

Message Summary

Our bones often ache. Sometimes the aching is from physical exertion over many years. But more often, our bones ache with the bitterness of hurt, pain, and sorrow that seeps deeply into us. Our text today (Heb. 11:22) recalls the story of Joseph (Gn. 37-50), whose bones were not the subject of ache but promise and hope. Those whose faith aligns with Joseph's can likewise prevent bitterness from springing up in them by entrusting life and death to the One who raises dry bones (Ez. 37) because He raised Christ's bones.

Joseph's life of humble beginnings on a Palestinian farm ends with the luxurious burial of Egyptian royalty. Joseph's father Jacob had twelve sons, but loved Joseph more than the others. After Joseph boasted a fine coat of many colors and a cryptic dream about rising to power, his brothers had had enough. The bitterness of their hearts conspired against him, and they left him in a pit for dead. After being sold into slavery, Joseph rose to prominence in Potiphar's household only to be falsely accused of sexual misconduct by Potiphar's wife. Like his brothers before, Potiphar threw Joseph into the pit of prison. God brings Joseph from the pit again, this time through sending Pharaoh a dream and granting Joseph the interpretation. This former slave and convict instantly became second in command over the most powerful nation on earth at the time. The Lord orchestrated Joseph's life to ensure that only He received glory from Joseph's place. Joseph's part to play was singularly faith. The key to rooting out bitterness is trust that the God reigning over the universe is for us and not against us.

As Joseph closes his life, he looks to bless his sons with mention of the exodus. The "directions concerning his bones" refers to Joseph's confidence that the Lord would bring Israel out of Egypt and into their own land, where his bones could be buried. Joseph knew that Egypt was not his home. His home is eternal. This promise would take time to fulfill (400 years!), but God fulfills His promises in His time, not ours. God's plans for Joseph eclipsed Joseph's own life. His blessings directly referenced his children's children to the third generation, but the Lord would ultimately lead to Christ, Israel's true Deliverer. Christ's bones would never be broken by human sword or sinful bitterness, but instead were resurrected on the third day to eternal life. This same promise persists for all who, like Joseph, look beyond this world with faith for the next.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

After this great "hall of faith" (Heb. 11), the author of Hebrews goes on to warn directly against bitterness: "See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled" (12:15). Why are roots of bitterness such a danger? How can many be defiled from one person's bitterness?

Why does the author of Hebrews put such prominence on Joseph's instructions concerning bones? What did these instructions about bones reveal?

How does an eternal perspective help us root out bitterness we may still hold against those who wrong us? See esp. Eph. 4:31.

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don't have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. Do you feel your life has been thrown into a pit because of what others have done to you? Do you harbor bitterness or hatred against them for it?
2. Do you try to take God's place by controlling and manipulating to make life go your way? How can you more trust God this week to rule the universe He designed well?
3. Do you live with the eternal perspective that this world is not your home?
4. Do you submit your dreams, plans, and goals in life to God's purposes, or do you cling to them as your own?
5. Do you struggle to have patience in the Lord's timing for His promises, or do you insist on Him acting now?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for giving up Christ's body to the dead, resurrected it, and promising the same future resurrection for those who have faith in Him.
 - Pray that the Lord would protect our church from any root of bitterness. Pray that we would love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Mt. 5:43)
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray for the current and future foster care families in our church body. Pray that many would have the desire and opportunity to provide foster care. Pray that many children would be exposed to the gospel, in Word and deed, through the loving influence of these families.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray for the Delaney family in their process of adopting Elliot. Pray that the Lord would see to all needed medical care, provide for finances, and finalize all documents for their adoption to be complete.