

New Life Episcopal Church
Uniontown, Ohio



Joseph Sold into Egypt, Gustave Dore

A Sermon for the 11th Sunday after Pentecost
August 9, 2026

Rev Barbara Bond

[Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost – The Episcopal Church](#)

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28; 45:1-15

We Can Afford to be Generous

One of my favorite movies, named *Impromptu*, tells the story of Frederick Chopin, the famous composer, and George Sand, the famous writer. Their relationship gets off to a rocky start because of the interference of a friend, a countess, who tries to thwart the affair through lying and scheming. But love triumphs in the end, and Chopin and Madam Sand forgive the conniving countess and give her a wonderful gift. Madam Sand comments graciously, "We are in love. We can afford to be generous." We can afford to be generous.

In our first reading today, we heard the first part of the story of Joseph. I am speaking today about the *whole* story of Joseph, somewhat more than you heard. This is the climax of our ancestor stories in the book of Genesis. Three generations of Jewish family history have told us of God's promise and how these folks struggled with their complex lives – Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekkah, Jacob and his complex family.

Today, our story moves into the fourth generation: Jacob's 11th son, Joseph, had a serious case of sibling rivalry with his ten brothers, who sold him into slavery in Egypt. Joseph has several adventures and ultimately rises to power in the Egyptian government. Joseph manages the resources of Egypt, and when famine hits the land, he has lots of food available for the hungry. The hungry include his own family, who come to Egypt seeking food and don't recognize their long-lost brother. Joseph immediately recognizes his brothers, however, and in a most poignant scene, he tells them who he is and that he forgives them for their earlier treachery. Joseph can afford to be generous. He is rich, he is powerful, and he has his brothers completely in his control.

But this is a teaching moment, not a display of power. Joseph says to his brothers, "Your action was malicious, but God used it for good. You sent me to Egypt to be a slave; but because I came to Egypt, God has worked in my life and now I am able to save you. You meant it for ill, but God used it for good."

Joseph is a man of faith, and he has needed a lot of faith given the misadventures he has been through. He trusted that God would use his life to do God's work. Joseph embodied the love of God. Through God's love, he could afford to be generous.

Likewise we, who are supported by the love of God, can afford to be generous. God's love is alive in our lives, and our cup runneth over with love. Let's give that love to others.

Is there someone in your life who is unforgivable? Think about it. This is a teaching moment, so it is good to have someone specific in mind, preferably a real rat. I'll give you a few moments to conjure up that memory. (*Silence*)

Perhaps a brother or sister cheated you out of something long ago. Perhaps a friend spread some gossip about you. Perhaps you were wrongly accused of something. Maybe your unforgivable person is just a Class A jerk. Maybe that person is you yourself.

Now, envision this person standing before you, like Joseph's brothers stood before him. Joseph's enslavement happened a long time ago, and his life has worked out OK. How about yours? I'll bet you have moved on and have enjoyed many blessings. Now do yourself a favor: tell that person that you forgive them. Go ahead: tell them, right now. Smile, and let it go. You are surrounded by the love of God – look around you – it is everywhere, especially in this church community. You have love. You can afford to be generous.

AMEN