

Jacob and Seesaw: Part 2

Genesis 28-33

August 2, 2026

We return to the story of Jacob and Seesaw this morning and if you have your Bibles please open them Genesis 29. Last week, we met two twins who were NOT identical in any way, shape manner or form. And as we've been working our way through the first book of the Bible and events that really happened about 4,000 years ago, we're finding that they are very relevant for today, especially last week's message involving family dynamics and sibling rivalry. Everyone really needs to hear it, so if you missed it, go to YouTube and catch up. In that message, we noticed where God told the pregnant Rebekah that two nations were in her womb which is a very strong pro-life statement. These were not just fetuses, but nations! This reminds us that unborn children are true human beings with destinies and plans from God.

But like all of us, as we learned last week, both of those twins sinned and fell short of God's glory in various ways. Esau, who was also called Edom because he was so red, trades his holy birthright for a bowl of soup. Which reminds me, what would Esau do with Jacob's lentils today? He'd EDOM! To make matters worse, Jacob then lies to his father and steals the blessing from his brother. Here is Jacob after stealing that blessing. When we left these unidentical twins last week, Esau was consoling himself with the thought of murdering his brother and today, as Paul Harvey would say, we'll learn the rest of the story. Part 2. At the end of Genesis 27, momma hears about Esau's plans and sends Jacob to her brother Laban over in Haran where she came from till Esau can cool down. And once again, she comments on how disgusted she was with her 2 Hittite daughters in law. In chapter 28, Esau, in what seems a desperate attempt to earn his parents' favor, marries his cousin, one of Ishmael's daughters. Your heart has to go out Esau as he struggles for attention even if he did "Edom lentils."

We don't have time to look at every part of this story, but I encourage families to read and discuss it together. In chapter 28, Jacob heads northeast to spend some time with his uncle and he will be there for the next 20 years during which time Rebekah will not see her favorite son. And although the Bible doesn't tell us, she is not mentioned after he returns and most believe she died without ever seeing him again. I told you she'd pay the price for her scheming.

So Jacob heads out and has the incredible experience in the desert with the dream of the stairway to heaven and God's promise of blessing. That was here at Bethel. Instead of Mike Lindell's My Pillow, he had to use a piece of basalt. Which reminds us. Don't take your pillows for granite. God not only promises to bless him and give him this land, but to be with him wherever he goes and whatever he does **and** will bring him back and give him this very land. Our Invitation to Give this morning was Jacob's response to

God's blessing which is worship. Say worship. He set up a stone and he pledged 10% of all his income.

He travels on until he finds Uncle Laban in Haran and he meets his future wife at the same water cooler where his dad's servant found his mom. Gen 29:10 When Jacob saw Rachel, daughter of Laban, his mother's brother, and Laban's sheep, he went over and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle's sheep. 11 Then Jacob kissed Rachel and began to weep aloud. 12 He had told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and a son of Rebekah. So she ran and told her father." Now her father, Jacob's uncle Laban, gets all excited and welcomes him in! But the plot thickens. If you've read the story you know that Jacob the deceiver falls in love with the sheep lady Rachel and makes a deal with her dad to work for 7 years to earn her hand in marriage. And when the 7 years are up, they have the wedding, everybody's partying, Jacob takes Rachel to bed and finds out when he wakes up in the morning, it ain't Rachel. Say deceived. The Deceiver gets deceived. Big time! He got a taste of his own medicine. And he didn't like it too well! "Oh," Laban says, "I must have forgotten to tell you. That's not the way we do it around here. You must be from out of state. The older sister has to get married first. Tell you what I'm gonna do. Because I like you, you can work for me for 7 **more** years and you can have Rachel too. Two for the price of two." What choice does he have? Jacob's deceptive chickens are coming home to roost.

Whenever anyone tells you that the Bible condones polygamy, don't believe it. Every time we see it, it causes problems. Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah and you can imagine what that did to family dynamics. You think sibling rivalry is bad? What about when they're married to the same man! The original Sister Wives. The two sisters get in a childbearing contest and drag their maid-servants into it with them and Jacob ends up with 11 boys and a girl before he leaves Laban. They even name some of their children struggle and vindication because of their family feud. Talk about dysfunction!

Meanwhile, Jacob is the herd manager for Laban's livestock and gets into a bit of selective breeding in chapter 30. In spite of all he's done, God has mercy on Jacob and blesses him incredibly. In spite of the fact that Laban changed Jacob's wages 10 times, Jacob still comes out ahead. And when his brothers-in-law get jealous and Jacob realizes there's no future for him in Haran, he decides to head back home. In fact God tells him to do that. So without telling Laban, he, his wives and his children all head out. Sounds like one of those deals where they packed up in the middle of the night and left. Gen 31:20 "Moreover, Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by **not** telling him he was running away. 21 So he fled with all he had, and crossing the River, he headed for the hill country of Gilead." He's still deceiving.

Three days later, Laban realizes they're gone and goes after him in hot pursuit. Talk about a caravan. Jacob not only has his wives and 12 young kids, he also has a slew of livestock by now. He can't travel as fast so Laban catches him in about a week but by

then God has warned him not to harm Jacob so he doesn't. He does get to kiss his daughters and his grandkids goodbye and the two men set up a rockpile as a sign of a peace covenant between them not to ever harm each other. They swore, "May the Lord keep watch between us while we are absent one from another," which would be the rest of their lives. They called on the God of Abraham to be a witness between them. Jacob sacrificed to the Lord and they shared a meal together before they went their separate ways.

But now comes the hard part. Say hard part. 20 years ago, when Jacob left, his brother was planning to kill him when their father died. Has their father died yet? Jacob didn't know. Was Esau still furious? Jacob didn't know. But it's time to find out. It's time to face the music. So he sends some messengers to his brother letting him know he's on his way home instead of surprising him. But Gen 32:6 "When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, 'We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.'"

Say uh oh. **That** doesn't sound good! Vs 7 In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups, and the flocks and herds and camels as well. 8 He thought, "If Esau comes and attacks one group, the group that is left may escape." 9 Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O Lord, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' 10 I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. 11 Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am **afraid** he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. 12 But **you** have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.'"

Jacob has learned to pray and he reminds God of His promises and asks Him to spare his family. But he is scared! So he devises a plan. Maybe a few gifts will soften Esau's heart. Grease the skids a bit. So he sets aside 220 goats, 220 sheep, 30 camels with calves, 40 cows and 10 bulls, and 30 donkeys. A whole starter farm. That is a pile of livestock! All this would bring about \$230,000 at today's stock sale and I low balled it. It could easily be twice that and if they were racing camels, they could be worth over 10 million a piece! Secretariat with a hump. Jacob left with nothing but he has become a very wealthy dude and he's trying to use that to buy his brother's mercy. He breaks them up into multiple waves so Esau will be softened more and more by each one if his plan works.

That evening, he sends his family over the Jabbok river while he spends the night at Peniel. (s) Gen 32:24 So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. 26 Then the man

said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will **not** let you go unless you bless me." 27 The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. 28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." 29 Jacob said, "Please tell me **your** name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw **God** face to face, and yet my life was spared."

Say whoa! Who was that masked man Jacob had in a half nelson? Was Jacob wrestling Rick Flair, the Rock or Hulk Hogan? The Bible never actually says but Jacob is convinced he wrestled with God that night. Some think it was an angel, but many believe this is a Christophany where Jesus appears in bodily form prior to His birth in Bethlehem and it could well be. Jacob's not about to let Him go until He blesses him which He does and changes his name. Say Israel. My footnote says Israel means he struggles with God, and today Israel still struggles with God. Most of us do at times. Foolishly, but we struggle and try to make God see it our way. Thankfully, He never does. He always has a better plan. But many of you know what it's like to wrestle in prayer all night. Don't quit, don't let go, until God gives you peace, but realize it may come at a price. Jacob limped the rest of his life perhaps as a reminder of how Mighty his God is. We could preach several sermons about this event but let's press on.

So that long night ends and Jacob knows that this day he will face his brother whom he had robbed so many years ago. Will there be a battle? Will he be killed? Will his children survive? What about his wives? Time to find out. Gen 33:1-12 Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men;" say uh oh. "so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two maid-servants. 2 He put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear." Wouldn't you like to be Leah? The plain one. The unloved one. We could preach several sermons on Leah but, Vs 3 He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother." Let's get this over with. Whatever will be will be. They're not shooting arrows yet so here goes. I do give him kudos for going first.

Vs 4 **But** Esau **ran** to meet Jacob and **embraced** him; he threw his arms around his neck and **kissed** him. And they wept." Say wept. 20 years of pent-up emotion flowing freely from both of their eyes. Vs 5 Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. "Who are these with you?" he asked. Jacob answered, "They are the children God has graciously given your servant." 6 Then the maidservants and their children approached and bowed down. 7 Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down. 8 Esau asked, "What do you mean by all these droves I met?" "To find favor in your eyes, my lord," he said. 9 But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself." 10 "No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to

see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably. 11 Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it."

Say praise God. The pain of the lentil stew and the sting of the robbed blessing have been dulled by the two decades of separation. God has blessed both boys but the one I want to shift our focus to is Esau. He doesn't want to accept his brother's gifts but does so when he insists. Jacob's generous gifts say to me that he's really sorry and wants to make amends. They did, no doubt, help to convince Esau that Jacob really meant it. Because the Jacob he used to know would never have done that. And the fact that Esau **ran** to Jacob, hugged and kissed him is nothing short of a miracle, after what Jacob did to him. More on that in a bit. They probably met somewhere in here since Esau was coming from the south.

Since Jacob left, Esau had moved down to Seir, which became known as Edom and the Edomites came from him. Later, they will not allow the Israelites to pass through their land when they come out of Egypt. Father Isaac, it seems, is still at Mamre near Hebron and I'm sure Jacob went to see him after he got back but it's not recorded until the end of chapter 35. Isaac is now 157 and will live another 23 years before he dies at 180. But Jacob doesn't move in with dad. Remember he's **not** dad's favorite and he had dishonored and lied to his father. Perhaps Isaac was having trouble forgiving. Jacob also doesn't go down to Seir with his brother. He initially sets up housekeeping at Succoth and then moves eastward near Shechem. And he will move yet again.

But before he does, Vs 20 says "There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel." El Elohe Israel can mean God, the God of Israel or mighty is the God of Israel. Why do you reckon he did that? He had seen how mighty this God was! The promises He made to him in a dream before he left at Bethel had now come to pass. Back in Gen 28:13-15 the Lord, said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. 14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. **All** peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. 15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I **will** bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

God had now done all of that. Jacob had left empty, Israel returned full. Jacob had left in enmity, Israel returned in peace. And the fact that he built an altar and called it Mighty is the God of Israel tells me that he kept his word to tithe 10% just as he had promised even if he had to limp to do it. When we realize how richly God has blessed us, we'll tithe too. And beyond. He's richly blessed us all.

Mighty is the God of Israel. Israel the man, who used to be Jacob, and Israel the nation that came from him. And this mighty God has sent His Mighty Son Jesus. Even though we wrestled with Him, He has blessed us with forgiveness and peace and eternal life. And He has commanded those who follow Him to pass His forgiveness on to others. Time doesn't heal wounds. Deciding to forgive heals wounds. A decision not to hold it against someone heals wounds. It doesn't mean you haven't been wronged. Jacob **had** wronged Esau bigtime. But somewhere in those 20 years Esau made a decision **not** to hold it against the deceiver anymore. For **his** own good. Refusing to forgive someone only hurts us. Someone once said that unforgiveness is the poison we drink thinking it will kill somebody else. It doesn't. It poisons us. It affects us emotionally and physically but spiritually most of all. Jesus says, unless **you** forgive others, I can't forgive you. And if you've done wrong, like Jacob, don't make excuses for why you did it, don't try to justify yourself, just own it. Jacob didn't blame Esau or his mom. When Esau forgave Jacob, all of heaven rejoiced and all hell shuddered because the Devil never wants us to forgive. Satan had been trying to frustrate God's plan all along the way. Forgiveness is a God thing. And this was a triumph for Christ's Kingdom.

What hurts are you nursing today? They may be 20 years old, they may be 20 minutes old. Real hurts. Forgiveness doesn't mean you haven't been hurt and it also doesn't mean you have to restore the relationship. In fact, if the other person isn't yet repentant, you're setting yourself up for more hurt. It takes 2 to reconcile, but it only takes one to forgive. And that one is you. The other person does not have to apologize or even admit their part. It makes it easier if they do, which is why we should apologize if we've done wrong. But they don't have to. But for **your** own spiritual and physical and mental health, forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. For Jesus so commanded. And forgiveness is a variety of spirit fruit all Christians should be producing. What will you do with your hurt and bitterness? Last week when we finished Esau wanted to kill his brother. His seesaw was way down. But now that he has forgiven Jacob, even of great wrong, Esau's seesaw is way up. Yours can be the too if you forgive as you have been forgiven.

Prayer

Blank Half sheet of paper. If you're still holding something against someone, maybe from 20 or more years ago. Maybe a sibling, maybe a parent or a neighbor or an ex-spouse, or whoever. They may even be dead. Or maybe someone from just this past week. I want to challenge you this morning to write their name on that blank paper, fold it once and during our closing song, bring them up and put them in the wheelbarrow for Jesus to carry out of here. If you don't mean it, don't do it, but if you do, I'm asking for you to do business with the Holy Spirit this morning and forgive as you have been forgiven as we sing, "Amazing Grace, my chains are gone."