Genesis 25:19-35:21 August 5, 2018

*He Was in the Beginning, Part 8*

*(Jacob)*

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 Last week we looked at the story of Abraham and Isaac – the heart-wrenching story of a father and his beloved son that pointed to our Heavenly Father and the sacrifice of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Today we are looking at the life of Jacob, one of the grandsons of Abraham and one of the twin sons of Isaac & Rebekah.

 Genesis 25:19-27, *“****19****These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham’s son: Abraham was the father of Isaac,****20****and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean.****21****Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived.****22****The children struggled together within her; and she said, “If it is to be this way, why do I live?”[*[*c*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+25&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-681c)*] So she went to inquire of the Lord.****23****And the Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger.”* ***24****When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb.****25****The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau.****26****Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob.[*[*d*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+25&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-685d)*] Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.”*

 God opened Rebekah’s womb and enabled her to have these two boys. But God also chose to reverse cultural convention. Usually the oldest receives the birthright – meaning he receives twice as much property and becomes the head of the family. But God declared to Rebekah that the younger son would receive what was called the ‘birthright.’

 The house was divided, folks. Esau became Isaac’s favorite and Jacob became Rebekah’s favorite. When you read the text it is plain to see that it was not the model, God-fearing home. There was a lot of squabbling, manipulation, and outright deception going on, which came to a head when Jacob put on a goatskin to make himself all hairy like Esau to his now blind father, Isaac – to receive (by deception) the following blessing from his father Isaac, *“****28****May God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine.* ***29****Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!”* This is great – except Isaac thought he was giving his blessing to Esau, not to Jacob. And when it became clear to Isaac and to Esau what Jacob (with the help of his mother) had done, this family blew apart. This family, the family from which the Promised Offspring is going to come, is already a mess just one generation removed from Abraham.

 “***41****Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”****42****But the words of her elder son Esau were told to Rebekah; so she sent and called her younger son Jacob and said to him, “Your brother Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you.****43****Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran,****44****and stay with him a while, until your brother’s fury turns away—****45****until your brother’s anger against you turns away, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send, and bring you back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?”*

 We don’t read anything about anyone seeking after God. There was no, “What would God have us do?” None. All they are doing is what they wanted to do. Isaac wanted to bless Esau even though God had said that Jacob was the one God had chosen for that. Rebekah deceived her husband to get what she wanted. Esau and Jacob were brothers in blood only. It seems they had as little interest in having a relationship with God as they had in having a relationship with each other.

 So Jacob fled. And one night on the way to Haran, he found a rock for a pillow and went to sleep. ***12****And he dreamed that there was a ladder[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+28&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-786b)*] set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.****13****And the Lord stood beside himand said, “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring;****14****and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed[*[*d*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+28&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-788d)*] in you and in your offspring.****15****Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”****16****Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!”****17****And he was afraid, and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”*

 As I read this last Sunday preparing for today, and read it again on Monday, I found myself asking this question over and over to the Lord, “Why the ladder, God? What was the deal with the ladder?” Because to me it didn’t make any sense. Angels going up and down rungs of a ladder? They don’t need a ladder! They are angels! What was with the ladder? This question was in me incessantly on Monday and Tuesday. “Why the ladder, God?” Then I went to bed on Tuesday night around 11 p.m. I had a good night’s sleep except at the end right before waking up. During that time, I had a very disturbing dream. My granddaughter Taylor (who is 10 now) was in the military. It was Christmastime and she had written to tell me that she was homesick. She asked if I could send her some things to remind her of our Christmases together. So, in my dream I was crying, I was sobbing as I was going through my Christmas boxes in the attic pulling out small things I could send her – because I was homesick for her too.

 Folks, when I became fully awake, I was physically affected. I had been crying in my sleep. I had a heaviness in my heart. It took me about 20 minutes walking around my house to get back to normal. And it was so weird. Usually things we dream about have some connection to things we are trying to work out in our wide-awake lives, but not this one. I was not thinking about any of my grandchildren joining the military, I was not thinking about Christmas. I said out loud to the Lord, “What was that about?” And I heard in my spirit these words, “Got your attention, didn’t it?” Well, yes. That dream definitely got my attention! And then the revelation came as the answer to the question I had been asking for two days, “Why the ladder, God?” The ladder came in the dream as a way of getting Jacob’s attention. God did not have Jacob’s attention. He had never had Jacob’s attention. But of the two sons, Esau and Jacob, Jacob was the one through whom the Promised Offspring, Jesus Christ, would eventually come. So, God wanted Jacob’s attention. He needed Jacob’s attention. Thus the ladder dream and the reiteration of the promises God had first made to Abraham, then to Isaac, and now to Jacob. But there was a promise added this time. Did you catch it? ***15****Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”* Though Jacob felt terribly alone having had to flee his family, God assured him that he was not alone now and God would be with him wherever he goes. Jacob’s response? ***16****Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!”****17****And he was afraid, and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”* God got his attention and his life finally started to be what God had intended it to be all along, so that God’s promises to you and me could find fulfillment through him.

 When has God gotten your attention? I know you have stories. I’ve heard some of your stories of how God has gotten your attention. The question is, what have you done about it? How has your life become more what God intended it to be since God got your attention? And if it hasn’t, why hasn’t it? What are you holding back, and why?

What an incredible thing – that the Creator of the Universe – wants your attention! Your attention! He says, “Over here! Look over here! Listen to Me! Heed my warnings! Heed my instructions! Quit running to other sources to try to hear what you want to hear. I’m right here. I have promised to be with you no matter where you are. I am right here and ready to help you get to that place of praise saying, “Surely the Lord is in this place! How awesome is this place where I am, that God is here with me, helping me, showing me, transforming me, day by day into the image of his beloved Son to the glory of His holy name!”

 Now, listen to this from John 1:43-51. This is from the Amplified Bible, *“The next day Jesus decided to go into Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me [as My disciple, accepting Me as your Master and Teacher, and walking the same path of life that I walk].”****44****Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.****45****Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the One Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote about—Jesus from Nazareth, the son of Joseph [according to public record].”****46****Nathanael answered him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip replied, “Come and see.”****47****Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Here is an Israelite indeed [a true descendant of Jacob], in whom there is no guile nor deceit nor duplicity!”****48****Nathanael said to Jesus, “How do You know [these things about] me?” Jesus answered, “Before Philip called you, when you were still under the fig tree, I saw you.”****49****Nathanael answered, “Rabbi (Teacher), You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.”****50****Jesus replied, “Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe [in Me]? You will see greater things than this.”****51****Then He said to him, “I assure you and most solemnly say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man [the bridge between heaven and earth].”*

 Do you think that got Nathanael’s attention? You know it did! A true descendant of Jacob would know all about Jacob’s dream with the ladder and the angels! And here is Jesus saying to him, “That was me. I’m the ladder.” That must have blown his mind!

 Jesus is the ladder, friends. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him. Before he even came into the world in human flesh, Jesus was the center of attention. All of the Scriptures point to him. All of the promises of God find their YES in him! The question for us today is, “Does he have your full attention?” It’s hard in this world where so many other things are calling out for our attention. Work, sports, schedules, family, friends, bills, video games, facebook, instagram, snapchat, twitter, on and on and on…”. Does God have your full attention? What are you thinking about before you go to sleep at night, and what are you thinking about when you first wake up? Those are indicators of what has your full attention.

What I know is that when GOD has your full attention, the light goes on and everything else begins to make sense. When he does, your life doesn’t all of sudden become trouble-free, or pain-free, or suffering-free, but your life begins to become MORE, more than you ever thought it could be – a life filled with peace, with joy, with over-flowing love, and with a sense of purpose that goes way beyond the here and now. As we stand and sing now in preparation for sharing the communion meal together, may the Lord, and what he has done for us, be given our full attention.

*Behold the Lamb*

*Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away, slain for us - and we remember
The promise made that all who come in faith find forgiveness at the cross.
So we share in this bread of life, and we drink of His sacrifice
As a sign of our bonds of peace around the table of the King.

The body of our Savior Jesus Christ, torn for you - eat and remember
The wounds that heal, the death that brings us life paid the price to make us one.
So we share in this bread of life, and we drink of His sacrifice
As a sign of our bonds of peace around the table of the King.

The blood that cleanses every stain of sin, shed for you - drink and remember
He drained death’s cup that all may enter in to receive the life of God.
So we share in this bread of life, and we drink of His sacrifice
As a sign of our bonds of peace around the table of the King.

And so with thankfulness and faith we rise to respond, - and to remember
Our call to follow in the steps of Christ as His body here on earth.
So we share in this bread of life, and we drink of His sacrifice
As a sign of our bonds of peace around the table of the King.  (Getty Music)*