

January 1, 2023

Relative Value

Genesis 25:27-34



Special Music:      Then Christ Came      Mercy Me  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=euUYX-jss5Y>

### Genesis 25:27-34

27 The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. 28 Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

29 Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. 30 He said to Jacob, “Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!”

31 Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.”

32 “Look, I am about to die,” Esau said. “What good is the birthright to me?”

**33 But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.**

**34 Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left.**

**So Esau despised his birthright.**

**WHAT DOES A SPIRIT WEIGH?**

**What does a spirit weigh?**

**What happens when you peel away**

**Flesh and bone,**

**And find you are left with a pallid stone**

**Of where your earthly mass**

**Was buried deep to rot away?**

**A pound of flesh, a pound of bone**

**Is easy to measure when weighed with stone,**

**But what of spirit,**

**Do you not hear it,**

**Death clefted from mortal coil?**

**Measured by the Cornerstone.**

**Can you measure such spirit with Silver or Gold**

**Can you throw in some diamonds just to be bold**

**Or weighed on a balance**

**With a song and a dance**

**Not likely at all**

**When a spirit is so hard to hold.**

**What does a spirit weigh?**

**Is it heavier when sin's at play?**

**Is it that way by God's design?**

**Can we fix the issue with bread and wine?**

**Not likely, not likely.**

**But there is a way.**

**When we begin to understand**

**It was God who created man**

**And lest he fear it**

**God gave him spirit**

**An identity not tied to death**

**That could only be weighed by the Son of Man.**

Growing up, I liked to watch movies about adventure and treasure. I guess every boy likes that to some extent. I really enjoyed ones that were staged in the near east during the Ottoman Empire. You know the ones that I'm talking about, sultans, scimitars, thieves, treasure, genies, and magicians. Maybe I was easily amused. A common element in these films was a scene where the sultan would be put on a balance scale and then the people would pile treasure on the other side and when it balanced, that was the amount that the sultan received in tribute. The sultan was always oversized and trying to gain more weight so that the next years tribute would be even greater.

As I grew up, memories of those movies went away, and I moved on to more mature things. But I guess I never really forgot about them, because they came back to mind when I started working on this sermon. And the first thing I did was ignore the thoughts because well, hey, they were only movies, right? And what did they have to do with Jacob and Esau. God often moves that way when I am working on the message for the week. So, on impulse, I looked up the stories and sources on the internet, and lo and behold, they are true. It seems that many sultans in the Ottoman Empire received their tribute in this manner, usually on their birthday.

This is an interesting way to collect tangible assets. But I do have to wonder how much larger we all would be if we were paid according to our weight like those sultans. In some ways we are. There are also people who are paid according to their knowledge. In many ways that's like a sultan, because if a person is paid based on their knowledge, they can always go out and learn more

in order to make more. But many college students will tell you that they had to weigh the cost of their education based on the possible ROI (Return On Investment). There are also many parents that tell their children that they will help pay for their college education right up to the point that the young person says that they are going to get an Arts Degree. ROI is a major factor in the decision process. That's when the conversation happens and the parents say, "Wouldn't you rather study engineering, medicine, accounting, or maybe law?" Other people are paid according to the weight of their responsibilities. In this case, you can earn more by taking on more responsibility, but not all the time, There are professions out there where taking on more responsibility just means more headaches without additional compensation.

This month, we are going to delve into another Campfire Tale with the story of Isaac's sons, Jacob and Esau. Isaac was Abraham and Sarah's son. When Isaac was 40 years old, he married Rebekah but, after 20 childless years, they realized that Rebekah was barren. Isaac prayed to God and through God's intervention, Rebekah conceived, only to find out that she was going to have twins. The twins were constantly wrestling with each other inside the womb, pushing and pulling at each other and it made Rebekah very uncomfortable. She prayed to God asking why this was happening to her and God responded in Genesis 25:23

**"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.”**

The dynamic between these two boys was one of friction before they were even born, and when they were born Esau, was born first but Jacob was holding tightly onto his heel. One might even say that this relationship was preordained to prevent these boys from ever bonding, which is highly unusual for twins. It did not help that it was clear that Isaac was more fond of Esau, and Rebekah loved Jacob. Esau became a skilled hunter and Isaac loved wild game. Perhaps this had something to do with his preference towards Esau. Jacob like to hang around the camp and was somewhat of a momma’s boy. That is why we see Rebekah constantly trying to manipulate Isaac to get him to pay attention to Jacob. Rebekah’s shrewd scheming rubbed off onto Jacob and he tried to outwit and confound his brother at every opportunity.

In this nomadic society, a patriarchal structure had been established within the culture. I’m not going to try and defend a patriarchal hierarchy, but it was the root system for both government and inheritance at the time. Esau, having been born first, would inherit his father’s wealth, and Jacob would have been sent off to find his place in the world. Esau was pretty happy with his life of hunting and probably not thinking much about needing an inheritance, much less the responsibility that went along with tribal leadership. So, when he comes in from a hard day of hunting and sees Jacob sitting in camp making stew, he’s just got to have some. But Jacob knows that he has the advantage here to get something important from his brother at little cost to himself. In an almost conniving way,

he says, “Well, I do have some pretty delicious stew here, if I do say so myself, and I would really like to give you some. I’m sure your mighty hungry from being out hunting all day. But hey, I don’t really hunt and I need something in return. How about a trade. I’ve got this stew that you really, really want, and will take that whole birthright thing off your hands, which I know you probably don’t want anyway. You and I both know it is just a bunch of headaches. I’ll give you some stew for that birthright and we will call it even.”

Esau doesn’t even take time to think about it:

**32 “Look, I am about to die,” Esau said. “What good is the birthright to me?”**

**33 But Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.**

**34 Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left**

Esau was probably pretty hungry but I don’t think he was starving to death. But for some soup and a piece of bread, he sells his inheritance, because he simply does not understand it’s value. Later on, Esau will shout that it was stolen from him, and, in truth, he wouldn’t be entirely wrong. Jacob did take advantage of his brother’s lack of understanding. But there was a oath sworn which would have been as good as video recording today. Still, it is really difficult for us to feel sorry for Esau and his lack of common sense. A deal’s a deal.

It’s okay for us to feel angry at Jacob taking advantage of his brother. It kind of goes against our sense of ethics. For the most part, we hold family



sacred today. But I have also seen a great lack of grace when it comes to family inheritances and divorces. Money and property will do that to people.

Okay, preacher, where is all this leading? Sometimes stories that we read about in the Old Testament have a great deal of relevance for us today. Throughout the ages, certain things about people really haven't changed much. On the whole, the human race is still pretty greedy and self-centered, which is the root of most of our problems. And we can draw a straight line from this story to our lives today about morality, ethics, legalities, grace, peace, justice and so much more.

But I would like for us to dive a little deeper than what we see on the surface and how this all pertains to us. I want us to take this to a more spiritual level rather than just the physical nature of loving and nurturing our brothers and sisters here on earth. I want to ask you, plain and simple, do you truly understand how much your spirit is worth? It's a very important question. When everything else is stripped away, what is your spirit worth? And to whom does it have that worth? Are we so unsure of our worth that we would sell our spirit for a bowl of soup? Our next fix? A night of pleasure in the wrong hands? Is the value of our spirit weighed by things of this earth? And who are we paying to determine our worth? The taxman? The preacher? The accountant? The employer? Is our spirit's worth in direct relationship with our Net Worth? Can it even be calculated.

Therein lies the problem. If we do not know our spirit's worth who determines that worth, then we are most likely susceptible to the same dilemma

that Esau faced. It is so easy for Satan to take advantage of us by telling us what he thinks we are worth. “That inheritance that God promised you isn’t really worth anything. You know that don’t you? You’ve never even seen it. How could you know if it even exists? What if you’re wrong. If you are that gullible, I’ve got some land off the coast of Florida that I’d like to sell you. How about a bowl of soup. Yeah, that’s right. A nice big bowl of hot soup. I guarantee you will love it. Right now, no questions asked, I will give you this wonderful bowl of soup for that worthless spirit of yours. No questions asked. You can fill your belly and get rid of all that Christian stuff you’ve been carry around. I promise you, no one has a better deal than what I’m offering.”

There has never been a better snake oil salesman than satan. He will misdirect, misadvise, mesmerize, manipulate, and understate our value in order to make us think we are getting a hell-of-a-deal.

Two thousand years ago, wisemen from the east traveled to Bethlehem because they saw a star, a star that all of their studies said led to a new king. We celebrate their arrival in Bethlehem with the festival of Epiphany. This year, Epiphany falls on Friday, January 6. Generally, western churches will celebrate Epiphany on the Sunday before or after the day set aside for Epiphany with messages and music about the Magi. But I believe that our message today is highly appropriate for this celebration. The wise men had an epiphany where they realized how important this event was from just seeing a star. It was enough of a realization that they traveled a very long way, taking over a year, just to get to

**Bethlehem and see for themselves. They found value in the journey to seek the new king. They sought truth and found it.**

**Esau, on the other hand, didn't care much for the truth and never had an epiphany. What little truth he did find amounted to a bowl of soup and some bread. He didn't really care to look any further. He was satisfied... until he wasn't. Things of this earth can never satisfy us completely. They may bring us comfort for a little while, but they will always be consumed in the end. Things of this earth are just not compatible with the things of heaven.**

**I want you know how valuable we really are. That's what this message is all about. Someone should have explained to Esau the value of his birthright so that he wouldn't do something so foolish. Because of that, I'm going to tell you right now how very valuable we are and to whom. We are the most valuable part of Creation. We are loved beyond measure by our Creator. We are so valuable to Him that He came to earth as a man to free us from our own captivity, our chains of sin and selfishness. He came to earth to shine the brightest of lights on the soup and lies of satan, making them visible for what they are. He came to teach us how to live in a manner that is pleasing to our Creator. He came to bleed great drops of the Creator's blood. He came to suffer the pain and agony of a criminal's death on a wooden cross to pay for our indifference and our sins. He came so He could raise Himself in victory over death itself for us. He gave His all for us. That is how valuable we are to God. That is the price of our inheritance.**

**If God finds us that valuable, why would we ever consider settling for soup?**

**God bless you all.**

**AMEN**

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