



Sermon Notes: Cameron Webber,
“Any Dream Will Do ?!?”

25 May 2025

Readings: Genesis 37:1- 11, Colossians 2 13-17, John 7: 1-5

Pre-Introduction

It's good to be back after three weeks of holidays. It was a holiday in which we spent time with Helen's side of the family which was great; but the plans for lots of rain forest walking had to be changed as Helen broke her foot just two days before we left so we went to cafés for coffee and food. And the holiday concluded with a lengthy scenic return trip to far flung places due to the flooding. Did you see what I did there? Lots of alliteration and we're not even into the sermon yet!

We've heard read, the beginning of the story of Joseph and his coat and his dreams. It's a story popularised by the Tim Rice / Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, ***Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat***.

The musical started off as a short 15 minute pop cantata in the late 1960s and had grown to a full-blown stage musical by 1974. It's been performed professionally in big theatres and it keeps returning in one form or another. In the 1980s it was on Broadway. There have many revivals and tours. It was released as a movie in the 1990s. The latest figure I could find indicates that there have been well in excess of 20,000 school and amateur productions.

It keeps popping up and in Feb 2020 a 50th Anniversary production was staged at the Lincoln Centre in the USA. Covid then messed things up, but that production returned to the London Palladium in mid-2021 and then it came to Australia – to Melbourne at the end of 2022 and then to Sydney in February 2023.

Did anyone see it then? Who has seen a production somewhere, sometime? Has anyone performed in it?

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat - a re-telling of the story of Joseph, as found in the Bible in Genesis 37-50. It's one of the well-known narratives from the Old Testament and it takes up a significant chunk of Genesis -Joseph and his coat, and his dreams. And it's a rollicking ride with ups and downs, ebbs and flows. Joseph, the favourite son, I'm sure you know the story, he's put in a pit, sold to Potiphar, off to prison before being taken to the palace and ending up as prime-minister, solving the problem that Egypt was facing even before they knew they had a problem. Did you see what I did there? More alliteration, and we are only in the introduction! So, spoiler alert, the problem is solved and they all lived happily ever after!

No wonder it's been made into a musical. No wonder it's in all the Children's Bibles and there are lots of versions in Bible Story Books. It's in all the Sunday School Curriculums and School Scripture Curriculums.

But have you read it lately? The original, in the Bible? Have you studied it, reflected on it, meditated on it? Have you brought your adult mind to bear on this account that is part of God's word; God's word to us?

As we start a new series today looking at the life of Joseph, I'd encourage you to take the time to read through the whole account and to pre-read and/or post-read the passages we look at Sunday by Sunday. And do that, praying that God will speak to you through his Word, and that the Holy Spirit who inspired the writer would enlighten your mind, touch your heart, and move your will so that you grow in the knowledge of God, and in love for God, and in living that out day by day.

And as we work through we will see this is not so much a story about **Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat** but rather it's about **Joseph and his Amazing God**. So let's pray as we begin the journey.

Prayer

God our Father, thank you for your Word. As we begin this series on Joseph, and throughout this series, help us to learn more about you, and to know you more as you speak to us through your Word. May your Holy Spirit enlighten our minds, touch our hearts, and transform us, that Jesus' name would be glorified. We ask this in His Name. Amen.

Introduction

The first song in the musical has the lyrics....

*But if you think it, want it, dream it, then it's real
You are what you feel.*

And then follows one of the well-known songs from the musical which I've used for the title of this sermon:

Any dream will do, which I prefer to rephrase as, ***Any dream will do ?!?***

Because, like, really?!? Is the message of the account of Joseph about pursuing your dreams? Did Tim Rice accurately capture the biblical account in his lyrics? Will any dream do?

I'd like to suggest – in case you haven't already picked it up by my tone - that the answer is NO! And as we commence this series about an **Amazing God**, not an amazing dream-coat, and as we set the scene looking at the context, we firstly see something of **God's Plan**.

God's Plan

You remember in Genesis 12 (one of the critical passages in the Old Testament in God's unfolding plan) Abram (later to be renamed Abraham) is called by God and promised that he will be the Father of a People, a Nation, through whom all peoples on earth will be blessed.

This is God's plan to reverse the curse of sin that came about because of the sin, the disobedience of Adam and Eve. And it will happen through the family of Abraham.

So miraculously, with Sarah, Isaac is born. Isaac has two sons – Jacob and Esau. Jacob has his name changed to Israel by God. (You may remember we looked at Jacob last year.) Jacob's 12 sons (including Joseph) are the patriarchs, the fathers of the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel.

There's a summary in Genesis 35:22b-26.

Jacob had twelve sons:

The sons of Leah: Reuben the firstborn of Jacob, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun.

The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin.

The sons of Rachel's servant Bilhah: Dan and Naphtali.

The sons of Leah's servant Zilpah: Gad and Asher.

And if that sounds like a complicated family, you'd be right. Jacob wanted to marry Rachel, gets tricked in to marrying her sister Leah, then also marries Rachel. Leah has children, Rachel does not. Rachel decides that she will use the surrogate mother approach and gives her servant Bilhah to Jacob and children are born. Leah says, two can play at that game, so she gives her servant Zilpah to Jacob and more sons are born. And then Rachel, finally, gives birth to Joseph. You can read about that in Genesis 29-30.

And you can kind of understand that this son - Joseph - born to Jacob after many years, born to his favourite wife, Rachel, would be greatly loved. But the obvious favouritism, with the fancy coat, is not great; and by the end of the chapter (as we will see next week) Joseph's step-brothers will have sold him as a slave.

God's People

And this motley crew are the beginning of the nation promised to Abraham. They are **God's People**; God's chosen people through whom all people will be blessed. And these 12 sons will be the fathers of the 12 tribes of this chosen people.

But it's off to an interesting start. Not all is well in the household of Jacob. He's playing favourites with his sons. Joseph is favourite, he's got the technicolour coat to prove it and his brothers hate him for it. And when he starts boasting about his dreams they hate him more and are jealous. Even his father rebukes him for going over the top, but ponders what Joseph has said.

There is certainly an interesting dynamic in the home, and we know how it plays out by the end of the chapter. Today we would call that a dysfunctional family. If you were God, would you have picked that lot, that family, to be your chosen people? What about your family? If you were God, would you pick your family?

As I mentioned, a lot of our holiday was spent with family - Helen's side - which is way more 'normal' than my side! But even then, there were some reminiscences about 'interesting times' and though in the scheme of things they were pretty minor, it's a

reminder that whoever God had chosen to be the carrier of his plan would be a child of Adam and Eve, and carry sin and death.

Every family is probably 'dysfunctional' to some extent, but this lot; Jacob's family! Yet these are God's People, this is God's Plan, and that ought to be comforting to us, that as fallible, sinful people, God can choose us and use us to be his people, to play a small part in his plan.

That's not to excuse our sin, or give us excuses. That's not to be fatalistic or say it doesn't matter. Indeed, living this side of Christ and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, as God's People we are called to truly grow in godliness as a piece of God's Plan.

God's Providence

And here in the muck of Genesis 37, we know that God's People will be used to bring about God's Big Plan. And we see that worked out in **God's Providence**, his sovereignty, his in-control-ness, because He is God; and he is an Amazing God! God, without taking away our free-will, remains in control and will bring about his plan.

If there is a well-known verse in the Joseph Narrative it comes in chapter 50, at the end of the story. When Jacob dies, Joseph's brothers are worried that maybe now he will take his revenge on them, but he says in Genesis 50:20,

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good. (NIV)

You put me in a pit, you sold me as a slave because you hated me, but God intended it for good. But note that the good that God intended was not for Joseph to have a nice life as second in charge in Egypt. What was it for? Well we need to read the rest of Genesis 50:20

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. (NIV)

Already, by Genesis 50, the nations have been blessed, as they could come to Egypt and get food in the famine that is available because of the family of Abraham. But more than that, a more literal reading of that verse would be...

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to bring it about that a numerous people should be kept alive, as they are today.

A numerous people. That's an interesting phrase, but that's what was promised to Abraham in Genesis 15.

'Look up at the sky and count the stars – if indeed you can count them. So shall your offspring be.'

And because Joseph was sold off as a slave, Jacob and his sons could survive the famine. And because they settled in Goshen and were not assimilated but retained their identity, then over the next 400 years in Egypt God's people, the people of Israel, as we read in Exodus 1:7, *increased in number and became so numerous* (same word as the previous page in Genesis 50:20) *that the land was filled with them.*

In God's providence, what was meant for harm, was used for good; to bring about his plan - His people saved from famine, growing to become a numerous people, a great nation – as promised to Abraham, and along the way, blessing other nations as promised to Abraham.

God's Pointer

But even more than that, as we look at Genesis 37-50, we see Joseph as **God's Pointer** because Joseph points us to **Jesus**.

What did we hear in our reading from Colossians? Paul is speaking about some of the OT law and he says:

These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. (Colossians 2:17)

Or in another place...

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:20)

Or in a song we sometimes sing...

*To fulfil the law and prophets,
to a virgin came the Word,
From a throne of endless glory
to a cradle in the dirt.*

Jesus comes as the one in whom the promise to Abraham to reverse the curse of sin is fulfilled. He comes as the one in whom all nations / peoples can be blessed. Jesus comes as the fulfilment of the law and prophets and also as the fulfilment of events and people in the Old Testament. Jesus is the perfect King, greater than David. Jesus is *the* High Priest, *the* Temple, *the* Sacrifice to which all the Old Testament law pointed. Jesus comes as the fulfilment of all the 'saviours' (e.g. in the book of Judges).

God's people needed a better king, a better saviour, a better temple, a better sacrifice, a better everything than all the Old Testament. All the shadows of the Old Testament point to the reality in Jesus. All God's promises find their 'Yes' in him.

And so it shouldn't surprise us that Joseph too, points us to Jesus. And it is evident in simple parallels which have been well noted.

- In John 7:5 we read of Jesus, that *even his own brothers did not believe in him*. Not unlike Joseph's brothers who don't believe that he will rule them.
- We will hear next week that Joseph was sold for silver. Jesus was sold, was betrayed for silver.
- Joseph dreamed of his brothers bowing to him. Spoiler alert – it happens. And one day every knee will bow before Jesus.
- Joseph saved people from death due to famine. Jesus saves us from the death due to us for our sin.

Because we are all dysfunctional, because we are all sinners, Joseph's Amazing God, does the most amazing thing. In Jesus Christ, God himself enters his creation as part of it, truly human, and takes on himself the punishment we deserve. And as we accept that, we may live with him now, and forever!

Can you remember the names of the 12 sons, the 12 tribes? Did you learn them in Sunday School. I read them earlier. They are actually in the next song in The Technicolour Dreamcoat. The song is called 'Jacob & Sons'; a song with all the names of that motley crew in motley circumstances. It might be worth remembering them because you are going to see those names one day! Do you know where? You are going to see them on some gates.

John, in his vision of heaven, tells us in Revelation 21 that

The Holy City – The New Jerusalem... had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

These names that gave voice to sadness and bitterness, competitiveness and envy, are written on the gates of heaven because God is faithful to his promises and in his grace he delights in rescuing and saving weak, frail, sinners and using them to bring about his purposes.

This is **not** the story of Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat.
It **is** the story of **Joseph and his Amazing God**.

Conclusion

So... will any Dream Do ?!?

Is it a case of, as Time Rice puts it...

If you think it, want it, dream it, then it's real

You are what you feel.

Any dream will do. ?!?

No! Joseph's dreams, dreams of his brothers bowing down, his dreams were unthinkable but unavoidable because this was not something Joseph dreamt up. No, this was God revealing something of his **plan** for his **people** who would know his **providence** and through the unfolding of this story and through the whole Old Testament it **points** from shadow to the reality in Christ so that in Him we may know life, because as we heard in Colossians 2, it was...

... when we were dead in our sins that God made us alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

That's **Jospeh's Amazing God** and as we respond to him in repentance and faith, he is **our Amazing God** too.

Thanks be to Him. **Amen.**