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*I'm having a bad day.* Have you ever muttered that phrase to yourself or someone else? Maybe when you failed a test at school. You found someone posting unkind things about you on Facebook. The item you wanted on sale at the store was out of stock. You overslept and missed an important meeting. You forgot to show up for a commitment you had agreed to attend.

We all have them—bad days. But did you ever think that a bad day could be blessing, could be an opportunity for new growth? A chance for something good?

That failed test at school may prompt you to study harder. A Facebook post might create the opportunity for a face-to-face conversation to clear up a misunderstanding. Missing an item at the store may prevent the purchase of more stuff you don't need. Missing an event on your schedule may encourage you to get organized and pay closer attention to what you have planned.

You get the idea...bad days may lead to new opportunities, which is something Joseph

discovered after many years of one bad day after another. You remember how the story begins? His father gave him a beautiful coat made of many colors and Joseph told his brothers about his dream of them bowing down to him, and in a fit of jealous rage, the brothers roughed him up and sold him to a traveling caravan. Joseph's bad day continued as he found himself a servant in Egypt, but he turned the bad experience into an opportunity for something good. Potiphar, the Pharaoh's chief officer, noticed his excellent work and promoted him, but Potiphar's wife also noticed Joseph's good looks. She tried to seduce Joseph, and when he ran away to prevent anything from happening, she accused Joseph of inappropriate behavior, which landed him in jail.

Once again, Joseph took a bad experience and turned it into an opportunity for good. He interpreted the dreams of other prisoners, and when one of them was released just as Joseph predicted, the released prisoner later told the Pharaoh about Joseph's abilities. When the Pharaoh

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had a strange dream, Joseph interpreted the dream about a coming famine and encouraged the Pharaoh to save up grain. Since the Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph's insights, once again Joseph went from a bad day to a new opportunity for good as he became the one in charge of storing grain to prepare for the famine.

Joseph's life had so many twists and turns, one bad day after another, but somehow God used the events as opportunities for good. When his brothers later met Joseph and feared for their lives that Joseph would take revenge, Joseph replied, "You planned something bad for me, but God produced something good from it" (Genesis 50:20).

As one writer summed up Joseph's life, "Either Joseph is the unluckiest of men, or he is perpetually blessed by a God who continues to send fortune his way."<sup>1</sup>

Maybe you've experienced those kinds of bad days that seem to never end, as was the case with Johnathon Stone as he watched his wife Sarah struggle with cancer for ten months. One evening

he took his four children to a Halloween party. During the party he received a phone call from the oncologist, urging him to bring his wife to the hospital immediately in light of the test results he had just received.

Johnny left the children with his parents and rushed his wife to the hospital. She sensed something had changed, for she said to him, "Promise me that, no matter what happens, you will continue to do good things, take good care of the kids and always be patient with them...I'm always going to look out for you, even when I'm in Heaven. And you have to smile—find the good."<sup>2</sup>

He replied, "Every day, the kids and I will find the good always." Later that evening, the doctors informed Johnny,

"Listen, we have some bad news...You have about five minutes to decide. You have an extremely difficult choice now; you can put her on life support, and she'll suffer because she's in bad shape. We can't adequately treat a cancer

patient on life support. Or, we can take her upstairs to the ICU and put her on oxygen and she'll have anywhere from four to forty-eight hours to live. I need you to decide now—we have to move quickly.”

Johnny wondered to himself, “What do I do? How do I make the right choice? How do I find something good to hold on to?”

In the midst of this terrible day, the family gathered together for hugs and to say their goodbyes, knowing that very little time was left for Sarah. After she died, the family missed her very much, but they found a way to continue.

When Sarah was alive, their youngest child had come to live with them as a foster child and was eventually adopted into their family. Before Sarah died, “one thing she always talked about was collecting backpacks and putting together little starter bags for foster kids,” for often they arrived in homes with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. After Sarah died, Johnny found a way to honor her and bring good into the lives of children

in turmoil. He created *Simply Finding the Good* to help “these children to know they are loved and not alone by providing them with something they can call their own as they navigate through this difficult experience: a duffle bag filled with a pillow, blanket, books, journal, clothes, toys, stuffed animals, personal care items, and more.”<sup>3</sup>

In the midst of the many bad days this family experienced, rather than lashing out in anger or cursing God, they continued to find good things to do for one another and for others. Like Joseph, the tragedies did not prevent them from bringing hope to the world.

Everyone has a bad day, which is something Actor Domhnall Gleeson realized when he said: Life is difficult for everyone; everyone has bad days. Everyone has trouble in their life, because it doesn't matter how rich you are: Sickness and trouble and worry and love, these things will mess with you at every level of life.<sup>4</sup>

Football player Jimmy Graham would have agreed, for he said:

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For me, I think one of the biggest battles is mentally. You have good days, and you have bad days. Randomly, you'll feel good for weeks, and then all of a sudden, you'll have a bad day where you're really sore. And you end up questioning yourself, like, "Am I doing the right thing? Why is this so hard?"<sup>5</sup>

When bad days enter our lives, we too may wonder if we are doing the right thing. *Why is life so hard?* we might wonder. *Where is God in all of this mess?*

Joseph found himself in one mess after another, a bad day that led to another bad day, and another, but he continued to trust that God was with him. Somehow, he knew that God could bring good out of those bad days, which is something Olympic Gymnast Aly Raisman realized when she commented:

You have to remember that the hard days are what make you stronger. The bad days make you realize what a good day is. If you never had any bad days, you would never have that sense of accomplishment!<sup>6</sup>

So, the next time you're having a bad day, remember that God does not send bad days into our lives, but God can turn them into opportunities to find the good. When those bad days happen, look for the blessing hidden within the day, for God continues to move in your life, offering surprising opportunities, hopes, and new directions that exist just around the corner.

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<sup>1</sup> Narrative Lectionary *Program 1 2018-2019* Worship Resources, Clergy Stuff, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> This and following quotations from *Finding Good*, Johnathon Stone and Sarah Stone.

<sup>3</sup> [www.simplyfindingthegood.org/](http://www.simplyfindingthegood.org/)

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<sup>4</sup> [www.brainyquote.com/quotes/domhnall\\_gleeson\\_690004?src=t\\_bad\\_days](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/domhnall_gleeson_690004?src=t_bad_days)

<sup>5</sup> [www.brainyquote.com/quotes/jimmy\\_graham\\_912292?src=t\\_bad\\_days](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/jimmy_graham_912292?src=t_bad_days)

<sup>6</sup> [www.brainyquote.com/quotes/aly\\_raisman\\_519555?src=t\\_bad\\_days](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/aly_raisman_519555?src=t_bad_days)