

Under Control
Genesis 50:15-21
9-28-2025

Jesus is Lord

It is the earliest confession of faith which many of those early believers were willing to publicly declare knowing it could mean persecution and even death

It is a declaration that despite whatever may be happening all around us and how things may appear at the moment, it is God, not Caesar, nor Satan, nor sin, nor circumstances that is in control of both creation and life

For us to say Jesus is Lord is to not just to place us on Gods side, it is to declare that he is in control of our life.

So why is it then, that despite the confession, so often our lives feel out of control? we often speak of a lack of time, having no time, not enough time, being out of time? We stress out trying to be on time and seek to gain more time. We borrow time, manage time, face time restraints, and are under time pressure, and then comes crisis time.

We are letting life push God out of the center and replace Him with other things which cause so much of our stress and despair.

In his book, Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives, Dr. Richard Swanson wrote:

50 years ago, futurists peering into their crystal balls predicted one of the biggest problems for coming generations would be deciding what to do with their abundant spare time. In 1967, testimony given before a US Senate subcommittee, claimed that because of advances in technology and computers, by 1985 people would be working just 22 hours per week or 27 weeks per year and would be able to retire at age 38.

If you pay attention to all the talk and controversy over AI, it's déjà vu all over again as its propagandists counter its threat to jobs by instead promoting how it will set us free from work to pursue other things.

No one talks about how we'll pay for them if people can't work to earn a living.

In a lifetime, an average American will spend 6 months sitting at traffic lights waiting for them to change. Spend 1 year searching through desk clutter looking for misplaced objects. Spend 8 months opening junk mail, 43 pounds per year. Spend 2 years trying to call people who aren't in or whose line is busy. Spend 5 years waiting in lines. Three years in meetings (though for some it is much more). Learn how to operate 20,000 different things, from soda machines to can openers to digital radio controls. Commute over 45 minutes every day. Be interrupted 73 times every day. Receive over

600 advertising messages every day through radio, TV, newspapers, and magazines and watch over 1700 hours of TV every year.

Is it any wonder life sometimes feels so out of control.

Under such conditions can we really say that in spite of it all, Jesus is Lord or are we allowing our circumstances to control our lives?

Jesus said ““No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” (Matthew 6:24)

If He is Lord then we are not, nor is anything else.

If He is Lord means our situations and circumstances are not.

If He is Lord means our bitterness and pain from past hurts are not.

If He is Lord means our anger and hostility towards others are not.

If He is Lord means our problems and failures are not.

If He is Lord means our ambitions are not.

If he is Lord our politics are not.

If He is Lord means our sin is not.

If he is Lord then our finances are not.

The original sin in the garden was over control.

Satan tempting Adam and Eve to believe that they could take control of their own lives and become masters of their own fate with God merely sitting on the sidelines to cheer them on and perhaps give them a hand every now and then.

So many of the fundamental problems and difficulties in our lives are due to the fact that we allow these other things to control us instead of God

as Paul told the Ephesians, there is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all who is over all and in all and through all. (Eph. 4:5-6)

And despite all the efforts of kings and parliaments, presidents and politicians, to pass laws and issue edicts and sign executive orders, He is lord not any man nor party or system.

And despite how out of control things may feel and appear, He is still on the throne and more than able to work for the good of those who love him and have been called according to His purposes.

He is Lord and HE IS IN CONTROL

As David prayed in 1 Chronicles 29, “Praise be to you, LORD, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is

yours. Yours, LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.” (1 Chronicles 29:10–13)

So, if you are feeling stressed out, panicked or in despair, depressed or hopeless, take time to consider what you are allowing to control your life and consume your thoughts, your circumstances or Jesus?

Let God be God and stop trying be in control and do his work for him
let Him be the one who is Lord of your life in the moment as well as in eternity

It ultimately all boils down to an issue of faith and what or who is our master

As I finish up in the book of Genesis this morning, that is something Joseph learned through his testing and difficulties

just because bad things kept happening to him, didn't mean that God wasn't there and still in control.

In Genesis 37 his brothers set off a chain of events where things seemed to keep going from bad to worse: from slave traders to slavery, to prison for being falsely accused of attempted rape, and forgotten promises for help.

And after suffering through 13 years of this, it appeared that they had put an end to his dreams, just as they had said in verse 20 when they mocked him with the words, “Now we'll see what becomes of his dreams.”

But this forgets who is Lord.

For when he was both a slave and a prisoner, it says in verses 2, 3, 21, and 23 of chapter 39 that **“the Lord was with him.”**

Joseph came to understand that it wasn't his circumstances or the evil intent of others, but God that was ultimately in control

While it may be tempting for us to doubt or question him during difficulties and when bad things happen, God's love, his presence, and his care for our lives is never diminished and is never determined by others or our circumstances or anything that may be happening to and around us

It is fixed by his word and his promise and as Paul told Timothy, even if we may be faithless, he will remain faithful for he cannot disown himself – it is who he is!

So, as Job said, though he slay me, yet I will hope in him

He may not still whatever storms we face but he does walk with us through them

And the 23 Psalm declared that even though we may walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he is not going to be out there somewhere just watching but rather he will be right there with us

And with Joseph, as things seemed to hit bottom, God took over

In chapter 41 Pharaoh took notice of him and his talents and after 13 years 41:41-43 says, *"So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him 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 people shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt."* (Genesis 41:41–43)

Then in the midst of a time of severe famine, Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy food, and who did they have to go to?

***"Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the person who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground."* (Genesis 42:6)**

After 30 years in Egypt, "Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Then he remembered his dreams about them"" (Genesis 42:8–9a)

After all he had gone through, all those years of injustice and being forcibly separated from his family, we can probably understand if Joseph could identify with the person who prayed,

Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I cannot accept, and the wisdom to hide the bodies of those I had to kill today because they got on my nerves.

Also help me to be careful of the toes that I step on today, as they may be connected to the feet I may have to kiss tomorrow.

Help me to give 100% at work: 12% on Monday, 23% on Tuesday, 40% on Wednesday, 20% on Thursday, and 5% on Friday.

And Lord, help me to remember that when I am having a bad day and people are trying to provoke me, that it takes 42 muscles to frown, 28 to smile, but only 34 to extend my arm and smack someone in the mouth.

Joseph now has the opportunity to get his revenge on his brothers for what they did to him, and he seemed to jump at the chance.

most of us can probably sympathize with him for wanting to make his brothers squirm a little.

He does this by making them experience a little of what he had gone through as their situation seemed to go from bad to worse.

without identifying himself, he accuses them of lying to him and being spies, he throws them in prison for three days, letting them stew, not knowing what was going to happen to them.

Then he lets all of them go except Simeon, with orders they return with their youngest brother, Benjamin.

He then sets them up to look like thieves by putting the money they used to buy the food back in their own sacks when they left, appearing like they had never paid him

Then after they do return with their brother, he makes it appear that Benjamin was stealing from him.

So, when he does finally reveal himself to them in chapter 45, of course they were afraid of him, they knew they were completely at his mercy

Even after he assures them that he had gotten past his desire for revenge, their fear didn't go away it merely was pushed to the background for a time, thinking that as long as their father was alive they would be okay.

But when Jacob died in chapter 50, their fears returned and come out in :15-21

“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.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.” (Genesis 50:15–21)

If he had held a grudge with a heart filled with bitterness and unforgiveness, regardless of what he might have said, those are the things which he would bow his knee to as his lord became they would be in control of his life not God.

But he let go of all that as he came to realize that through it all, God was in control and therefore what they meant for evil God intended for good.

Don't become so focused on what you are facing that you feel like everything is in control but God

Sin and evil may be real and present, and no matter what our situation, what problems we face, what circumstances confront us, don't bow your knee to them and let them control your life Jesus is still and always will be Lord
And he is therefore always able to bring some good out of whatever may be intended for evil

If he is indeed Lord and in control that means our fears are not, our pain is not, our disappointments are not, our hurts are not, our failure and sin are not, and our finances are not.

In the end it is a faith issue above all else.
What is our faith in?

Hebrews 11 says this is what the ancients were commended for.
Their situations may have seemed hopeless.
They may have faced persecution and death and suffering, but they knew that in the end, God held their lives and their future in His hand

In a book titled, Ender's Shadow, there's a conversation where one of the characters says to another,

Do you know why Satan is so angry all the time? Because whenever he works a particularly clever bit of mischief, God uses it to serve his own righteous purposes.

The other character asks, So God uses wicked people as his tools?

God gives us the freedom to do great evil, if we choose. Then he uses His own freedom to create goodness out of that evil, for that is what He chooses.

So, in the long run, God always wins?

Yes! In the short run though, it can be uncomfortable.

Paul said Jesus, who is Lord, has set us free from such things as sin and fear and death which means they are to no longer control us, our lives and thoughts and behavior

"Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule (be Lord) over me." (Psalm 119:133)

For as Jesus promised, if he, the son has set us free, we shall be free indeed

That is what we mean when we say Jesus is Lord!

Joseph's statement to his brothers in verse 20, that while they may have intended evil by harming him, God intended it for good, is not limited to Joseph and his story

It is a fitting conclusion and summary for the entire book of Genesis.

The message from the creation and fall, through setting in motion the beginning of salvation history through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and now Joseph and on through their descendants, is that no matter how things may appear, it is not Satan nor sin but GOD WHO IS IN CONTROL!

"When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise— in God I trust and am not afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" (Psalm 56:3–4)

And we may look around us, at this world and see it filled with evil, see all the harm people do to themselves, to others, and to a creation God declared as very good, the greed and cruelty, crime and inhumanity, and we can be tempted to think it is all out of control, that God has either removed himself or is impotent in the midst of it all

Yet still, what man may intend for evil, God is working for good and the saving of many lives

For in all things God works for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purposes.

**When everything seemed to be falling apart and out of control, Habakkuk said,
"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights." (Habakkuk 3:17–19)**