

Scripture Reading: Genesis 27:40 – 28:9

“38 And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me--me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. 39 Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, And of the dew of heaven from above. 40 By your sword you shall live, And you shall serve your brother; And it shall come to pass, when you become restless, That you shall break his yoke from your neck." 41 So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob." 42 And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, "Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you by intending to kill you. 43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. 44 And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away, 45 until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?" 46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

Genesis 28: “1 Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. 2 Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. 3 "May God Almighty bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples; 4 And give you the blessing of Abraham, To you and your descendants with you, That you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, Which God gave to Abraham." 5 So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau. 6 Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan," 7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram. 8 Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac. 9 So Esau went to Ishmael and took Ma-ha-lath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Ne-bajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had. 10 Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran.”

"Jacob Travels to Padam Aram"

What we are dealing with here in the Book of Beginnings this morning is in many ways a transitional passage. After the dramatic events that we studied last week from chapter 27 we are going to see a sort of post-script about what happens to the various characters and the beginning of the focus on the life of Jacob.

➤ **As I mentioned before, Jacob will be with us until his burial in the final chapter of Genesis.**

This morning we will see the blessing from his father confirmed and how he is sent away to Padan Aram to find a wife... Though he goes off alone, supposedly for a few days, we know he will be gone around twenty years, returning with four wives and eleven children along with many servants and riches.

But before we get to our focus on Jacob, we should take inventory of our cast of characters and once again consider what all this means for us. As I said last week, God is presenting His story of salvation and He does so by reminding us that it is worked out in real history; with real people.

Yes, history goes where God intends it to go, but He moves it there by means, and those means are often the players in his story [discuss ‘means’ for the children].

I am reminded of the lectures that Nate Wilson gives about God's grand story and reminding us that a good question to often ask oneself is "What will people think of my character in God's story?"

So let us keep that in mind as we go through our morning text and in the end I want to remind us that God is in the business of making changes, significant changes in many of the characters in His story!

Well the first and last person we are given information about in the text is the older brother who was destined to serve the younger: Esau...

Genesis 27:41 "So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

- Yes, we should have echoes of the story of Cain and Abel ringing in our ears at this point, because once again we see brother ready to rise up against brother.

As I mentioned last week, we will deal with Esau's eternal state a bit later in this book, but for this morning we should see him as someone who is NOT acting the way a godly person should!

Rather than accepting what has taken place as God's way of accomplishing what He had said would happen while they were still in the womb and submitting to God's wisdom...

- Esau instead does what so often happens when men reject God's will for their lives: He becomes a very angry and desperate man.

We see his desperation at the other end of our text where after he finally realizes that marrying the pagan Hittites was a mistake, he runs off to find wives from the families of Ismael... Who remember had also been cast out!

- Out of the frying pan and into the fire as we used to say...

So Esau is certainly not playing the role of a character we would want to emulate this morning, but as I said we will see more of him a bit later upon Jacob's return and there does seem to be some serious changes in his life at that point, so let's not write him off completely just yet!

Our story continues with mom hearing that she has an angry son on her hands...

42 "And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, "Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you by intending to kill you. 43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran."

- Once again Rebekah springs into action on behalf of her favorite son.

Opinions are once more divided as to whether we are seeing a faithful woman who is determined to carry out God's revealed will for her son, or one who not unlike Esau is quickly moving from that frying pan into the fire. We must remember that she is now facing this crisis because of the deception that she encouraged Jacob to engage in which has caused the angry response from Esau.

With the text silent as to her motives, I think we can only judge her actions by the results.

- As I mentioned last week, she is sending her favorite son off and will likely never see him again.

That could be seen as a great sacrifice on her part or the natural consequences from her continued attempts to steer things the way she thinks they should go and I think we have a pretty strong hint as to which it is right here in the text:

43 "Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. 44 And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away, 45 until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?"

- **Rebekah rightly wants to defuse the situation because she knows that if Esau rises up and commits a capital crime she will have lost both boys.**

However, I struggle to see how she can be seen as sacrificial when she expected Jacob's journey to be very short: "stay with him a few days!" I think we should also note that everyone is still reading the situation with Isaac very badly because he is NOT a man who is about to die:

- **He is going to live for nearly another forty years!**

In any case, we see Rebekah again as the great manipulator as she approaches her husband NOT with news that his favorite son is being a bad boy, but rather by bringing up a subject that we know was irritating to both of them.... Those Hittite wives whom Esau married years before!

46 "And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

The appeal is effective and with that Rebekah exists our stage... We then see a return of the more faithful Isaac we had seen in previous accounts as he confirms the blessing on Jacob and does what his father before him had done in making sure he was properly married to ensure that the line of promise would continue!

Genesis 28: "1 Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. 2 Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. 3 "May God Almighty bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples; 4 And give you the blessing of Abraham, To you and your descendants with you, That you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, Which God gave to Abraham."

5 So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau."

As we read last week from the Hebrews hall of faith, Isaac is commended for blessing Jacob and Esau and in the end has properly passed on the blessing to the younger son as God had intended.

- **Although God has not spoken directly to our cast of characters for some time, it is clear whose will is being carried out!**

And now Isaac also exits our stage and he will not appear again in our story until the time of his death in chapter thirty-five.

6 "Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan," 7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram."

Perhaps we see a touch of repentance here with Esau as he sees that his anger has not accomplished anything, and so he again tries to please his father:

8 "Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac. 9 So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had."

- **Esau also exits our stage at this point, but will be back with the return of Jacob and the death of their father and the writer of Genesis will include a good deal of his family history as well.**

And so our story comes down to a lonely traveler, who likely left thinking it was to be a short journey, taking little or nothing with him.

- **In two weeks we will see him sleeping outside with a rock as a pillow, but oh what a night it will be!**

Now if we look at this from a human perspective Jacob is not the sort of character that we would have take the lead... Esau, the angry hunter would make a much more interesting character!

The ambitious woman who always got her way by hook or by crook would make a great plot-line.

And even Isaac as the older and wiser man of faith could have been developed further and as we said earlier seems to have too little a part to play.

And yet he played his part well passing along the line of promise and being a part of the signature name that Jehovah would often use when addressing His people or their enemies...

- ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.’

In the end all of these characters were used by God to accomplish His glorious end and in that we should rejoice. It is also in that where we should see the work of Jesus in our lives today.

- God is still telling His story & He uses all the characters of history to do so!

We don't get to pick which character we want to be in the story, just as from a human standpoint none of our little ones here this morning got to choose their families!

However, just as we saw here in Genesis there are many different ways that we can play our parts...

And we should always remember Nate's sobering question:

- “What will people think of my character in God's story?”

Well last week there was much to NOT like with all four of our characters and yet a good case can be made for growth in all of their lives, especially with Isaac and Jacob and such should be the same with us.

To help us see that I would like to turn to a very familiar portion of the Epistle to the Ephesians and see it with some fresh insight having this account from the Book of Beginnings in our minds!

Ephesians 2: “1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

- It is very important that we remember how we all come from the same place as children of Adam, children of wrath by nature because we were born under the curse of sin.

Paul is going to explain how God has made us alive and how that transformation has happened to each and every one of us... With some of us who can remember many grievous sins in our lives because we were converted at a later age it is easy to see the contrast . *[mention movie night or discussions]*

However I am blessed to have many grandchildren who have been raised by faithful Christian parents and would honestly confess they have never known a day when Jesus was not their Savior.

While each of my children can certainly attest, as could any other Christian parent here this morning, that the sin nature of these children was not absent or that if left unattended they would not have been in the end acting as children of wrath.

Just because the Spirit of God does His work early in the lives of those children who then lead faithful lives does not mean it is not what the Apostle here describes...

- In fact I would argue that such testimonies bring far more glory to God than turning from a life of sin!
[even though we sadly often think they are boring in comparison!]

- So listen carefully to what the Apostle Paul says has been done for us, ALL of us, who are by nature children of wrath...

4 “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

- When did God show His love and grace to us?
- When we were dead in trespasses and sins!

That is true whether it come when Christian parents bring their new born child to the Church for baptism, or what I did in coming to the Church with years of sinning to confess & repent of!

- We BOTH needed the miracle of God’s love and that is what Paul repeats just so we don’t miss this important point.

8 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, & that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

- So we have NOTHING to boast about with regard to getting into the Kingdom and now Paul says we are to walk in the same faith, and this is where being characters in God’s story comes into view:

10 “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands-- 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope & without God in the world.”

- In other words without God’s intervention we would have had no role to play in the grand story of Salvation as the people of God!
- We could only have been outsiders but now we can claim all that we see here with God’s people as our heritage or history!
- But that came at a great cost!

13 “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”

- Today there are many who are struggling to bring people together who are divided over racial or ethnic or economic chasms...
- And yet, it is we as Christians who should know that it is only the Gospel that can build real and lasting bridges!

And that is just how the Apostle Paul presents the Gospel to that pagan First Century world that was full of idolatry, slavery and much licentiousness...

17 “And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. 19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

God has built a grand stage on which to present His grand story and we have been given the opportunity to perform:

- **May our performance always bring much Glory to God!**

Communion Meditation: Proverbs 9

“1 Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars; 2 She has slaughtered her meat, She has mixed her wine, She has also furnished her table. 3 She has sent out her maidens, She cries out from the highest places of the city,

4 "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, 5 "Come, eat of my bread And drink of the wine I have mixed. 6 Forsake foolishness and live, And go in the way of understanding."