



**breadfortheworld**  
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

***Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time: August 14, 2011***  
***Rev. Donald DiXon Williams***

RCL: Genesis 45:1-15; Psalm 133; Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32; Matthew 15:(10-20) 21-28  
LM: Isaiah 56:1, 6-7; Psalm 67:2-3, 5,6,8; Romans 11:13-15, 29-32; Matthew 15:21-28

There is famine in the land. No matter how important you are or what position you hold in life, if you can't get food, eventually you will die. Given this pressing reality, the patriarch Jacob, hearing that there is grain in Egypt, unceremoniously tells his sons to get off their collective you-know-whats and go to Egypt to buy grain. When they arrive, Joseph immediately recognizes his brothers, but they do not recognize him. Time has a way of bringing about changes, and Joseph is no exception. When he left home, he was a wisecracking 17-year-old slave. Now he is a mature governor, full of wisdom. Only the king had more power. Isn't it wonderful to see how God has a way of making powerful those who are powerless? Just ask Nelson Mandela.

The passage from Genesis finds Joseph disclosing who he is but more importantly, also expressing God's purpose in his suffering. Can you imagine what must be going on in his brothers' minds when they realize that the most powerful man in Egypt is actually the brother they sold into slavery? They are speechless to the point that Joseph has to tell them a second time who he is. He explains that God knew all along that there would be a famine in the land and merely used this situation as a vehicle to send him ahead to save their and others' lives.

In 1999 our plane touched down in Ghana in West Africa, and within hours Reverend Michael Thurman, my dear friend and pastor of the historic Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, and I were in a Sunday worship service at Calvary Methodist Church. Dexter Avenue and Calvary Methodist Church are sister churches, and Michael was guest preacher that Sunday. In the brief remarks I gave, I simply stressed the connection I felt as an African American with my brothers and sisters in the homeland and that although we'd been disconnected for hundreds of years, we are uniting again.

After the service two sisters, Mrs. Emma Kufi and Judge Helena Inkumsah-Abban, greeted us. Emma came with tears in her eyes and expressed her pleasure at having us return home. She said to us, "Your forefathers left these shores as slaves but have come back through you. You have not only survived in America but thrived in America, and now you are in a better position to help us." As she spoke, I reflected on this passage in Genesis. I could see Joseph and his brothers once again uniting with kisses and tears after a long and dreadful separation.



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Take a moment right now and reread Psalm 133, savoring its rich images. It speaks volumes, my friends, about God's ultimate purpose.

### ***Children's Time***

***Written by Rev. Donald Dixon Williams and Larry Hollar***

[DDW] If you can arrange it in advance, invite children to bring in childhood pictures of their parents; put them on a board and have them guess whose parents they are. The point is to show how people change over the years, sometimes so much they're hard to recognize.

[LH] If you can't prepare in that way, remind the children about family reunions, or times when they've gone to see, or had visits from, family or friends they hadn't seen for a long time. Ask how they felt at those times, and share your own feelings about seeing people again after a long absence. Point out that people change over time and that sometimes it's important to put away old hurts, as Joseph did. What his brothers did to Joseph was terrible, but Joseph was later able to see that God took what had happened and made something good out of it, which allowed Joseph to greet his brothers and welcome them back.

### ***Musical Suggestions***

Unity – AAH 338

I Don't Feel No Ways Tired – AAH 414

He Brought Me out – AAH 509

We Shall Overcome – AAH 542

Thuma Mina – AAH 564

Bind Us Together – WOV 748

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