



**DATE:** Sept. 27, 2020 (17th Sun. after Pentecost)  
**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 50:15-21  
**TITLE:** Joseph and his brothers.

The rise, fall, rise, fall, and rise again of Joseph is one of the longest and most complete narratives in the entire Biblical canon. Known to some as the “Joseph Novella,” it is a story that functions as a bridge between the promises made to Abraham and the predicament presented to Moses. It is the story of how a family in Canaan became a large group of people in Egypt.

The story of Joseph and his brothers begins much like the story of Jacob and his brother,

Esau. Sibling rivalry fomented by parental favoritism marked Jacob and his brother’s relationship. It was a relationship fraught with trickery, betrayal, and led Jacob to much heartache and hardship. As a father, Ja-

cob makes the same mistakes that his father made, playing favorites and treating Joseph differently.

This time the sibling rivalry turns to deep resentment, and Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers. Over the course of several chapters in Genesis (over a quarter of the 50 chapters are dedicated to Joseph’s story), Joseph rises to prominence in Egypt, is framed and thrown into prison, forgotten, but then is able to rise again to an even greater place. Eventually, he becomes Pharaoh’s right-hand-man, perhaps the second most powerful man in the world.

When famine strikes the land, the brothers come looking for help. The reunion of Jacob’s sons is itself a dramatic tale, but in the end there is much rejoicing. Jacob comes to live with his family that is made whole again. We learn that Jacob lives 17 years in Egypt with his family. Upon his

death however, we learn that the wounds we believed to be healed are still open.

In Genesis 50:15-21, we learn that the brothers never believed that Joseph had forgiven them. When Jacob dies, they believe that Joseph will finally pay them back for the evil they had done. Once again Joseph forgives them—telling them,

**“Don’t be afraid. Am I God? You planned something bad for me, but God produced something good from it.”**

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Joseph had endured much over the years. Through it all though, he held on to God’s promises. In the end, he was able to look back and see God in the midst of his trials, sufferings, and his triumphs. The

brothers on the other hand, never fully healed from their misdeeds. They never trusted—and lived 17 years with anxiety that someday they would suffer Joseph’s vengeance.

That is no way to live. Having lived lives of deceit, they were never able to accept the amazing grace that Joseph offered. We who have felt betrayal, pain, or loss can learn from Joseph and his brothers. We can hold onto the pain and bitterness or we can hold onto the promises of God. There are many things that threaten God’s promises of love and grace, but we can learn from Joseph to endure through hope. Our hope is grounded not in the evil plans of the world, but in the steadfast promise of God.