

Read also Hebrews 11:10-16. Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

What are your future plans? When I retire I am going to move to Aruba or Brazil. When I grow up I'm going to be a doctor. When I get married I am going to live in a big house and have eight children... What is your dream?

Does that dream include your faith?

Yesterday we had a funeral, and we talked about what future you and I have as Christians. That future goes beyond the end of this life. So as we plan, we must think about an aspect you might rarely consider, and that is the description of the Christian as a "sojourner."

Okay, when I retire, I'm going to sojourn in Paris! Well, I'm not exactly sure that's what Jesus has in mind.

Sojourn: "a temporary stay in a place." Listen for that as you hear the story. READ Genesis 47:1-12

Did you hear it? Jacob said:

"We have come to live here in Egypt for a while." (v. 4)

We have come for a little while; as aliens or foreigners; not to settle there forever.

Even his grandfather, Abraham, had that attitude when he lived in Canaan. The writer of Hebrews puts it as living under the promise:

"By an act of faith (Abraham) lived in the country promised him, lived as a stranger camping in tents. Isaac and Jacob did the same, living under the same promise."

When Jacob and his family went to Egypt that is how they went. They were not there permanently; they were there for a while.

Once Jesus told a parable about a man whose job produced abundantly. So he bought a bigger house, because he had accumulated more stuff and needed a place to store it. The man then bragged, "I can retire! I have enough laid up that I can relax, eat, drink, and be merry for many years." But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' (Lk 12:16-21)

When you understand that you are a sojourner, that you are living under the promise of eternal life, packing a lot of goods in your life doesn't fit the narrative. Corrie Ten Boom used to say, "Hold everything in your hands lightly, otherwise it hurts when God pries your fingers open."

God wants you to live wisely. **This is actually a gift.** It frees you. You're free from keeping up with the Jones. You are free from thinking success is all about how many toys you have. Live as though you are just passing through, not putting your focus on possessions. You have a better future.

The Bible says, “Abraham did it by keeping his eye on an unseen city with real, eternal foundations—the City designed and built by God.” (Heb 11:10)

This first family of God expected a very real promise.

Now let’s contrast that with the people in Egypt, and Pharaoh in particular.

Pharaoh was running the local economy and he wanted it to go well. He had hit the jackpot with Joseph, who had saved his entire country by his economic savvy. Of course Pharaoh did not understand that saving the country really was God’s initiative.

So Pharaoh thought, if Joseph is good, his brothers will be, too. I need to treat these people well, give them a job overseeing my animals, so that they prosper Egypt. So he sweetened the pie by giving them the best land in Egypt.

This was not out of the goodness of his heart; this was an economic decision. You can see it when you remember that we are just three chapters away from Exodus, a time when the Pharaoh knew nothing of Joseph and oppressed God’s people. When your foundation is sheer economics and power, then exploitation happens.

But even though Jacob had the lesser economic security, even though life for them seemed precarious and unstable, God took care of them and blessed them. God used Pharaoh to bless Jacob’s family. They were given the best place to live.

And, God will bless you. But do not make prosperity your end point – you are just passing through. *Make the promise your end point and you will go far.*

So amazingly, as Jacob and his clan came into Egypt as sojourners, they were blessed by God. However, what they received was not as important to them as what they gave.

Did you catch what they gave?

“Joseph brought in his father, Jacob, and presented him to Pharaoh. *And Jacob blessed Pharaoh.*” (v. 7)

Can you imagine a shepherd, 130 years old, gray and stooped, standing before a king with a gleaming crown, and the lowly one blesses the one seemingly on top of the world.

The blue collar worker blesses the president. The man of God, the one who clings to God’s promise, has something much more valuable to give. It’s not the size of your possessions that makes you valuable, but whether you believe the promise.

God blesses those who have faith. And, God reaches right through simple people who give their heart to Him and he uses you to prosper the nations.

Egypt's power would not have been enough to solve their problems. It was God working through Joseph that saved them. You must find the real point of security. It is in belief in the promise that extends far beyond the safety and security and prosperity that Egypt had to offer.

To God, Jacob's family was tops because they believed the promise. And God blessed them.

You are God's children. Do you believe the promise? Are you headed to that country that God has planned for you? Then your purpose is like that of Jacob.

What's Jacob interested in? Listening to God and blessing others. "Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh again before leaving his court." (v. 10)

Last week the Ben Franklin Apothecary on Main Street in Duncanville celebrated its 50th anniversary. Only three businesses in Duncanville have survived for fifty years. Owner Dan Jespersen credits his store's success with his determination to follow God, to bless his city, and bring God honor. He said there have been hard times, but if you do what God wants you to do and persist in following Him and bringing Him honor, He will bless you.

What if we lived under the promise? What if we lived like aliens on this earth? What if we cared less about building more stuff for this life, and saw our future a little farther than that. How would we be changed?

Perhaps the security we seek in being prosperous here and now in this life would become security in God's future for us. This life is not the end of the story. The "now" generation is not what life is about.

Jacob and his family seem to be walking a road that goes through Egypt but not to Egypt. We will be here for a little while, he says to the king. You wonder, why doesn't he want to stay there forever, in the best part of Egypt? He could "have it made." They're looking for a better country, and they call to you to join them on the road.

"They saw it way off in the distance, waved their greeting, and accepted the fact that they were transients in this world. People who live this way make it plain that they are looking for their true home. If they were homesick for the old country, they could have gone back any time they wanted. But they were after a far better country than that—*heaven* country. You can see why God is so proud of them, and has a City waiting for them."

Will you come along with them?

AMEN