

Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke
Bible passage or verse: Genesis 50: 15-21
Title of sermon: **Two Plans**
Series: Don't Settle for Normal - #4

Genesis 50:15-21: **15**When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" **16** So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: **17** 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept. **18** His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. **19** But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? **20** You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. **21** So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

So, we are in this series called "Don't Settle For Normal." Why? Well, it's not to be rebellious, I mean, they're talking about the "new normal," but the reality is, normal's never gonna cut it. It doesn't. Normal doesn't cut anything. What's normal is to be fleshly, what's normal is to be vengeful, what's normal is to be angry, what's normal is not to forgive, what's normal is to label people -- like racists, and everything else under the sun -- and, what's normal is to brandish people and to judge them by their colors, to judge them by some other means. That's normal. That's what happens in the world. And so, for us to say that we want to be normal is despicable, and, by the way, it's not what God calls us to. So, for the first three weeks, we looked at this concept of, "Lord, I have these emotions of what I see -- the injustice," and, if you don't take care of them, it explodes, and it kind of boils up. And I don't think it's going to get a lot easier.

I was just with a guy yesterday who is a director of four large camps in California, and he serves on some international boards. He was telling me that 65 -- they estimate 65 percent of all Christian camps will close within the next year. I mean, that's huge! I was reading an article, and I spend a lot of time with pastors, and -- for a variety of reasons -- I love them, and want to encourage them, and -- and I was reading an article that they estimate that 35 percent of all pastors will resign within the next year or two. Why? Well, because we're coming through some seasons that aren't exactly easy for camps and for businesses like some that you run. And some of you have wonderfully secure jobs, and others of you, you've been downsized, you've been reduced, you have to do more with less. And some, because of the tension that we live in, in this culture -- and it's a huge tension -- tension over views of COVID, and tension over masks, and tension over race, and tension over the economics, and tension over the presidential race, and -- there's just all kinds of things, and people are furious! It's not an uncommon phone call that I get -- I got one two days ago -- "Pastor, can you please come over. My husband is raging. He's watching too much Fox News." Now, if I was joking, that would be funny, but it's not. When things started sailing and getting thrown, and people are getting hurt -- it's a lot of tension. And so, we look at this, and we say, "God, the last thing we could ever do is settle for normal. Normal's gonna get you in trouble." So I turned to a story, and it's a marvelous story -- you know it well -- it's the story of Joseph. Joseph was a young man, who -- he had older brothers, and he had a dad, Jacob -- and Joseph, he was dad's favorite; that usually doesn't go well with the rest of the guys. But he was. And Joseph had a way of maybe getting under your skin, and one day he came to his brothers and said, "Hey, I had a dream!" And they're like, "Oh,

you're just a dreamer. Why don't you do something worthwhile?" And he told them his dream, and he said, "My dream is that one day you guys will all bow to me." Well, that goes over really well with your older brothers. They were furious! It didn't even settle well with dad! He was, like, "What? Does that mean I will bow to you?" Says, "Son -- remember who you are! You're my son! I brought you into the world, I can take you out," that kinda thing. So, what happened is, this jealousy -- what's normal? Jealousy, envy, rage -- began to boil. One day Joseph is heading out to go see his brothers, and his brothers see him, and they conspire in their heart, said, "We gotta get rid of this guy. He's a troublemaker, he's a nuisance." And so, they devise this kind of idea -- one of them wanted to kill him, and they said, "No, we can't kill him." So they sell him into slavery. They sell him out. They kind of lie to each other, they lie to their dad. They go back and tell dad, "Dad, he's dead. Grieve, have a funeral. Sorry."

Joseph goes on, and he has some skills given to him by God. He's a great administrator, and he kind of grows up and gets some pretty significant employment and advancement, and then he runs into trouble with this young lady, and he gets lied about and he gets put in prison. If Joseph was your son, you would be losing your mind with the injustice of his life. If Joseph was your good friend, you'd be hiring a lawyer. You'd be, like, you know, "What on earth is happening? God, where are you?" You'd be furious! Joseph gets anointed by God and given the ability to interpret a dream, and so, Pharaoh brings him into his court, because Joseph can interpret dreams. He can not only tell you what the dream means -- he can tell you what the dream was. And so, because of that, he's promoted into Pharaoh's cabinet and becomes the chief of staff. Interprets the dream, and the dream is simply this, that -- "We're going to have seven years of great harvest to prepare for seven years of famine, and if we can prepare well, we can endure the famine." And so, Joseph is given the command of the entire nation, virtually, and he saves virtually everybody. That's where the text picks up today.

Genesis chapter 50. "When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs that we did to him?'" Now, they've met him. They've kind of sized things up. But the strange thing is, they never had that moment where they went to Joseph and said, "You know what -- we're sorry we sold you into slavery. Dumb on us!" They never did that. They never had that moment where they reconciled, where they asked for forgiveness. "So they sent word to Joseph, saying, 'Hey, your father left these instructions before he died'" -- lie. "'This is what you are to say to Joseph: 'I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.'" When their message came to him, Joseph wept." It doesn't tell us why he wept. You could extrapolate. Maybe it's that he wept because he knew they were lying and he couldn't figure out -- "Why on earth don't you guys ever trust me?" Maybe he wept because they wondered if he would forgive them, and he knew in his heart, "You guys really don't know me at all. I have nothing but love for you, and forgiveness." But he wept. The text goes on, "His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him." Ah. Wonder what that dream was about. "'We're your slaves,' they said. And then Joseph said to them, 'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?'" And here's the line, and this is what I want to unpack. "' You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done.'"

That doesn't mean that God takes lightly the injustice that happened to Joseph; that doesn't mean that God takes lightly the way he was treated. It doesn't mean that God takes lightly betrayal. It doesn't mean that God glosses over when a person is treated unfairly. What it does mean is that there are always two plans in this world. There is Satan's plan and there is God's plan. Every day that you wake up, there are two plans in your life. There is Satan's desire, what he wants to do in your life,

and there is God's desire, what He intends to do in your life. Every day when the United States wakes up, there are two plans. There is the plan that Satan wants to bring about. And there is the plan that God eventually will bring about. The question is -- do you trust Him? In the midst of the unfolding of God's plan, when you see evil, when it touches you -- when it manifests in front of you, and it seems like everywhere is just out of control -- what is the conviction that can enable you to know how to respond, especially when God's plan is unveiled? Satan does have a plan. What is it? Joseph summarized it, and simply, it's just in these words, these five words -- "You intended to harm me." Well, Satan's not listed there, so you say, "Pastor, how do you know that was Satan?" It's because Satan is the father of lies. Satan is the father of chaos and destruction. Satan is the one who stirs pride and jealousy in all of our hearts, and whenever you see that, whenever you see the manifestation of that, you know that that's Satan. When a person is filled with hatred, that is Satan. When a congregation is experiencing the splits or the strains, or our nation is experiencing it -- that doesn't come from the spirit of God. God doesn't breed chaos. He doesn't breed jealousy, He doesn't breed spite. Why? We know that. Because the scripture says, "The thief comes" -- and I understand in the context, the thief in that text is not Satan, but that spirit is a reflection of Satan, and what has Satan come to do? To steal, to kill, and to destroy. Whenever you see that, you know that's Satan's vision. That's what he wants to see happen. So, what happens when Satan works in today's marketplace? You go out there, what does he desire? He desires for all of us to feel hatred towards one another, and he's doing a marvelous job! People hate each other all over the place! There's suspicion and there's accusation and there's people calling each other names. You're a sheep or you're a racist, or you're a bigot or you're a homophobe, or you're whatever the case may be. And what happens is, the line starts to get drawn, and people start to get separated. He comes to divide. He comes to bring shame. And he comes to bring destruction.

I cannot tell you how many people have said recently, "I'm afraid to say anything." Why? Because Satan has created that kind of culture where we are afraid of each other, we're afraid what each other thinks. We're not given permission to think, we're not given permission to dialog. And so, Satan has risen up in our day, and he has brought us to this place as a country where we're afraid of each other. We've taken whole sects of society, tragically, the whole, entire police force, and we've somehow as a culture branded them as the purveyors of racial tension. Where does it come from? This is my opinion -- I think that comes from Satan. I think to take an entire group of people and to say, "You are evil!" -- to depersonalize any more than if you say, "All blacks think this way or all whites are this way." That's what Satan does! He wants to bring and fill us with hatred towards each other, and he wants to get us focused always on the wrong thing. He does. He wants to move people off-center.

Tony Dungy -- I have a lot of respect for him -- he's a formal NFL coach, and he -- he has a significant platform. And to my knowledge, I haven't seen -- otherwise, he just speaks with great wisdom, and at times, just so helpful. I wanted an interview of him recently, in the last couple of weeks, and he was being interviewed on some of the racial issues, and Tony told a story. There was somebody, a political person, very high up -- made a tweet, and it hurt Tony. In fact, it hurt him significantly. And he said, "You know, when I read the tweet it made me mad, it hurt me." And so he said, "You know, I have a million followers on my Twitter account," and he typed out his response. And then he paused for a moment, looking at the "SEND," thinking that a million people are going to read this, and it'll spread like wildfire, because that's the capacity of Tony Dungy, and when people read, I mean, they quote him, and he's a significant individual. He called a friend, it's another broadcaster on another station. And he said, "You know, this is what this individual said, and it hurt. And I wrote a response, and I'm wondering if I should send it." And so, the guy said, "Tell me. What'd you say." He read it. He asked Tony, he said, "Tony, I've got a question for you. Do you think your response will

point people towards Christ?" "Nope." Do you think your response will help solve the racial tensions in our culture? And do you think you'll have a greater platform to influence people towards Christ? Which, Tony, you and I both know is the only hope that this country has." Dungy, to his credit, looked at his tweet and said, "No." And he scrapped it. He wrote another one. Probably a lot of you have seen it. It's been seen by tens of millions. It was so powerful that Tony said that after he tweeted it, he got over 50 phone calls from athletes in the NFL, who said, "Tony, I believe in what you said. How do we change this?" And Tony said to those 50-plus athletes -- "Brothers, you are the church, and God has planted you in the NFL. And we have to be the leaders who bring Christ into that place." I thought -- how many people have had that decision on a daily basis? Do I add to the chaos, or do I point people to Christ?" Do I foster a mistrust, or do I help them humble themselves before God and love each other?

See, what Satan wants you to do is -- he wants you to think about protecting yourself. He wants you to think about you as a person, or maybe even your race, rather than, "How do I point people to Christ, which is their only hope?" Satan has a plan every day for your life. He does. He has a plan every day. And Joseph said to his brothers, "That plan that Satan has is to harm people. That's his soul purpose in life." Satan doesn't wake up -- if he has a morning -- and think to himself, "I wonder how I can be kind today." He's never had that thought from the point where he fell from Heaven down to Hell. He's never woken up in the morning -- if he has a morning -- and said to himself, "I wonder who I can move towards Christ." He's never thought, "I wonder who I can help. I wonder who I can serve." Never has thought that way! Every day, what's on his mind is stealing, destruction, and killing people. So when he sees the riots, he throws a party in Hell. When he sees the monuments coming down, he throws a party in Hell. Why? Because he loves destruction at any level! And Satan wants to sow seeds of discord and mistrust. I had probably what was a good friend, a man who at one time lived with us, who is now teaching his young son to mistrust every police officer, and that every police officer is out to get him. He's a seminary grad. He should know better. He knows the Bible, and he's poisoning his son. And he didn't like it when I said, "You're a voice from Hell into your son's heart. But that's the reality, because that's what Satan wants to do. "Brothers," Joseph looked at them and said, "You intended to harm me. You are children of Satan. You're acting just like him -- but God." See, every day Satan has a plan. But every day, God has a plan. And the text says, "Oh, yes. You intended to harm me. But God intended it. Oh yes, even the betrayal, and yes, even the jealousy -- God was working for good, to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives, so that -- guys, don't be afraid. Nope. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them, and he did what? He spoke kindly to them.

You see, God tells us what His plan is, and His plan is this -- it's given to us in II Timothy chapter one, verse seven. "I have not given you a spirit of timidity and fear. I don't want you running around scarred to death. I've given you what? A spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline." You see, the reality is, in God's plan, He always wants to display His power. Why? Because many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails. Now, if you believe this conviction, if you have just an ounce of faith in this verse to say, "I believe that," then you will navigate these coming days no matter what happens, with absolute great faith and confidence. But if you don't believe this, you're in trouble. Your fear will go up, your anxiety will go up, your rage will go up, and your hatred of people will go up. Why? Because, every day, Satan has a plan. And there's some days that his plan looks like it's gonna win. But -- God has a plan, the scripture says, that overrides Satan. And how does He do it? Number one, the text tells us that God wants to demonstrate His power. He did in Joseph's life. He preserved Joseph. He saved him from an evil woman. He gave him supernatural ability to interpret dreams. He gave him an off-the-charts ability to manage the

affairs of Pharaoh and an entire nation. That's God's power. And no matter what happens, no matter how much evil, God is always longing to demonstrate His power. He does!

A lot of you probably remember -- some of you who are younger, you'll have to recoil back with your parents, but there was a high school. It became kind of infamous in terms of -- or, famous -- it was Columbine High School. Kerri and I lived really close to that high school, and so, we had a front row seat. And one of my friends actually went there that night, the night when Dylan Klebold shot up all of those kids in that high school and killed so many people. It was horrible. And he said, "I walked up to the gate of the high school," and he said, "Mark, I could smell the stench of Hell." Where do we see God's power in that kind of a story? I don't know about you, but when a 17-year-old girl looks into the eyes of her killer, and he asks, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ?" and she says, "Yes," I think that's courageous. I think that's God's power. When John Tomlin, who was killed on that day -- young 17-year-old John -- earlier in the week, he had shared his faith with a young man by the name of Brandon. And John told Brandon, "Brandon, if you ever come to the point where you want peace and hope in your life, place your faith in Jesus Christ." Brandon didn't on that day, and John was killed at Columbine High School. But Brandon had the sense to make his way to a person of faith and said, "My friend John told me about peace with Christ. I have no peace with Christ. I'm scared to death." And on that day, Brandon trusted Christ. But the story doesn't stop there. Because even in the face of evil, God loves to demonstrate His power. Brandon went to John's funeral, and he took five friends with him -- five people that he didn't want to go to Heaven without, five people that he thought needed to experience the peace of Christ. And all five of those young men trusted Christ on that day.

You see, the reason why Joseph could look his brothers in the eye is to say, "Guys, I believe in something." Oh, Satan has a plan. He has a marvelous plan. It's powerful, yes, it's destructive. But God has a bigger plan, and His power overrides evil. It doesn't negate it sometimes, but He knows how to even use the jealousy and the betrayal of these brothers for the glory of God, and by the way, for their benefit. Recently I was talking with Reid Saunders, an evangelist in our community, attends our church, and he was telling me the story -- early in this year, 2020, there was a pastor in Pakistan who said, "Reid, I'd like to work with you." And Reid has been planning on thinking about doing some evangelistic work in Pakistan. I told him he was crazy. I've been to Pakistan, it's one of the roughest countries I've ever been to in my life. And this pastor said, "I could use some of your sermons. If you'll preach some sermons, we could broadcast them and reach thousands and thousands of Muslims." And at the time, Reid Saunders Association looked at it and said, "Well, thank you for the invitation, but we prefer to do live and in-person things." That was back in January of 2020. Then March 15th hit, and every airplane hit the ground, and no one was traveling. So, a phone call was made, and -- "Hey, Reid, now that you can't travel to Pakistan, would you like to utilize the internet and preach some gospel messages here, and I can broadcast it to all of Pakistan." Yeah, let's do that. The first message, 457 -- I believe was the number -- Muslims placed their faith in Christ. It is now -- he's preached other sermons. He's been seen by millions of people. Tens of thousands have placed their faith in Christ. See -- I thought being sequestered at home was a problem. I don't like it. I don't like anything about this thing. I don't like the business of being shut down, I prefer the Swedish model. I really can't stand masks. And then, all of a sudden, God says to me, "Hey, Mark! Come here, you bonehead! I need to show you something. I'm not limited by airplanes that can't travel." And when I began to hear the stories, when I experienced them there in Columbine when I heard them once again, I was reminded, if you have this conviction, it can keep you from losing your mind. God has a plan that overrides Satan's plan. And He will, He longs to. And that's why He said, "I haven't given you a spirit of fear and timidity; I've given you a spirit of power." God loves to demonstrate His power, and He also loves to display His love through you. What Joseph says -- it's

really amazing. So then, in verse 21 -- "'So then, don't be afraid, guys. Don't be afraid for a moment. I will provide for you and your children.'" And he reassured them, and he spoke kindly to them."

He spoke kindly to them? They sold him into slavery! And he spoke kindly to them? They hated him! And he spoke kindly to them? They lied about dad, they lied to dad, they lied about dad. And he spoke kindly to them? Yeah. That's why it's not normal. This is not normal. What's normal is, "You guys sold me into slavery. I'll let you live, but you're gonna be in a work camp the rest of your lives." What's normal is, "I'll take care of your kids, but brothers, I'm taking your heads off." "I'll take care of your wives. They had no part in selling me into slavery, but brothers, you're going to a work camp, and you're never going to see your children again. Just like I never saw my dad again." That's normal. He spoke kindly to them.

As we've made our way through this COVID experience, not everyone -- if you haven't noticed -- agrees. Not everyone agrees on whether or not to wear masks, not everyone agrees on whether or not social distancing, not everyone agrees. And then when we get to the race issue, not everyone agrees. I, like the Apostle Paul -- that's probably a cheap quote, but -- believe that sometimes you need to utilize the legal ramifications given to you, and -- a brother in our church represented a number of us, and we sued the governor. Why did I do that? I did that because I believe that the individual who's our governor was operating outside of the constitution. And I think somebody personally has to say, "Hey, you know what? I think we need to draw a line. I think we have a constitution, we actually ought to recognize it." Not everyone in our church liked me for that. I've heard some things. It's like, okay. I appreciate that. Glad you are honest about sharing that. When you get into the issue of race -- boy, it's a whole other issue, isn't it? I'm very displeased with monuments that are being torn down. I don't think the way you treat inequity is through lawlessness. And not everyone agrees. And so, they say things -- sometimes not very kind. In that moment, I have a choice, just like you have a choice. I can surround myself with people who believe the way I do, and sometimes I get down to just the horses and the dogs. Or I can choose to live an unnatural life. I can choose to move towards people who vehemently disagree with me. I can listen, and I can have conversation with them. And I can choose to speak kindly, and I can love them. And I believe with all my heart that if I want to live an unnatural life, a Joseph kind of life, a God-ordained kind of life -- the only way I can do that is if I believe, in the end, God will settle it all out. I don't have a corner on the truth. What I do have is a choice -- do I trust God enough to speak kindly to those who have hurt me, to those who have hurt you?

Will I trust God? Will I trust His plan? And I don't think trusting God in this moment today is gullible. I don't think you're being a sheep, I don't think you're being soft. I think sometimes the words like Tony Dungy, and I think sometimes to go to a person who rabidly disagrees with you is not somehow gullible. Or, to think somehow that, "God, you're going to straighten this all out" -- I don't think that's gullible at all. I don't think Joseph was gullible. I don't think the apostle Paul was gullible when he said, "I want you to make the most of every opportunity in these evil days." He said, "I want you to trust God." And trusting God, I believe, sometimes is holding on not to what you feel in the moment, but what you believe. My friends, Marshall and Susan Shelley -- they were told when they were younger that they were going to have a baby, and they were so excited about it until the doctor said, "Your baby's really not made for this earth. He's going to live maybe a couple of hours and then he's going to die." So they went home, and they thought about naming their baby -- they hadn't named it at that point -- and they came up with a name. Strange name, actually. Not strange, the name itself, its meaning, given the context. Tobia was his name. And I remember one time somebody asking Marshall, "Why on earth would you name your son Tobia when he was going

to live and he lived two minutes on this earth?" I'll never, ever forget Marshall's response. "I named my son Tobia because it is what I believe about God, not what I feel. And sometimes in life, always in life, if you're going to live the unnatural life, you live out of your convictions, not necessarily what you feel. Sometimes you name your son Tobia, which means 'God is good.'" "Really? You named your son 'God is good,' when he's going to live two minutes?" "Yes." You trust that God's going to work all of this stuff out? Yes. You have coins that you can pull out of your pocket, and you know what it says on those coins -- don't know how much longer, maybe it won't last very much longer, but today it says this -- the question is not so much "Is it on your coin?" rather, "Is it in your heart -- in God I trust"? I trust that Satan has a plan, but God's plan will always override it. God is so majestic, so powerful, so wise, He can take even the evil intentions of brothers and bring about the glorious will of God. If He can do that, Seattle's gonna be okay. The US is gonna be okay. Not necessarily because it has great leaders -- because I trust God. I trust Him so much that I will seek to live an unnatural life, love people who disagree with me, love people who brand me and label me, speak kindly to them. Why? Because what you intend for evil, God has the ability to bring about glorious good.

My friend, if you believe that, it'll keep you from losing your mind. Satan has a plan, but if I trust this text, God determines the outcome. And that's why Joseph said, "Come on in, brothers. I love you. God was preparing for this very day." Ah! Can you imagine how that's going to unfold for us?

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