

Life is a Changing Proposition

Genesis 39:1-5

Joseph's life in Egypt was marked by change. Nothing about that land was like his homeland. There was a multitude of adjustments to make in this new place, not the least of which was becoming a servant in another man's household. **His master, Potiphar, was the captain of the bodyguard and a very important man in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself.** Only one thing from Joseph's old life remained constant in his new one: God never left him. Even in the midst of tremendous change, God's presence was there. Joseph knew it, and Potiphar knew it too.

I believe God's presence was the reason Joseph found favor with Potiphar. Everything he touched seemed to prosper, and in a short time Potiphar made Joseph his personal servant and overseer of his household. He placed Joseph in charge of everything he owned. Imagine! A foreigner, a son of Abraham, managing the affairs of an important Egyptian!

From the time Potiphar appointed Joseph overseer, God blessed his house. Everything he owned, in the house and in the fields, prospered as never before. It was as if God were saying to Joseph, "I know where you are, Joseph, and I am the One who cares for you." **Potiphar was amazed at his foreign slave and at the power and might of Joseph's God.** You don't get to be one of the most powerful men in Egypt by being a fool, who cares for and Potiphar knew a good thing when he saw it. Before long he put everything he owned in Joseph's charge and never again concerned himself with anything except the food he ate!

Joseph was homesick at times. Potiphar's house was beautiful and Egypt was a land of great riches, but he longed for his home. He'd had a family once. **Now he lived with strangers.** Everything was different, the food, the language, and the customs. It was all new to

him! But the greatest pain of his heart came when he remembered his father, and Benjamin, and wondered if they had forgotten him.

When the homesickness was almost unbearable, Joseph would remind himself of God's provision in Egypt. No, it was *not his home*. But his God and the God of his fathers had *traveled with him to this place and remained with him even in the midst of despair*. He might have been a slave, but he had a trusting and lenient master. He might have been *lonely*, but he was seldom *alone*. Even the *changes themselves were filled with challenges, and there were countless things to learn and master in his new home*.

Sometimes he marveled at Potiphar's trust. What did he see? Joseph was *bright* but not *brilliant*. He was honest but not above all reproach. He had some *natural abilities* but nothing to warrant the faith Potiphar so readily placed in him. Probably, Potiphar simply saw God's workmanship, the only truly extraordinary thing Joseph brought from Canaan.

Like Joseph, we also live in a fast-moving society, and to survive and grow we have to move with it. *We cannot be satisfied with the status quo, nor can we live in yesterday.* Change is the very stuff of life. God created, and the universe has been in motion ever since. The smallest particle of life we know, the atom, is energy in its simplest form. *Heat and light* are waves that move through space, and they are never still. *Our bodies are constantly changing as we age*, although we've gotten pretty good at disguising that fact.

Although it seems a contradiction, change is one of the most consistent things in life. We can always count on it. Joseph went through incredible changes in his life before he was thirty years of age. His mother died when he was a young boy. He was taken out of his home and sold as a slave and then taken away to a foreign culture where he knew no one. He became familiar with the ups and downs of

life, moving from a palace to a prison and back. He was in favor and then unjustly accused, forgotten and then remembered.

It is true that change is one of the most consistent things in life, but it also has the potential to become a crisis if we are unprepared or unable to adjust to it.

Whether expected or unexpected, change has the potential to become a crisis if we are unprepared or unable to adjust to it. Psychologists tell us that sudden changes, such as a *death, serious illness, relocation, loss of a job, or even a job promotion*, can threaten not only personal stability, but the stability of our most intimate relationships as well. But change does not have to be life-altering for us to resist it. Even the slightest change can be uncomfortable for us.

No matter how tough we are, we are vulnerable to change. It is always there nipping at our heels, urging us to keep moving forward. The world never stops changing, even if we stop changing with it.

Why? Because there's a comfort in doing things the way they've always been done. When Moses died he was the only leader the nation of Israel had ever known. **They were at the Jordan River on the edge of the Promised Land, and the reins of authority had been turned over to Joshua.** God's direction to Joshua was to get up, take the people, and cross the river into Canaan. There was just one problem. The people didn't want to go.

Moses was the one who had made the decisions. Moses had performed the miracles. Moses had led the wandering Israelites through crisis after crisis. **But now Moses was dead.** Pessimistic, despairing, and complaining, they wanted to go back to Egypt rather than move on without their familiar leader.

George Bernard Shaw said, "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man." Thank God for all the *unreasonable men who have embraced change and made our world a better place*, in spite of the inherent risks.

I remember very well when each of our children went to their very first day of school. It was a day of great joy and a day of great sadness, but most of all it was a day of great change. You can ask any teacher and they will tell you that one of the "liveliest" days of each school year is the first day of school. **But the place to be to see the greatest change is in the kindergarten or first grade rooms. Great change is going on.** Children are leaving the secure, familiar environment of the home and facing the prospect of a new place, new faces, and new challenges.

The fact that some tears are shed on that first day should not surprise anyone. Change can be painful. By the way, the children are not the only ones who cry. **The mother who sends her child off to school for the first time knows that in some way things will never be the same again.** A process of growth and blossoming independence has begun that is necessary and good, but nevertheless painful.

The same is true here at Mountain Grove. In order to continue to meet the needs of our people, it is necessary for us to continue to change our methods of ministry. Through the years we have made significant changes. **And through those years we have made some people very happy, and we have made some people very angry.** But in the months and years ahead there will be, by necessity, still other changes taking place. And I must confess to you that some of them might be subtle and some of them might be very radical, and for some of you, more than others, it might even be painful, but I also promise you that we will not allow our church to become stagnant simply because we are afraid of changing the way we do things.

Change is painful-building new relationships, moving to new places, getting involved in new endeavors-these things can hurt. But the alternative to change is stagnation and death, a high price for temporary comfort!

What is God's position in the midst of our changing circumstances? It can be described in two words: *immutable* and *sovereign*. To say that God is *immutable* is to say He never changes. Hebrews 13:8 says that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” **His Word does not change. His character does not change.** God's *message* of love and salvation through His Son Jesus Christ does not change.

God is not only immutable, He is sovereign. This means that God is always working out His *will*, His *plan*, His *purpose*, and His *dreams* in every realm of life. God says this in Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” **His plan for the destiny of mankind is being put forth in the everyday affairs of men, or otherwise this whole thing would be hopeless!** Some believe we live in a world that turns on the spin of a roulette wheel, on luck, or chance. That is not true. Paul explained God's involvement in our world this way in Colossians 1:16-17, “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”

The key to surviving and thriving in an atmosphere of change is perspective. We can view change in one of several ways, but the view we choose will determine whether change becomes an obstacle or an opportunity for us.

One response to change is to fight it. We can resist change around us, but that resistance draws a costly penalty. **We fall behind**

those who are more willing to change, and instead of leading, we find ourselves in the position of playing catch up.

Another response to change is to take the position of a martyr.

"There is nothing I can do about this, so I'll just let it roll right over me." This choice differs from resistance because essentially it is passive. Those who merely resign themselves to change take a "que sera, sera" attitude toward life, believing they are at the mercy of their circumstances. And as long as an attitude of resignation prevails, a person's circumstances do determine his fate.

Another response to change is removal. When children play and things do not go their way their "ace in the hole" is to stop the game and go home. If change is too threatening we too can choose to exit the game by removing ourselves or changing our environment. Mental hospitals are filled with people who have simply removed themselves from life because they found its twists and turns too difficult. Many marriages fail because two people who promised to be committed to one another "for better or for worse" don't want to deal with the constant changes of matrimony. Opting out is a last ditch option. If we remove ourselves from the changes of life, we stop growing. And when we stop growing, we die.

Each of the three perspectives on change we've looked at so far view change as an obstacle. There is another perspective we can choose that makes change not an obstacle but an *opportunity*.

We can choose to re-script. What does that word "re-script" mean? Re-scripting in the face of change is a shifting of our way of looking at it. Ladies and gentlemen, changes are coming in your life, it may be today, it may be tomorrow, it may be next year, but I promise you changes are coming.

You can embrace the changes as doors of opportunity, or you can resist them as something you are dead-set against. One response will be *enjoyable* and the other will be *miserable*.

Let me close with this statement – there is one thing that will never change and that is God love for you, as seen in Romans 8:38-39, “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

If you have never been saved, why not today?

Everyone please stand for prayer.

Father,

Your Word is true. Give me the faith and the courage to make my life count for you in our ever-changing world. In Jesus’ name. Amen.