# Hidden Treasure

Genesis 43:1-34
Key Verse: Genesis 43:23
““It’s all right,” he said. “Don’t be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.”

In 2014, Sean and Rikki McEvoy found an old West Point sweater that they liked at a Goodwill store and bought for 58 cents. It wasn't until the couple was watching a Vince Lombardi television special that they realized it was the famed coach's personal property. They had it authenticated and took it to auction where it brought them $43,020. In 2013, a man walked into a thrift shop in Sydney Australia and bought a strange looking cup for $4. After doing some research he found that it was a libation cup from 17th century China carved from rhinoceros’ horn. He sold it for $75,640 Australian dollars.

In 2006, a man named Leroy purchased a painting for $3 at a local Goodwill store. It turned out to be a Flemish work of art that dated to around 1650 that sold for $190,000. Randy Guijarro was walking through a thrift shop when he discovered a few junk boxes. He found three tintypes inside one of the boxes. A tintype is an old picture printed on thin metal sheets. He paid $3 for all three photos and headed home. Upon a closer examination of the work, he was shocked when he recognized the famous outlaw, Billy the Kid. At first, collectors were very skeptical when Guijarro told them of his find. The artwork was examined for a full-year by a team of professionals. They ended up identifying all 18 people in the photo, including Billy, his gang, and their friends and family. The photo was later discovered to have been taken in Chaves Country, New Mexico. They even found the remains of the building in the photo, which is now worth $5 million. And finally, in 2000 painter Rick Norsigian purchased a set of glass plates (negatives) that had printed images of Yosemite National Park for $45. After investigation he found out that they were the work of a famous photographer, Ansel Adams and worth a mind-boggling $200 million. Here is a picture of Ansel with an early version of the selfie stick.

I bring these up because all of these incidents have one thing in common, these people all found hidden treasures, something that was more valuable than they realized and it changed their lives. In today’s passage we’re going to see how Joseph’s brothers find their hidden treasure.

If you remember from last week’s passage, Jacob sent 10 of his sons to Egypt to buy food. When they arrived, Joseph recognized them, but they didn’t know who he was. He accused them of being spies and had them thrown into prison. After three days, Joseph decided to release them from prison. Joseph graciously gave them grain for their families and let nine of them return home, but he kept Simeon as collateral, until they could bring their youngest brother Benjamin to Egypt as proof that they weren’t spies. But he had their silver put back in their sacks. At this they were terrified.


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As we start today's passage Simeon is still being held hostage in Egypt and Jacob and all his family had once again run low on food. Verses 1-7 tell us. "Now the famine was still severe in the land. **2** So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go back and buy us a little more food." **3** But Judah said to him, "The man warned us solemnly, 'You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.' **4** If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you. **5** But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because the man said to us, 'You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.'"**6** Israel asked, "Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?" **7** They replied, "The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. 'Is your father still living?' he asked us. 'Do you have another brother?' We simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, 'Bring your brother down here'?""

Ever since the brothers returned from Egypt, it seems Jacob old wound of losing Joseph had been reopened. He couldn't bear the thought of losing another son, especially the only one left that reminded him of his precious wife Rachel. Seeing that their need for food is getting critical, Judah takes it upon himself to press the issue with his stubborn father. Take a look at verses 8-10. "**8** 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. **9** 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. **10** As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice."" Jacob seems to be the master of drama, that he is overwhelmed having to send Benjamin along. But here I am encouraged by Judah that he is personally taking responsibility for his younger brother. His suggestion is much better than his older brother Ruben's idea. (Which only seems to focus on more death)

Finally, Jacob gives in and agrees to send Benjamin with Judah. This would be the brother's second trip to Egypt. This time they had their youngest brother, Benjamin with them. Their mission had four goals, to show Joseph they were honest men, to prove they weren't spies, to get Simeon back, and lastly to buy more food. In addition to this, they were also bringing back the money that had been returned in their sacks from their first visit along with some local specialty gifts for Egypt's second most powerful man.

I imagine that the brothers were full of worries and questions as they made their way to Egypt. Would the Egyptian prime-minister look with favor on them for returning the money or accuse them of being thieves? Would he actually give Simeon back or would they lose another brother? Would he even let any of them go or would they die there? Nothing seemed for certain.

The story then shifts from the brothers to Joseph who was waiting for their return. He too must have been wondering a few things himself. Will his brothers return or will they leave Simeon to his fate? Is Benjamin even alive, or did they do something to him as they did to Joseph so many years ago. Finally, the waiting was over. Take a look at verses 16-17. "**16** When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Take these men to my house, slaughter


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an animal and prepare a meal; they are to eat with me at noon." [17] The man did as Joseph told him and took the men to Joseph's house." Joseph forced himself to stay calm. He looked over the group and found Benjamin. How his heart must have pounded as he saw his younger brother, who may have been just a boy when Joseph was forcibly dragged away from his family. Joseph ordered his steward to have a meal prepared and to bring the men from Canaan to his home. I wonder what Joseph's steward must have thought about all this. It was probably pretty weird to him that the prime minister was inviting these lowly, dirty, Hebrew nomads to his house? But the steward obeyed his master.

The story continues, take a look at verses 18-22. "[18] Now the men were frightened when they were taken to his house. They thought, "We were brought here because of the silver that was put back into our sacks the first time. He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys." [19] So they went up to Joseph's steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. [20] "We beg your pardon, our lord," they said, "we came down here the first time to buy food. [21] But at the place where we stopped for the night we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver—the exact weight—in the mouth of his sack. So we have brought it back with us. [22] We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don't know who put our silver in our sacks."" At this point Joseph's brothers were really freaking out. They wondered what in the world is going on? It seems that their guilt is magnifying their anxiety. Immediately they focused on the money, "it must be about the money", they thought to themselves. So, they began stumbling over themselves, trying to explain it all to the steward. Notice what they were afraid of: "He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves." Their own guilt was being squeezed out of them because this is what they did. THEY had seized their own brother, THEY had overpowered him and THEY had sold him into slavery, and now this what they feared would happen to them. This shows how they conscience had been gnawing at them for nearly three decades.

As they were standing before an unnamed, soft-spoken servant from Egypt, whom they had never met, they began to pour out their confession. "We don't know how the money got back in our sacks when we came here to buy food last time, but we've brought it all back and more.

Look at the steward's response in verse 23, "[23] "It's all right," 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 brought Simeon out to them." The steward did his best to reassure them, "Don't worry," he told them. Amazingly, he even witnessed to them about their God. "Your own God is the one who put the treasure in your sacks. Nobody thinks you stole it. I know what happened, I was the one who put it there." I'm not sure if this steward knew anything about the God of their father, but if he did, Joseph must have told him. And I wonder, did the steward know that these men were Joseph's family because how would he know anything of their father?

Here's an important question, why did Joseph's brothers never think to relate the return of their money to the abundant grace of God? Because their fear and guilt kept them from seeing God's hand of grace in their lives. Nevertheless, the unmerited favor of God had come in abundance to


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them in the form of grain, and money, and the returning of Simeon. God was so good to them.

So, what happened next? Take a look at verses 24-25, "**24** The steward took the men into Joseph's house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys. **25** They prepared their gifts for Joseph's arrival at noon, because they had heard that they were to eat there." This strange situation must have had Joseph's brothers totally confused. They had come bearing money and gifts, hoping to buy the good will of the Egyptian prime minister. More importantly, they had brought Benjamin, as the man had requested. But instead of being asked about any of this, however, they had been taken to the prime-minister's home for a feast. What was going on? This would be like some of the people from that south American caravan being taken to VP Mike Pence's house and been given a fancy meal. I imagine that it wasn't a very common occurrence.

The story continues in verses 26-28. "**26** When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts they had brought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground.**27** He asked them how they were, and then he said, "How is your aged father you told me about? Is he still living?" **28** They replied, "Your servant our father is still alive and well." And they bowed down, prostrating themselves before him." Suddenly, the prime minister comes home and the brothers hurried to present their gifts to him. They bowed down to him, sparking another flashback of his dreams. Joseph wasn't really interested in their gifts. He was more interested in them and their father. Joseph asked, "How are you doing?" "How's your dad?" His brothers seemed ok to answer his questions, but even though the official's sincere interest, I'm sure the brothers were anxious and uncomfortable wondering, "what the heck is going? We came to prove that we're honest by showing Benjamin, get Simeon back, get more food and hightail it back to Canaan. We didn't come here to chit-chat and become BFF's.

Finally, the attention turns to Benjamin. Take a look at verse 29. "As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son, he asked, "Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?" And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son."" Here we have one of the most emotional sentences in Scripture: "As he looked and saw his brother Benjamin." Here's his only full-blooded brother whom he had not seen in more than 20 years. All his other siblings were half brothers and sisters, who never really accepted him. But Benjamin was his only full-blooded brother, and his only connection with his dead mother. Choking back tears, Joseph asked a question that he knew the answer to: "Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?" His brother's must have nodded yes, and Joseph blessed him. Suddenly, this powerful, efficient prime minister, who had been through so much in his life, could no longer control his emotions. He was simply overwhelmed. The Bible says, "**30** Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there." Have you ever been so overcome by emotion that you had to go somewhere private and let it all come gushing out? I wonder what Joseph was thinking about as he wept. Did the past 20 years sweep through his memories? Was it the loneliness, and the loss? Was it the loss of all the time he missed, the birthdays and significant family events that he could never share with them? Like the breach of a dam, his tears gushed out with great sobs. He had to maintain his position, his strong


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impression, but all of the sudden he was no longer a grown man in charge of a world power nation, but was just a boy who missed his father and family. I wonder what Joseph's brothers were doing while he was off composing himself. As Joseph bolts out the door, they must have looked at each other and said, "Awkward." "Did we say something to upset him?" And once again, the brothers were left in great confusion and anxiety.

Joseph washed his face and composed himself and came back into the room and says, "Serve the food." And here's where things get interesting. Verse 32 says, "**32** They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians." When you step back from this scene, it seems a bit funny. Here was Joseph was eating by himself, probably at the head table, and the brothers were at a table of their own, and the other Egyptians were also eating by themselves. All these people were sharing lunch in the same place, but they were all at separate tables, in their own little cliques.

Now comes the most peculiar thing of all that must have really brought wonder and fear to

Joseph's brothers. Verses 33-34 say, "**33** The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment. **34** When portions were served to them from Joseph's table, Benjamin's portion was five times as much as anyone else's. So they feasted and drank freely with him." Author and scholar, Henry Morris had this to say about these verses: "After they were assigned to seats at their table, the eleven brothers noted a remarkable thing. They had been seated in order of age, from the eldest through the youngest. If this were a mere coincidence, it was indeed marvelous." For those of us that studied probability, you can show from a simple calculation that there are roughly 40 million (11 factorial-39,916,800) different variations that eleven individuals could have been seated. And in fact, they would more likely to be killed by a vending machine, or by a falling coconut, or by a mountain lion, or by a hippo, or by a meteor impact, or die from being left-handed, than be seated in order of their birth. So, either this man knew a more about their family than they realized, or else he had some kind of supernatural power. They had no answer, and could only wonder about it.

Joseph's brothers must have been amazed at the way they were being treated. They had expected that many things could happen to them, including prison and death, but never thought this. Now here they were, eating with the prime minister, in his home, seated according to their age. And what a feast it was. I imagine it was the best of what Egypt could offer, Prime Rib, NY Strip Steak, T-Bone, Top Sirloin is anyone getting hungry? (messenger's meeting, Jimmy & Becky were there preparing lunch) And it was being served from the prime ministers table. And look what he did for Benjamin. Why did the prime minister give Benjamin five times as much as anyone else? Maybe Joseph was just so overjoyed at seeing his baby bro that he just kept piling the food on Benjamin's plate that he didn't realize what he was doing.

And it's here that we see something amazing. How Joseph's acts of grace freed up everyone at


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the tables. In the beginning, there were feelings of anxiety and dread as guilt held the brothers in its clutches. Their fear knew no bounds as they returned to Egypt, wondering what they would face. But by the grace of God, things didn't go as they expected. Surprisingly, they found themselves being treated kindly, sitting at a banquet table loaded with more food than they have seen in a long time, especially in a time of famine, and they were eating with royalty. What a relief! Better yet, what grace! They were recipients of favor they hadn't earned and kindness they didn't deserve. And they were overloaded with an abundance of provisions they could never repay. This great man, though not yet known to them as their brother, was determined to show them grace. This reunion was really a banquet of grace and all because Joseph was a man of faith, integrity and grace.

Joseph was dropping hints, he knew what was going on but they didn't know what to make of it. Joseph was reassuring them, he returned Simeon, washed their feet, feed their donkeys, prepared a feast, sat them at his own table and blessed them with more than they could ever use. Joseph didn't give the other brothers meager portions and Benjamin all their shares, no all of them feasted, but Benjamin had enough leftovers for 5 more feasts. (Bon Appetit, don't be shy )

Joseph's brothers' expectations were fearful punishment. They were blinded by their expectations of fear. But the reality was quite different. But they couldn't see it, because of their guilt and fear. The reality was they were never in danger at all.

Here is why I titled the message "Hidden Treasure" because all along they had this treasure that they were not aware of. And that treasure was grace. That treasure was their fear was replaced by grace. Likewise we have our own expectations of God but often they are not the reality because of our own sin and shame. Treasure is mentioned 77 times in the Bible. And God describes his people as "His treasured possession." "Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession." (Dt 14:2) How beautiful is that.

As we think about this segment in Joseph's life, I believe we see a very simple yet profound analogy. Joseph's life offers us a magnificent portrayal of the grace of God expressed through his son, Jesus, who came to our rescue. So many of us come to the Lord like Joseph's guilty brothers, feeling the guilt and shame of our sins and fearing the worst. Yet when we come to the Lord, we are surprised by grace as God demonstrates his incredible generosity and mercy toward us. Instead of being blamed, we are forgiven. Instead of feeling guilty, we are freed. And instead of experiencing punishment, we are seated at His heavenly banquet table and served more than we can ever use.

For some of us, God's grace seems too good to be true. Rather than just accepting the gift of grace, we try to plead our case, only to have the Lord speak kindly to us – promising us peace. We then try to fend off His anticipated anger by bargaining with Him, hoping that somehow our hard work and efforts will make up for all those past evil deeds. But God tells us that there is no need for any of this – Christ's work on the cross is enough and it's already finished. On the cross, Jesus


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bore our sins and accomplished our forgiveness in the process. Paul put it so straight and simple in Ephesians 2. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9** not by works, so that no one can boast.” (2:8-9) Will we allow God to be graceful and to save us by grace? Will we realize that God has gracefully prepared his table, and he is waiting for you to sit down and enjoy the feast he prepared for us?

There’s no way to earn it or deserve it or bring it about any more than you can deserve the taste of raspberries and cream or earn good looks or bring about your own birth. As Christians, we are people that are saved by grace and there’s nothing you have to do. There’s only one catch. Like any other gift, the gift of grace can be yours only if you’ll reach out and take it. The very first day that salvation in Jesus was proclaimed, the crowd was cut to the heart and asked the apostle Peter, “What shall we do?” The Bible says: Peter replied, “Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Ac 2:37-41) And those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. Today is the day of salvation. God is presenting the gift of grace to us, will we receive it by faith, with repentance and confession and baptism? I hope that none of us reject a gift so wonderful and full of grace.


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