

Between Apathy and Overreach: June 21, 2026

Genesis 45:1-15, Matthew 13:24-30

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The family story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob occupies the rest of Genesis. Mixed history of highs and lows. Walk with me through these 38 chapters with thumbs up - faithfulness. Thumbs down - betrayal, fear, and failure.

High God calls Abraham and promises land, descendants, and blessing for all nations (Gen 12).

Low Abraham fears for his safety and deceives others about Sarah, putting the promise at risk.

High God establishes his covenant with Abraham and guarantees the future of the promise (Genesis 15, 17).

Low Abraham and Sarah attempt to secure God's promise through Hagar, creating conflict and suffering (Genesis 16).

High Isaac, the promised son, is born despite every obstacle (Genesis 21).

Low God commands Abraham to offer Isaac, and the promised future appears endangered (Genesis 22).

High God provides a substitute and reaffirms the covenant (Genesis 22).

Low Jacob deceives Esau and fractures the family (Genesis 25-27).

High God appears to Jacob and renews the covenant promises (Genesis 28).

Low Jacob spends years under Laban's manipulation and exploitation (Genesis 29-31).

High God preserves Jacob and brings him safely home (Genesis 31-33).

Low The story of Dinah and Shechem reveals violence and moral chaos within the covenant family (Genesis 34).

High God calls Jacob back to Bethel and renews his identity as Israel (Genesis 35).

Low Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery (Genesis 37).

Low Judah's failures further expose the brokenness of the family (Genesis 38).

High God remains with Joseph through slavery and imprisonment (Genesis 39-40).

High Joseph rises to leadership in Egypt and prepares the nation for famine (Genesis 41).

Low Famine threatens the survival of Jacob's family and the covenant line (Genesis 42-43).

High Joseph preserves the family and provides what they need to survive (Genesis 44-47).

High Reconciliation begins as Joseph forgives his brothers (Genesis 45).

Low The family settles in Egypt as foreigners, foreshadowing future bondage (Genesis 46-50).

Final High Joseph interprets the entire story: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good." (Genesis 50:20)

By the end of Genesis we learn something remarkable: God's covenant does not depend on human perfection. It survives deception, betrayal, violence, famine, exile, and failure because God remains faithful to his promise.

But this raises an important question. If God works good out of evil, should Christians simply accept evil? Should we remain silent in the face of injustice?

Spoiler alert - the answer is no.

When Joseph says, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good," he does not deny the evil. His brothers' actions remain evil. God's redemption does not erase their responsibility. God's redemption is greater than evil, but it is never a denial of evil.

Faithful Trust says "God can bring good from this tragedy, so I will continue to act faithfully and help where I can." Unfaithful Apathy says "God can bring good from this tragedy, so it doesn't matter what I do." Scripture consistently rejects the second response.

The Bible commands us to:

- seek justice,
- care for the vulnerable,
- repent of sin,
- love our neighbours,
- protect the oppressed.

Trust in God's providence is meant to sustain action, not replace it.

Yet another danger can develop. If we take evil seriously, must we take responsibility for fixing all of it? Many Christians swing between two extremes:

Extreme One Trying to carry the whole world on their shoulders. Eventually this leads to exhaustion and despair.

Extreme Two Doing nothing because the problems are too large. Eventually this leads to apathy.

The challenge is finding a faithful middle path. I'll never forget how this was described by Rt. Rev. Clark MacDonald. He was elected Moderator of the United Church at the General Council in 1982. Known for his passionate work for justice in the world he explained a Christian's responsibility this way: "Contribute in two areas where you can genuinely help, and know enough about the rest not to become part of the problem."

Accept your limits. Take responsibility for a few concrete things. Remain informed enough about the rest that you do not contribute to the harm through neglect or ignorance.

Jesus addresses this tension in the parable of the weeds. The servants discover weeds growing among the wheat.

Notice what happens:

- They correctly identify a problem.
- They correctly identify that an enemy caused it.
- They are eager to act immediately.

But the master restrains them. Not because the weeds are acceptable. Not because evil should be ignored. But because their solution would damage the wheat.

The lesson is not: "Ignore the weeds." The lesson is: "You are not the final judge, and your attempt to purify the field may do more harm than good."

The weeds will be dealt with. But not by the servants. Not yet. Not in the way they imagine.

Jesus calls us to a threefold posture.

1. Recognize Evil Realistically

The weeds are real. Jesus never minimizes evil. Christians should be among the first to recognize injustice, suffering, and oppression.

2. Act Within Your Calling

The servants still have work to do. They cultivate the wheat. They serve the master of the field. They do not assume responsibility for the entire harvest.

Faithfulness means asking: What has God actually entrusted to me?

3. Trust God With What Exceeds Your Responsibility

The harvest will come. Judgment is not abandoned. It is deferred to the proper time and the proper judge. God remains responsible for what belongs to God.

We live surrounded by weeds. People are denied justice, dignity, protection, and the opportunity to flourish. Recognize injustice and oppression:

- ARCH program funding cut as of Friday (June 26). 26 complex needs people will lose supports for stable housing.
- AISH to ADAP - implementing a program that requires severely handicapped, who are on the program because they cannot work. Reduction of support already well below the poverty line.
- Southern Baptist Convention denied women's call to lead and preach. Michelle Obama femininity denied by someone claiming devotion to Jesus. Women encouraged to give up vote to uphold Christian values.
- Attack on immigrants while instituting citizenship on provincial ID
- Strain and deflection of issues for public education and public healthcare.
- Major resource and infrastructure decisions being made without honouring the treaty rights of Indigenous brothers and sisters.
- **Women's shelters—primarily in rural communities—cut funding resulting in reduced services and staffing.**

Relentless. No single person can solve all of it. The question is not: "How do I fix everything?"

But: "Which one or two of these issues has God placed close enough to me that I can help, while staying informed enough about the others not to contribute to them?"

Joseph could not save the entire world. He could not eliminate every injustice in Egypt. He could not undo every evil committed against him. But he remained faithful where God placed him. And through that faithfulness God preserved many lives.

The servants in Jesus' parable are not asked to cleanse the entire field. They are asked to serve faithfully within it. The same is true for us. Apathy says: "There are weeds, but I don't care." Overreach says: "There are weeds, and I must remove every one of them myself."

Jesus says: "There are weeds. Tend the wheat faithfully. Oppose evil where you are called to do so. Leave the final sorting to God."

Turn to neighbour - what is one area you can work faithfully?

Lastly, Let us trust God with what exceeds our responsibility. God's redemption is greater than the evil we face.

Genesis ends not with human success but with divine faithfulness. Abraham stumbled. Jacob deceived. Joseph's brothers betrayed him. Again and again the covenant family failed. Yet God's purposes endured. Not because evil did not matter, but because God's grace proved stronger. And to trust that the God who remained faithful through every chapter of Genesis is still faithful now.

The same promise sustains us today. We are not called to save the world. That role has already been filled. We are called to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ in the portion of the field entrusted to our care. We recognize evil honestly. We oppose injustice where we can. We nurture what is good. We refuse both despair and apathy.

And we remember that the field, our families, our community, our country, our world ultimately belong to God. Joseph looked back over a lifetime marked by betrayal, suffering, and loss and declared, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."

That is not permission to ignore evil. It is permission to hope.