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Weekly Letter – 9 August 2026

Genesis 37:12-28 – Could you use a slave?

You would have thought that Jacob had had enough of favouritism from his own experience, but he has a favourite son, born to him in his old age: Joseph. The other brothers notice. Joseph tells on them to their father. Jacob gives Joseph a special coat (some say ornamented, some say with sleeves, and the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures says 'many coloured'). And Jacob has dreams that wind them all up.

We pick up the story where Jacob sends Joseph to his brothers who are tending the family flocks near Shechem, but when he gets there, they have moved ten miles further on, and Joseph trudges after them. When the brothers see him, the majority want to kill him. Reuben has one option, to throw him down a pit – a cistern for collecting water (shaped like the Christ Well worship area, with a wide base and narrow top) – and to collect him later and restore him to Jacob. Judah comes up with another option of selling him to traders going to Egypt, which makes a profit on the side. They pull him out of the pit and Joseph is on his way to Egypt. Reuben doesn't know where to turn when his plan has failed, but the other brothers dip Joseph's coat in goat's blood to explain Joseph's disappearance to their dad. Jacob is inconsolable.

No one comes out of this well. Even the options from Reuben and Judah don't address the issues. We are used to the story as entertainment in the form of 'Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat' and perhaps it is part of the soap opera of Jacob's dysfunctional family, but I wonder what you make of it?

There is no mention of God as this part of the story unfolds, although later Joseph looks back and tells his brothers, 'Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good.' (Gen 50:20) Maybe it was only possible to say that in hindsight; the seventeen-year-old Joseph down a pit or sold as a slave may not have seen it like that. Centuries later, Paul could write, 'We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.' (Rom 8:28) and that was despite all he had been through.

It doesn't help to say such things to other people who are stuck in the pits, but we can encourage ourselves when we are struggling to make sense of what we are going through. Perhaps everything will be alright in the end, and if it's not alright, then it's not the end yet.

Simon

Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom at 10.30 am will be led by Rev Linda Woollacott

Bible Readings: Genesis 16.1-15: Genesis 21.8-21.

Cycle of Prayer in the Region – we will pray for Christ Well

Prayers for every household – Manor Road nos. 74-118 and 129-135

IN SILENCE AND STORM

(Bible Readings: Genesis 37.1-4, 12-28: i Kings 19.9-18: Matthew 14.22-33)

Come all who are weary, tired of noise and endless chatter,
the constant hum of a world always plugged in.

Come, all who are exhausted, burnt out by the relentless demand
of tending a fire that has long since gone cold.

Come, all who are longing for dry land, battered by the storms of life,
worn down by the wind and rain of the vast open sea.

Come, all who long for peace, for calm deeper than silence,
for the tender sound of God's still small voice.

Come, let us worship the One, who meets us now
in silence as in storm, whose presence is our peace. **Amen.**

Jonnie Hill (URC Prayer Handbook 2026)

