

HOME REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE: Family Secrets

Genesis 37:1-4, 20-33

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WATCH/LISTEN: <https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/family-secrets/>

During this stay-at-home season, how are the household chores going? For example, taking out the trash. Have you noticed? The longer you put it off, the worse it gets. Even if you try to pack the trash can fuller—it just becomes more difficult to empty out and there's more of it! (I have no personal knowledge of this; a friend told me!). The same with laundry! That's the way it is with family secrets. The more we hide, the more lies we tell, the more dishonest we are, the worse it gets. When I was a very young boy, my dear mother taught me this couplet from Walter Scott: "O what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive."

Our text tells a story of the corrosive power of family secrets. Joseph was the pampered son of the patriarch Jacob, who spoiled him and gave him a very expensive, special coat to wear. Joseph's older brothers were jealous. They hated him. One day, they attempted to kill him but instead decided to send him off with a caravan. To hide their crime, they all took part in a lie. They smeared goat's blood on Joseph's coat and told their dad he had been killed. Secrets. Everywhere you turn in this story, secrets. Family secrets.

Joseph's brothers came by their dishonesty and secret-keeping very naturally. Their dad Jacob lied to his parents, his twin brother, his father-in-law and many others. He was a secret keeper. In fact, one translation of the name Jacob is trickster or deceiver.

In the end, secrets can't be contained. Like the trash can at your house, sooner or later they have to be dumped. In v. 26, Judah asked what good it would do them to try to "conceal his blood?" Secrets end up creating blame games, triangles (think about Joseph's brothers later turned on each other) and more anxiety. They poison the environment. No healing could come to Jacob's family until the secrets were dealt with.

Mental health experts have been monitoring the impact of COVID-19 sheltering at home. They note the increase in domestic abuse and violence. Alcohol sales are skyrocketing. Porn sites are offering free membership. A person going through AA twelve-step recovery once said, "Ten percent of my battle is with alcohol. The other 90% is all about honesty." I heard someone say once that it's not what we show off that tells our truest story; it's what we hide away.

In Ephesians 5:8-9: "For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true." I can't help but think about the evangelistic opportunity we have in this moment—both because of the pandemic and because of this timely sermon series. The difference that Christ can make.

The graphic for this sermon series is instructive. Yes, it is messy. But at least they are standing beside each other. And at least they have their work clothes on. Relationships are messy and

they do require effort. This picture to me says some people are ready to work at being open and loving.

In the case of Joseph and his family, we have the luxury of knowing how it turns out. We fast forward to the end and know Joseph survives. The family is reunited. The secrets are exposed and all is forgiven. But still, all those wasted years. What we do NOT know how your family will end up. That story is still being written.