**Treasure God’s Spiritual Blessings**

Genesis 25:19-34

Key Verse 25:23 – *“The Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.””*

Many of you are familiar with this old saying, “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.” It describes how two people can view the same thing but differ greatly on how valuable or important it is. In today’s passage, we witness an illustration of this from the story of Jacob and Esau and how they viewed God’s great promise of blessing upon them. And it is through one key moment that God sets the course of history, the effects of which are still felt to this day.

With Abraham’s story now concluded, God’s focus shifts towards Isaac. When we last left off, Isaac (now 40 years old) had just gotten married to Rebekah, a beautiful woman of strength, compassion, great action and above all, even greater faith. They eagerly wanted to establish a godly family of their own. Sadly, verse 21 tells us that Isaac and Rebekah were unable to have children. They must have tried for many years but to no avail; Rebekah was still childless. History seemed to be repeating itself and it could have been very easy for Isaac and Rebekah to point the finger of blame at each other or at God and fall into the same trap that Abraham and Sarah did many years ago. Even today, in spite of all our medical advances, many couples struggle with the prospect of being unable to have children together, placing incredible pressure and strain on their relationships.

Yet instead of responding to his situation with despair, Isaac earnestly prayed on behalf of his wife. Even though we view him to be quiet and passive, Isaac was a man of strong faith. He recognized that it is God who is the Giver of life and he appealed to God for the sake of his wife, putting his own needs to the side and kept this same prayer topic for twenty long years. Such a beautiful illustration of what a godly marriage should be; where both partners seek out the Lord together to help serve and better one another. May we consider ourselves extremely blessed should with we end up with a God-loving spouse such as Isaac or Rebekah! Speaking of blessed, God eventually answered their prayer in His good timing in a manner they did not expected. Abraham could only manage to wait 10 years before taking Hagar as his concubine to bear a son. Now after 20 years of prayer, Isaac and Rebekah were blessed with two sons… and twins no less! (21)

One would naturally think that with their prayer answered, everything would run smoothly. However, Rebekah felt something very troubling during her pregnancy. Look at verse 22a, **“The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, “Why is this happening to me?””** But the babies were not merely pushing each other around as a more descriptive translation of the original Hebrew word used here compares there actions to smashing or crushing. This was no ordinary shoving match. The babies were pretty much brawling in her belly and Rebekah had no idea why. “Complication” is the worst word for any expectant mother to hear and you can imagine how heart-wrenching the entire situation must have been given how long Rebekah had to wait for this moment. Rebekah could have become very fearful of losing her baby, lamenting “Why is this happening to me?” while her husband and everyone else around her felt sorry for her. But remember, Rebekah is a woman of great action and even greater faith. She was not one for pity-parties! In her own time of need, she humbly came to God in prayer, bringing her greatest question before the One who has all the answers.

From these two accounts, Isaac and Rebekah serve as important reminders on the importance of prayer. Prayer is not simply talking to thin air or making a laundry list of all the things in life. Rather, it is an opportunity to freely communicate with our Creator, expressing our greatest joys and deepest concerns before him. Through prayer, we come to know God’s heart personally and we gradually come to desire the things God created us for. Our intimate relationship with God through prayer is one of the greatest blessing we have as Christians and I pray we may truly appreciate it for what it is worth.

Let us look at the key verse (23), **“The Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.””** God revealed a prophecy to Rebekah concerning not only her two sons, but also God’s future redemptive plan for mankind through her descendants. However, one detail stands out among all others; **“the older will serve the younger.”** This made no sense for according to their culture, it was the oldest who received the greatest blessing. The oldest was the one who would receive a double portion of the inheritance and the honour of carrying on the family name. The oldest would be considered as the master of the household.All these privileges put together were also known as the birthright. In short, it was best to be the oldest.

Look at verses 24-26a, “**When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob.”** After nine months of struggling against each other in the womb, the twins were finally born. Esau, whose name means “*hairy*,” was born first. However, clutching his heel right behind him was his brother Jacob whose literally means “*he grasps the heel*”… another way of saying “*deceiver*” or “*cheater*.” And just as they were different in appearance, they differed as much in character. Esau grew up to be a “man’s man,” a skilled hunter who enjoyed the taste of wild game just like his father Isaac and preferred the open country to a boring shepherd’s life in the tents. He was a man who lived for pleasure and followed his gut instincts to wherever they would lead him. Contrast him to Jacob whom despite preferring the quieter surroundings of the tents and his mother’s presence, was filled with all the ambition and craftiness only a younger sibling can possess.

Verses 29-34 describe one of the most important trades in the history of mankind. One pastor even joked that this event resulted in the second most expensive meal of all time, the first being when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. Upon arrival from another day out in the country, Esau was very hungry. He probably did not have any success hunting for the wild game he loved so much, making him quite “hangry” i.e. hungry plus angry. But his “hangriness” began to dissipate as he caught the scrumptious aroma of fresh, home-made lentil stew. He followed both his nose and his empty stomach until he caught sight of the delicious red stew carefully being prepared by Jacob, who must have developed exceptional culinary skills from staying around the tents all the time. So Esau said to Jacob,**“Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!”** (30). However, Jacob knew his twin brother’s weakness for both the colour red and delicious food. His swift response to Esau’s demand shows that this was something Jacob had thought very much about. Jacob told Esau that he would give him the stew in exchange for Esau’s birthright, a ridiculous trade that logically should never have been made. However, look at verse 32; **““Look, I am about to die,” Esau said. “What good is the birthright to me?””** Shockingly, Esau was very willing to make the trade. He even saw his own birthright as something of so little importance that he was willing to give it up for a bowl of stew, hence why Esau is described as despising his birthright in verse 34. But why on earth did he do such a thing!?

Esau has no excuses here. Esau was born into a situation with great blessings. He didn’t do anything special to earn or deserve them. He wasn’t born into a pagan home, where his parents worshipped idols and taught him wrong. He was the son of Isaac and Rebekah, grandson of Abraham, the original friend of God. No doubt, during the first 15 years of Esau’s life, while Abraham was alive, his grandfather had taught him all about God and His covenant promises. Surely that teaching had been reinforced by Isaac and Rebekah. Esau had all the great spiritual privileges imaginable. The modern day equivalentwould be Esau being born into a prominent yet lovingChristian home where your grandfather is the famous pastor of the church. But as I mentioned earlier, Esau was a man who lived for earthly things and cared little for spiritual things. He would later go on to marry not one but two Canaanite women who brought nothing but grief to both his parents, showing that his appetite for all forms of physical pleasures was not just limited to food. And as the word of God teaches us, when a man’s heart is ruled by earthly things he will never be able to set his mind on heavenly things, the things belonging to God (Colossians 3:2, Proverbs 25:28, Romans 8:6-8). Esau traded in his greatest spiritual blessing for something so ordinary because he could not see and did not appreciate the true value of the amazing gift he already had. Which is why the author of Hebrews rebuked Esau so sternly in Hebrews 12:16-17 to the point of even calling him godless because of his selfish and unrepentant heart.

But while it is easy for us to pile blame on Esau, we are guilty of making that same trade when we choose to follow our own desires rather than what God desires of us and the things of this world rather than the things above. We live in an era of instant gratification where people go to all kinds of lengths to have their desires fulfilled. If you’re hungry, go grab something at the nearest fast-food restaurant. If you want your dream job, spend all your time studying, networking and think of nothing else! If you want to get rich quick, invest in BitCoin. If you want to have many people admire you, become a social media or YouTube sensation. If you’re looking for love, there’s Tinder. And for everything else in life, there’s an app for that… or the Internet. Yet for all these amazing advances in culture and technology, more and more people feel lonely, disconnected, depressed, needy and unloved. Even we as Christians are not free from all these feelings when we view God merely as a tool to have our wishes granted and our personal desires met. As a result, we have the same potential of making that one seemingly innocent decision that may tragically cost us for all eternity as Esau did. So how does one guard their hearts against this and choose to follow God? It is when we truly valuing the wonderful treasure we have received from God in Jesus Christ.

The Lord is our Creator and Sustainer. He made us out His great love for us. He knows our every thought and every need in life. Yet God calls on us to seek Him first as our most important goal in life (Matthew 6:33). But God is not only concerned about putting food in your belly and clothes on your back. Even though we were all separated from God by our sins, God made the way for us to come back to Him and called us into being His children through His Son Jesus Christ. As sons and daughters of God, we have the amazing privilege of our relationship with Him and the rich spiritual inheritance we have been gifted through Christ (John 1:12-13, Romans 8:14-17). This is our birthright in Jesus Christ, worth more than anything else in this life for Jesus gave it to us in exchange of his own.

Think about Jacob. He too would have heard from his parents and grandpa about how important this blessing was. His own mother must have imbedded in him that it was he who would be the one who would be blessed and not his older brother. He could have asked Esau for anything else in that moment that he could enjoy immediately but Jacob chose what he thought was most important. Now, let us be very clear here; Jacobinitially went after the birthright for the wrong reasons and in the wrong way. Choosing the right thing but with the wrong motives and methods is still wrong. Even from the womb, Jacob sought to get one over Esau and be #1. So when the opportunity presented itself, Jacob took advantage of his brother’s impetuous personality and hungry condition. He should have waited on the Lord to fulfill His promises. As we’ll see later in Genesis, God dealt with Jacob by giving him a dose of his own medicine many times over. Jacob was always scheming to work things out for his own advantage. But God chose him to be the possessor of this great promise in spite of all he was as a person to demonstrate how life-changing and powerful God’s grace is (Romans 9:10-13). Even though at this moment Jacob only cared about the physical blessing, God would show him how important this spiritual blessing and honour he received really is.

In conclusion, we see in this passage how two people born in the same family and growing up in the same environment could have two very different views on God’s great spiritual gift to them. I pray that we may be like Jacob, who saw God’s blessing as something to be treasured and worth putting all our thought, time and energy into obtaining. I pray that God may grant us His wisdom and guidance to help us determine the things that are most important in life from the things that are not, to treasure the spiritual riches from Heaven above over the trinkets of the world below (Matthew 6:19-21). It is my hope that in all that we do, we may hold on to our birthright as God’s beloved children for there is nothing else in this life better than this.