

**February 25, 2024 – Pastor Randy Bennett, guest preacher**

## **“A Cupbearer, A Baker, and another Guy”**

**Genesis 39:22-40:23**

Before we get into the text this morning, I want you to know, I am here today to share with you about the jail ministry at St. Clair Jail and the new chaplain who has come to develop ministries there. I first got involved in the jail ministry to inmates when I began my ministry with Operation Transformation. I have been serving there now for over 2 years as the Outreach Coordinator. One of my responsibilities is to oversee outreach groups and develop them across the churches in our area.

Ministering to men and women in our jail system certainly has been challenging. In St. Clair jail there are 7 pods where the men and women are held. A-F are mens pods of 80 each capacity and G pod is women of 80 capacity. There are about 400-500 inmates in the jail at any given time of the year. Our new chaplain, Paul Zeller, has helped us place one weekly Bible Study each week in each pod. Paul recently told me his actual goal is to have significant ministry in every pod every day of the week. That would be amazing.

As I mentioned, Paul Zeller is now our St. Clair Jail chaplain. His ministry title is “Reach the Forgotten Ministries”. 13 other counties have been funding this county ministry so far, so upcoming will be Paul’s first fundraising banquet. It is on April 4. They are looking for ways to continue to fund this chaplain ministry. So what kind of men and women do we encounter each week when we go in for Bible Studies? Good question. We can hardly imagine what kind of person ends up in a jail in the first place. It seems like another world to many of you here. Well, it is hard to imagine, and it isn’t. Being in jail is another world. You are limited from so many things. You do see the blue sky, but it is vertical and never horizontal like a sunset or a sunrise. But it isn’t another world when you sit down and ask simple questions about each of their faith journey. Many of these men and women want Christ in their life. Many of these men and women have Christ in their life.

So I want to get into our text this morning asking the question just what kind of people might you find in a place we call jail, or prison? In this passage we meet 3 kinds of people in this Egyptian palace jail.

What do the 3 men represent when we think about jail ministry and the men and women incarcerated there?

- It says both the cupbearer and the baker had offended Pharaoh.
- It says he was angry with both of them. We are not told why.
- No specific reason was given for Pharaoh's judgment. But some have wondered if they were there for the same reason Joseph was there.
- They were put into the palace jail. It was different kind of jail, but it was still jail. We know Joseph was there for several years, it wasn't just some weekend hold place.
- Joseph had been given favor with Potiphar, and now again, Joseph finds himself given favor in the palace jail.
- Both the cupbearer and the baker were under the supervision of Joseph.

Time had passed. Life went on in the palace and the palace jail. It says that both the cupbearer and the Baker had dreams in the night. And it's in their dreams and the outcomes of the same, that we see a difference in these 2 men. They both go to Joseph about their dreams, and Joseph tells them that God can help them to know the interpretation of their dreams.

It is here that we begin to see the difference between these 2 men.

**The cupbearer's dream** revealed to Joseph that he would be restored to his position as cupbearer to Pharaoh, and that is exactly what happened shortly after.

But the **baker's dream** had quite a different outcome. His dream brought about the end of his life, as Pharaoh ordered his execution.

And what about **Joseph**? I find it interesting that from the prison warden, to Potiphar, and even Potiphar's wife that Joseph finds favor at every turn. Why? Because God had favor upon Joseph. And God had reason to give favor upon Joseph.

Was it because Joseph lived out Matthew 6:33, "*Seek First the kingdom of God, and these things will be added unto you.*"

Why do I illustrate these men in relation to the jail ministry? Because I believe that literally represent the kind of men and women we minister to there. Men who come to our jail Bible Study are mostly those men who appear repentant. And there are those others who can't see past themselves and are resistant to any kind of help no matter how many times it's offered.

Illus. I was amazed a few months ago when we gave a bible study on confession, and at the end of the lesson, I felt led to ask the guys if any of them would like to pray a prayer of confession or anything else you want to pray, you go ahead. There were probably 12 men in the room at the time. After a few seconds of silence, one after one they began to pour out their hearts to God. The spirit's presence was so thick that night. We was so amazed. I see this response in some ways the cupbearers attitude.

But we can't look past one more person in that prison, and that is **Joseph**. He was that kind of person who in fact had done nothing wrong to be in such a place as a prison, let alone in Egypt where his brothers had sold him into slavery. Joseph was one of the most steady people in all of scripture, save Moses.

Even when Joseph interpreted both the cupbearer and the baker's dreams, he did not hold back the truth, nor did he hinder anyone from receiving their honor.

**Illus.** Every once in awhile we run across an inmate and we ask, how in the world did they end up here. Recently, a group of guys came to our Bible Study and 6 of them were Hispanics. They were ICE detainees and none of them spoke English. We had a problem on our hands. Neither Jeff nor I spoke Spanish, so for a couple weeks they just enjoyed being there, and there was nothing we could do. For 2 weeks recently, one of the Spanish guys was bi-lingual, and he interpreted the message for the others. This last week, that man was extradited to Mexico, and there we were again without any way to communicate. But how wrong we were. I happened be teaching that day, and God just moved into our Bible Study in a blessed way, and the emotion flowed. I had to stop several times giving my testimony, and it was clear as we prayed, all the men were touched. I guess intelligible words were optional that day.

Let me apply this now to our community. When these men and women get out, they have heard a consistent message that Blue Water Recovery Center is there for them when they get out. We also promote our mentoring ministry from Operation Transformation. Several of the inmates are now in our mentoring ministry, and certainly many of them find their way to the Blue Water Recovery Center on 10<sup>th</sup> Street.

Let me close this message in one other way. Is it possible that the description of one of these 3 men in scripture applies to you. Maybe you haven't been sent to jail, but there are other kinds of prisons that some of have fallen prey to.

Are you like the baker, who gave the appearance of a repentant heart but in the end, just wanted out of his jail life, but found himself rebelling against any authority in life, including God's.

Or are you like the cupbearer, who when he had his dream, it represented a truly repentant heart. Dear friends, God can only walk through the door of your heart if it is an opened one. You have to let God in to be forgiven.

Finally maybe you have been wronged so many times you find yourself like Joseph. But Joseph was not without his faults. His pride helped drive his brother's hatred of him to that of a slave. Simply put, we are all at least one of these three men, who in the end all needed God in their life. Joseph made his peace with God so many years before, but no matter where you are today, repentance is always the first step to God.