

God of the Blessing

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[0 : 00] All right, so good morning everybody. This morning we're reading from Genesis chapter 28, the whole chapter. All right, so verse 1.

Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and directed him, you must not take a wife from the Canaanite women. Arise, go to Paddan Aram, to the house of Betwa, your mother's father, and take as your wife from there one of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother.

God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring with you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham.

Thus Isaac sent Jacob away. And he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban, the son of Betwa, the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan Aram to take a wife from there. And that as he blessed him, he directed him, you must not take a wife from the Canaanite women, and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and gone to Paddan Aram.

[1 : 14] So when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please Isaac, his father, Esau went to Ishmael and took as his wife, besides the wives he had, Mahalaf, the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Neboif.

Jacob left Bathsheba and went toward Haran, and he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep.

And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it and 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. 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 in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, 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.

[2 : 24] Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it. And he was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! There is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

So early in the morning, Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called the name of that place better, but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God.

And this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me, I will give a full tenth to you. Okay, so last week we started talking about the blessing of God.

We were just considering about this blessing that Jacob was wanting to have. And we think about what it means to get God's blessing, in terms of what Jacob was looking for, was being someone who has a secure future, and someone who has significance.

[3 : 46] And that's what God wanted to give him, but not in the way that Jacob was expecting it would be. It's that Jacob would only be significant or secure when he trusted in God and not in

himself.

And so today we are looking at this God who is behind the blessing. We are looking at the blessing still, but more focusing on this God that is behind the blessing through this passage.

Let us pray first before we start. Almighty God, we thank you for being our anchor and giving us Christ Jesus to focus on as we come before you.

May you teach us your way. Thank you, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So last week we saw how Jacob successfully deceived his father to inherit the blessing of God, and his older brother, Esau, was furious, and he vowed to kill Jacob.

So to save Jacob, their mother, Rebecca, requested Isaac, their father, to send Jacob back to their home country to get a wife, with the excuse of getting a wife.

[5 : 03] Did we notice what Isaac did before sending Jacob away? Isaac blessed Jacob this time for real, knowing that that was Jacob.

He said, God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to his offspring with you, that you might take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham.

So were you surprised to see that Isaac actually blessed Jacob? I suppose Jacob would not have expected his father would really bless him.

He would have expected his father to scold him for his deceptive behavior. But he didn't, I wouldn't mention about Isaac doing any such thing.

He really blessed Jacob. And when Esau saw Isaac sending Jacob away with his blessing, we read that he thought Isaac's sudden change of heart was because of his Canaanite wives.

[6 : 26] It is true that Isaac was upset with Esau's two Canaanite wives. Esau just didn't think much. He just married those two foreign women and caused a lot of trouble for his parents.

However, it was not because of Esau's behavior that Isaac chose to bless Jacob eventually. I think Esau did love Jacob in some way.

I suppose he was just disappointed that Jacob didn't turn out as the man that he would like Jacob to be. And also we read in chapter 27, when he knew that he made a mistake in giving the blessing to Jacob instead of Esau, we read that Isaac trembled violently.

He was trembling. It might seem like, oh, I mean a mistake, oh, I should have given it to Esau and not Jacob. But I thought there's more than that.

He's trembling violently. I think it means that he realized he actually made a mistake in the sense that he had disobeyed God.

[7 : 44] And that's why he trembled. And that's why he knew that blessing is supposed God wanted it to be for Jacob. So we need to understand that Isaac is a godly man.

He's more godly than us in any way. Because God said, I'm the God of Isaac. So when God said that I'm the God of Isaac, it means that God has already began or have worked in Isaac's heart and make him to be someone who is godly.

It doesn't mean that he wouldn't make mistakes, but it means that he's a changed man. At least he's got this humility to know that he did something not according to God's will and he changed.

And that's why he blessed Jacob as he should have done. But then Esau just didn't know about all these things. He just thought, oh, if Isaac would be pleased for Jacob to marry someone from the mother's side of family, I would marry someone from my father's side's family.

So he married Ishmael's daughter, his cousin, and get another wife. Whether that would please Isaac or not, I don't know.

[9 : 02] Most likely not. But that's how Esau thought Isaac was thinking. So like Jacob, he did not understand his father's heart.

Jacob didn't understand either when he left, I suppose. So about that, do you understand your father? I do not understand my own father either.

Being the second youngest of many children, my father usually only interacted with me when I did something wrong, got punishment in the family. But other than that, we hardly talk.

We don't, even mealtimes, we didn't have mealtimes together. So it's very seldom that I would talk to my father all my life, basically.

So most of what I know about my father is from what others told me until quite the very end before he died. So not long before his death, I found out my father had at least three wives.

[10:09] We lived with two. I didn't even know that he got another one and 19 children. And before I was born, the third wife already brought two others of her children and left the family.

So I have two other siblings somewhere. At home, I don't know. I still don't know where they are. But at that time, culturally, it was quite acceptable for a man to have more than one wife, especially those who are rich.

who were rich. And my father was the last generation for that to happen, thankfully. And during the war, when Japanese came, my father's wealth also wiped out.

So after the war, before I was born, the family became quite poor from there. But I was quite thankful that we were poor.

Otherwise, with two wives and 17 children, eventually, you can imagine how sort of politics that has been going on in such a family.

[11:17] And most of, I'm not sure how it would turn out if we were rich. But because we were poor, so we were all required to work, even from a very young age. And there's no time to fight for positions or favors from the parents.

You just have to work to survive. And that's what actually helped the whole family together by having two wives. And so I didn't know about my father until he became very sick.

Before he died, he was bedridden for about seven years. And at that time, I was in Kenworth and just studying my own practice. It was quite busy, but I still got time.

When I got time, I just went back to spend time with him. Also as a doctor, more rather than a son. Just look after him. Once, went back once a year.

And during the last couple of years when I went back, he started to talk. At that time, he lost his sight. He couldn't talk about his life a bit.

[12:24] And then I started to understand him a bit more. He told me, in particular, his regrets. I think he knew that he did many things wrong in his life. and he had many regrets.

And I wish that at that time, I knew about this Jacob story and tell him about that. I could quote verses of New Testament to him, but it's not much of a use, I thought, for him to help him to see how gracious God is.

but it was only during that time that I started to know my father just before his death. And I'm thankful for that.

So, Jacob did not understand his father. And Esau didn't understand his father. I didn't understand his father until quite late. Or it is because we are self-centered.

Our fathers were there to serve our purposes. So, it's true that fathers are supposed to nurture us and provide for us. They serve us not because they are our servants, but because they are our fathers.

[13:37] And we are self-centered because we want to preserve our lives and we want to have dignity in our lives. So, we are quite busy trying to get attention to ourselves.

And so, because we are so busy getting attention for ourselves, we will not have time to look at others, our parents, to see what they think, what they are going through.

So, even when I did look at my father, I tend to interpret his motives or his thoughts with my own thoughts because how I think about things, I would think that is what my father thinks.

And that's how Esau was doing and Jacob was doing as well. So, returning to Jacob's story, we know that Jacob is now traveling north 900 kilometers to the mother's hometown in Haran.

So, I guess it would take him at least two months to walk there. And leaving the comfort of his house for the first time, walking along in the wilderness, not knowing what was ahead of him, Jacob was anxious and confused as well.

[14:57] I would think he started to, what do you think, in his mind as he walked, I can think of a few questions like, why did my father suddenly become so kind to me?

Did he think that I could not survive this journey? That's why he was kind, he was just sending me off, didn't think that he would see me ever again? Or, thinking, or Jacob would think, why am I the one who needs to leave the security of my home?

Didn't I get the blessing? Why did this happen to me? Or, have my father tricked me so as to send me away so that I do not get any share in the inheritance?

So, because he tricks people, so he would think that when things happen to him, other people were tricking him. So, that's how we work in our mind. And, he might be thinking that I hope I can find houses or places to spend my nights.

I've never stepped outside of my house before. Or, I wish that my brother Esau would be with me. He would know what to do. He could protect me. But, my stupid brother is the only, the one, the reason why I needed to run away from home.

[16:10] All this would be, I think, running through his mind. and he kept walking off. And, there were less and less houses along the way, until there was no more house.

And, the sun was setting. The sky was getting darker and darker. Jacob wanted to turn back, but he dared not. He just couldn't face Esau.

Not only now, even 20 years later, he still couldn't face Esau. So, it's a very big threat for him. Before any experience, Jacob did not find a safe place to spend the night, until he became too dark, completely dark.

He just didn't know any better. But I suppose he became too tired at that time to think much. He just wanted to lie down and sleep, pick up a stone and went to sleep in the open air.

Genesis 28, 11 tells us that the sun has set on Jacob. It's quite interesting in this verse, because we don't read about the sun rising again on Jacob for 20 years until Genesis 32, 31.

[17:29] Then it says that the sun rose on him. So, there's a gap of about 20 years between these two verses. It seems to tell us that Jacob was living in some sort of darkness or struggling in his heart over these 20 years.

Last week I said God's blessing does not usually come in comfort, but it always comes with peace. Why then I would say he would have this struggle in this time in Jacob after this night?

before this night, Jacob was living for himself. He depended on his own carelessness to get what he wanted. And during this night, he was going to encounter God.

Before this night, God was like Santa Cross. He was there to grant wishes. God was not his God.

Remember how he explained to Isaac last week why he could find an animal so quickly?

He told Isaac, because the Lord, your God, granted me success. That God was Isaac's God, not his God. Jacob was too occupied with his own plan to care much about God.

[18:51] After Jacob encountered God, there began a change inside him. God did not choose Jacob because Jacob was a godly man. God chose him because God wants to make him a godly man.

That is the change we will be seeing in Jacob. Jacob started to see God in his daily encounters or his daily experiences. This gave him peace in his suffering.

He will suffer in the next 20 years, but as we got a chance to go through it, when we re-counter back, he said it was because of God with him that he went through all those things.

at the same time, I think there will be struggles in his heart, a struggle between his will and God's will. That's why the sun is setting and rising.

It means there's a new chapter happening in his life. The old has gone, the sun is set. The new is coming, but not yet. There is this period of time.

[19:54] Until he surrendered his heart to God in your offspring.

Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west, to the east, to the north, and to the south. And in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Behold, 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.

Actually in the Hebrews, the west east, north, south. They are not strictly written in those terms.

So understood as those terms. It's more like your land will be from where the north is where you are coming from, from Haran to Nagat, the south where there's wilderness, there's nobody.

[21:20] From the east is the garden Eden until the west is where the God revealed himself to someone, the response is always here.

For the first time in his life, Jacob had a glimpse of holiness. God was no longer like Santa Cross. God is the Lord, the master of all things.

For the first time, he started to understand that the blessing he inherited or he cheated on was not something trivial or comfortable.

He realized that God was in control of all things as he saw the angels traveling between heaven and earth. God is sending the angels and doing his plan.

This God was now formally giving him the promise of this blessing. We can ask, why didn't God give Jacob this blessing sooner?

[22 : 48] If God did, then Jacob would not need to deceive Isaac for this blessing. I guess it is because when we are full of ourselves, God will not speak to us.

He will wait until we see our own happiness. Was God been partial in choosing Jacob but not Esau?

Last week I said that we are partial people because we all have needs. We favor those who meet our needs. God is not partial in this way. God needs nothing.

That's why you can be partial. Partial implies that we make life easier for those whom be favored. God was certainly not going to make Jacob's life easier, at least not for the next 20 years.

Actually, it's not even until his death, I suppose. If Jacob knew what was coming, I thought, I think he would gladly let Esau have the blessing instead.

[23 : 52] God promised Jacob that he would be with Jacob and bring him back to his homeland. This promise gave Jacob the strength to go on the long journey until he reached his uncle's place.

With God's presence, Jacob now had a much bigger purpose in his life. Initially, he wanted to get a blessing so that he could have a comfortable and secure life.

Now he started to realize that God had appointed something much greater for his life on earth. He God said, in him and his offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Jacob did not understand how all the families of the earth shall be blessed. But now he treasured his life in a different way. He started to see things differently and there starts the hope within him to live full.

He began to train his body and learn how to live outdoors as he traveled north. Day by day he became stronger. We will see that when he reached around how he became stronger.

[25 : 05] But today I want to talk about how God's blessing of Jacob needs to the families of the earth being blessed. Eventually God changed Jacob's name to Israel and through Jacob's 12 sons God formed the people of Israel and through this nation Jesus of Nazareth came to the world.

We can read this if you want to turn to John chapter 1. John chapter 1 verses 45 to 51. I'll read to you.

Philip found Nathaniel and said to him, We have found him of home Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Nathaniel said to him, Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathaniel coming toward him and said to him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit.

Nathaniel said to him, How do you know me? And then God changed them to Israel. And now Jesus is saying, I know you are a real Israelite and in you there is no deceit.

[26 : 25] There is a change in nature. in this passage we see that there are people like Nathaniel and Philip still waiting for God's promise to be fulfilled.

There is 1,800 years after God promised Abraham this blessing. And they were looking for these special people. And Nathaniel at first did not believe that that could come from Jesus because Jesus is from Nazareth.

Nazareth is a very insignificant place. How can such significant people come from such a insignificant place? So when a lot of people use the name Jesus of Nazareth it basically means that Jesus of nobody coming from nowhere.

But then when Jesus revealed to Nathaniel that Jesus knew what was in Nathaniel's mind Nathaniel changed his mind very quickly and acknowledged Jesus to be the son of God and the king of Israel. But Jesus told Nathaniel not to be impressed because of his supernatural power but because of the fulfillment of Jacob's dream. So unless you know Jacob's dream what Jesus told Nathaniel would not make much sense.

[27 : 49] I think because there's two reasons. One for the angels to descend on the son of man or on Jesus then either the angels are very tiny coming up and down or Jesus was a giant for that to happen.

Secondly it would be nobody ever seen that happen physically. So that would have to be what Jesus was saying was to do with Jacob's dream.

You can say that if Jesus is God he could certainly make himself a giant for the angels to come up and down on him. But you notice that Nathaniel addressed Jesus as the son of God but Jesus addressed himself as the son of man.

Jesus was telling Nathaniel that he came as a man. So therefore it's not likely that Jesus would use his power in that way and make himself a Zion. So that we understand what Jesus said about the angels ascending and descending on the son of man is that he would be the ladder.

So in Jacob's dream the ladder was set up from earth to heaven. Angels were ascending and descending on the ladder but God stayed above the ladder.

[29 : 12] Jacob was fearful enough seeing God in a distance. If God came down in all his glory I don't think Jacob could survive in God's presence.

So how is God coming to human? How is God coming to man? He came to us in the person of Jesus. We read in John if we can turn to Philippians chapter 2 verses 5 to 11 tells us God God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above all and every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that

Christ Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Philippians tells us that God emptied himself of his glory came to us as a servant he died on the cross that was how Jesus became the ladder for us to return to God the presence of angels in Jacob's dream tells us that God is in control of everything happening on earth whether we believe in him or not the angels also serve as a reference point for Jesus to tell us that he is that ladder so Jesus was telling Nathaniel not to believe in him because of his supernatural power but because of his death on the cross because there are many gods we could believe because they are supposed to give us or help us to be wealthy or healthy but there is only one God who would die for our sins did Jacob understand God more after God spoke to him yes in some way he did from his response and how he lived later but in some ways he didn't he still was thinking he still thinking

God's thought with his own mind because we are all slow to learn we do not even understand our own parents well how are we to understand God and that was what Philippians 2.5 was saying have this mind among yourself which is yours in Christ Jesus telling us that we will learn from the Lord Jesus Christ and not to focus on ourselves empty ourselves as well if I keep thinking that I'm the most important person in the universe I will never have a chance to understand anyone else Jacob was still a bit full of himself in his response to God because when we have crooked minds we tend to judge others with our own crooked minds so in verse 20 of Genesis chapter 28 Jacob then Jacob make a vow saying if God will be with you and will keep me with me and will keep me in this way that I go and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear so that I come again to my father's house in peace then the Lord shall be my God and this stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house and all that you give me I will give a full thanks to love to so what did God tell Jacob I will be with you and what was Jacob's response if God will be with me then I will do something for God if you were God what will you do to Jacob I will strangle him and ask which of the words I will be with you he did not understand God is not like us otherwise none of us will survive any encounter with

[33 : 42] God we are so slow God know that I think Jacob eventually did learn that he could not give God anything in his chance for God's favor in that incident God had to cripple Jacob to take away the last bit of his self centreness it happened in chapter 32 just before the sun rose on him nevertheless Jacob's response was more honorable than that of our generation we live in the age of entitlement and duty of care we tell everyone including God that they have the duty to care for us it is true that we cannot do anything to exchange God's favor but to do nothing in response to God's creating providing redeeming us is the ultimate self centreness the blessing which Isaac gave

Jacob is being fulfilled in Jesus Christ as Philippians 2 verses 9-11 tells us that therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father do you know who is in the center of the universe Jesus Christ do you know who is in the mind what is in the mind of God to exalt Jesus Christ why because it is only in this offspring Jesus Christ this offspring of Abraham that all the families of the earth will be blessed there's no other way the only way for God blessing to come is through Jesus as a sacrificial name and the risen king the death on the cross proved to us that Jesus loved us he did not die to trick us to worship a false God he died to become the ladder to reconcile us with true God in Jesus we are free from the need to worship ourselves when we know the God who is behind this blessing we will start worshipping a being who is far greater than us a God who is both great and good let us pray Father God we are amazed at the way you carry out

your plan and humble by your love towards us we want to worship you right thank you Father we pray in Jesus name Amen