

September 26 2021

Genesis 27:1-4, 15-23;28:10-17

Isaac's Blessing and Jacob's Dream

Young people's message: Does God still love us when we do bad things? Well the short answer is a strong YES! God absolutely loves us at all times. There is nothing that can take God's love for us away.

The long answer is more complex with a lot of moving parts. As humans we really do not have much to compare God's love for us to. Many times we compare it to a parents love for their children. That seems to be the closest thing we have. Parents always love their children. Regardless of what they do. However the thing that parents worry the most about is consequences. They worry about the consequences of our actions and how they may hurt us and others. Can we live through the consequences of a bad action or decision? Yet our parents still love us, just as God does.

I do think that our example of a parent's love for us as an example of God's love is limited. Mind you this is the only thing we can compare it to. God is God and is not limited to a parent's type of love. We may get to heaven and find out that God's love is far beyond our wildest imaginations. This is where I am placing my hope. We are using only one type of limited example of love to help us understand God's unlimited love.

We could go around the Mulberry bush for days on this topic. Have hope in knowing that God always loves us. Our faith is built on that and it has gotten us through two thousand years of history. Remember that God loves YOU. He thought about YOU before YOU were born and He knows YOUR name.

Adult's message: This morning's passage is about Isaac's blessing and how Jacob stole it. In Christianity we truly focus heavily on this passage. Yet from a Hebrew perspective it is not that important as the story that comes before this one. The story I am referring to is the birth right story.

I have listened to many lectures on the stealing of Esau's birth right this past week. From a Hebrew perspective it is not what we Christians tend to think it is. Remember that the birth right was started by Abraham and passed on to Isaac. The birth right centers around the belief and worship of the one God and the community that has grown up around this new idea. I have come to think of it as a family business that Abraham started and it grew up around his family. At the time when Isaac was to pass the birth right to Esau, the birth right was huge. Abraham had brought many people to the faith in the one God. It only continued to grow and expand by the time Isaac was to pass it on to Esau.

The birth right contained a lot of responsibility. The one who held the birth right was to lead community worship to the one God and offer sacrifice. With the birth right came power, money, wealth and influence.

The rabbis I listened to all stated that Jacob did not steal Esau's birth right. From the text, the rabbis concluded that Esau had no interest in the birth right and its responsibilities. Esau was a hunter and loved being on the land. He did not want to be confined by being a community leader and offering sacrifice to God. There also seemed to be much tension in the family between Esau and his parents. Esau married two Hittite girls who were spiritually hostile to Isaac and Rebekah. That is a polite way of saying they were not respectful of the faith Isaac and Rebekah held. Then to top it off Esau married his first cousin. The daughter of Ishmael. From all of this the rabbis concluded that Esau was not interested in the responsibilities of the birth right.

The rabbis look at the lentil soup issues very different from us. They look at it as Jacob doing Esau a huge favor. He took the pressure and responsibility off of Esau. Jacob did not steal it because Esau was not interested in it and didn't want it in the first place. For the rabbis the birth right was the most important thing and not the blessing. The birth right ensures that the faith will continue. They are grateful that Jacob took an interest in it. I find it amazing how another interpretation can open up the text in a completely new way. The rabbis also noted that the blessing given to Jacob was not in the presence of God. That Isaac knew it was not Esau. Isaac had his suspected as much because of the short time to hunt and prepare the meal. As well as the words used by Jacob were not the words Esau would use.

Concerning Jacob's dream, the rabbis said that Jacob was a holy man and always accompanied by angels. When Jacob reached the border of Canaan, the angels assigned to the Holy Land went back up to heaven and the angels assigned to other lands came down to meet Jacob.

When Jacob returned to Canaan in Genesis 32:2-3 he was again greeted by the angels who were assigned to the Holy Land.

I hope and pray that this may fill in some gaps you have. I have found it very helpful to have an interpretation closer to the source. The orthodox rabbis are an incredible source of information when it comes to the Old Testament. I hope that this has been a blessing for you.

Pastor D