

Taking the Easy Way Out

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Preacher: Cedric Moss

[0 : 00] Good morning. Our scripture reading this morning will be taken from the book of Genesis chapter 31, beginning at verse 1 through 55.

! Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and from what was our father's, he has gained all this wealth.

And Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him with favor as before. Then the Lord said to Jacob, return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you.

So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was and said to them, I see that your father does not regard me with favor as he did before, but the God of my father has been with me.

You know that I have served your father with all my strength, yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not permit him to harm me.

[1 : 11] If he said, the spotted shall be your wages, then all the flock bore spotted. And if he said, the stripes shall be your wages, then all the flock bore striped.

Thus God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me. In the breeding season of the flock, I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream that the goats were mated with the flock, were striped, spotted, unmodeled.

Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, Jacob, and I said, here I am. And he said, lift up your eyes and see all the goats that mate with the flock are striped, spotted, unmodeled.

For I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land, and return to the land of your kindred.

Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father's house? Are we not regarded by him as foreigners?

[2 : 18] For he has sold us, and he has indeed devoured our money. All the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do.

So Jacob arose and set his sons and his wives on camels. He drove away all his livestock, all his property that he had gained, the livestock in his possession that he had acquired in Paddan Aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac.

Laban had gone to share his sheep, and Rachel stole her father's household gods. And Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he intended to flee.

He fled with all that he had and arose and crossed the Euphrates and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead. When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled, he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him for seven days and followed close after him into the hill country of Gilead. But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night and said to him, Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad. And Laban overtook Jacob.

[3 : 38] Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen pitched tents in the hill country of Gilead. And Laban said to Jacob, What have you done that you have tricked me and driven away my daughters like captives of the sword?

Why do you flee secretly and tricked me and did not tell me so that I might have sent you away with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre?

And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? Now you have done foolishly. It is in my power to do you harm. But the God of your father spoke to me last night saying, Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.

And now you have gone away because you long greatly for your father's house. But why did you steal my gods? Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid, for I thought that you

would take your daughters from me by force.

Anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live. In the presence of our kinsmen, point out what I have that is yours and take it. Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

[4 : 52] So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two female servants, but he did not find them. And he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's.

Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel's saddle and sat on them. Laban felt about all the tent but did not find them. And she said to her father, Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the way of women is upon me.

So he searched but did not find the household gods. Then Jacob became angry and berated Laban. Jacob said to Laban, What is my offense? What is my sin that you have heartily pursued me?

For you have felt through all my goods what you have found of all your household goods. Set it here before my kinsmen and your kinsmen that they may decide between us two. These twenty years I have been with you.

Your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams of your flocks. What was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you. I bore the loss of it myself.

[6 : 01] From my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. There I was. By the day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sheep fled from my eyes.

These twenty years I have been in your house. I have served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.

If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction on the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night.

Then Laban answered and said to Jacob, The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine.

But what I can do this day for these my daughters, or for their children whom they have borne? Come now, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me.

[7 : 04] So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. And Jacob said to his kinsmen, Gather stones, and they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap.

Laban called it Jagar-Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galiad. Laban said, This heap is a witness between you and me today. Therefore he named it Galiad and Misper.

For he said, The Lord watch between you and me when we are out of one another's sight. If you oppress my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no one is with us, see, God is witness between you and me.

Then Laban said to Jacob, See this heap and the pillar, which I have set between you and me? This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness that I will not pass over this heap to you, and you will not pass over this heap and this pillar to me to do harm.

Then the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judged between us. So Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac, and Jacob offered a sacrifice in the hill country and called his kinsmen to eat bread.

[8 : 18] They ate bread and spent the night in the hill country. Early in the morning, Laban arose and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned home.

Amen. Thank you very much, David, for reading for us this morning. I believe most of us at different points in our lives have had to face difficult situations, but rather than face them head on, we took the easy way out in an attempt to avoid them altogether.

And most of the times, these difficult situations involved other people. Perhaps it was a broken or strained relationship where a hard conversation needed to be had, but rather than have that conversation, we avoided the person like the plague.

We took the easy way out, determined not to have that conversation. Perhaps it was a situation where we needed to receive correction but didn't want to hear it, and so we avoided it.

Perhaps it was a situation where we needed to give correction, but we dreaded how it would be received, how the person hearing it might respond, and so refused to have the conversation.

[9 : 50] We took the easy way out. And what makes this difficult to hear this morning, I think for us, is that we belong to Christ.

And he has promised never to leave us, never to forsake us, to always be with us. And this includes in difficult situations where we have to have hard conversations.

So there's no reason, really, to take the easy way out. Maybe this is the place you find yourself this morning, and it wouldn't surprise me, even though there aren't a whole lot of us here this morning, that there might be some of us who have difficult situations we are faced with, and rather than facing them head on, remembering that the Lord is with us, we are taking the easy way out.

This is where Jacob found himself in the passage we have come to this morning as we continue our sermon series in the book of Genesis. Genesis. The Lord told Jacob, leave Paddan Aram and go to the land of Canaan.

And rather than have a difficult but necessary conversation with his father-in-law, Jacob took the easy way out and he simply fled. But God was still with Jacob.

[11 : 20] God was with him even though he took the easy way out. And this morning, I want us to consider how. I want us to consider how God was with Jacob even as he took the easy way out.

And then I want us to consider how that has implications for our own lives this morning. So let's take a moment first to pray. Father, we are grateful that we are gathered this morning because you brought us here, Lord.

Lord, above and beyond the decisions we made to come in your divine providence, you brought us here. Those who are watching online in your divine providence, you're causing them to watch.

And so, Lord, would you speak to our hearts now? Would you cause us to hear as we ought to hear and to respond as we ought to respond?

Lord, I ask once again that you would anoint me by your spirit. You would grant us all illumination as we open your word. And Lord, you would do it all for your glory and for our good.

[12 : 31] We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. For those taking notes this morning, I've organized a sermon around three words. Three words to help me to work through this somewhat lengthy passage.

The first word is deception. Last week, we considered how Jacob, despite the heartless and greedy attempts of his father-in-law, Laban, to get him to work for nothing, the Lord blessed him.

Despite Laban's efforts to cheat and to rob Jacob, he was able to amass an enormous amount of wealth, all because the Lord blessed him.

Chapter 31 opens with Jacob hearing a false accusation from his first cousins, the sons of Laban, who are accusing him of acquiring all the wealth that he had gotten because he got them from, he took them from, their father.

And Jacob also noticed that Laban's attitude towards him had changed. And so in the face of this false accusation and this poor attitude that he was getting from Laban, Jacob summons his wives, Rachel and Leah, and he speaks to them.

[13 : 59] And the Lord had commanded him to return to the land of his birth, his home in Canaan.

And you see that in verse 3, it says, then the Lord said to Jacob, return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred and I will be with you.

That was the Lord's promise to him when he called him to go back. And Jacob lays out to Leah and Rachel in detail the mistreatment that he experienced in the hand of their father.

He said how Jacob, how Laban, sorry, continuously changed his wages. That's what he meant by 10 times. He wasn't literally saying, you know, I counted 10 times he did this.

He was using a figure of speech. He was using a manner of speaking that was common when somebody did something repeatedly to tax you. We would say something like umpteen times.

[15 : 00] and it just means that the person did something repeatedly and that's what he was saying. He said, your father repeatedly changed my wages from one thing to the next.

But Jacob ended his talk with his wives by pointing them to an undeniable reality and that was that God was with him, that God was protecting him, that God was preserving him in the midst of the bad treatment from Laban.

In verse 5, he says, but God, the God of my father was with me. In verse 7, he says, but God did not permit him to harm me. And so how did Rachel and Leah respond as they heard their husband berate their father for his bad treatment?

We see their response in verses 14 to 16. Look again at what they said starting in verse 14. Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father's house?

Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us and he has indeed devoured our money. All the wealth that God has taken from our father belongs to us and to our children.

[16 : 26] Now then, whatever God has said to you, do. So with the support of his wives, Jacob decides to leave Padan-Aram and to return to Canaan.

But Jacob decides to leave in a less than honorable way. We're told in verse 20 that he tricked Laban by not telling him. And literally what he did was he stole Laban's heart.

He deceived Laban in almost thinking that he was just cementing himself in the land of Padan-Aram, removing any concern in Laban's heart.

And then when Laban went to share his sheep, an activity that would have taken him far away from where they were living, and would have taken him there for a long period of time, this would be over several days that he'd be gone, because that's how long the process of sharing the wool off the sheep took, Jacob used that opportunity to steal away with his wives and his children and all of his possessions, his donkeys, his flock, his camels, his servants.

But Jacob didn't have to deceive Laban. Jacob could have simply told Laban, I'm returning to Canaan, I want to go back, and I'm going to take my wives with me, I'm going to take my children with me, I'm going to take the concubines with me, they belong to Rachel and Leah, and all the lives, I'm going to take everything back, because they belong to me.

[18 : 09] But telling Laban this was no easy task, we all have seen the kind of man that Laban was. And so, Jacob decided to deceive him, Jacob decided not to tell him of his plans to leave, because Jacob was fearful, he was fearful of what Laban might do, and therefore, he did not disclose his plans.

But Jacob shouldn't have been afraid. He's already told his wives how God was with him in the face of mistreatment, and God had already said to him, we read it earlier in verse 3, I will be with you, leave this land, go to the land of your fathers, and I will be with you.

God promised him, that in leaving, he would be with him. But despite this promise from God, Jacob was fearful, and so he took the easy way out.

But it wasn't God's plan for Jacob to deceive Laban, it wasn't God's plan for him to take the easy way out. And so even though Jacob deceived Laban, and took the easy way out, that was not the end of the story, and God, in his providence, caused Jacob to do what Jacob was trying to avoid.

And this brings me to the second word, confrontation. Three days later, Laban got word that Jacob had fled, Laban ran after him, Laban took some of his family members and pursued Jacob for seven days.

[20 : 07] But the Lord warned Laban, don't say anything. Actually, he didn't really say to him, don't say anything at all to Jacob, good or bad, because we know that Laban spoke to Jacob.

Literally, what the Lord said to him is, don't you speak good to him and then turn it into evil as you are accustomed to doing. The Lord was warning him against his deception, warning him against his trickery and saying, don't you speak to Jacob in that particular way.

And so even though this is something that Jacob is trying to avoid altogether, Laban pursues him and Laban finally catches up with him and Laban is enraged because Jacob has tricked him.

You know, when a person thinks they're really a master at something and somebody out masters them, they are really enraged and this master trickster was enraged because his green nephew, who he had tricked for all these years, 20 years, has now tricked him.

Look again at what Laban said to Jacob when he met up with him in verse 26. Laban said to Jacob, what have you done that you have tricked me and driven away my daughters like captives of the sword?

[21 : 38] Why did you flee secretly and trick me and did not tell me so that I might have sent you away with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre?

Why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? Now you have done foolishly. Now Laban pretends to be upset because Jacob didn't allow him to kiss his daughters and his grandchildren farewell and throw a party for them.

Again, we know Laban, this is all a lie. Laban was selfish, he was greedy, he was cheap, he cared nothing about his daughters and his grandchildren, and we saw this and now he mistreated his son-in-law because by extension he was mistreating them.

Laban was upset because Jacob deceived him. The master deceiver was deceived. And he was upset that it was through Jacob that God had blessed him and now that Jacob is leaving, those

blessings are going to leave with Jacob, those blessings were going to stop. We're able to see Laban's arrogance, we're able to see his spiritual blindness and the threat that he makes to Jacob in verse 29. He told Jacob, it's in my power to do you harm.

[23 : 04] Yet God had spoken to him the night before and warned him how he should speak to Jacob. Yet Laban arrogantly boasts about power that he didn't have.

He had no power to harm Jacob. And the reason is that God prevented him from harming Jacob. And as angry as he was, he was restrained by God.

We also see Laban's spiritual blindness and his pride in his unwillingness to acknowledge his cruel treatment of Jacob as the reason that Jacob was leaving Paddan Aram to go to Canaan.

Laban says, I know you left because you were homesick. I know you left, you wanted to see, that wasn't it. He was totally denying the bad treatment that he had meted out to his nephew when his nephew stayed with him.

But I think it's important for us to not miss what is actually happening in this account. What is happening in this account is that God is causing Jacob to have this confrontation with Laban that he was trying to avoid by taking the easy way out.

[24 : 26] We notice in verse 31 that Jacob confesses why he fled. He confesses why he tricked Laban.

Notice what he said. He said, because I was afraid for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force.

That's why he fled. That's why he tricked him. Jacob was afraid of what Laban might do. And Laban was certainly capable of disgusting behavior.

He was certainly capable of taking these wives for whom Jacob had worked and wresting them from him. But God was with Jacob.

Even though Jacob did not remember that God was with him, he didn't remember the promise that God would be with him. And so Jacob took the easy way out, forgetting that promise.

[25 : 29] In this confrontation with Jacob, Laban, again, is still true to character, and he falsely accuses Jacob of stealing his household gods.

Again, think about it. Jacob has a large family. Jacob has many servants. And Laban accuses Jacob directly and says, you stole them.

My household gods are missing. You stole them. All Laban knew is his household gods were missing. But he takes Jacob to task and he accuses him directly of stealing these household gods. And knowing that he didn't steal them, Jacob confidently said to him, if anyone is found with them, that person is going to die.

And obviously, Jacob didn't think anyone with him had those household gods, and certainly didn't think that his beloved Rachel stole them.

[26 : 41] And so Laban goes about and he sets about searching everyone's tent, goes into Leah's tent, goes into Rachel's tent, goes into the tent of the two concubines, Billa and Zilpah, and then he proceeds to go into Rachel's tent, not finding the other tent.

And when he goes into Rachel's tent, Rachel took these household gods, and these were little things, they were more like good luck charms, they weren't anything huge, they were big enough or small enough to fit into the saddle of a camel.

And Rachel hid them in the saddle of the camel, placed them on the ground, and she sat on them, and when her father walked in, it was appropriate that she would stand in his presence, and she said, I'm sitting because my cycle is on.

And so he searches the tent, he doesn't find them, and so he leaves. Now one of the things I think is important to not miss as we consider this particular part of the account, is that Moses, again, Moses is writing this account to the children of Israel as they're coming out of Egypt, and Moses is teaching them something about false gods.

These false gods that Laban worshipped and he was so concerned about, Rachel takes them, and whether Rachel was telling the truth or not about her condition, she sat on them, and by doing so, she defiled them.

[28 : 28] And these false gods had no power to even defend their own honor. These false gods were powerless. They were like the gods of the Egyptians where the children of Israel were coming out of.

They had no ability to defend themselves. They were dead gods. They were idle gods. And that certainly would have come out in the hearing of the original audience of Moses.

We're told in verse 36 that when Laban came out empty handed, that Jacob was angry and he blasted him out. And he proceeded to tell Laban all that he should have told him in Paddan Abraham.

He proceeded to have this difficult conversation with his father-in-law that he should have had to him face to face, man to man in the land of Canaan.

And as he lays out the way Laban treated him, we learn some details that we didn't learn before. We learn the extent of the cruel treatment that Jacob endured at the hands of his uncle Laban.

[29 : 42] Two very startling ways that Jacob was mistreated by Laban. He told Laban, he said, you didn't even allow me to eat the male goats.

And it's a common thing to do that because male goats were not that valuable. Male goats, you didn't need a lot of them. You just need a few male goats to impregnate flocks of females. Male goats could not reproduce. And so they were not as valuable as the female goats. And so they were the ones that were readily eaten. And his father-in-law would not even allow him to eat a male goat.

He told Laban, he said, you even required, he said, when the wild animals came, I'm out there in the heat. I'm out there at night in the cold.

And when the wild animals came and they would steal one of the flock and would kill them, you required me to pay. That was unheard of.

[30 : 48] That wasn't done. That was just considered a loss. But Laban so ruthlessly mistreated Jacob that he made Jacob pay.

Jacob had to account for the losses from the wild animals. And so Jacob lays out his grievances against his father-in-law.

Again, things he should have told him in Paddan Aram. He's now by God's providence having to face his father-in-law and tell him these particular things.

And he reminds him, I worked for your daughters for 14 years and I worked for these flock for six years. And you were dishonest with me.

You changed my wages, he said, again and again. You changed it ten times. But at the end of his whole grievance that he laid out to his father-in-law, look at how he ends it in verse 42.

[31 : 58] He says, if the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the feared Isaac had not been with me, had not been on my side, surely you would have sent me away empty handed.

God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked you last night. And Jacob was right. Even though the wives were, Jacob's wives and the children were Jacob's children and the servants, the livestock, the camels, the donkeys all belonged to him, Jacob would have sent, Laban would have sent Jacob away empty handed.

He was heartless, he was ruthless, he was greedy. But it wasn't left up to him. God was with Jacob. Brothers and sisters, he is with us too. And we are never at the mercy of anyone. It doesn't matter how big they seem, it doesn't matter how powerful they seem, we are never at the mercy of people. Because everything, everyone is subject to our sovereign God. We're never at the mercy of people and circumstances.

[33 : 23] And so even when it requires us to have difficult conversations, even when it requires us to do things that we don't want to do, our constitution is screaming against us to do, not to do, we should face them head on.

Because God is with us. He's promised never to leave us, he's promised never to forsake us. We don't need to take the easy way out. Because God is working his purpose out in our lives, and when we even try to take the easy way out, God is going to cause us to face that situation and to show us that he is with us.

And so Jacob finally faced and confronted Laban, even though it wasn't his preference. It was God's will.

And having confronted Laban, and even though Laban was unmoved, Laban was unrepentant, Jacob was still able to come to a place of resolution with Laban.

And this brings me to my third and final point, resolution. Jacob's response to, Laban's response to Jacob's blistering rebuke is quite sad.

[34 : 57] It's met with indifference, it's met with denial, it's met with unrepentance. Look again at what Laban said, starting in verse 43.

Then Laban answered and said to Jacob, the daughters are mine, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine.

But what can I do this day for these my daughters or for their children whom they have born? come now, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me.

Laban continued to dishonestly lay claim to everything that Jacob had, that he honestly worked for, that he worked for under harsh conditions.

He continued to do that. Laban is dead, but how many of you know that there are a lot of modern-day Labans? There are a lot of people who are unreasonable, there are a lot of people who would act in the same kind of manner, the same kind of spirit, the same kind of attitude.

[36 : 32] See no wrong, nothing they've done is wrong, and even pretend to be kind-hearted. Look at what he says again at the end of verse 43.

But what can I do this day for these my daughters or for their children whom they have born? He's really saying what good thing can I do for them? How can I help them? I'm a noble man, I'm a generous man, what can I do for them today?

And so he initiates making a covenant with Jacob claiming to do it on behalf of his daughters and grandchildren. Almost, when you read the account, he is really saying, let me make this covenant so you don't mistreat them.

And if there was ever an example of the part calling the kettle black, it would be this. And so Laban and Jacob make a covenant.

It's witnessed by stones. Jacob erects a pillar. he tells Laban and the relatives with him that they are to make a heap of stones as well.

[37 : 44] And they ate together as part of this covenant that they were making, this covenant of peace that they were making together. Laban called the heap witness in his language, in the Aramaic language, and Jacob called it witness in the Hebrew language.

Galit, he called it, and then later he calls it mispah as well in the Hebrew language, which is watchtower because Laban said, may the Lord watch between us while we're absent one from another.

And here again we see Laban's hypocrisy. God only needed to watch Laban, not watch over Jacob. Look at this hypocrisy again, verse 50, if you oppress my daughters, or if you take wives beside my daughters, although no one is with us, see, God is witness between you and me.

Laban had no regard for his daughters, he didn't care for them, and he pretends to be concerned that Jacob might mistreat them, he calls the Lord to watch Jacob.

But despite the fact that they've already made this covenant of peace, it's clear in Laban's heart that it isn't a settled matter. He knows it's not settled.

[39 : 05] Look at what he says, starting in verse 51. Then Laban said to Jacob, see this heap and the pillar which I have set between you and me. This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not pass over this heap to you, and you will not pass over this heap and this pillar to me, do me harm.

The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor the God of their father judge between us. Laban invokes the names of the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, and more properly what he was doing was he was invoking the names of the gods of Nahor, because Nahor was an idol worshiper.

He was into worshipping all kinds of idol gods. He didn't worship the true and the living God.

That began with Abraham. I noticed that although Jacob follows likewise, follows him in this act of swearing, Jacob does not swear by the gods of Nahor.

He only swore by the god of his father, the god of Abraham, the god of Isaac. But we're told that Jacob also did something else.

[40 : 32] The first time the narrator tells us about a meal that Laban and Jacob ate together is in verse 46 when they ate by the heap.

We're not sure who provided that meal. We're not sure what that meal consisted of. But in verse 54 there's no doubt what they ate and who provided it.

Look at verse 54. It says, And Jacob offered a sacrifice in the hill country and called his kinsmen to eat bread. And they ate bread and spent the night in the hill country.

I think it's important to notice that Jacob offered a sacrifice. Jacob didn't just kill an animal. He didn't just slaughter an animal, slaughter something to eat.

No, Jacob offered a sacrifice. He offered a sacrifice unto the Lord. It was an act of worship. It was an act of worship towards God.

[41 : 40] It was an act of grace towards his enemy Laban. This was an act of amazing grace. to someone who had so mistreated him.

Someone who had been so dishonest with him. Someone who had no regard for him. And here we see Jacob offering a sacrifice, offering an act of worship to God but towards his enemy Laban despite the prolonged and horrific treatment that he experienced at Laban's hands.

And this is a clear indication of God's work in Jacob's heart. Something that would not have happened if the Lord had allowed Jacob to take the easy way out and not face Laban.

And brothers and sisters, this is easy to miss in this account. But something happened in Jacob's heart. And I think we know that Jacob couldn't have changed his own heart.

Even as Jacob faced Laban, even as he had this interaction with him, even as he went through the motions of making this initial covenant with him that he asked for them to make, God so moved upon Jacob's heart that Jacob would sacrifice this animal in worship and he would then call them to eat another meal.

[43 : 14] That clearly pointed to his good will, clearly pointed to his transformed heart that he was making evident towards Laban.

Brothers and sisters, this sacrifice of Jacob points us to a far greater sacrifice. Indeed, it points us to the greatest sacrifice.

God was a sacrifice of an animal. It was the sacrifice of God's own son. He offered himself for undeserving sinners like you and me, not just to bring resolution as Jacob and Laban were able to bring, but to bring reconciliation between a holy God and sinful man.

And his sacrifice had a greater power to transform hard hearts like Laban's hearts and your heart and my heart. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross doesn't just bring some temporary non-aggression pact, but it brings peace between God and sinners who were once his enemies.

The sacrifice of Christ did something and still does something that animal sacrifice could never do. And I pray we hear this this morning.

[44 : 48] I pray we hear this this morning that the sacrifice of Christ has this ability to transform our hearts. Not just to help us to go through the motions.

Not just to help us to be better people, better behaved people, but no, to transform us from the inside out, that we would live a transformed life.

And I don't know where you stand this morning. I don't know where everyone stands this morning. Maybe you're here and you don't know Christ. Maybe you're watching and you don't know Christ. This is what he offers. He offers us true peace with God.

And it's from that peace with God that we can have true peace with others because he transforms our hearts. Forgiveness is one of the most difficult acts we are ever called upon to engage in.

Forgiveness from the heart. When we have been sinned against and we are called not just to mouth forgiveness, not just to say don't worry about it, but to genuinely forgive from the heart.

[46 : 18] That takes a miracle, brothers and sisters. If we take very seriously what Jacob went through with Laban, what accounts for the change of heart?

only the work of God can so change hearts. And brothers and sisters, that's what we all need. And here's the reality.

To one degree or another, all of us have been sinned against. And if you have not been sinned against, live long enough, you will be sinned against in the most graphic way, and you'll be called upon to forgive.

You'll be called upon not to take the easy way out, to face that person who has harmed you, and to forgive them from your heart. And it takes a transformed heart that none of us can produce to be able to truly forgive from the heart.

That's what Christ offers. That's what he offers to undeserving sinners like you and me. we get a glimpse of that.

[47 : 32] We get a small glimpse of that in Jacob's treatment of Laban. But it requires that necessary sacrifice that Christ offered in the person of himself on Calvary's cross to change sinners like you and me.

this account began with Jacob deceiving his father-in-law and taking the easy way out. It ended with him having confronted his father-in-law, coming to a resolution and making peace for one reason. God was at work in his heart.

God did a divine work in Jacob's heart to enable him to act in the way that he did towards his father-in-law.

God was doing something above and beyond all of that. God was fulfilling his purpose in Jacob's life. God was taking him from the land of Paddan around into Canaan, the promised land.

[48 : 50] he was going to fulfill the promises that he had made to Abraham and to Isaac. And the next situation that Jacob was going to face was far more dreadful than dealing with a greedy uncle who cheated him for 20 years.

He was going to have to face an angry brother who he cheated 20 years earlier. and that was a far more serious situation that he had to face.

It's one thing dealing with Laban who sinned against him. He now had to go and deal with his brother whom he sinned against.

And God was preparing him for that. Requiring him to face Laban and not take the easy way out was preparing him to face his brother and not take the easy way out as well.

Next Sunday Pastor Doug Plank is going to be preaching so we're going to pick up in chapter 32 the following Sunday the Lord willing. Let's pray. Father we thank you this morning that through Jesus Christ and his sacrifice on the cross you transform our hearts.

[50 : 23] We thank you Lord that you love us so much that you don't allow us to take the easy way out. But you promise that you'll be with us. You'll never leave us.

You'll never forsake us. And therefore we can trust you when we face difficult situations. I pray you would cause all of us this morning to hear your word as we should and help us to respond as we ought.

Help us to trust you as we face these situations head on remembering that you will give us grace. You will give us amazing grace. Would you speak to our hearts in these ways we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's stand for our closing song. God to you to you to you to