Date: July 5, 2026
Title: Freedom, Work, and Wisdom: God's Design for Human Flourishing.
Passage: Genesis 47: 13-26

Summary:
I. God has established governments for the good of the people. (vv. 13-15)
II. God created us to work and be responsible stewards of His creation (vv. 16-23)
III. Scripture assumes the goodness of private property. (vv. 17-26)
IV. Governments exists to serve human flourishing, not human enslavement (vv. 24-26)
Key Truths:

- Freedom flourishes where people are free to work, own property, exercise personal responsibility, and where government fulfills its God-given role without becoming all-encompassing.
- God created governments because of human sin. God appointed governments to punish evil, to uphold justice, to restrain evil and to protect the lives of its citizens, because every person bears God's image.
- God created three institutions for human flourishing: the family to nurture life; the church to proclaim truth and make disciples; and the government to preserve justice and restrain evil.
- Everything you possess has been entrusted to you by God.
- Good government doesn't exist to maximize dependence or maximize revenue; it exists to promote justice, preserve order, and encourage human flourishing
- The government is God's servant not God's substitute. The government can restrain evil but cannot regenerate hearts. The government can distribute resources but cannot create virtue. The government can write laws but cannot produce love. ONLY CHRIST CAN DO THAT! ONLY CHRIST IS THE TRUE SAVIOR!

Application:

- Pray for those who God has placed in authority over us.
- Remember that human's greatest enemy is sin.
- Do not confuse freedom that matters the most: freedom from the bondage of sin.
- Be faithful citizens of God's kingdom.

Possible Discussion Questions:

- What point(s) in the sermon did the Lord most impress upon you?
- What's a takeaway from the sermon you can apply to your life?
- What next steps will you take in response to the truths you have heard or seen?

Introduction

God's design of economics and human flourishing

- We evaluate philosophies through the lens of Scripture. (Not the other way around where we view Scripture through lens of politics)
    - Best question: What does the Bible say about a particular topic?
        - The Bible is the standard to evaluate all things.

Looking back to America's founding fathers, the nation was grounded in many principles that were from the Bible.

- "The purpose of the government is to protect every person's property. A government is just only if it impartially protects what belongs to each person." (James Madison)
- "Property must be secured, or liberty cannot exist." (John Adams)
- "A wise and frugal Government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement." (Thomas Jefferson)

Key Point:
Freedom flourishes where people are free to work, own property, exercise personal responsibility, and where the government fulfills its God-given role without becoming all-encompassing.

- Contrast: "The theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property." (Karl Marx)
    - Karl Marx did not believe in God. He viewed society as divided between the predator and prey, which he further translated into classes of the oppressor and oppressed.

How does this connect to Genesis?

- Today's passage is Genesis 47, which outlines Biblical principles with regards to economics.

Passage:
Genesis 47:13-26

EXPOSITION
I. God has established governments for the good of the people (vv. 13-15)
Genesis 47:13-15
Now there was no food in all the land, for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished by reason of the famine. And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, in exchange for

the grain that they bought. And Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. And when the money was all spent in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, “Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? For our money is gone.”

Question: Why did God place Joseph in charge of all of Egypt?

Genesis 41:57

- says that "all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain."
- Why?
    - God instituted government as a means to show us common grace so that through this He shows His compassion and kindness and ultimately points back to God's goodness.

Romans 13:1-7
Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

- So why did God create governments?
    - Because of human sin, God appointed governments to punish evil, to uphold justice, to restrain evil and to protect the lives of its citizens, because every person bears God's image.
        - America is a uniquely created country that had no precedent. It was not based on Greek or Roman's systems.
- "If men were angels, no government would be necessary." (James Madison)
    - We need governments because we are sinners but also made in God's image.

God created three institutions for human flourishing: the family to nurture life;
the church to proclaim truth and make disciples; and the government to preserve justice and restrain evil.

- When the government becomes the church, it becomes an idol. (ex: North Korea)
- When the government tries to be the family, it undermines it.

Genesis 47 is an example of where the government acted in an extraordinary time to allow life to be protected and administered justice to the people.

II. God created us to work and be responsible stewards of His creation (vv. 16-23)
Genesis 47:16-23
And Joseph answered, “Give your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your livestock, if your money is gone.” So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the herds, and the donkeys. He supplied them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year. And when that year was ended, they came to him the following year and said to him, “We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent. The herds of livestock are my lord's. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our land. Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we with our land will be servants to Pharaoh. And give us seed that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate.”
So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for all the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe on them. The land became Pharaoh's. As for the people, he made servants of them from one end of Egypt to the other. Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh and lived on the allowance that Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their land.
Then Joseph said to the people, “Behold, I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh. Now here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land.

- Observation: Joseph did not give grain out for free.

  Interpretation: God designed us to be producers not just consumers.

  - See v.23: "Now here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land."
    - Joseph gives the means for people to provide for themselves.
- God created us to work. Work was not a result of the Fall. God called Adam to tend and work the garden.
  - When you are idle, it is not a good thing. God designed us to be producers.

Bible speaks harshly of idleness:
2 Thess. 3:10
"For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat."
Ephesians 4:28

"Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need."

- There are times where people need assistance. But the norm and God's design is for people to work.
- See Old Testament examples: farmers were to leave the edges of the fields ungleaned so the poor could gather for themselves.
    - See book of Esther who gleaned the fields to sustain themselves.
- People flourish when they work as that is how God designed each person.
- The church should help people in need.
    - But our goal should always be restoration, not dependency.

III. Scripture assumes the goodness of private property (vv. 17-26)

Genesis 47:17-26

So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the herds, and the donkeys. He supplied them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year. And when that year was ended, they came to him the following year and said to him, “We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent. The herds of livestock are my lord's. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our land. Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we with our land will be servants to Pharaoh. And give us seed that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate.”

So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for all the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe on them. The land became Pharaoh's. As for the people, he made servants of them from one end of Egypt to the other. Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh and lived on the allowance that Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their land.

Then Joseph said to the people, “Behold, I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh. Now here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land. And at the harvests you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and as food for yourselves and your households, and as food for your little ones.” And they said, “You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be servants to Pharaoh.” So Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt, and it stands to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; the land of the priests alone did not become Pharaoh's.

- The text repeatedly speaks about their money, their land, their fields.
- The very language assumes that these things belonged to individuals before they were voluntarily exchanged.
    - That assumption runs throughout the Bible.

We are called to protect our own property and not steal other people's properties.

- "Do not steal" = assumes private property.
    - The Bible does not allow for people to take what does not belong to them.
- Everything one possesses has been entrusted to you by God.

The issue isn't whether you own a little or a lot.

- The issue is whether you recognize that everything you possess-your house, your retirement account, your business, your car, your farm, your gifts, even your children-has been entrusted to you by God.
    - Scripture doesn't celebrate ownership for ownership's sake. It celebrates faithful stewardship.

IV. Governments exists to serve human flourishing, not human enslavement (vv. 24-26)

Genesis 47:24-26

And at the harvests you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and as food for yourselves and your households, and as food for your little ones." And they said, "You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be servants to Pharaoh." So Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt, and it stands to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; the land of the priests alone did not become Pharaoh's.

- Joseph doesn't leave the people dependent
    - The government is a catalyst for flourishing rather than a substitute for responsibility
- The Government collects taxes but leaves room for flourishing
    - Good government doesn't exist to maximize dependence or maximize revenue; it exists to promote justice, preserve order, and encourage human flourishing
- The people recognize that a good government preserved their lives.
    - Here: Egyptians give thanks to the government that sustained their lives.
- The Bible never presents any government as man's savior.

The government is God's servant not God's substitute.

- The government can restrain evil but cannot regenerate hearts.
- The government can distribute resources but cannot create virtue.
- The government can write laws but cannot produce love.
- ONLY CHRIST CAN DO THAT! ONLY CHRIST IS THE TRUE SAVIOR!

- When the government exceeds God's design, it begins to enslave.

    - Governments become dangerous whenever they forget that they exist to serve justice and protect the people and instead to begin accumulating power for themselves.

Application:
Pray for those who God has placed in authority over us.
Do not confuse freedom that matters the most: freedom from the bondage of sin.
Remember that man's greatest enemy is sin.

- It is not poverty or greed or material things.
- Joseph points us to a greater Savior.
    - Joseph gave seed but Jesus is the promised seed of God who gives new life that latest for eternity.
    - Joseph was head of an earthly kingdom but Jesus is building an everlasting kingdom that can never be shaken.

Be faithful citizens of God's kingdom.

John 8:36
So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.