

Proper 14 (A)

[Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28](#)

[Psalm 105: 1-6, 16-22, 45b](#) (or)

[1 Kings 19:9-18](#)

[Psalm 85:8-13](#)

[Romans 10:5-15](#)

[Matthew 14:22-33](#)

- Genesis 39
 - o beginning of Joseph story
 - o rich in color and imagery
 - o theology is hidden
 - o God not even named
 - o things would have turned out very differently had not been for watchful care of one who called Israel into being
- Psalm 105
 - o recital of saving acts in Israel's life
 - o remembers story of Joseph
 - o stresses hiddenness and significant mercy of God
 - o God of Israel tested and saved Joseph and Israel
 - o urgent response to mercy of God = Hallelujah! praise the Lord!
- Romans 10
 - o notoriously difficult argument
 - o wide interpretations
 - o note high regard for scripture
 - o even if we don't care for his method
 - o note how Paul brings past to bear on present -> saving activity of God
 - o insists on universal availability of salvation
- Matthew 14
 - o inexplicable wonder of God's redeeming love
 - o appropriated and answered in doxology
 - o biblical faith from miracle of salvation
 - o wrought by faithful power of God

Genesis 37, Texts for preaching year A

- beginning of Joseph stories
- two or more versions combined
- Reuben (21) then Judah (26)

- Ishmaelites (25, 27) then Midianites (28, 36)
- essential narrative unity
- 1-4 lay foundation
 - o part of Jacob's stories
 - o Jacob narratives end Genesis 50
- cause of friction
 - o Bilhah and Zilpah
 - o Joseph = child of favorite wife
 - o natural target of animosity
 - o harem intrigue
 - o Benjamin not yet born
- favoritism toward Joseph
 - o "long robe" or coat of many colors
- (5-11 and Joseph's insensitivity to brothers
 - o came across as arrogance)
- 12-17 Joseph sent to check on brothers
 - o why kept at home?
 - o age? favoritism?
- 18-28 plot and execution
 - o Reuben intervenes to save Joseph's life
 - o would have died see 37:24
 - o Judah steps forward to sell
 - o Joseph hauled out and life is spared
 - o thereby lives of Jacob and family
- no mention of God
 - o unfolds like human adventure story
 - o would have turned out differently save for loving will of God
 - o Genesis 45:5, 78

Genesis 37, Walter Brueggemann, Interpretation

- distinctive kind of literature
- more in common with David story
 - o 2 Samuel 9-20
- royal urban ethos of Solomon?
 - o criticized claims of tribal traditions
- cool detachment from things religious
- contrasts with direct religious affirmations of Abraham + Jacob stories
- old modes of faith embarrassing and unconvincing

- “Sophisticated literary response to cultural theological crisis. How does one speak about faith in a context where older ways are found wanting?”
 - theological claims subdued implicit
 - in the contingencies of history purposes of God at work in hidden unnoticed ways
 - yet reliable and will come to fruition
 - mysterious ways of God’s providence
 - purposes of God wrought by ways of the world that seem natural continuous
 - ways of God at work regardless of human attitudes or actions
 - high view of God
 - human action irrelevant?
 - unaware until end of ways God keeps the dream
- movement of narrative from initial dream to settlement in land under Joseph
- main issue = power and validity of the dream
- purpose = link ancestral promises to Exodus narrative
- God works through and in spite of Egypt Joseph and his brothers
- hiddenness of God
- addresses people who know too much and will not accept raw confession of rescuing God who intrudes and makes right
- struggle of a specific concrete family
 - issues of power in any family
 - family kept off balance by the dream
- family issues tilt toward political realities
 - Israel helps Egypt make Israel (295)
- new ways to think about faith and power in relation to human realities
 - Joseph = new paradigm for dynamic of power and faith
- Genesis 37 per se
 - (1) 1-4 -> family tensions
 - (2) 5-36 -> power of the dream
 - theme of entire narrative = kill the dream
 - main character = Yhwh
 - dream = unsettling work of Yhwh
 - (Rw - Yhwh’s dream not = Joseph’s yes?)
- issue of love/hate
 - promises of Abraham and futures of Jacob now lodges with Joseph
 - Joseph narrative is different but serves the history
 - Joseph is “added”
 - unwelcome afterthought
 - special gift that reshapes

- latecomer becomes one who bears blessing and life
- Jacob and Joseph = ?
 - fulfills what God meant by giving clothes in the garden?
- promise of the fathers must survive in a turbulent triangle
 - loved too much tension
 - loves too much violence
 - feeling too little loved grief
- 3 clear scenes
 - (1) 5-11
 - interlude 12-17
 - (2) 18-31
 - (3) 32-35
- (1) Joseph formed a son to dream
 - This dream has political substance
 - Some drive toward power
 - Dreams permit new political possibilities
 - Bowing down -> jealousy -> murder?
 - “brothers know the threat of hope”
 - Hope is a threat
 - Father honors to dream privately
- (2) now only (future) ruler and (destined) to bow down
 - (1) = hopeful humanity called by God
 - (2) = resistant hopelessness
 - 21-30 = narrative delay with ploys of older brothers
- (3) robe for enthronement
 - Now dethronement
 - Then evidence for death
 - Love -> torn in hate
 - Tool for deception
 - Loss of Israel from memory?
- Story of this family = mourning and comfort
- The loss is real
- The dream can disappear
- Genesis 37 and Jeremiah 31:15
- Narrative leaves us waiting for words that come for Israel only slowly
- We hear the story at early coming of death to the dream
- We are all children of grief
 - Death
 - Failure
 - Unlived dreams

- Verse 36
 - Dream versus empire
 - Joseph is not free
 - But he is not dead
 - The unfree one cannot give up on the promise
- What dream is dreamed over us?
- Sometimes we dream
 - Or deny the dream
 - Or “keep the thing”