

When The Threat Becomes The Opportunity

On Sunday we celebrated LifeJourney's 29th Anniversary. Since it's been such a difficult and disrupted year, we looked at the story of the life of Joseph for perspective and insight.

1. Warm-up Question: When Joseph was young, he had a dream that he shared with his brothers. In his dream, they all bowed down to him. If you had told a dream like that to your siblings, how might they have reacted and what might they have done to you?
2. John Lennon said, "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans." What's his point? Do you agree?
3. Joseph was the eleventh son of a wealthy rancher named Jacob (also sometimes called Israel). To get a flavor of Joseph's early years, read Genesis 37:1-8 and 12-28.
 - a. Do you think it was God's will for Joseph to be sold away? Why or why not?
 - b. Joseph went from rich kid with big dreams to a lowly slave in a faraway land. On his way to Egypt, what thoughts and emotions do you imagine arose within him?
 - c. What's the most stunning adverse turn of events you've ever experienced? In the aftermath of that adverse turn what thoughts and emotions arose within you?
 - d. Picture yourself having just experienced some kind of bitter setback. Imagine two tiny angels standing on your shoulders. On your right shoulder is a bad angel; on your left, a good angel. Given the way you typically process loss, what does the bad angel whisper in your ear? And what does the good angel whisper?
4. When Joseph was sold into slavery, instead of giving up, he became the best possible slave, gained the trust of his master, and ended up overseeing his master's entire household. Eventually Joseph was falsely accused of making unwanted advances to his Master's wife. He was thrown in jail. But instead of giving up, he became the best possible prisoner, gained the trust of the warden, and ended up being appointed to oversee the other prisoners. **The lesson from all this is: The true measure of a person (or group of people) is not how they respond in times of triumph, but how they respond in times of testing.**
 - a. Throughout the ups and downs of life, Joseph showed amazing resilience. In your view, what enables some people to be resilient in situations where others sink into despair? What are the key component parts of a resilient attitude?
 - b. Who is the most resilient, indomitable person you've ever known. What kind of adversity did they face? What did you learn from their example? What enabled them to be so resilient?
 - c. On Sunday, Jeff told a parable about three trees and the dreams each had. Each of their dreams were dashed, only to be realized later in a form they never imagined.

Name a dream in your life that has died. Name something wonderful that came along in your life instead that you never imagined would.

5. This year has probably been the most difficult in our congregation's 29-year history. We've faced the disruption of coronavirus, economic meltdown, and racism. On top of that, two of our beloved leaders (Pastor Vivian and Spencer) have faced and overcome life-threatening illnesses. This has been a year of Great Tribulation. Despite it all, our congregation has remained miraculously resilient.
- a. Though we haven't been able to be inside our sanctuary for six months, almost 90% of our people are still regularly participating either in online worship (live or recorded on Facebook, YouTube, and our webpage) or in Wednesday evening outdoor worship. Neither experience is nearly as engaging as worship in our sanctuary, but still folks are hanging in there. What have you liked about online or Wednesday worship? What have you disliked? What keeps you hanging in there with online or Wednesday worship in spite of it all?
 - b. Our Oasis experience has also changed drastically. What have you liked about it? What have you disliked? And what keeps you hanging in there in spite of it all?
 - c. Our fall lineup of Zoom Discipleship courses will be: (1) ***Discipleship 101, Following Jesus*** (Sunday afternoons, 4-weeks of deep conversations about what it means to follow Jesus). (2) Reading and discussing ***Faith in the Shadows: Finding Christ in the Midst of Doubt*** (Sunday evenings). (3) Reading and discussing ***How To Be An Antiracist*** (Thursday evenings). If you were going to take one of these courses, which would you take and why? ***Note: Registration begins this coming Sunday.***
 - d. On Sunday we saw 9 new members inducted. Jeff also gave examples of new people who are connecting to us even through online worship. What is it about our church that you think most draws people in?
 - e. On Sunday you saw a video of our Loaves & Fishes dispatch room and heard stories about some of the 29 people we're feeding – including someone who recently attempted suicide, a family whose father was struck with COVID leaving the mother and two kids without income, and an immigrant family referred to us by the Immigrant Welcome Center. If anyone in your Oasis has had a chance to participate as a volunteer in Loaves & Fishes, describe the experience, why you do it, and how it makes you feel?
 - f. Our Board of Directors is discussing whether, when, and how we should resume worship in our building. Many churches recently began allowing limited numbers of people to attend through a reservations system. The Board is watching to see whether that leads to outbreaks. It's also watching trend lines in Indiana and what happens with school reopenings and Labor Day parties. They will also survey the congregation in the next couple weeks. Does your Oasis Group have any wisdom to share with the Board on this? If so, we invite your Oasis leader (or anyone else) to email those thoughts to Board@LifeJourney.church.