

God is weaving a beautiful tapestry of a Peaceable Kingdom of God
Genesis 45:1-15

A History Is Intertwined

I have been living in Rhode Island for 1 year but I am still learning new things. If you are Rhode Islanders, I bet you know August 10th was Victory day, also known as Victory over Japan Day. I didn't know what Victory Day was about until last Sunday. Warren Cole told me that Victory Day celebrates the end of the second World War and Japan's surrender. Then, I realized how closely our histories are intertwined. While everyone knows about V-J Day, I think many of you may not know that August 15th is National Liberation Day of Korea from Japanese colonization. Yesterday was the 75th anniversary of National Liberation Day of Korea.

Since you have a Korean pastor, I don't think you'll mind having a short history lesson about Korea. Right? Korea is located in East Asia. South Korea is a relatively small country. It is about 99 times smaller than the United States. Although it is small, it has a 5,000 year-long history and rich cultural and religious heritages. However, its modern history is filled with many tragic stories of suffering, war and division.

The modern history of Korea and the history of the United States are closely linked. Some of you may think that the United States saved Korea from Japanese colonization and fought for Korea during the Korean War, and now protects Korea from North Korean communists, but the history is not that simple.

In 1882, the United States and Korea signed their first treaty that established mutual friendship and mutual assistance in case of attack by other nations. So, when Japan's ambition to colonize Korea grew, the king of Korea and people of Korea expected the support from their ally, the United States. But do you know what happened? In 1905, right before Japan took over Korea, Japan and the United States secretly signed the Taft-Katsura Agreement in which the United States concurred Japanese protectorate over Korea. It was a moment when a friend betrayed a friend at a desperate time. Koreans had to endure 35 years of brutal oppression by Japanese colonial government.

Of course, the course of history changed again and the United States and Japan entered into war and Imperial Japan signed surrender documents on August 15, 1945. The victory of the United States brought liberation to Korea. When the United States celebrated its victory day, Koreans celebrated its National Liberation Day.

However, the national tragedy of Korea did not end there. With the onset of the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union determined to divide Korea along the 38th parallel. No Koreans were involved in this decision of dividing Korea and as we all know, the tragic Korean War broke out in 1950. That war lasted for 3 years and nearly 5 million people died during the war. Though a ceasefire of the Korean War was issued in July 1953, the war is technically still not over. The traumatic experience of the Korean War and 75 years of division has created a deep wound in every Korean soul. Do you think reconciliation and reunification between the two Koreas is possible?

A Story of Dysfunctional Family

What we read today is a great story of forgiveness, reconciliation and a family reunited. But, this story goes back to Jacob and his dysfunctional family. As you know, Jacob married his cousins Leah and Rachel, who were sisters. But Jacob loved Rachel over Leah and he seemed to favor Rachel's two sons over the other sons, especially, Joseph. His favoritism created a

destructive division within the family and made brothers turn against one another. The Bible says, “when his brothers saw that their father loved Joseph more than all his brothers, they hated him.” (Gen. 37:4) So what did they do to Joseph? At first, they wanted to kill him but they changed their plan and sold him off as a slave. Can you imagine any family more broken and dysfunctional than Jacob’s?

The family is divided by hatred and anger and Joseph’s relationship with his brothers is completely shattered by unspeakable violence against him. Do you think their relationship is amendable? Maybe not.

How would you feel if you were Joseph? When you are thrown into a pit and sit down there while awaiting sale? How would you feel? Scared, afraid... perhaps angry at your brothers. When he was taken to Egypt, a complete foreign land, and sold as a servant, how would he feel? When he was locked in a foreign prison even though he did nothing wrong, how would he feel? If you were Joseph, could you forgive your brothers? Most people would be resentful and their heart filled with anger and desire for revenge.

This sad family story of Jacob could be the sad history of Korea. The two great superpowers divided Korea and made Koreans turn against their own brothers and sisters. The traumatic experience of the Korean War and 75 year-long division implanted fear, anger, resentment, and hatred in people’s hearts. South Koreans perceive North Korea as their brothers and sisters and at the same time, the primary enemy of South Korea. Isn’t it a tragedy to see one’s own siblings as your primary enemy? Can North and South Korea be reconciled and reunited again after what they have gone through?

God’s Great Story of Reconciliation

Can Joseph and his brothers be reconciled after what they have gone through? We all know the answer. In today’s reading, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. He could not control his emotion and burst into tears. He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. I believe his tears sprung from many different feelings and emotions but his crying marked a transformation. In previous chapters of Genesis, we can see the subtle signs of resentment in Joseph but with his tears, his resentment toward his brothers disappeared. Some say, “Joseph is eager to forgive and restore his family not just for his generation, but for a dysfunction that permeated the earlier generations of Jacob/Esau and Isaac/Ishmael.”¹

How could Joseph forgive his brothers who had done an unforgivable violation to him? It is Joseph’s recognition of God’s sovereignty. In other words, Joseph was able to recognize what God was doing even in the sorrowful and hurtful events he had undergone. And that recognition changed Joseph. Because Joseph was able to see what God is doing through his life, he let go of blame against his brothers and said, “So it was not you who sent me here, but God” (verse 8). This does not mean that God made his brothers commit a horrible sin against Joseph or that their action was o.k. While Joseph’s brothers wove evil, God rewove it for good. Joseph saw how God worked and what God was doing so he was able to forgive his brothers and embrace them again as his own kin.

God is weaving a tapestry of a Peaceable Kingdom of God

Max Lucado, a pastor and Christian writer, said, God, the Master Weaver, “stretches the yarn and intertwines the colors, the ragged [래-기뜨] twine with the velvet strings, the pains

¹ https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=4547

with the pleasures. Nothing escapes His reach. Every king, despot, weather pattern, and molecule are at His command. He passes the shuttle back and forth across the generations, and as He does, a design emerges. Satan weaves; God reweaves.”² God is weaving everything together for good. Our failures, our sorrows, our mistakes, our brokenness and even our resentment don’t matter. God reweaves them together for good.

What is God weaving today? What is God doing between North and South Korea and the United States? What is God doing in our divisive society? God is weaving a beautiful tapestry of the peaceable Kingdom of God. We may not be able to completely understand what God is doing but we can trust God and participate in God’s weaving work.

The historical threads between Korea and the United States are complexly woven together. Some threads are colorful and cheerful but there are also some dark threads there. But God weaves even the thread of sorrow, war and division with God’s skillful hands, and God is creating a beautiful tapestry of peace, reconciliation, and love.

As a people of God, I invite you to pray for peace and the peaceful reunification of Korea. As Joseph embraced his own brothers after many years of separation, pray for an end to the 75 year-long division and for peace on the Korean Peninsula, so brothers and sisters can embrace one another with joyful tears! Be bright and warm threads rather than dark ones in this tapestry of life.

Also, pray for peace in our divisive society. We, Christians, believe everyone is created in God’s image and God created the world. It means we are all family. Pray for an end of ugly family conflicts and division in our society. Pray for racial justice and reconciliation in this nation.

Even though nothing seems to have changed, don’t be disappointed. God is weaving. Our God is weaving a wonderful tapestry of forgiveness, reconciliation, peace and love. God invites us to do this joyful work together. What do you say?

² <https://www.faithgateway.com/what-was-meant-for-evil-god-uses-for-good/#.XzIfKi2z1m8>