

January 8, 2023

Lost Blessings

Genesis 27:30-40



Special Music: Who I Am Ben Fuller

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrpTTvrRfl>

Genesis 27:30-40

30 After Isaac finished blessing him, and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting.

31 He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, "My father, please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing."

32 His father Isaac asked him, "Who are you?"

"I am your son," he answered, "your firstborn, Esau."

33 Isaac trembled violently and said, “Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him—and indeed he will be blessed!”

34 When Esau heard his father’s words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, “Bless me—me too, my father!”

35 But he said, “Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing.”

36 Esau said, “Isn’t he rightly named? This is the second time he has taken advantage of me: He took my birthright, and now he’s taken my blessing!” Then he asked, “Haven’t you reserved any blessing for me?”

37 Isaac answered Esau, “I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?”

38 Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!” Then Esau wept aloud.

39 His father Isaac answered him,

**“Your dwelling will be
away from the earth’s richness,
away from the dew of heaven above.**

**40 You will live by the sword
and you will serve your brother.
But when you grow restless,
you will throw his yoke
from off your neck.”**

Blessings are a very positive force in the universe. We don't give blessings to each other near as much as people in other places around the world. I think we lost the initiative along the way, or maybe we just ceased to believe they had any purpose. I would disagree with that. I have seen very few people resent someone giving them a blessing. Oftentimes those blessing come in the form of a toast. Whatever the occasion, it is an opportunity for us to express good fortune for those that we appreciate. I have always enjoyed reading and employing various blessings and I have to say, without a doubt, the Irish are the best blessing givers in the world. I think that it is because they believe in the richness of blessings, that expressing good fortune for someone is the best way to ensure it. I will give you the following as examples.

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face;

the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,

may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

Traditional Irish Blessing

“Here's to you and yours, and to mine and ours. And if mine and ours ever come across to you and yours, I hope you and yours will do as much for mine and ours as mine and ours have done for you and yours.”

Irish toast and blessing

“A toast to your coffin. May it be made of 100-year-old oak. And may we plant the tree together, tomorrow.”

Irish Toast

“May your glass be ever full. May the roof over your head be always strong. And may you be in heaven half an hour before the devil knows you’re dead.”

Irish Toast and Blessing

Paul was pretty good with blessings as well. Listen to Ephesians 3:16-19

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,

18 may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

And this is how God told Moses and the Levites to bless the Children of Israel.

22 The LORD said to Moses,

23“Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:

24“ “The LORD bless you

and keep you;

25 the LORD make his face shine on you

**and be gracious to you;
26 the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace.”’**

Numbers 6:22-26

The Jews have always taken blessings seriously, and many of the early Christians carried that seriousness forward. Many churches today still consider blessings important. We ask God’s blessings on the church. We ask God’s blessings on the congregants. We ask God’s blessings on animals. We even automatically say “God bless you” when somebody sneezes. Those who have no church or religious affiliation, generally don’t take blessings seriously. But even those people will be more than happy to join in on a toast because, in their hearts, they do wish people well.

But the kind of faith that Isaac, Jacob, and Esau found in a blessing, just doesn’t seem to be around today. Even though it is not part of our scripture today, let’s look at the blessing that Esau should have received, but was given to Jacob surreptitiously:

**28 May God give you heaven’s dew
and earth’s richness—
an abundance of grain and new wine.
29 May nations serve you
and peoples bow down to you.**

**Be lord over your brothers,
and may the sons of your mother bow down to you.
May those who curse you be cursed
and those who bless you be blessed.”**

As we talked about last week, being the firstborn in a family carried a great deal of authority and privilege. Being born second carried nothing. Unless you left home, you and your family would be forever at the mercy of your brother. And the blessing from father to first-born-son insured that. Jacob already had Esau’s birthright, so things had already gotten complicated. Esau was still in line to get the blessing because birthrights and blessings were two different things. And while we today may not find that blessing so binding, it was solidly bound for Isaac, Jacob, and Esau.

If Rebekah could somehow secure Isaac’s blessing for Jacob instead of Esau, it would go a long way towards securing her plans for Jacob. Through eavesdropping, conniving, lying, trickery, and deceit she was able to make it happen; she was able to convince Isaac that Jacob was Esau and so Jacob received Esau’s blessing. It was on the foundation of these devious actions that the blessing changed course and was passed to the branch of Jacob.

When we look at the scripture for today, we see what blessing Esau was left with, simply because Isaac had nothing left to give him:

**“Your dwelling will be
away from the earth’s richness,**

**Meaning a land that is impoverished, lacking in jewels, metals, or
other consumables that could be used for trade and manufacturing.**

away from the dew of heaven above.

A dry barren land with little rain

40 You will live by the sword

You will constantly have to be fighting off your enemies

and you will serve your brother.

**You will be cannon fodder for your brother’s enemies and you will
constantly be working for his benefit.**

But when you grow restless,

you will throw his yoke

from off your neck.”

Eventually, you will break free of his chains to live your own life.

**It would seem that the only legacy left for Esau was pain and suffering. He
believed that. Jacob believed that. Even Isaac believed that. Without that
blessing, life was going to be very hard for Esau and those that followed him.
When Esau realized what he had lost both his birthright and his blessing through
being manipulated, and the victim of a con, he was extremely angry and decided**

his best option was to kill his brother. Rebekah convinced Isaac that it would be a very bad thing to have Jacob marry into the Hittites, carrying his bloodline into an inferior nation. Wouldn't it be wiser for Jacob to visit her brother Laban in Paddan Aram in Mesopotamia. This was Rebekah's way of getting Jacob away from his brother's ill intentions and also get him married of into a better family, her family. So, Jacob is sent off to stay with Laban and Esau marries women from the Hittites.

Ok, preacher. We learned all that in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. We even remember most of it. How does any of that relate to us today? And aren't we talking trying to understand what it means to have a legacy? You know, if the story stopped here, the legacies at hand wouldn't appeal to us much. There's nothing in this story so far that says, "Hey, I wish I could be more like Rebekah," or "I never want to find myself as manipulated and conned out of everything I own as Esau," or "I never want to get to the point that I make a bad decision like Isaac," or even "I do not want people to remember me like Jacob, manipulative and cruel to my own family members." This particular Bible story doesn't really have any heroes. Everyone is playing their own game with their own strategies and desired outcomes. Everyone is selfish. Strange how our understanding of this story changes the older we get, as we begin to better grasp human behavior and what people will do to satisfy their own desires. We might even look around us and see at least portions of these legacies in people that we know or are acquainted with.

But God always knows more than we know. While the legacies of Rebekah, Isaac, and Esau are pretty much carved in stone by this moment in time, when Jacob sets off to Paddan Aram, his legacy is really just getting started. The events have shaped his life thus far are about to become a footnote to his growth as a leader. God is about to start changing his life, his character, and his legacy. He is going to twist him up, turn him around, and build him into a man with a completely different legacy than that of a thief, con artist, and narcissist. But he is going to have to go into God's forge. He's going to have to learn patience, grace, mercy, forgiveness, humility, forbearance, understanding, compassion, justice, wisdom, and so much more in order to become the tool that God needs to build up His people. But Jacob is a perfect example of God equipping the called rather than calling the equipped. Jacob believed he was perfect just the way he was, and God was going to have to take him apart and put him back together the right way so that he could meet his called purpose.

But what about our legacy? Have we ever considered that the legacy that we have set for ourselves might not be the legacy that God intended for us? Do we feel like the events in our lives have robbed us of our blessings and that there just isn't and real legacy for us to remind people of who we are and what gifts we have given to the world?

Legacies are real and they are very impactful. While we may see some of the impact on the lives we have touched, our spouses, children, and friends, we often cannot see the impact that we have had on many other lives, both positive and negative. There are times when we sought revenge when we should have

sought forgiveness, rushed someone when we should have shown patience. Ignored someone when we should have reached out our hand. Those things are also a part of our legacies, whether we like it or not. Consider also those moments when we either showed kindness or were inconsiderate, only to realize that others were watching or listening. Times when we spoke an off color remark, thereby kicking someone when they are down and needing a lift, or a gentle voice of comfort that carried them through a tough time. Where do we stand when asked the question, “Which is more important, our legacy before our fellow human beings or our legacy before God?”

We’ve talked about Matthew 22:37-40 before, but in a different context:

37 He said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’

38 This is the greatest and first commandment.

39 And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

How do we think this New Testament teaching by Jesus applies to this lesson about legacies that are found even in the Old Testament? Understanding these verses in Matthew shows us how to determine the value and strength of our own legacies. If we base our legacies on our own actions, our own accomplishments, our legacies will be made of sand, doomed to fade with the tide. However, if we base our legacies on what God has planned for us, that legacy will be founded on rock and will not fade because it will always point to

Jesus. Everything that we do hinges on our full submission to God's will. So, if "You love your God with all your heart, all your soul, and with all you mind," and "Love your neighbor as yourself," the law will be fulfilled in you and your legacy will be once based on truth, justice, and love.

This week, I want us all to take a look at our legacies. What will we be leaving behind for people to remember us? After we are gone, will people say, "He was a man after God's own heart," or, "Everything that she did and said pointed the way the Jesus"? That is how we should be viewing our legacies, through the lens of Jesus Christ.

God bless you all!

AMEN

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