

Hindsight Foresight

Serving as Prisoners of Hope

July 12, 2026



Today we're *learning to rest in the trust of the future assurance that we know hindsight will bring!*

Last Sunday, the question was, "Do you want to be *healed*?" If so, Jesus said, *get up, pick up, and walk*. Today it's: *Do you want your created purpose fulfilled?* If so, then *prepare for the pain*.



[For] All creation was *subjected* to God's curse. But with eager hope ... *groaning* as in the pains of childbirth right up to the *present* ... even though we have the Holy Spirit *within us* ... [we long] to be *released* from *sin* and *suffering*. – Romans 8:20-23 NLT



So what'll it be: *the hopeful pain of birth or the hopeless pain of death?* We've come *full circle* in our *mini-series* on *Joseph*. In fact, we have *three full circles*. The *first* is that we're *back* where we *began* with little Joe *longing* to be *released* from Potiphar's *prison*, and the *eager hope* he'd been given after *attending* and *befriending* Pharaoh's *innocent, cup-bearing butler* (and the *guilty baker*), and asking his new *bestie royal butler* to:



"Remember me and ... *mention me* to Pharaoh and get me out of this *prison* [lit. *round-house*; the likely *layout*, with *cells* around the *perimeter*. and our *second full circle*]. For I was forcibly carried off [when the *Ishmaelites kidnapped me*] from the land of the Hebrews, [where my *brothers betrayed me* and *sold me into slavery*] and even here [unjustly imprisoned] I have done *nothing* [of which the *Mrs.* has *falsely accused me*] to *deserve* being *put* in a *dungeon*." [lit. *pit, well, or cistern*; it's the *same word* for the *brothers' pit* where it all *began*] ... The chief cupbearer, *however*, did *not* remember Joseph; [in *fact*] he *forgot* [all about] him. – Genesis 40:14-15, 23 NIV



For those "two *full years*" (Gen 41:1) of *empty, hopeless waiting, unaware* of all *God was preparing*. For:

The God of *Jacob* [Joseph's *dad*] ... established it *for a testimony* in Joseph [among those *royals, for*] when he [later] *went* throughout the *land* of *Egypt*. – Psalm 81:5 NAS

But why two *full years*? Cuz *the promise isn't an easy life, but a full life*. *Purpose-ful. Meaning-ful. Joy-ful. Hope-ful. And peace-ful*. And those *fuls* are *found* and *founded* in *faith* in the *empty space*.

Because *all that time serving others while serving time was serving to fulfill his wildest dreams*.

But for *Joseph* it was (our *third*) *full circle*. Cuz he *alone* describes his *current confinement* with the *same word* used to describe his *former pit* where his *brothers betrayed* him. When:

They took him and *threw* him into the *pit* ... *without any water* – Genesis 37:24 NAS

[And now] Joseph's master took him and threw him into the [round-house] [that Joseph calls a pit] ... where the king's prisoners were confined ... [and] put all the prisoners under Joseph's care ... because the Lord was with him [because he didn't leave the Lord] and whatever he was doing the Lord was making successful. – Genesis 39:20 NET

In a *pit*, in a *palace*, in a *box* with a *fox*, and now in a *dungeon*. And *this success*, in the *prison*, is why Joseph is such an *inspiring story*! Because, *what* was he *doing*? **He's caring for his fellow inmates**, while facing one of our *deadliest temptations*: the "Why ME?!"s. Cuz, **we're never more likely to despair than when life's unfair**. "This is *all* my goodness gets me? I should've just slept with her!" And *that's* the *wrestling match* we all need. **So we can sort out who we're really serving**. And *why*. He probably thought God would reward him for resisting the Mrs., with a wife of his own. Instead, he got a *ball* and *chain*! And yet:

He asked Pharaoh's officials who were *in custody with him* in his [unjust] master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?" – Genesis 40:7 NIV



They're in *prison*! Better question: Why *isn't* yours? Because, **he's finding purpose in serving and caring in spite of his own condition**. But what power can *enable* us to *do* that in the *midst* of our *own suffering*? In a word: *trust*. **Joseph had the foresight to rest in what he knew hindsight would prove**. And you can do *that anywhere*, any *time*, and under any *conditions*. He has *no idea* the *next chapter* (literally) of his *life* takes off with a *miraculous rise* to power along with *blessing upon blessing* beyond *imagination*! But:

When two full years had passed ... the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I am reminded of ... a young Hebrew ... Then Pharaoh said to Joseph ... "You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders." – Genesis 41:1-12, 39-40 NIV

That's the *abbreviated version*! But that to say, that **the pit is always about something deeper than the pit**. Just as *suffering* is *always* about something *beyond* the *suffering*. So, **don't sit in your pit and sulk**. Because the *unjust pit* is *just* the *thing* to show the *world* that you *have* what *they need*! **Peace in the storm** and **comfort in the pain** and **closeness in the aloneness** and **joy in the sorrow**. In other words: **hope in whatever waterless pit of despair**. And this isn't *only* your *moment to shine*, it's the *best time* for you to see *who* you're *really* serving: God or *yourself*? And if it's God, then *why*: **To get what you want, or to become what God wants?**

In 1997, I was asked to *step up* as *senior pastor*. And I said, *absolutely not*. Our *district supervisor* at the *time*, said he wanted to *take me to lunch* to *talk me into* it. I said he could *buy me lunch* but he couldn't *talk me into* it. Cuz I *knew* what the *job entailed*, and I had *other ambitions*. At *lunch*, he asked if I *wanted to follow God's will*. I *did*, but I had *no idea* what it was. He asked if I *would* if God *made it clear*. I said I *would*. He asked if God had made it *clear* that I shouldn't *be* the *pastor*. I didn't know *what He wanted*. Then he said, **"In all my years, I've only found one way to know God's will."** I said, "What's *that*?" And he said, **"Hindsight! Give me two years, and you won't even need to pray. You'll know if it was God's will. And if it's not, you'll get credit for seeking it."** And those *two full years* is how I was *tricked* – I mean, *convinced* to become your *pastor*! Because:

“The Spirit of the Lord ... has anointed Me to preach the Gospel ... to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives ... who are oppressed” – Luke 4:18 NKJ

So hear *this*, the *real tragedy* isn't serving time in the pit – we all have our cross to bear – **the real tragedy is wasting time worrying or killing time serving ourselves** while we're there!

For it has been *granted* to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for Him – Philippians 1:29 NIV

“Because of the blood of My covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to your Stronghold, O prisoners of hope” – Zechariah 9:11-12 ESV

[What Stronghold?] [The Lord is] a Stronghold in the day of trouble – Nahum 1:7 NKJ

For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” – Hebrews 13:5 NKJ

[So this is how] The Lord gives freedom to the prisoners. – Psalm 146:7-8 NKJ

We are therefore **[in this groaning creation together, as]** Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. – 2 Corinthians 5:20 NIV

So, don't be confused by early results. Because:

[He] is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine – Ephesians 3:20-21 NAB



That *might* be the most *comforting* verse in the Bible. But **why did He not give us the ability to even imagine what He's accomplishing?** Because *then* we couldn't grow in *faith* and *trust* that *when* we see Him, **we'll fully know and understand and agree with His mind-blowing plan** ... and get to see our own *personal list* of but-to-do-that's! Know what a “but-to-do-that” is? Take *Joseph's example*: when the Lord *began* to fulfill his *teenage, God-given dreams of greatness*, wherein his *family* is transformed into a *chosen nation* ...

[Pharaoh] dressed [Joseph] in *robes* of fine linen and put a *gold chain* around his neck. He had him *ride* in a *chariot* as his second-in-command, and ... *put* him in *charge* of the *whole* land of *Egypt*. – Genesis 41:42-43 NIV

But to do that, *Pharaoh* had to see him in *action*. But to do that, *Pharaoh* had to have a *reliable* recommendation. But to do that, the *royal butler* had to see him in *action*. But to do that, *little Joe* (though *innocent*) had to get sent to the *royal prison*. But to do that, the *Mrs.* had to make a *false allegation*. But to do that, *she* and *he* had to *share* a *house*. But to do that, *Potiphar* had to *purchase* him as a *slave*. But to do that, the *Ishmaelites* had to *kidnap* him and *take* him to *Egypt*. But to do that, his *brothers* had to *betray* him and *sell* him. But to do that, they *really* had to *hate* him. But to do that, he had to be *arrogant* and *really hateable*. And to do that, the Lord simply *gave* a *teenager God-given dreams of greatness*. Our Father won't *mess* with our *free-will*. But **He sure knows how to position us like dominos and let human nature take its course!**

And that's *why*, when a *humbled Joseph* finally *revealed* himself to his *brothers*, he said:

It was *not you* who *sent* me here, but *God*. He has *made* me a *father* to *Pharaoh* ... and *ruler* over *all the land* of *Egypt*. [But to do *that* ...] – Genesis 45:8 ESV

If you want to *follow* the *Lord*, you gotta *learn* to *accept* His *unpleasant* and *unattractive* *answers* to your *prayers* and *problems*. **And stop wasting time and faith asking "Why?"**

Here's an *obvious observation* that's *easily overlooked*: **when you *hit the bottom of the pit*, *stop looking down***. On the way down, Joseph likely said, "Why me?" But once there, he *looked up* and asked, "What now?" And in this case, the *answer* was, "*Run the prison with righteousness*." So, Joseph *approached* his *new post* in the *pit* like *Job*, who *famously* said:

Though He *slay* me, yet will I *trust* Him. – Job 13:15 NKJ

You see, **we don't get to choose how we die, just how we live**. So, don't *abandon* your *post* in the *pit*. Cuz **we also don't get to choose if we'll stay in the pit, just if we'll stay in God's will**. And:

"I, the Lord, have *called you* in *righteousness* ... to *free captives* from *prison* and to *release* from the *dungeon* those who *sit* in *darkness*." – Isaiah 42:6-7 NIV

Here's the *rule* of *righteousness*: **Do what's right**, and *eventually*, maybe *not until eternity*, you'll get to *see* in *hindsight* *why* it was *so right*. Otherwise, you can *never* know what God was *planning* concerning your *created purpose* and your *specific role* in everyone's *eternal best*.

Just **think of trust as a head start on hindsight**. Because **trust allows us to live in the peace that foresight tells us we're destined to have in hindsight**. Because:

We *know* that in *all* things God *works* for the *good* of those who *love* Him, who have been called according to *His* purpose. – Romans 8:28 NIV

[But] "As the *heavens* are *higher* than the *earth*, so are *My ways* *higher* than *your ways* and *My thoughts* than *your thoughts*." – Isaiah 55:9 NIV

[So] Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding – Proverbs 3:5 NIV

[Because] The God of *all comfort* ... *comforts us* in *all our troubles*, so *that* we can *comfort* those in *any* trouble with the *comfort* we *ourselves* have *received* – 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NIV

He's not asking us to ignore our pain, simply to comfort others in spite of it.

The *world* has always defined *success* by *circumstances*. The more *comfy* your *current conditions*, the more *successful*. But **God defines success by our trust in Him and our care for others**. That's why, sometimes it's *impossible* to *understand* or even *imagine* how *God's* gonna *right* the *wrongs*. But **if we spend our time trusting Him and serving others, He won't waste our pain**.

So *what* do you say we get a *head start* on the *peace* that *hindsight's* bound to *bring*!