

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “Digging Up Bones” from the “Called Together” sermon series

Scripture: Genesis 47:27-31; 50:22-26

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In these sections from Genesis, we first read about Jacob’s move to Egypt and his request to be buried back in his homeland in chapter 47. Then we shift to chapter 50 and read about Joseph’s final words to his brothers that God will come to their aide, and to also to bury him in Israel with his ancestors.
- In chapter 47, verse 27 explains how Israel in Egypt had “...gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied exceedingly.” This verse emphasizes the growing strength of the Israelites in Egypt.
- When Jacob/Israel was on his deathbed, he told his son Joseph “If I have found favor with you, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal loyally and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt.”
- The idea of swearing an oath with a hand under someone’s thigh is also seen in Genesis 24:2 when Abraham made his oldest servant swear in a similar way to not get his son a wife from the Canaanites.
- Putting your hand under someone’s thigh, close to the organs of procreation, was a sign of solemnity and emphasized the importance of an issue. Verse 30 points out Jacob’s instructions for his burial, specifically to “...carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their (his ancestors) burial place.” This is the Cave of Machpelah (see Genesis 23:1-20; 25:9; and 49:29-52).
- In chapter 50, we read about Joseph’s final days and his words to his brothers that “I am about to die; but God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land (Egypt) to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” This assurance of God coming to their aide is fulfilled beginning with the Book of Exodus and completed in the Book of Joshua, as is the request to bring his bones out of Egypt (see Exodus 13:19).

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- Today we begin a new series “Called Together”, in which we are exploring the nature of God’s call to us as disciples in Christ. It is not just a personal call, though it begins here, but also the collective call of the church as a community.
- In the last chapter of the Book of Genesis, we see what is considered a “deathbed scene”. Joseph, the great grandson of Abraham, is nearing the end of his life and is viewed as a great figure who led his great family out of famine and into Egypt for a better life.
- Joseph was old, tired and on his deathbed. His family surrounded him and contemplating his final resting place. He says, “I’m not going to be with you much longer. But God will surely come to you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And when this happens, I want you to carry up my bones from here.” There is a similar scene with Joseph’s father Jacob in Genesis 47 who also wanted to be buried in the “promised land.” They did not want to be forgotten and left behind in the land of Egypt.
- The Hebrew word for memory is *zachar* which means imprint, and to remember. This is why Spiritual formation is so critical, especially for our youth, as it gives us something to come back to in life...to remember!
- How are we passing on a promise that was passed on to you? It is not about “digging up the past” but remembering. In this remembrance you will find yourself when lost.
- Francis Asbury was a Methodist preacher that was sent to America to preach by John Wesley. He came to Middle TN as a circuit rider and established a presence that would eventually lead to Brentwood Methodist Episcopal Church. Our congregation is “carrying” his bones! Think of all that this church has lived through and seen all of these years! Week after week, the church brings us back to life and back to ourselves!
- As we think about our children, grandchildren, etc., we think about the “bones” that they will carry and embodying the Spirit of the One who left no bones behind. The One who continues to flesh out His grace and love in us, as we continue to live out our call...together!

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- Jacob had Joseph promise to bury him in his homeland. No written contract was necessary because his word carried as much weight as such a contract. How can we speak and live the truth in such a way?
- What is the significance of Jacob and Joseph wanting their bones removed from Egypt and be buried with their ancestors? Why was this so important to them?
- How can we learn to rely on the promises of God in the same way that Jacob and Joseph exhibited in these verses?
- What is the significance of the word *remember* throughout Scripture?
- Whose “bones” are you carrying with you today? Why?

