuse.** And though a *nonstop stream* of *insults* *hurled* and *heaped* on Jesus sent Him into *despair*, **He only ever responded with concern and care**, saying “Father, *forgive* them.” (Lk 23:34) So, **the very thing that broke Jesus’ heart softened and changed this criminal’s**. And *Mark* (15:27-28) says that *Isaiah 53:12* was *fulfilled* on the *cross* when: “He was *numbered* with the *transgressors*”. But *look* at the *two verses* just *before*:

He *has* put Him to *grief*. [But] *When You make His soul* an *offering* for *sin* ... He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. ... Because He *poured out* His *soul* unto *death*, and He was *numbered* with the *transgressors*, and He *bore* the *sin* of *many* – Isaiah 53:10-12 NKJ

Then *he* said, “Jesus, *remember me* when You come into Your *kingdom*.” Jesus answered him, “I tell you the *truth*, today you will be *with Me* in *paradise*.” – Luke 23:42-43 NIV



Because **he humbled himself under God’s might hand.**

But if he hadn’t **started the day by taunting Jesus**, *Psalm 69:20* wouldn’t be *fulfilled*. And if he didn’t **finish the day by trusting Jesus**, *Isaiah 53:10-11* wouldn’t be *fulfilled*. But he *did*. And they *were*. And *Jesus*, the *Son of Joseph*, *sighed* and *died* quite *satisfied*, cuz **at the end of the day, He wasn’t going home empty handed!** Happy Easter!