

**10/4/18**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

Do you have phobias? Massive storms, like hurricanes, create cases of aquaphobia (fear of water) and astraphobia (fear of thunder and lightning).

Joseph's brothers were afraid. They had done terrible things to Joseph and now Joseph is a powerful ruling official in Egypt. The lives of the brothers were in his hands. They were afraid! The brothers' problem was the fear of not being forgiven for what they had done to Joseph. They had sold their brother into slavery. They were afraid of forgiveness. Does that sound strange? It might, but we can all have "forgiveaphobia".

*When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." Genesis 50:15-21*

Like those men, we fear the repercussions of confessing what we have done wrong. And lying about our situation does not help at all. The man or woman who cheated on their spouse, the worker who misappropriated funds, or the student who cheated on a test gain nothing positive by lying about it. Instead, though difficult, there is great benefit in confessing and asking for forgiveness.

Joseph said to his brothers, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God?” God’s forgiveness dismisses fear. Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross takes away all our sins—even those that are horrific. Followers of Christ dismiss fear because God freely forgives them. In response, as God does for them, they fully and completely send away the sin of others. Forgiveness is freely and lovingly given.

Forgiveness offered in love is the most powerful agent of change the world has ever seen. Joseph forgave because he knew God is a God of forgiveness. We forgive because we are forgiven by God through Jesus.

So then, don’t be afraid.

***Prayer:*** *Heavenly Father, may your gracious forgiveness of all my sins through Jesus my Savior lead me to forgive others even as I have been forgiven. Amen.*

*(WELS E-Devotion, adapted)*

...See you in worship.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

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