

GENESIS 39:6b – 12, 16 – 23

Pentecost 5, July 13015, 2019

Smith

THE CREED OF MY LIFE

6 With Joseph in charge, he [Potiphar] did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, 7 and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" 8 But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. 9 No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" 10 And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. 11 One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. 12 She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. 16 She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. 17 Then she told him this story: "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. 18 But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." 19 When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. 20 Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, 21 the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. 22 So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. 23 The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

A creed is a statement of faith. We use two ancient creeds regularly in worship and another one less often. But another way of making a public declaration of your faith is with your life. The faith we have and the values it produces affect the way we live, the way we worship, how often we pray, how often we come to the Lord's Table, how seriously we take the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule—in short, this is the Creed of your life.

Or to think of it another way, we express and declare our faith with the creed we confess with our lips, and we show our faith with the creed we express with our actions. Let's take a look at Joseph.

When Joseph was a young man, he was hated by his brothers because he was the favorite of their father and because God gave him visions and dreams, and perhaps Joseph was too young to understand that they would be jealous of him. One day they seized him out on a field, threw him into a pit, and then sold him into slavery to some traveling merchants, who sold him to an official named Potiphar in Egypt.

From this moment, the first thing we notice about Joseph is that he isn't a whiner. He doesn't complain. If anything, he lives out his life proving just how obedient he can be to the Fourth Commandment, as if he already knew that Paul would say, "Are you a slave? Don't let it trouble you" (1 Cor 7:21).

Joseph did his work to the glory of God, and God blessed his work and his abilities so much that soon after he arrived in the house, he was made master of the house, second only to Potiphar himself, and such an affective and efficient administrator that Potiphar denied this slave, Joseph, nothing at all. He gave him anything he needed; anything he wanted. Joseph even accepted his slavery and did not ask to go home—although, in his case, home was where his brothers were, the ones who wanted to kill him.

Now, here we need to say that there was a world of a difference between the kind of slave Joseph was, and the kind of slavery that was introduced to the world centuries later and was outlawed in our nation through the Emancipation Proclamation in the 1863.

But while Joseph was giving glory to God with his life with work with everything he did, he was also an attractive young man, and the wife of his master tried to seduce him, “Come to bed with me!” That wasn’t her only sin. She was sinning by * coveting what wasn’t hers, * by violating her marriage and her vow to her husband, * by enticing a young man to commit a sin, * by setting an example of a sinful life to the other servants who would certainly find out about this, but most of all, * by dishonoring God and sinning against his will. To this we can add * giving false testimony against Joseph with her lies and therefore * endangering his life with a death penalty, and that at least nine separate sins.

It is hard, almost impossible, to sin in only one way. Any sin will involve other sins, many other sins. But here, it is “enticing someone else to commit a sin” that I want to emphasize, because when we do that, we’re doing the devil’s work for him. And we all do that. Whether it’s because we don’t like getting caught and misery loves company or whatever lurks there as our motive, it is so much worse to involve someone else in a sin. Jesus said, **“Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin”** (Lk 17:1-2).

And what was Joseph’s response to Mrs. Potiphar’s invitation? First, he confessed his faith (and her sin) with a creed of his words: “My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” But when she persisted, he confessed his faith with the creed of his life and actions. When she grabbed him, he ran away.

This was the second of three times that Joseph loses his shirt or his outfit in the account. The first time, he lost the Coat of Many Colors when his brothers took it and sold him. Now, Pharaoh’s wife took his cloak. Later, when he was elevated to be the Number 2 official in all of Egypt, he was allowed to set aside his prison clothes and was dressed as an Egyptian prince.

Rather than kill Joseph, Potiphar put him in prison, and immediately Joseph showed the confession or creed of his life once again, because after hardly any time at all, he was in charge of the prisoners and of everything that was done in the prison.

What does Joseph's life inspire in your life? *** Maybe nothing. Maybe you never think of Joseph and his troubles, the brothers who imprisoned him and wanted to kill him, the mistress who had him imprisoned and wanted him dead because he scorned her advances. Let Joseph be nothing but an example for you—but let his example be the right kind of example.

Before we talk any more about this Creed of our Life—which is another way of describing good works, done for the right reason, we need to put them in perspective by holding them up against our sins. Whether our sins run the list alongside all those of Potiphar's wife or whether they are some other thing, something, perhaps, that brings with it the terrible sinful crime of inciting and inviting somebody else to sin, some act when we should have run away from temptation like Joseph but didn't, then we stand condemned in those sins.

And making us right again, righteous to God, blotting out our sins, is so high and glorious a work that is could be done only by Jesus Christ. Toward salvation our works do nothing. They have no power, no shine, no special quality, and no value when set against our sins. Only the blood of Christ could free us from our sins, and the blood of Jesus Christ did exactly that.

So does the Creed of my Life, my good work in response to Jesus, have any value at all? The Deed of my Life is priceless. What I do is good because God has done it through me and in me. If God has done it, it is priceless, glorious, and spectacular, even if stained by my errors and mistakes. My life doesn't make me holy – the Life of Jesus is what makes me holy. But my life, the way I live, is done to praise God. It shows my faith in God. It's done for the benefit and the welfare of my wife, of my children, of my friends, my neighbors, the people in this church, my extended family, and on and on out into the world like so many beams of light that go unimpeded to the very extreme distances and touch the lives, in the end, of so many people, the surely if any one of us does not quite touch the lives of everyone in the world, then surely any two of us, gathered together in Jesus' name, will touch the lives of the whole planet for the sake of Jesus Christ.

There is no deed in the wide world so valuable as a good deed done by a Christian in faith. Such an act, whatever it might be, is blessed by God, like the work of Joseph touching the lives of everyone in Egypt because he had faith, faith in the coming Savior, and everything he did was a Creed of that Faith, a public statement of what he believed, put into action, put to the test.

Let everything you say and do be the Creed of Your Life. Confess it and proclaim it with every moment. Amen.