Genesis Sermon Series (21)

**“There Is Something More in It”**

Genesis 37:1-11 / May 29, 2022

 **1.**

 Five years ago, a 13-year-old girl named Courtney Hadwin appeared on a show called America's Got Talent. The girl, who appeared in an innocent and modest dress, was introverted and shy enough to not be able to properly answer the judges' questions, and was extremely nervous. When the girl trembled and couldn't properly answer the questions, a judge encouraged her to sing comfortably that she would be fine. The girl soon started singing her songs.

 As the accompaniment followed, the girl slowly began to tap her legs with a beat. Then she suddenly began to sing in a rich voice close to shouting. The timid girl suddenly turned into a wild rocker and jumped on the stage. The excited audience jumped out of their seats, and all the judges stood up with exclamations. One of the judges pounded the Golden Buzzer excitedly. It was as if she were from a different era and Janis Joplin had come back to life.

 Life would probably be boring if all we could see was everything. What is visible to the eye only plays a very small role in the reality, and sometimes it even interferes with knowing the truth. What we see now may not be the reality. The reality we see now may not be the genuine reality. The desperate world we see now may not be the real world. What we see is not everything. There is something more in it.

 In Today’s text, a 17-year-old boy, Joseph, appears. At first glance, the appearance of this boy is not very favorable. He told his father the faults of his brothers, wore fancy clothes alone like a prince, and told his brothers stories of dreams that could make them feel bad. There doesn't seem to be any desirable features. But the Bible did not evaluate Joseph's attitudes, and even though Jacob rebuked him outwardly, he kept his words in his heart.

 A question arises here. Why does Genesis 37 introduce the main character, Joseph, at the beginning of the story as an immature, selfish, ignorant, and dreamy character who has no other side than that? Of course, we already know the plot of the entire Joseph’s story and its ending. Although we see the disappointing side of Joseph in this opening part, we know it is not a genuine reflection of Joseph and that’s not all. There is something more. Why does the Bible start the story of Joseph like this?

 **2.**

 Joseph was the son of Jacob conceived at a late age. In addition, he was the son through Rachel, whom Jacob loved the most among the four wives but had died too early. For Jacob, Joseph was the apple of his eyes. Jacob's sons were all in charge of taking care of the sheep. But Joseph enjoyed the privilege of running errands between them when his brothers were scattered to take care of the sheep. Moreover, Jacob favored Rachel's son to such an extent that he made a richly ornamented robe for him.

 But Joseph didn't seem to notice either. He should have refrained from saying things that his brothers would not like, but he never did. One day Joseph told his brothers the story of a dream he had had, “We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it… I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” Naturally, the brothers were angry and his father rebuked Joseph, but Jacob kept the dream in mind.

 Let's briefly summarize what follows. Joseph was hated by his brothers and was thrown into a pit, sold to a Midianite merchant, and then sold back as a slave to the house of an Egyptian dignitary. He was falsely framed and spent a long time in prison, but accidentally interpreted the Pharaoh's dream and became a chair of the whole land of Egypt. He was later reunited dramatically with his brothers and his father. Joseph was eventually used as a tool of salvation to save Egypt, Israel, and the whole world. This is the plot of the story of Joseph.

 The story of Joseph flew towards its destination with a well-organized structure and continuity from start to finish, and the level of the dramatic perfection was very high. It began with the dream of young Joseph and until the dream came true. It began with the quarrels of the brothers and until all the brothers were reconciled. And it began with the grievous incident of Jacob losing his beloved son and then returned to the joyful reunion with the son in Egypt. The whole story began with ‘you will bow down’ and eventually flew toward the direction of bowing down.

 In this well-structured story, there is something it is trying to emphasize. It is a confrontation between ‘dreamer’ and ‘those who try to break the dream’. Joseph's dream was continually blocked by his brothers, by the Midianite merchants, by Potiphar's wife, and by the unjust imprisonment. But what Joseph’s story was trying to show was not the hopeless reality, but that something was moving behind that supposed reality. Dreams seemed to have been broken by those who tried to break them, but the story showed that dreams were never broken.

 **3.**

 There was one characteristic that the story of Joseph was distinctly different from the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, actively speaking, giving directions, and sometimes intervening. However, throughout the Joseph story, God never appeared, did not speak, and did not interfere. God was hidden to the end. As if God did not exist in the world or as if he had no power, He was portrayed as the One who neglected Joseph's sufferings.

 The story of Joseph has a theologically different background from when the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was written. If the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob reflected the age in which faith in God was natural, the story of Joseph reflected the age in which faith in God was shaken and questioned. In other words, Joseph's story reflected the age in which these kinds of questions were asked, “why is God so powerless? why is God silent? why does God allow evil?”

 Thus, the story of Joseph has a message suitable for our day, when God seems to be invisible, God does not interfere, and God seems to be silent. What is the message? It is that invisibility, non-interference, and silence does not mean that God is not doing anything. The point is that even today, God dreams in someone's soul and is silently fulfilling that dream.

 In the Joseph’s story, God seemed to be shy and introverted, like Courtney Hadwin before singing. But that's not all. Courtney had yet to turn her stage upside down with amazing dance and singing. God will do so. In this story, God seemed to be silent and powerless, just as Joseph did before becoming a chair of the whole land of Egypt. But soon Joseph will save Israel, Egypt, and the whole world. What you see now isn't everything. Sometimes it seems that God does not exist, that God is silent, and that God has no power, but that is not all. There is something more in it.

 **4.**

 Since the Great Awakening Movement in the 17th and 18th centuries, the American churches have been on an endless downward path. Since the wave of revival in the 1970s and 1980s, the Korean churches also have been walking down rapidly. However, the phenomenon is not the reality. Something is moving under the phenomenon. I believe that God is now leading us into a new paradigm of faith, destroying old churches and establishing new churches for the birth of a true Christian faith.

 Even if your life is full of hardships and despair, that's not the reality. There is something more. When the situation is hopeless, it does not mean that there is no God. God is doing something invisible. So what should we do? Let's turn our attention back to today's text. Notice how the story of Joseph, which is surprisingly highly dramatic and complete, begins. Why does this story begin with the statement that Joseph had a dream? Because it was not just Joseph's dream, but God's dream. The story of Joseph can be said to be the story of God's dream.

 In an age in which dreams are not fulfilled, God still wants to dream in someone's soul today. God is still working to make His dreams come true behind all the darkness and despair we are facing. So, like Joseph, we need to be faithful instruments through which God can make His dreams come true. Let's become the sincere instruments of God's dream through which God can renew and save the world.