

Introduction

Good morning. It is Independence Day weekend. As we look at a holiday like this, sometimes people wonder what ought the role of the church be when it's a holiday weekend... people are going to take an extended time on this. I know there are some churches out there, they do full-blown patriotic services. Let me just tell you why we don't do that. It's not because we don't love the United States, but we believe that whenever we gather together as a church, we are supposed to worship Jesus and not to worship the country that God has provided us with. That doesn't mean that we think that this country is not a great gift from God, because we certainly do. As we were reflecting as a pastoral staff, "What ought our response as a church be during this time?" ...the answer that we came to was that we thought it would be very appropriate if on an Independence Day weekend if we would, as a church, stop and congregationally intercede on behalf of our nation. And if we would say, "God, would You please today give our leaders wisdom? Lord, would You today call the people of this country back to You... to know You?" So that's what we're going to do right now, and I want to ask you if you would just join me and say, "Lord, we know that there is a lot in our country that is messed up, that is fouled up. There's greed and there's avarice and there's all sorts of destruction, but Lord we ask that You would give us the opportunity to repent and turn to You. Could we pray and ask God to sweep across this country and to awaken His people to know Him? Would you join me in that prayer? Let's pray:

"Father, today as we come together, many of us are preparing for a great weekend with friends or family... thinking about maybe cooking out or shooting fireworks, watching fireworks, being with friends... Lord, we're going to reflect on the fact that You chose to allow us to be alive in this country in this time, and we do not take that for granted. Lord, we recognize that much of what set this nation on the right course was a common virtue in the hearts of many men and women who honor Jesus Christ. Lord, we also recognize that there are many people today who are in power that have forsaken that. They might smile for the camera or act appropriately when in public, but Lord we know that many of our leaders and many people who are aspiring to be leaders of our nation do not hold true to the teachings of Jesus. They do not lift Him up in character. Father, we can't control those things, and we trust in the fact of Romans chapter 13 that there's no authority that hasn't been instituted by You. Lord, we also trust in the fact that we look in the Bible and we see there are times when You use people like Darius and Cyrus who were Persian kings and You used them for Your glory, so Lord we understand that it's not always the way that we would draw things up. We simply say this God... that many people in our country have wandered far away from You, and God, we just ask, would your Holy Spirit bring them back? Father, our prayer today is that we know that the way that a nation's destiny is changed is when virtue is at the heart of that. Lord, we know that virtue only comes through the power of Your Holy Spirit and the sharing of your Gospel. So Lord we pray these things: first, that Your Church would be bold to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Lord, we also pray that Your Spirit would awaken a hunger for that Gospel all across our land, and God we pray that we would be able to scatter spiritual seeds to people who would listen, and then Lord we even pray that in the highest offices all across our counties, our states, and our country, Lord, that there would be people that are so moved by the Gospel, so moved by Your grace, that they would turn toward You. God, we ask that this nation would awaken to Your goodness and to who You are. God, we pray this and we ask it so that our country... not because our country is the most important thing... You are the most important thing.... but God we pray these things because we believe that we can be a vessel for Your grace. So Lord, we pray that You would awaken us for that in this time. We pray this and we ask it in the Name of Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen."

If you have a Bible, and I hope that you do, I want to ask you at this time to open it up... take it out with me and turn over to the Book of Genesis. We're going to be in Genesis chapter 41 today. If you don't have a Bible with you, that's okay. Don't freak out; just look right there in that chair tray right in front of you... right there by your feet, you'll see a Bible right there. You can open that up... open it up to the first Book of the Bible... Genesis. Again, we'll be in Genesis chapter 41 today. If you don't have a Bible yourself, that Bible is our gift to you today. If you would rather use your tablet or smart phone, use your Bible app on there. That's fine; do whatever it is that is easiest for you to be able to engage with the Scripture today. Now before we jump into Genesis chapter 41, I want to remind you about what the Bible is. The Bible is divided into two parts. The first part is the Old Testament. The Old Testament is God's record of creating, choosing a people, and then working in the lives of those people to the point of demonstrating that they need a Rescuer. The New Testament is the second part of the Bible, and the New Testament is the story of that Rescuer. The Rescuer's name is Jesus Christ. And the Bible tells us, in the New Testament, about His birth... God becoming flesh; about His death... He dies on a cross as a sacrifice for your sin and for mine; and then the resurrection. The resurrection is the great story of Him conquering death and giving eternal life to those who believe. Now that might sound a little bit crazy to you; if so, just hang with me... it's alright. Then after that we get the story of the Church. The people who follow Jesus are His believers, also known as the Church. So those of us who gather today as the Church are people today who would say that they believe that they are following after this God who gave a Rescuer named Jesus, and that this Jesus has given us life and breath. So that's what the Bible is. We're looking today in Genesis. Genesis is part of the Old Testament; we're looking at the lives of one of God's chosen people, Joseph. And Joseph is now currently, as we look at him today, he has been exiled into a land... he is in slavery... He is in Egypt and we're going to see how God uses him. So let me pray over us and then we'll jump into the Scripture today.

"Lord, thanks for Your Word. God, again, we thank You for the fact that You love us, and Lord, today we pray that You would awaken our country to You, but Lord we also pray that today You would awaken our hearts to You. Lord, we want to hear from You; we want Your Word to speak to us, so God I pray, for anyone who is far from You today, that they would hear from You. And I ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

Genesis chapter 41: What's happening here, if you remember, Joseph started out as favored-son status. He had the coat of many colors; then after that his brothers don't like him. He was a little bit bratty, if you remember that. He was sold into slavery. He was thrown into a pit. His death is faked. Then after that he is sold to a man named Potiphar. Potiphar was the captain of Pharaoh's guards. He is there. He actually rises to become number two in Potiphar's house. But while he was there, then Potiphar's wife falsely accuses him. He is then thrown into prison. He sits in prison. When he is in prison, he gets promoted again. He becomes the number two person in prison. And once he is there doing that, then what happens? He interprets two dreams; both of his interpretations come true because they are from the Lord, but he is forgotten again, even though the cupbearer was supposed to remember him whenever he was taken out, and he has forgotten. We pick up in chapter 41 where he has been forgotten now for two solid years. So, Genesis chapter 41, starting in verse 1:

"After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke. And he fell asleep and dreamed a second dream. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. And the thin

ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

"Then the cupbearer said to Pharaoh, 'I remember my offenses today. When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation. A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged.'

"Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.' Joseph answered Pharaoh, 'It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.'"

I want to skip down a few verses... Pharaoh retells his dream; then, verse 25...

Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, 'The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine. It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do. There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land, and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about. Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years. And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain, under the authority of Pharaoh, for food in the cities and let them keep it. That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine.

"This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, 'Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?'"

It's an interesting turn of events. When you look at this story, Joseph has gone from favored-son status, to a pit, to his death being faked, to a prison, and now he stands suddenly before Pharaoh. God, for whatever reason, has chosen to take Joseph and go all the way through the darkest time of his life, and suddenly now he is elevated to speak to power. That's really the thing I want to talk about today in this series entitled "It's Always Something." Suddenly Joseph has a reversal of fortune. And this reversal of fortune has been intended by God, and it appears all along so that God might be able, for whatever reason, to allow Joseph to speak to power. I want to talk today about how it is that God uses difficult seasons in our lives to prepare us for perhaps the greatest season of God using us in our lives.

1. It's That It Requires The Wilderness. (v. 1)

I want to begin by thinking about this: Why would God allow us to go through difficult times to prepare us? I think that, first and foremost, we need to see this: That Joseph was forgotten in prison for two years; verse 1 tells us that. And we begin to realize that for God to be able to use us, to be able to speak in powerful situations, it turns out that, first and foremost, God requires sending us into the wilderness.

Years ago, I read a Spurgeon quote... I looked all week for it and couldn't find it, but I know it's out there so I'm going to quote it and you're just going to have to believe me. This is what Spurgeon said: "When God wants to bring you into the throne room, He must first send you out into the wilderness." That's a little bit of a paraphrase, but this is basically what Spurgeon was saying. He said, "If you look in the Bible, you'll see this: King David, already anointed... he knows he's going to be king, but what does he have to do? He has to live on the run from King Saul, hiding out in caves for years before he is finally able to enter into the throne room. Saul of Tarsus who is saved and becomes Paul, the greatest church missionary in the history of the world... what happens to Paul? Paul actually has to live in Arabia for three years, isolated, apparently growing in the Spirit. We're not really sure was happening there, but before he could be known in a great way, he had to go off by himself and be in the wilderness. Jesus Christ... God sent Him into the wilderness for forty days, right before His ministry began. His public ministry could not begin until Jesus was tempted forty days and forty nights. All of these individuals were used by God in great ways. Jesus, of course, being God Himself, in flesh... but still His own humanity had to go through a series of time in the wilderness. What about you? Does God want to use you? And if so, would God send you through the wilderness? Nobody really likes this idea... the fact that God might actually allow us to go through difficult circumstances so that, first and foremost, He then might do something in us.

I'm on my third pacemaker now. For those who don't know... I've got a pacemaker here in my chest. So I'm on number three. I got my first one back in 2001. They've changed a lot over the years. Whenever now I need to upload this information for my doctor to look at it, I have this fun little device. I hold it over it; it downloads it into a box, and then this box has a cell signal, and it shoots it off to my cardiologist. The cardiologist is then able to look at the information and tell me if they see any problems. It's kind of amazing. I feel like I'm living in an episode of the Jetsons every time that that happens. Here's the other thing that's kind of crazy. Whenever I talk to people now they're like, "Oh yeah... they have even better ones. Now the new one that you're going to get next time... it's great. They have Bluetooth." Is that crazy to anybody besides me? (Laughter) I said, "What do you mean 'It has Bluetooth'?" They said, "Yeah... at night when you lay down and you go to sleep, it syncs with your phone, and your phone shoots the information." I'm not even making this stuff up. This is incredible, right? This blows my mind that this is the way that it's happening. I was like, "Man... I want to be able to get that new thing so I don't have to use the device anymore." They were like, "Yeah, great... the only thing you have to do is we have to be able to cut you open to put it in you." Nobody wants that. I want a new pacemaker because I want the Bluetooth. But do you know what? (Laughter) I'm going to hold off on the cutting-open part, if we could hold off on that just a little while.

Have you ever noticed the fact that whenever profound change needs to happen inside of you, it often requires you being cut open? I mean, the Lord wants to change your heart, and what does He have to do? He has to slice you. Nobody likes that. Nobody wants to go into the wilderness. Nobody wants to be sent out into a place where they're hurt. You see, the truth of the matter is that God wants to be able to send you into the wilderness because He knows that whenever you're all alone and a lot of things have been taken away from you and there are no more distractions and you're now beginning to think it's all about

you... whenever those things are taken away from you, that's when God can set you up on the table and really begin to work directly in your heart. Whenever you have less money in the bank account... it's whenever all those friends that you thought were so faithful and loyal have turned their back on you... it's when your family seems to not really care about you. It's when all of those things are going wrong and you're left all by yourself with the Lord... it's in that moment, right then, when all you've got is Him, that He says, "Let's get to work." You see, God sends us into the wilderness because He wants to use us and change us.

Did you guys notice that the wilderness was actually preparation for Joseph's new job? If we had read on through chapter 41, what you would have seen is that after Pharaoh had made his exclamation, "*Can we find a man like this? In whom is the very Spirit of God?*" ...If we would have carried on through that statement, if we had kept going through there, we would have seen Pharaoh actually chose Joseph and made him number two in the country. Number two... running the whole thing. What happened whenever Joseph was in the wilderness? He was in Potiphar's house. He was number two there; he ran the whole thing. The only person with more power than him was Potiphar, and Potiphar didn't worry about a thing. Then he ended up in prison. What happened to him in prison? The Bible tells us he became the number two man there... in prison as well. Is it crazy to believe that actually God was using the wilderness to give Joseph a set of skills that he didn't even know that he would need, whenever one day he would actually end up being the vice-president of Egypt? He didn't know. It's funny because sometimes we're picking up skills whenever we're in the wilderness that we don't even know that we're going to need. God will send us out into places and teach us things that we don't even know that we need, but He is doing that to prepare us for a time that comes later. You see, if we believe that it's only by God's grace that we are saved, once we have been saved, we must also believe that it's only by God's grace that then not only are we saved, but then we are changed. And if God graciously carries us into the wilderness, He has a reason for us to be in the wilderness. It's because He desperately wants us to learn something.

2. To Change Us. (v. 16)

You see, the reason that God takes us into the wilderness is that He actually wants to change us. He wants to change us. I never had the opportunity to meet Joy's grandmother. She went by the name of "Snookie." I wish I could have met Snookie; I think that's a pretty great name. Joy tells me the story that whenever they would sometimes be cleaning up the kitchen after a big family meal, that Snookie would actually wipe off and clean aluminum foil that had been covering a dish and then would fold it up and put it in a drawer and save it. She asked her, "Why are you saving the foil? Doesn't that go in the trash?" And she told her, "I've lived through the Great Depression, and I remember when we didn't have foil, so I keep my foil." She had gone through a wilderness that had changed her.

This is the thing that I want you to understand. If God takes you into the wilderness, He doesn't just take you into the wilderness to slap you around for a little while. God takes you into the wilderness for a purpose, and the purpose is to change you. God carries us there so that we might be transformed. Now, many of us might actually miss this lesson, but the real reason that we're taken there is so that we will indeed be changed. Genesis 41:16, this passage that we just read... Joseph answered Pharaoh... I want you to listen to this verse: Pharaoh says, "I hear that you have the ability to interpret dreams." and Joseph says, "*It's not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.*" You say, "Well yeah; that's great. Joseph is giving God glory." Do you remember the way that Joseph acted when he interpreted dreams at the very first of the story? Do you remember that? He was the bratty little brother. He had all his older brothers around... the older brothers that were there and he says "Oh yeah... all of your bundles of grain... they

bow down to my bundle of grain." Then he tells his dad, "Oh yeah... the sun and the moon were bowing down to me in this dream." It wasn't that he was actually lying in that process. But Joseph, for whatever reason, was being a little bit bratty... a little bit haughty in those moments. You see, what we see in this moment is that actually Joseph has now been changed. His heart has been changed to a point where he is now ready actually to no longer take credit for it himself and also to come before Pharaoh with an attitude of humility, saying, "None of this talent is in me; this is all from God." Why does that matter? It matters because of this. I think that many of us are taken through the wilderness, and we get this set of skills. Think about Joseph... Joseph would never have been allowed to be in charge of anything, as long as he had ten older brothers. He had to be taken into the wilderness. He had to go and be in Potiphar's house; he had to be in prison. It's there that he is promoted. It's there that he is allowed to exercise those abilities. He is taken into the wilderness. He is given those sets of skills. Many of us are taken into the wilderness, and we even learn those particular skills, but what happens is that we don't let God change our heart. We won't allow God to break us. We come out on the other side of the wilderness, and we have these opportunities to speak into various situations, but because we have gone through the wilderness and refuse to be broken, we actually present ourselves as individuals who made it through the wilderness on our own. "Oh yeah... I made it through that tough time in my life because I'm strong. I made it through that tough time in my life because I'm prideful. I'm the one who has great work ethic..." And we begin to act as if we are the ones that were able to make it through that difficult time, rather than recognizing that God took us out into the wilderness, drug us through that dark valley so that He might break us and change our heart, and we don't realize it. And when that happens, when we refuse to be changed... we are slow learners, but... worse than that... we are refusing to be used by God. ...Because the truth of the matter is this: It's that there are many of us... and you know these people and I know these people... maybe you've been in this situation... I know that I have... where we ourselves have walked through the valley, and we refuse to learn the lesson that God was trying to teach us. And He said, "Oh, you didn't get it?... Alright... let's go back through it again." And here we go. Anybody been through that more than once? Right. There are a few more slow learners out there.

3. So We Can Faithfully Act. (v. 25)

You see, God let the children of the Israelites wander in the desert for forty years. It wasn't that far to the Promised Land. He kept saying, "We'll go back around one more time. Why don't you just follow this pillar of fire and pillar of cloud... we're going this way... (laughs) ...until your hearts are broken, we're not going into the place that I have prepared for you." You see, God doesn't just take us into the wilderness to beat us up. God takes us into the wilderness because He wants to change us, and He wants to change us for a very specific purpose. He wants to use us. You see, it's a waste of brokenness if we're taken to the valley only to refuse to give God glory... to embrace the fact that we often don't know the outcome that God has intended and present ourselves to God with an attitude of indifference or an attitude of haughtiness. God takes us through the wilderness so that He might change our hearts. And He changes our hearts so that He can use us and so that we might act.

Verse 25: *"Joseph then said to Pharaoh, 'The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do.'* Joseph lines up before Pharaoh, and he speaks the words of God to him. Joseph has told him, "Look... this ability does not come from me; it comes from God. So tell me your dream and I'll speak it. I will tell you God's interpretation of it." Pharaoh could have told Joseph anything. Joseph had no idea what the dream was going to be. Joseph might have had to tell Pharaoh "You're going to die tomorrow... Your kingdom is about to be destroyed..." and Pharaoh could have because he was the most powerful human on the planet at that time in human history. He could have destroyed Joseph. You see,

God took Joseph through the wilderness, then changed his heart, and Joseph had reached a point where he was willing to do whatever God wanted to be faithful to the Lord, to be used by the Lord, no matter what the outcome was... because God takes us and changes us so that He might use us.

A.W. Tozer has said this: "It is of great doubt that God can use a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply." It's only when we have been crushed and changed that then sometimes we'll learn, and we'll be willing to be used by God in a great way, without any eye for our own interest. I think the thing that's interesting about this is that Joseph finds himself in the throne room of the Pharaoh. And he doesn't look for an angle to rescue himself. He just speaks the truth.

What does that have to do with you and me? Well... On Independence Day, maybe we ought to think about that with a story about government and a church. I wrote my doctoral dissertation on a pastor by the name Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was a pastor in Germany in World War II, so he saw the Nazi regime firsthand. As part of my doctoral research, I got to run across some images that I had never seen before and maybe you've never seen them either. I want to show you a few pictures of churches that existed during the rise of the Nazi party in Germany. This first picture was taken in a church.



This is an altar at the front of a church. That is a crucifix with a swastika right under it. You say, "Wow... How could that happen?" Look at the next picture:



The man on the right is Archbishop Mueller... Mueller was the chief officer of the Church in Germany. He is shaking hands there with Adolf Hitler. He was one who helped actually advocate for and endorse Hitler as he was running for chancellor of Germany. The next picture, if we've got it... It didn't work in the last service. We'll see if it works here. It looks like it's not going to work. I must have given them a corrupted file or something. It crashed the computer in the last service. What you would see in the next picture, if it was to come up, was actually a church in Germany in World War II being used as a campaign spot for Nazi party. Then you say, "Steve, what does that have to do with us?" Dietrich Bonhoeffer was imprisoned because he was implicated in a plot to assassinate Hitler. This pastor was writing a letter from a concentration camp just weeks before he was actually to be executed by the Nazis. He was writing a letter, and basically what he said in this letter was this, in April 1945: "I am concerned that in the future the Church will have lost her credibility in Germany because we advocated for something so evil and heinous." You see, a Church that gets too cozy with power oftentimes loses their position to be prophetic.

Why am I telling you that? Well... I'm telling you that because I think that actually this lesson of the wilderness might actually be applied to the Church in America in the 21st century. I think that the Church probably got a little too cozy with power not too far in the distant past. And I think that actually much of the evangelical Church in the United States reached a point where they were much more comfortable being in the hallways and the corridors of power than they were speaking in a prophetic voice. I think that the Lord has, over the last generation or so, taken the American Church through the wilderness of losing a lot of that political influence. The question of course is, "Has the Church changed? God taking us through the wilderness... has that allowed the heart of the Church to change?" I think that right now, as we go into a political season, this is one of those moments where you get tested. So alright, Church... you've been taken through the wilderness... have you grown? Have you learned? I guess we'll find out.

This is why I get uncomfortable whenever I see pastors endorsing political candidates, because I think that the second that a pastor endorses a candidate, they lose the power to speak prophetically because you have to actually stand up and say, "I love you... I care about you... But my job is to speak the truth, not to be your best friend." Now, listen: you hear that and you go, "Man... that's awesome. You go, pastor." Guess what church, you're in that too. You see, the Church is the prophetic community, right? The reason

that I bring that up to you today is this: It's because as the prophetic community of the Church, we have to ask the question, "Have we been changed?" So let's look now at our own personal life. Let's get off of this illustration about church and politics. Let's talk about us personally. We have to ask the question "Have I been taken through a time recently where God has drug me through the wilderness?" Maybe you're in the wilderness right now. Then ask the next question? Have I learned what it is that God is trying to teach me? Am I still proud and prideful? Do I believe that it's my own strength that got me where I am, or have I allowed myself to be humbled? Have I reached a point where I'm willing to say, "Lord, I'll learn whatever it is that You want me to learn." "Am I willing to be used?"

I talk to people all the time who will say things like, "I just want God to use me." So here's a question: If God has taken you out into the wilderness and He has put you up on the operating table and He has done surgery on you, ask this question: "What might God then want me to do with this new heart attitude that He has put in me?" You see, God doesn't just change us so that personally we can feel better about ourselves. God changes us so that then we will act, and we will do the thing that He wants us to do. You see, when God brings you out of the wilderness, you might find yourself in a board room that you have never have been in before, surrounded by people who make decisions that affect a lot of other individuals. Will you speak the truth in that moment? Maybe you'll find yourself having a conversation with somebody that you never thought you would have the opportunity to talk to... Will you speak the truth in that moment? I don't really know what the scenario will be, but the thing is that if God takes you to the place where you're supposed to be taken, will you indeed allow God to take you through the wilderness to change you so that you can be used for His glory?

4. So The Lord Might Be Visible. (v. 38)

That's really what it's all about. Because if we look at the very end of the story when you get to chapter 41 verse 38, we see Pharaoh... who by the way, is supposed to be a god himself, right? That's what the Egyptians believed... that Pharaoh was a god... and Pharaoh exclaims, in verse 38, "*Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?*" You see, this is the thing... even Pharaoh knows he is a false god. His closest advisors had to know that he didn't have any magical powers... that he wasn't supernatural... and they now see a man interpreting dreams; they see God's hand on him, and they suddenly realize, "Wow... This guy's different." Now, did revival sweep across Egypt right after that? As best as we can tell, "No." We don't have any record of any other Egyptians coming to faith, even though they stayed for generations. By the time we get to the Book of Exodus, we read that there are so many Israelites that the Egyptians were afraid that they would eventually outnumber them. We still don't have any record of Egyptians coming to faith. What's the point? We honestly don't know, other than this, that God told Joseph to go and to present this message, and he did and God worked His purpose in that. And that's it... end of story. That's what we know. Here's the thing. I think that, for many of us, God is asking us to do certain things, and do you know why we resist? It's because we say, "I just can't see what good that's going to do." And God says, "That's good; that's not your job. **I know** what good it's going to do. You go do what I ask you to do."

I know that oftentimes I'll say to my kids, "Hey... I want you to go do this." They're like, "Why?" Being the typical dad, "...Because I said so." That's what dads say. Sometimes if I'm feeling more patient, I'll sit down and explain all my reasoning and all the things that I'm hoping to happen. Sometimes I get frustrated and I'm like, "Listen... Just do what I tell you." Right? I think that sometimes the Lord says, "Here's the thing. Sometimes I'll show you exactly why it is that I want you to do the things that I want you to do. Other times, I just want you to learn how beautiful it is to be obedient to Me and to be used by Me.

I've taken you through the wilderness, I've changed your heart so that you might be used, now go and do what I've asked you and display My glory."

So Joseph finds himself standing in the throne room of the most powerful person on the planet at that time, and what happens? He gets to make God's glory apparent, right there. Pharaoh knew, in that moment, that there was a God and that he was not Him. And that became apparent to a lot of people in that room. God might ask you to go to a place and to be obedient so that you can proclaim and display His glory, and you may never know why. Would you do it?

You see, the thing about this is that it actually reminds me a whole lot of Jesus. Jesus, who was sent into the wilderness, started a ministry, was completely obedient unto the Father, did whatever the Father asked, even obedient, as Philippians chapter 2 tells us, "...unto the point of death," allowing Himself to be killed on a cross. And He did all of those things because God said, "I want You to display My love to these people." You see, Jesus went to the cross and acted in a lot of the same ways that Joseph did, and He did that because He wanted people out there to understand the nature and the glory of God, that it wasn't through going to church that made God love you. It wasn't because you're super holy that made God love you. It's because God simply chose to give you His grace because He loved you and He wanted to forgive you, and He was able to illustrate that best and teach that best by allowing Himself to be killed and hung on a cross and then to come back to life three days later. That was what He had to do, and that was the obedience. And people today who have seen that and receive that, they experience that fullness. And today, if you are here and you've never said "Yes" to that, you can say "Yes" to that Jesus. But also... you should know this... if you say "Yes" to Him, a lot of people in this room could testify, God might take you through the wilderness. He will take you there, He will change you so that you can be used to display God's glory. So Church, today, I want to ask you this: "Are you ready to be used? Has God changed you? If so, will you be faithful?" If the answer is "Yes", the only question now is, "What is He asking you to do?" Let's pray.

"Lord, we thank You for teaching us about Your goodness, for teaching us about the fact that sometimes You may love us so much that You will take us into a wilderness, a place that we don't really want to go, but You do that because You love us deeply and You want to use us, You want to change us... You want to allow our hearts to be molded and to be shaped to reflect Your purpose, Your character, Your nature. So God, I pray for every person who is here right now that's walking in some sort of wilderness, that they would not miss it... Lord, that You would not let them miss out on the reason that You've taken them there. Father, then for the people who are here today and they're in a wilderness but they don't believe in You... and I know that they're out there. They're sitting here right now and they're going, 'Man... I'm in a wilderness. I don't even believe that God's real, but could it be that I'm in a season like this because God actually wants to do something with me.' Lord, I pray that You would show them that the answer is 'Yes' and that You may be taking them out into the middle of nowhere, spiritually, right now, ripping everything away from them so that they will finally bend a knee and say, 'I surrender... I believe... I give it all to Jesus Christ.' Lord, I pray for those of us who are here, that right now life is good: Money is good, family is good, kids are good, friends are good. Lord, I pray that these words would not be wasted on them, that they would say, 'I'm going to store these words in my heart for when the day of trouble comes, I'll remember that the wilderness is here to shape me.' God, may we not forget the story of your servant Joseph, and God may You awaken us to that today. I pray this in the Name of Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen."