

October 26, 2025

Morning Worship Service (1st and 3rd Services)

“Attempt Great Things for God”

Genesis 45:7–8

by Pastor Chon Himchan

This morning, the Second Worship Service is being held as a Family Worship, in which children and their parents gather together in this sanctuary and offer worship as families. In this service as well, I would like us to be taught together from the Word of God concerning the children whom God has entrusted to our church.

This morning, I have chosen Genesis 45:7–8 as the passage for the message, but I would like for us to learn through the entire story of Joseph that is recorded from chapter 37 of Genesis onward. During the message I will mention various passages of Scripture, so please open your Bibles at each point as we proceed.

I believe all of you are well acquainted with Joseph. Joseph was the son born to Jacob from his most beloved wife Rachel. Jacob loved Joseph, who was born to him in his old age, especially dearly, and gave to him alone a special robe. However, this favoritism produced hatred among the brothers. Furthermore, in such a circumstance, Joseph once had two dreams concerning himself and his family. One was a dream in which the sheaves of his brothers bowed down before his sheaf, and another was a dream in which the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down before him. Joseph, in his innocence, told his dreams, but his brothers took them as meaning that Joseph would become a ruler who would reign over them, and their hatred toward Joseph reached its height.

One day, when the brothers had gone out to pasture their flocks, Joseph went to see how they were doing at his father’s command. The brothers took this opportunity to plot to kill him, but through the intervention of the eldest brother Reuben, instead of killing him, they threw him into a pit. In the end, he was sold as a slave to a caravan of Midianites. Joseph’s life, which until then had been smooth and prosperous, suddenly took a drastic downfall. The one who had been more loved than anyone else by his father was betrayed by his brothers, abandoned, and fell down to the state of a slave. This must have been nothing less than a plunge into the very bottom — a life of suffering. If someone experienced such a thing, it would not be strange if they became desperate and gave up on life. However, the Bible tells us that Joseph’s life was not like that.

Joseph, who was taken to Egypt, became a slave of a man named Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard. And amazingly, whatever Joseph did there, he succeeded in it. The Bible clearly tells us the reason for this.

Genesis 39:2–3

2 The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master.

3 His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.

Because God was with Joseph, Joseph became a successful man. Joseph was abandoned by his brothers and forcibly separated from his family, yet God was with him. In chapter 39, the phrase “The LORD was with Joseph” is repeated four times. Humanly speaking, Joseph’s situation was extremely painful, but this testifies to us that God surely held onto him and guided him.

It was something evident even to the eyes of others. In verse 3 it says that Joseph’s master Potiphar **“saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.”** Even in the eyes of one who did not know God, it was clear and recognizable — “Ah, this man has God with him.” This is my personal understanding, but if Potiphar could perceive that, then surely Joseph himself also must have known that God was with him. As a result, Potiphar entrusted his whole house and all his possessions into Joseph’s hands and had him manage them.

However, after this, a trial came upon Joseph. Potiphar’s wife took a liking to Joseph and persistently tried to entice him, saying, “Lie with me.” But look at verses 8 and 9. These are Joseph’s words to his master’s wife.

Genesis 39:8–9

8 But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Behold, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge.

9 He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

Joseph says, “My master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge.” And the words that follow are striking: **“How then could I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”** Joseph does not say, “How could I do such a thing and betray my master?” Of course, Joseph must have understood that this act would be a betrayal of his master, but here Joseph’s consciousness is fixed on God. What we can see from these words is that Joseph was above all a man who feared God. He lived conscious of the fact that God was watching him and hearing him — living before the face of God. In other words, God was with Joseph, but Joseph also feared God and walked before His face.

However, again suffering came upon him. Because of the false accusation of Potiphar’s wife, he was imprisoned though innocent. As we read Joseph’s life, perhaps we might have a question: Joseph

lived faithfully before the Lord — why then did his suffering deepen all the more? This is a very important point when we look at Joseph’s life. The Bible clearly tells us the reason. The reason is written in **Psalm 105:17–22**.

This passage speaks of the covenant that God made with the people of Israel, and of what God did in accordance with that covenant. And here, it speaks about Joseph.

Psalm 105:17–22

**17 He sent a man before them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.
18 His feet were hurt with fetters;
his neck was put in a collar of iron;
19 until what he had said came to pass,
the word of the LORD tested him.
20 The king sent and released him;
the ruler of the peoples set him free;
21 he made him lord of his house
and ruler of all his possessions,
22 to bind his princes at his pleasure
and to teach his elders wisdom.**

Verses 17 and 18 describe how Joseph became a slave in Potiphar’s house and then was cast into prison afterward. Then in verse 20, we read that he was finally released. But what is important is the Word in between — verse 19 — because it clearly tells us the reason why Joseph suffered.

Verse 19:

“Until what he had said came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him.”

It says, “Until what he had said came to pass.” What does “what he had said” refer to? It refers to those dreams Joseph once told to his brothers — the dreams of the sheaves and of the stars, the dreams that revealed that he would rule over his father, mother, and brothers. In other words, until those dreams were fulfilled, Joseph was tested. And the next phrase tells us what tested Joseph: “The word of the LORD tested him.” What is this “word of the LORD”? It is, again, that revelation in the dreams which God had given to Joseph. In other words, until the words of those dreams were fulfilled, the word of God — that is, God’s revelation, and His will and power that drove toward the fulfillment of that dream — pressed upon Joseph and refined him.

This becomes clear when we look at the process of Joseph’s life. While in his father’s house, Joseph did not dream because he wanted to. The dreams were revelations given by God. And what did those dreams bring about? They stirred up his brothers’ hatred, and in the end, because of those dreams, Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers. Then his life descended further into the depths — becoming a slave, and even being cast into prison though innocent. To human eyes, this could only look like a downfall. However, God was continuously working to bring about the fulfillment of those

dreams. Joseph was sold as a slave to the house of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. The prison where he was confined was the place where the king's prisoners were kept. His life was steadily being drawn closer to the king himself.

But why did Joseph have to be betrayed by his brothers, sold away, become a slave, and be thrown into prison?

We are taught the reason through the word "tested" or "refined."

The word "refined" here carries the meaning of "purified as metal."

Refining is the process of heating metal to high temperature, striking it repeatedly, and removing its impurities.

That Joseph was "refined" means that, like iron being heated and hammered, he went through great stress and suffering — being betrayed and cast away by his brothers, torn from the father who loved him, made a slave, imprisoned, and thrown into despair without hope or expectation.

But through that suffering, Joseph was refined.

The word of God refined Joseph.

That is, God permitted and gave him suffering for the fulfillment of the dreams that had been shown to him.

However, the purpose was not to torment him.

The purpose was to accomplish God's plan through Joseph.

In other words, God had decided to use Joseph as His instrument, and He refined and prepared him as the vessel of God.

We can confirm from the Word that Joseph was made into a vessel of God through all these things.

In time, when God's appointed time was fulfilled, Pharaoh dreamed a dream. Joseph interpreted that dream which no one else could interpret.

At that time Joseph said:

41:15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said about you that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it."

41:16 Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh the answer of peace."

Later, when Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, called for Joseph and said, "I have heard it said about you that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it," Joseph replied, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh the answer of peace."

Joseph firmly denied that the interpretation of dreams came from his own ability. He declared that it is God who gives the interpretation, and that he himself is only a tool of God. Indeed, Joseph was conscious that he himself was a vessel of God, a tool in God's hands.

But that was not all. Through suffering, while being refined, Joseph gradually came to understand what God was thinking, and that God was surely using him to accomplish His plan.

45:7 God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

45:8 So now it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, lord of all his household, and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Joseph was convinced that in his life there was surely the guidance of God, and that God had sent him to Egypt for His plan and was using him.

God's plan was to give life to the descendants of Abraham—and further, to give life to all the people of the world.

And Joseph truly became a person who lived for that mission.

Up to this point, we have looked through the Word at the life of Joseph and how God was involved with him throughout his life.

From this, I would like to speak about how we should nurture the children who have been given to our church, from three perspectives.

① **The Way We Look at Children**

The first point is the way we look at children.

How we think about the existence of children, and how we look at them, is directly connected to how we relate to them.

What we learn from the story of Joseph is **not** that “if we trust in God, we will succeed like Joseph and attain a great position.”

Rather, one thing that is spoken to us through Joseph is that **God created human beings**, and that He who created them **has a plan for each and every person**.

God indeed had a plan for Joseph, and He revealed that plan to Joseph as a dream.

And according to that dream which was shown, He led Joseph—and in the very process of fulfilling that dream, God refined him and shaped him into a vessel of God.

Of course, our lives are not the same as Joseph's.

But it is true that for each and every child given to our church, **God also has a plan**.

We believe clearly what is written in the Bible: that God created human beings.

If we were beings that came into existence by chance, then our existence would be a mere accident, and there would be no purpose in it.

However, the fact that we were not made by chance but created by God carries the message that God made us with a clear intention and a definite purpose.

Therefore, we first want to discover that there is God's intention in the fact that children were born into this world.

Beyond the presence or absence of ability, beyond the categories of able-bodied or disabled, **the Lord**

has given life to this child, and we want to turn our eyes to the truth that there is God's plan expected of this child.

When Joseph's brothers heard Joseph telling his dream, they hated and envied him.

But **Genesis 37:11** says:

“His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.”

Father Jacob, though he felt arrogance in Joseph as he told his dreams and rebuked him, **kept this matter in his heart**—Joseph's act of telling the dream.

We, too, tend to think that the things that happen before our eyes, the visible aspects of children—their grades, attitudes, behaviors—are everything.

However, like Father Jacob, we want to keep in our hearts **God's plan that lies behind the words and the appearances of children.**

What is God expecting of this child?

What meaning does this event have for this child in the sight of God?

② About Suffering(苦しみについて)

The second point is “about suffering.”

Children face various kinds of suffering and run into many walls.

However, what we can learn from Joseph's life is that **the trial of suffering is not something contrary to God's plan.**

Rather, in the process by which God's plan comes to fulfillment, those very trials themselves served as a “furnace” that tested and refined the person.

Let me share about my family.

It was in 1996—about thirty years ago now.

My parents had a calling for mission work in Japan, and our whole family was preparing to go to Japan.

However, the family visa was not immediately granted.

In that situation, my parents decided to first go to Japan using tourist visas, and I was left in the care of my grandmother together with my older brother, who was two years above me.

It was when I was in the first grade of elementary school.

That period became a very painful time for me.

My grandmother disliked me, and I suffered various kinds of ill-treatment from her.

Later, I came to understand that at that time my grandmother had dementia, and that she suffered from delusional beliefs about theft and had false perceptions.

But back then, no one knew such a thing, and since the only adult in the house was my grandmother, it became difficult for me to stay at home in such an environment.

When I came home from school, I would just leave my belongings at the house and spend the rest of the time outside until it became dark.

The ones who helped me at that time were the adults at church. Fortunately, the church was close to my house. When I went to church, they talked with me, prayed for me, and gave me delicious snacks to eat. But the ones who truly rescued me were the Sunday School teachers. Every Sunday, in the worship of Sunday School, the teachers spoke the Word of God to me. Especially the stories of Joseph, which I have talked about today, and of the young David, left a deep impression on me. Through those, I came to know that **God is with me**. And I came to know that this God became **my God**. I learned that there is much sin in human beings. I came to know that there was sin in myself as well. Yet, I also came to know that God has given the way of salvation. That first-grade year was a painful time for me, but it became an irreplaceable and blessed time in which I experienced that God is alive and personally encountered Him.

Children, too, experience suffering. However, that does not mean that we adults should easily make them escape from that hardship, or encourage them to run away from it, or try to solve it for them in their place. That is not necessarily the best way. The Lord, who loves His own, never gives up in pursuing them to the end. He refines us and shapes us—because He desires that we live according to the plan by which we were created. That is because that is the child's "**true self**" in God's sight. Therefore, we should encourage the children so that, even in the midst of suffering, they may learn the will of the Lord and move forward. We should teach from the Word what kind of meaning their suffering has, convey to them that God is with them and guiding them, and continue to pray together with them.

③ **That Children May Have God's Dream and Aspiration**

In fact, this biblical story of Joseph is, I believe, a passage that is often misinterpreted with regard to the matter of "dreams" and "goals." For example, from this story of Joseph, it is often taken to mean that "it is important for young people to have dreams." Of course, it is good and important to have dreams. However, when we look closely at the content, we find that sometimes it is distorted into a success story in which, if one trusts in God like Joseph, one can become great, become someone important in society, and achieve success.

This is, in many cases, due to confusing the different meanings of the word *dream*, which are homonyms.

The dream that Joseph saw was literally a **dream he saw while sleeping**.

But when this is taken to mean a “dream for the future,” or a “life goal,” confusion arises.

Rather, the dream that Joseph saw was a **revelation from God**.

And for us who are now living, the revelation given to us is the **Word of God—the Bible**.

Therefore, what is important for us is to continue to convey the Word of the Lord to the children.

And that the children, through the Word, may learn the will of God, and come to know what God expects of them, for what and for whom God has caused them to be born into this world—this is what is important.

If we dare to use the word *dream*, then what is important is to have “**God’s dream**.”

The Apostle Paul says in Philippians 2:13:

“For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.”

That means to have the dream, the aspiration that God Himself causes to arise within us.

The title of today’s sermon is “**Attempt Great Things for God**.”

This is taken from the words left by **William Carey**, who devoted his whole life to mission work in India.

More precisely, he said,

“Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.”

Children today live in an age of uncertainty about the future.

However, even in such an unstable world, I sincerely pray that the children will grow as those who expect great things from God and live for Him.

Above all, may they come to know God, discover the plan of God that has been given to each one of them, and live it out as their own calling.

I earnestly pray for this.

May the children of Tsuchiura Megumi Church become those who **attempt great things for God**.

And we adults are the ones to whom those children are entrusted.

May we help them discover and live out the calling given to them by God.

And we, too, must seriously think about how, as a church, we will nurture these children.

Let us also **attempt great things for God**, and for the children who have been entrusted to us.

Let us pray.