

MY OWN SCRIPT
JEREMIAH 29:11

Joseph's story was the story of a family falling out, of jealousy and hatred, of brothers doing nasty things to one another. Yet at end, there was something else about this story: when the brothers had all made up together, Joseph said *"It was not you who sent me here, but God."* (Gen 45:8) God had a plan to save people; so to save lives, God sent Joseph to Egypt to be the man to save lives. On the one hand, it was his brothers who sent Joseph to Egypt, because of their plan to get rid of him and they succeeded, but in the background, God had His plan to save people's lives and Joseph was the man to do that and so, Joseph saw that God sent him there.

God has a plan; He has a big plan to bless the world and we've seen this week how that plan began at the beginning of everything and how that plan got better when Jesus came and Jesus became the centre of that plan in His death and rising again; it seems strange, but the Bible says that this one event is the turning point of God's whole plan, setting everything right; clearing up the mess that the world was in. There is still work to do, but God is still working out His plan for the world, for the universe and Jesus is at centre of it.

But as well as one big plan, God has lots of little plans inside it. *"I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* (Jer 29:11) Sometimes we think of life as just a random set of chance events, choices we make for ourselves or choices that other people make for us and there is no pattern, no rhyme or reason to them. But God has a plan for us, for you and for me and His plan is to bless us and make us like Jesus. So He takes all of these choices that we make and all of these things that happen to us and He uses these choices and events to make us into the kind of people that He wants us to be. We make choices; events happen and through all of these choices and events God is at work to make us more like Jesus. I didn't like God's plan for me and my life; I had a better plan, but I discovered that there is no better plan than God's and so I learned to trust Him.

Jesus told a wonderful story about a great banquet, a feast, a party. A rich man decided to hold this great banquet and invite all his friends and they replied and said 'Yes, we'll come!' but when the time came for the party, they made excuses for not being there: one said he had to go see his new field; another try out his new oxen (or a new tractor!); the third had just got married; but let's be honest, the field was not going to run away, he could try out tractor tomorrow, but had probably tried it our already anyway; he could bring his wife to the party. They made excuses because they didn't want to come. So our man decided that he would invite other people instead, people who were poor, people who needed help and they came and enjoyed his party wonderfully.

Jesus told this story to people who thought they knew better than God; they didn't want God's plan because thought they had a better plan. God's plan for us is to bless us wonderfully, to give us all kinds of wonderful gifts and to love us with a wonderful love and to make us more and more like Jesus. We have a choice: we can stick with our own plan and just do what we want; or we can trust God's plan and learn to trust Him with every day of our lives. There are good days in life, when we make lots of good choices and are full of love; there are difficult days when the choices are hard and life is not so good; God is with us in all of these days, blessing us, helping us, loving us.

Let me finish with another story, this time from C.S. Lewis: "Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house, At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that these jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that he is building quite a different house from the one you thought of – throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but he is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself." (*Mere Christianity* p.169)