#1. DIE WELL

An ancient Roman emperor once said that the greatest difference between Christians and pagans is that "Christians die well." He should have known, because he put many of them to death. Sometimes when a faithful Christian dies, people in the church might say something like "He died well." What do people mean when they say that? What do you want people to say about you when you die?

#2. BLESSINGS FOR YOU AND YOU AND YOU AND YOU...

Read Genesis 49. What insights can we discover?

INSIGHT 1: (Verses 3-4) Reuben, Jacob's firstborn with Leah, lost his privileges for sleeping with a concubine (Genesis 35:22-23). Although Jacob initially remained silent about it, he now recounts Reuben's actions, highlighting that all actions and words will be accounted for by God. Consider that Ruben is described as being "unstable as water." What does this say about accountability?

INSIGHT 2: (Verses 5-7) Simeon and Levi, known for their violent actions (Genesis 34), murdered the Hivites after their sister Dinah's rape. Jacob predicts their alliance will only bring destruction, resulting in his curse of scattering them among their brothers.

INSIGHT 3: (Verses 8-12) Judah, who showed maturity during the family's reunion with Joseph, is promised blessings. Jacob's prophecy hints at the future Davidic kingdom and Jesus, indicating that not only Judah's brothers will honor him but also that Gentiles will be included in God's kingdom.

INSIGHT 4: (Verse 13) Zebulun, Leah's sixth son, is blessed with prosperity in maritime trading. His name suggests "honor" or "dwelling," and Jacob's words may reflect Zebulun's survival and future success in trade.

INSIGHT 5: (Verses 14-15) Issachar was born after Leah's negotiations for Jacob's company (Genesis 30:16-18). Despite Jacob's seemingly harsh words, Issachar's descendants were known for their strength and insightful leadership, as evidenced in battles and military ranks throughout scripture.

INSIGHT 6: (Verses 16-18) Dan, born to Bilhah, is marked as a future judge but is compared to a serpent, invoking negative connotations tied to deception from Genesis 3. This foreshadows the dual nature of his legacy.

INSIGHT 7: (Verse 19) Gad faces hardship but will ultimately triumph. His struggles cultivate him and his descendants into fierce warriors, as evidenced by their bravery during David's time (1 Chronicles 12:8).

INSIGHT 8: (Verse 20) Asher, another son of Zilpah, is destined for prosperity through rich food production and will serve as chefs in charge of royal kitchens, highlighting a life of luxury compared to his warrior brother Gad.

INSIGHT 9: (Verse 21) Naphtali is likened to a swift deer and is noted for his eloquence. This suggests potential future artistry in poetry, writing, or music, implying a legacy of cultural contribution.

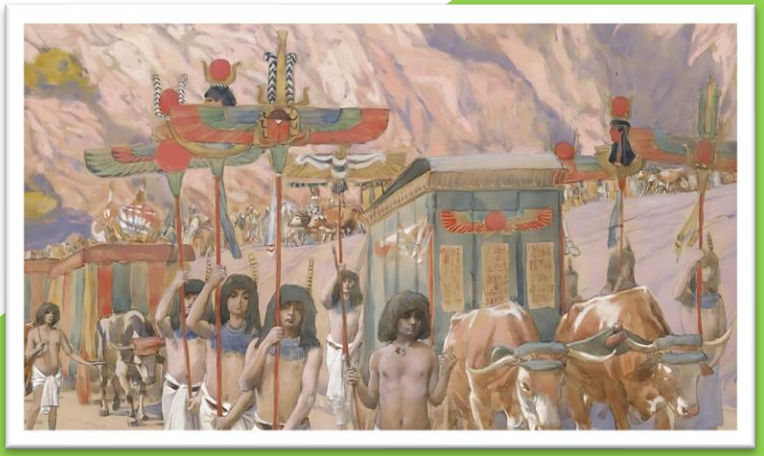
INSIGHT 10: Jacob's favoritism for Joseph is clearly expressed in his blessings (verses 22-26), indicating Joseph's significant role within the family and future story.

INSIGHT 11: Benjamin's character is described as fierce, with progeny expected to be adept in battle. Historical figures from Benjamin, like Ehud and Saul, showcase this warrior nature, highlighting their impact in battles throughout biblical narratives.

#3. Read Genesis 50. *"Mamre"*—Joseph had come back home. This is where his family had been located when he was sold as a slave. He probably passed by this place when the slave traders were taking him to Egypt. Though we may forgive others the sins they commit against us, our memories of past hurts are long and don't easily fade. Why did Joseph weep when the message from his brothers came to him? Why did the brothers appeal to their father's request to Joseph and not to what they themselves wanted?

#4. Read Hebrews 11:10 & 22. What does Joseph tell us about his faith by the instructions he gave his brothers when he was about to die?

#5. Guilt dies hard. Why dare we never let our guilt over past sins dominate our thinking?



SESSION 19 Answer Key:

Intro notes:
Last week we heard Jacob blessing Joseph and adopting his two sons as heirs. These boys, born of an Egyptian mother, gain full status in the family of God—people through whom God will bless all the world. Whether it was intentional or accidental, Jacob's elevating of Ephraim over Mannasseh, continues the strange way in which God brings His kingdom into the world. And all of it shows that He can then also, adopt each of us to be His own through Holy Baptism.

Question 1:
Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. 161 – 180 AD.

What do people mean when they say a Christian "died well." Well, some probably simply mean that he lived a long, full life. In that sense this man certainly died well–he was almost 96. More often, however, we probably mean that the person died with no unfinished business. His life was in order, relationships with family and friends were all solid, and any forgiveness that needed to happen had been taken care of. In that sense, too, this man died well.

But the most important thing *I* mean when I say about someone, "He died well" is that the person is ready to meet God, that he or she knew the Savior personally, and will be there to meet me when my time comes. In today's Scripture text I find two biblical examples of dying well–one even better than the other. I think we can learn from them both.

In Hebrews 11, "dying well" is presented as a consequence of living a life of faith. It's not about a painless or easy death, but rather a death characterized by faith in God's promises and a focus on the eternal reward, even amidst earthly hardships. The chapter highlights examples of individuals who, despite not fully receiving the promised blessings in their lifetime, lived and died with unwavering faith.

Isn't it amazing that Jacob simply knew that God would bring Israel back.

Queston 2:

Read Genesis 49. What insights can we discover?

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INSIGHT 2: (Verses 5-7) Simeon and Levi, known for their violent actions (Genesis 34), murdered the Hivites after their sister Dinah's rape. Jacob predicts their alliance will only bring destruction, resulting in his curse of scattering them among their brothers. Simeon will be absorbed by Judah. Levi will be come the priesthood and have cities scattered through out Israel. What does this say about how God chooses his servants? Levi was the least likely choice. But God makes the choice. We don't. Could be a good argument in the discussion on women pastors. Just because it might seem okay to us. What does God's word say about who should serve as pastors?

INSIGHT 3: (Verses 8-12) Judah, who showed maturity during the family's reunion with Joseph, is promised blessings. Jacob's prophecy hints at the future Davidic kingdom and Jesus, indicating that not only Judah's brothers will honor him but also that Gentiles will be included in God's kingdom. You can mention the controversy over verse 10 "until tribute comes to Him" or "until he comes to Shiloh" or "until Shiloh comes." Many ancient Jewish sources just say "Messiah comes." Judah gets the special portion of the promise that was given to Adam and Eve, passed through Seth to Noah and from Noah to Abraham and from Abraham to Jacob. See ESV textual note. See issues with Genesis 4:1 also.

INSIGHT 4: (Verse 13) Zebulun, Leah's sixth son, is blessed with prosperity in maritime trading. His name suggests “honor” or “dwelling,” and Jacob’s words may reflect Zebulun's survival and future success in trade.

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Question 3:

Joseph had tried to persuade his brothers that his intention was to take care of them and help them. He was reliving the time when Judah offered his heartfelt request that Joseph spare Benjamin. They were his brothers. He loved them. Perhaps they had gotten their father to make this request before he died. In any case, they were sure that Joseph loved their father, Jacob, but they were still not sure that he loved them.

Question 4

He looked ahead in faith and clung to God’s promise that his people would receive the land of Canaan. He was content not to be buried in Canaan right away as Jacob had been. He would wait for God to fulfill his promise. Even in death Joseph served as a pillar of faith, an example to his people of what they could look forward to. During the next centuries, the people of Israel would look at Joseph’s coffin and use it to remember what God would someday do for them. In Joseph’s story, Romans 8:28 comes to life. For every follower of Jesus Christ, we can rest in the truth that every trial, hardship, and difficulty we face in this life, however unjust, can ultimately be leveraged by God to accomplish great good in our lives and in the advancement of God’s kingdom on earth. In some instances, those trials serve as a road map to God’s destiny for our lives. He held on by faith to the covenant promise God had made to his forefathers that a nation would be formed from their bloodline who would eventually return to their own land, and that inspite of being blessed in Egypt, their final destination was the Promised Land. The book of Genesis ends on a positive note, a hopeful anticipation that God would lead His people to their true home… “city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” (Hebrews 11:10)

Question 5

We can perhaps understand why Joseph’s brothers were afraid of Joseph after Jacob died. After all, Joseph was merely human, and he could hold a grudge. God, however, is perfect. He has forgiven us through Jesus and to doubt his love for us is to challenge his faithfulness and also to challenge the complete nature of Jesus’ sacrifice for us.