

Facing Our Past

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- [0 : 0 0] Our scripture lesson today is taken from Genesis chapter 33 verses 1 through 20. And Jacob last of all.
- He himself went on before them, bowing before himself to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother. But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him.
- And they wept. And when Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children, he said, Who are these with you? Jacob said, The children whom God has graciously given your servant.
- Then the servants drew near, they and their children, and bowed down. Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down.
- Angelas, Joseph, and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. Esau said, What do you mean by all this company that I meet, that I met?
- [1 : 2 4] Jacob answered, To find favor in the sight of my Lord. But Esau said, I have enough, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself.
- Jacob said, No, please. If I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God.
- And you have accepted me. Please accept my blessings that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.
- Thus he urged him, and he took it. Then Esau said, Let us journey on our way, and I will go ahead of you. But Jacob said to him, My Lord knows that the children are frail, and that the nursing flocks and herds are a care to me.
- If they are driven hard for one day, all the flocks will die. Let my Lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly at the pace of the livestock that are ahead of me, and at the pace of the children until I come to my Lord in Seir.
- [2 : 3 6] Esau said, Let me leave you. Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me. But he said, What need is there?
- Let me find favor in the sight of my Lord. So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. But Jacob joined it to Sukkoth, and built himself a house and made booths for livestock.
- Therefore, the name of the place is called Sukkoth. And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Padanaram.
- And he camped before the city. And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money, the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent.
- Therefore, he erected an altar and called it Elohi Israel. Amen. Thank you very much, Michelle.
- [3 : 4 3] I'm sure that with the exception of the young children among us, all of us have experienced situations with other people where we sinned against them.

And we had to go back and try to make it right. And I think we would all agree that it is one of the hardest things to do, especially when our words or our deeds wounded them deeply.

But life being what it is, I'm sure that we also have found ourselves on the other side, where the words and deeds of other people have wounded us deeply.

And they needed to come and ask for forgiveness and to seek reconciliation. And I think we all know that it is far easier to ask for forgiveness than to extend forgiveness.

But the truth is, whether we need to ask for forgiveness or we need to extend forgiveness, whenever there's a breakdown in a relationship, it is never easy. Whichever side we find ourselves on.

[5 : 03] This morning, as we continue our sermon series in the book of Genesis, we come to an account where Jacob and Esau found themselves in a difficult situation.

They had to face a situation in their past that took place 20 years before. Both of them had to face their past.

It was a painful past. And it brought about a long separation between them. And I pray that as we consider this account this morning, that the Lord will speak to our hearts.

Because here's what I know. Without even taking a poll, I know that there are some among us. Indeed, there might be many among us.

Who find ourselves where there is a relationship that's been ruptured. A relationship that has been broken. And reconciliation needs to happen.

[6 : 08] And in the providence of God, he has brought us here this morning. And so we should hear this as God speaking to us.

Concerning those relationships that are broken. And trusting that even in his providence to bring us here, that God is at work to help us.

To respond as we should respond, whichever side we find ourselves. But let me pray for us first. Father, we are so grateful that you know what we need and when we need it.

And we're grateful, Lord, that you work in our lives. You cause us to do your will. Lord, you brought us all to this place this morning. Would you speak to our hearts?

And Lord, in this I include myself. We all need to hear from you, Lord. Would you speak to us about seeking reconciliation, extending forgiveness?

[7 : 24] Or asking for forgiveness? And Lord, we ask that you would cause each of us to hear as you would have us to hear.

And then cause each of us to obey as you would have us to obey. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. For those taking notes, I've organized this sermon under two simple points.

The first point, which covers verses 1 to 11, is a necessary reconciliation. The Lord had commanded Jacob to return from Paddan Aram to Canaan.

And this required Jacob to have to face his brother Esau, whom he cheated out of his birthright and his blessing some 20 years earlier.

Last Sunday, we saw in chapter 32 how Jacob came up with an elaborate plan to pacify his brother Esau with a very extravagant gift that he sent with his servants and he put the gift in parcels so that he could overcome the anger of his brother and cause his brother to receive him.

[8 : 46] We also saw how Jacob, after he had separated himself from his wife and all of his goods, how left alone one night, God met him and God wrestled with him.

And God got him to confess who he really was by stating his name which meant cheater and supplanter and schemer and deceiver.

And that night, God changed his name to Israel. God did for him what he could not do for himself. God made him a new man from the inside out.

We're also told that in the process of God wrestling with him, God touched his hip socket and put it out of joint and we left off where Jacob was leaving Peniel and he was limping because God had touched the hip socket.

And this morning in verse 1, we pick up immediately after this encounter with God where Jacob is leaving Peniel, he lifts up his eyes and he sees his brother Esau coming with 400 men.

[9 : 59] And Jacob immediately divides his family into three groups and he divides them in the order of his affections for them.

The ones he didn't have great affection for, he put them to the front. So he put the two servants, Zilpah and Bilhah to the front with their children and then he put Leah and her children after them and then to the back of them, he put Rachel and Joseph whom he really loved.

And clearly we see that he is so fearful that his brother Esau is going to attack him and bring him harm. But then we see Jacob doing something that is quite surprising and we don't get that he was going to do this from chapter 32.

What Jacob does is Jacob goes in front of them. Jacob puts himself in the most vulnerable and risky position, something that we don't see him doing for the entirety of his life.

But he's a changed man because he's met God and God has changed him. And so Jacob goes before his family facing his brother, the last words from whom he heard is I'm going to kill you when my father dies.

[11 : 25] And he faces his brother with these 400 men who were with him. Even more surprising, we see how Jacob approaches his brother. We're told that he bows before him seven times.

He bows himself to the ground seven times as he is approaching his brother Esau. what is he doing? What is Jacob doing by bowing himself in this way before his brother?

This wasn't a part of the plan. He didn't say to them, I want you all to go, give him the gifts, and then I'm going to come behind and I'm going to bow myself to the ground seven times before him.

But no, this is after he's encountered the true and the living God. what Jacob was doing was Jacob was humbling himself before his brother.

Jacob was living out what it looks like to have encountered the Lord. And he was completely humbling himself. And in Scripture, a lot of times when you come across numbers, this is not always true, but a lot of times it is true, there's biblical numerology.

[12 : 42] number seven consistently throughout the Bible signifies completion or perfection. And that's why when we think of the week, the week goes from one to seven and then it goes back to one because it's a complete cycle.

When you go to seven, you come back to the first day. And Jacob bowing himself before Esau seven times is an indication that he was completely humbling himself before his brother against whom he had sinned some 20 years before.

This is a self-humbling act on the part of Jacob. Now, what did Esau see? What did Esau see as his brother Jacob was making his way towards him?

I'll tell you what he saw. What he saw was a changed man. He didn't just see a brother who was 20 years older, but he saw a brother who was visibly weaker, who was limping towards him, and he saw a brother who was humbling himself before him, and he understood what that meant.

He understood that his brother, Jacob, was a changed man. His brother left Canaan as Jacob, a cold-hearted cheater and schemer and deceiver, and he was returning to Canaan as a different man.

[14 : 08] He didn't know his name yet, but his name had changed. He was returning as a man who had encountered the true of the living God, and he was walking in brokenness, he was walking in humility.

And look at what happened in the very next verse, in verse 4. We read, but Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, and they wept.

That was shocking. That was surprising. In his wildest dreams, Jacob could not have imagined that that was the reception he was going to get from his brother.

But the author sets it up for us to see the surprise in it. Notice how it begins. Verse 4 begins with the word but, not and. It's a contrast to what we saw before.

But, so here he is, he's humbling himself. He is fearful of his brother, but Esau runs to meet him, embraces him, falls on his neck, kisses him, and they wept.

[15 : 26] It's very, very dramatic to look at the verbs in there. Esau ran. Esau embraced him. Esau fell on his neck. Esau kissed him.

And it says, they wept. There's so much wrapped up in those two words, they wept. The one who sinned and the one who was sinned against both wept.

Esau was preparing for a very difficult encounter. Esau was coming with his 400 men and they were not just coming for the ride.

Jacob was planning to try to minimize the damage, thinking that, okay, if he attacks the ones to the front, the ones to the back could escape. They were preparing for a very difficult encounter.

I'm sure Esau had a speech prepared. He had something prepared that he was going to say to his brother and he didn't have to say it. His brother ran up to him and embraced him, fell on his neck and kissed him and they wrapped together.

[16 : 45] So what happened? What happened was the Lord went before Jacob. Jacob thought that his gifts were going to go before him and change the heart of his brother but no, the Lord went before his gifts and we'll see that in a while.

The Lord went before his gifts and it was the Lord who changed Esau's heart and removed the intention to murder Jacob from his heart. And so Esau who came no doubt still very angry with his 400 men in the end runs to his brother embraces him falls on his neck kisses him and then they wrap together.

The one who was sinned against took the greater initiative to run and be reconciled with his brother in this way.

And so whatever speech Esau Jacob had planned to say to Esau he didn't get to say it. But you know what? He did speak to him. In their tears they communicated.

I think we've lived long enough to know that sometimes tears can communicate what words never can. And I believe that these two estranged brothers experienced that on that day.

[18 : 15] Genuine tears represent brokenness and contrition. So genuine tears represent. And they for reconciliation are more meaningful than a book of words.

We'll never know exactly what those tears represented for both Jacob and Esau. We won't know. But at minimum here's what we know.

The tears of Jacob represented and said to Esau, I am sorry. Would you forgive me? Minimum it said that. And minimum the tears of Esau said to Jacob, I forgive you.

Those tears on both sides helped to bring about a necessary reconciliation. no doubt there are some of us this morning who have broken relationships that need to be reconciled.

Maybe you've sinned against someone or maybe someone has sinned against you. And certainly if you sinned against another person, humble yourself.

[19 : 39] Humble yourself before the Lord and before that person and seek reconciliation in a spirit of humility, trusting the Lord to go before you.

God desires that we be reconciled. And so he will not tell us, you go and be reconciled and then fold his arms and leave us to ourselves. No, he is involved in the reconciliation because if he is not, reconciliation will not happen.

And so we have this assurance that as difficult as it might seem to take those steps towards reconciliation, there is a God who is with us, there is a God who goes before us, and there is a God who will make that much easier than we think it will be, as he did for Jacob.

And even if you have been sinned against, you know that the New Testament teaching on this is very clear, that whether we have been sinned against or we sinned against another person, we all have a duty to go and seek reconciliation.

So if you read in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 23, 24, Jesus talks about when you remember that your brother has something against you, something that you did, you go to your brother.

[21 : 06] And then in Matthew 18, he says, if your brother sins against you, then you go and you confront your brother concerning that sin, the goal being to be reconciled.

There's no substitute for this, brothers and sisters. Jacob then asked Esau two questions. His first question is in verse 5.

Upon seeing the women and children behind, Jacob, he asked, who are these with you? And Jacob responds, only referring to the children.

He doesn't refer to his wives and he says, the children whom God has graciously given your servant. Notice his humility.

His humility before God and his humility before his brother Esau. is seen in the fact that he recognizes that the children that God has given to him first and foremost are a gift from God and not the fruit of his own fertility or his own masculinity.

[22 : 19] They are a gift from God. That's his humility before God. And his humility before Esau is seen in the fact that he calls himself Esau's servant.

Brothers and sisters, this posture of humility must be our posture when we have sinned and when we are seeking forgiveness and reconciliation.

We must humble ourselves. Esau's second question to Jacob is in verse 8.

He asks him, what do you mean by this company I met? And here Esau's referring to the 580 animals that Jacob sent ahead with his servants in droves.

And he told the servants you to tell Esau that these belong to my master Jacob and he has sent them as a gift to you so that he might find favor in your eyes.

[23 : 24] Notice Jacob's answer to Esau also in verse 8. He says to find favor in the sight of my Lord.

Notice again, he humbles himself before his brother Esau and he refers to him as his Lord pointing to the fact that he is his servant.

Again, brothers and sisters, this must be our posture. we must be humble as we pursue reconciliation. And this is not mere words. Jacob encountered the true and the living God who changed him from a cheating hard-hearted man into a broken humble man who was willing to humble himself before his brother against whom he had sinned.

Jacob's response in verse 9 shows that his gift failed. Shows that this extravagant gift, the 580 animals that he sent ahead, that his gift failed to do what he wanted his gift to do.

Look again at what Esau says in verse 9. But Esau said, I have enough, my brother, concerning the gift, I have enough, my brother, keep what you have for yourself.

[24 : 55] Esau told Jacob, keep it. I don't need it. In other words, the place where Esau found himself, the place of peace and reconciliation, the gift had nothing to do with it, and he said, you could keep it.

Jacob's gift failed to do what he wanted it to do. God was the one who brought about the change of heart. that Esau had.

Notice again that although Jacob calls Esau his lord and he refers to himself as Esau's servant, Esau refers to him as his brother.

Esau didn't make him grovel in the dust to get forgiveness and to be reconciled.

He saw him as his brother. That was his heart towards him. He didn't say, yes, you're my servant. No, he said, my brother. And this change of heart was not due to the passage of time.

[26 : 06] this change of heart came about because God softened Esau's heart. God went before Jacob and God worked in Esau's heart.

Notice again what Jacob in response says to Esau in verse 10. Jacob says, no, please. If I found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand, for I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me.

Jacob says to Esau, seeing your face is like seeing the face of God. And brothers and sisters, this is a beautiful picture of what divine forgiveness and reconciliation looks like.

Esau's eager reception of Jacob, the forgiveness that he extended to him, is a glorious picture of God's marvelous grace to undeserving sinners.

True forgiveness is an act of divine grace. When we truly forgive from the heart, that is something that is outside of us, that is something that is divine, that God enables us to extend.

[27 : 33] And when we truly forgive from the heart, we show the face of God. forgiveness to the other person receiving forgiveness whenever we truly forgive from the heart.

Because that is so foreign to us, because that is not a part of us, we show the face of God. We show a face that is not our face. When we truly forgive forgiveness from the heart.

True and genuine forgiveness, brothers and sisters, is a miracle. True and genuine forgiveness is something that is God-enabled.

It is something that God brings to pass. And Jacob describes it so well. He says, Brother, when I saw your face, when I saw the way you ran to me, when I saw the way you embraced me, when I saw the way you kissed me, it was like seeing the face of God because I know I've sinned against you.

I know I've done you wrong. And you received me. Didn't wait for me to come to you, you ran to me and came to me.

[28 : 52] Brothers and sisters, there's no other activity that we can engage in that identifies us as belonging to God than when we extend forgiveness from the heart to another person.

That more than any other activity identifies us as belonging to the Lord. That's when people see the face of God when we extend forgiveness.

Because even when we repent, even when we say I'm sorry, that does not earn the right to forgiveness. It's the right thing to do.

It's the proper thing to do to say you're sorry because you should have done what you did. But forgiveness is a gift. Forgiveness is not earned by our confession.

It is a gift. And when we extend that gift, it is something God has given to us that we get to extend to somebody else. And when we do, they see the face of God.

[29 : 58] They see the face of God in a fellow sinner like them. They see the face of God in someone whom God has met and God has enabled to forgive and thereby show his face.

God is. It's in verse 11 that Jacob insisted that Esau take the gift. So Esau did. Not as some kind of compensation or restitution for what Jacob did.

He took it because he was compelled to take it. He didn't want to take it. The point is that Jacob's gift failed. Jacob's gift did not bring about the reconciliation that he wanted.

Now I would be misleading you brothers and sisters if I were to give you the impression that reconciliation will always happen.

I think it's so fitting that we are memorizing Romans 12 17 to 18 because the very last verse reminds us that reconciliation isn't always possible.

[31 : 24] We are called to live at peace with everyone. If possible, if possible, live at peace with everyone as much as lies within you.

And the broken world and the fallen world, we will not get perfect reconciliation in every circumstance. and so I don't want anyone to get the impression that I'm saying that this morning, but here's what I know.

I believe that we can get more reconciliation than we currently have, even though we'll never be 100% in this broken, fallen world. But it isn't always possible.

What we must do is we must recognize we're responsible for our part and we need to fulfill our part And we need to make sure that our side of the bridge is up. And by the grace of God, that it stays up.

But we can't build the other side of the bridge. The other person needs to build that. Well, in this passage, not only do we come face-to-face with a God-ordained, necessary reconciliation, but this passage also brings us face-to-face with a God-ordained, necessary separation.

[32 : 45] And this is my second and final point, a necessary separation. We see this necessary separation, verses 12 to 20.

In verse 12, Esau proposes to lead the way back to his home in Seir, or ahead of Jacob and his family and the flock. And Jacob knew he wasn't going to go.

But one of the things that I want you to see as we work our way towards finishing Genesis is that although Jacob was a changed man, he wasn't a perfect man.

And that's something we all need to grasp. God changes us. It doesn't mean we're perfect. And one of the weaknesses that we see in Jacob is Jacob had a hard time making difficult decisions.

We'll see this especially next Sunday, the Lord willing, when we consider how he dealt with the rape of his daughter. Jacob knew that he was not going to Seir with Esau.

[34 : 03] He knew that God had a different plan for him. He knew that his path and Esau's path were separate paths. But Jacob doesn't tell him straight.

Jacob gives him an excuse about why he doesn't want him to lead them into Seir. He says, well, you know, the children, they're weak, and they can only go so far, and the animals are nursing, and I need to go at their pace.

And so he said, you go ahead, and we will follow you when we will come to Seir. He gave Esau the impression that he was going to follow him to the land of Seir.

So in verse 15, Esau proposes, he says, okay then, let me at least leave some of the people with you who will no doubt be a source of help to you.

And Jacob declines. He says, look, what's the need? There is no need to leave them. And I want you to see again in verse 15, for the third time, Jacob identifies himself as Esau's servant, calling Esau his lord.

[35 : 20] But Jacob is one of those persons, I'm sure we've all met them, that they can tell you certain things, but they could do certain things. They can't tell you no, but they could do no.

And so Jacob is fully intending to do what he has in mind, but he can't bring himself to tell his brother that he is not going with him to Seir.

So we read in verse 16 that Jacob returned on his way to Seir, but in verse 17 we read, I want you to look at it. In verse 17, it says, but, it's intentional to show a contrast, but he knew he wasn't going to go to Seir.

But Jacob journeyed to Sukkoth and built himself a house and made booths for his livestock.

Therefore, the name of the place is called Sukkoth. Jacob went to an area that was away from where Esau was.

[36 : 38] And he, this area really hadn't been named yet. It only became Sukkoth because he built these booths, which means Sukkoth, and that's how it became known as Sukkoth.

We're told in verses 18 and 19 that Jacob came to the city of Shechem in the land of Canaan and he brought a hundred pieces, he brought a piece of land with a hundred pieces of money.

And on that land, he built a house and he pitched a tent. He pitched his tent. I want to ask you, why of all the different cities in Canaan that Jacob could have gone to, why did he go to Shechem?

He knew he was going to Shechem. Why did he go to Shechem? What is very clear is that all of this is the man that Jacob is becoming.

Jacob had embraced the promises that God had made to Abraham and his offspring to give them the land of Canaan and to bless all the nations through them.

[37 : 54] And what is clear is that Jacob went to the place where God first appeared to his grandfather Abraham.

He went to the place where God appeared to Abraham, where God said to Abraham, I'm going to give you this land, and he goes there as an act of faith and he buys land in that location.

Look at what it says in Genesis 12, 4-7. It should be projected for you. So, talking about Abraham, so Abraham went as the Lord had told him and Lot went with him.

Abraham was 75 years old when he departed from Haran. And Abraham took Sarai, his wife, and Lot, his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered.

And the people that they had acquired in Haran, they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abraham passed through the land to the place of Shechem, to the oak of Moray.

- [39 : 08] At that time, the Canaanites were living in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abraham and said, To your offspring I will give this land. So he built an altar.
- He built there an altar to the Lord who appeared to him. Jacob knew his family's history. And here he was.
- He is renewing his belief in God's promise that he would give this land to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants. And so he goes to this place in the promised land when he returns.
- And he expresses faith by buying land there that this is where he's going to settle, the land where God promised to give him. Esau was not a part of the promise.
- And so Jacob necessarily had to separate from him. The next reference that we see about Esau is the descendants of Esau.
- [40 : 15] It's when Isaac dies and both Esau and Jacob come back to bury him. And then after that the next reference is over in Genesis 36 where it gives us the descendants of Esau.
- And after that it's the last mention of Esau in all of Genesis. They needed to be reconciled. But that reconciliation didn't mean that they had to be together.
- Divinely they needed to be separated because God had different paths for them. And I didn't really intend to make this point or to dwell on this point but I would just say it in passing.
- Sometimes brothers and sisters reconciliation happens but continuation is not what God would have for us. Reconciliation is necessary.
- Continuation together is not always necessary. Now of course that's not husband and wife so no one go and say oh the pastor say we don't have to continue.
- [41 : 32] No you're in a covenant and so that doesn't apply to you. You know sometimes it's with siblings. Do you know that siblings are not joined in covenant the way husband and wife are?
- They're not. God joins a husband and wife and he makes them one. He does a unique kind of mathematics. He takes two and he makes one.
- And this is why death is so hard for a husband and wife and divorce as well. It is a tearing apart of what God made to be one.
- But back to the point Jacob and Israel had divinely set separate paths and it was necessary that they would separate.
- In verse 20 we are able to see how Jacob really was a changed mind. again not a perfect man but a changed man.
- [42 : 53] We know this because in verse 20 Jacob builds his first altar. He builds his first altar as an expression of his new commitment to serve the Lord and he's investing in his relationship with the Lord.
- The last time he saw Jacob doing anything similar was in chapter 28 when he was running from Canaan he was running to Paddan for his life and the Bible tells us that the son caught him and he laid down and slept on a stone and when he got up and God appeared to him he took the stone set it up as a pillar poured oil on it and said God you'll be my God.
- But that was the extent of what he was willing to invest in his relationship with God in terms of worship is taking a stone putting no effort into it no energy into it and simply pouring some oil on it and say God I worship you.
- But here we see him erecting an altar. He's building an altar. This is a stone altar. This is something that took energy and effort and intentionality.

He's building this altar his first altar he's building it the same place where Abraham built his first altar. And he calls it not Elohi Jacob not the God not God the God of literally what it is God the God of Elohi he doesn't call it Elohi Jacob because Elohi Israel which means God the God of Israel Jacob is now coming into his own relationship.

[44 : 55] It's no longer going to be the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac. It's not going to be the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Jacob is owning now his own relationship with the Lord.

And children I want to say to you this morning you must do the same. Jacob was always referring to the God of his fathers the God of Abraham the God of Isaac but the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac had to become the God of Jacob and children I'm saying to you it must be the same for you.

You must come to the place where your parents God becomes your God where you have your relationship with the Lord where you're serving the Lord not where you were just standing on their relationship with the Lord you must come to the place where God the true and the living God is your God where he changes you and he transforms you into a new person.

Jacob's family no doubt would have asked him why did you name it Elohi Israel and he no doubt would have had to explain to them why he did that but one of the things that is a reality is when God changes us we are more aware that he has changed us even before we bear fruit for others to see it.

And so even before Jacob is bearing real tangible fruit for others to see it he takes on this new identity that God has given to him he names this altar after his new name that God has given to him.

[46 : 49] And here again this was not Esau's God Esau was not serving the Lord and a necessary separation was needed because they were serving to different gods.

I think we would all agree that when we came to chapter 33 unless you knew the story you have to admit that it's quite a surprise how things turned out in chapter 33 and how they seemed like they will turn out in chapter 32.

As a matter of fact if this story was just being told to us and we didn't know what 33 said if we were told that these two brothers had this strange relationship and one the one who's been sinned against is coming with 400 men and the other one is preparing gifts to appease him and we were all asked to just give our speculation as to how things are going to turn out none of us would have guessed that things would have turned out the way they turned out it is a big surprise when we come to chapter 33 that these two brothers are reconciled it's a huge surprise brothers and sisters there is an even greater surprise the greatest surprise in human history of all reconciliations that have ever taken place is the reconciliation between a holy God and sinful men and women like you and me you see with Jacob and Esau these were two sinners reconciling yes Jacob sinned against

Esau but Esau sinned as well Esau lacked character Esau did not value his position as the first son as the one to whom this incredible inheritance was coming he needed to repent about that and Esau told his brother I'm going to kill you that's sin and he needed to say to his brother hey I know you sinned against me but I'm sorry for saying that I was going to kill you and so that reconciliation as surprising as it was that was a reconciliation between two sinners brothers and sisters the most profound the most out of this world reconciliation is when a holy God who committed no sin against us acted in more mercy and grace than Esau ever could and ran to us in mercy and grace and reconciled us not in a vacuum but at his own cost by sending his son to die on Calvary's cross so that we might be forgiven he didn't just say don't worry about it what he said is

I forgive you because I have poured out my wrath for your sin on my son and brothers and sisters this is the most shocking reconciliation the most surprising reconciliation in all of human history God the perfect one reconciled the sinners like you and me who didn't deserve to be reconciled to him and so I pray that as surprising as this turn of events is in chapter 33 let's not leave here marveling about that more that we marvel about the fact that those of us who have trusted in Jesus Christ have been forgiven by a merciful God by a gracious God and we didn't deserve to be forgiven you and

[51:10] I deserve one thing and that is the wrath of God that our sins deserve that is what we deserve mercy is undeserved grace is undeserved but that grace has come to us and that grace has reconciled us to a holy God and so Jacob rightly said to Esau and I saw your face it was a saying the face of God because we see the face of God in forgiveness and grace that he's extended to all of us and those of us who know Christ and the pardon of our sins we know that's marvelous grace that is amazing grace that is undeserved grace that is grace from a God who knows us perfectly grace from a God who's able to see all the many ways in our future that we will sin and fail and he reconciles us nonetheless and he causes his own and he promises that he'll never turn us away no matter what our future holds he will never turn us we're not told much about what was going on between

Jacob and Esau all we know is they bury their father together we don't know what words they exchange we don't know if Esau said hey you tricked me you told me you were going to come to see or you didn't come we don't know but you know sometimes if we had knowledge of the future we would not make some decisions that we make in the present God is not like that God sees us perfectly he sees us at our worst in the future and that is no bearing upon his receiving us and reconciling us to himself and he says I will do it forever you will always be mine I will never turn you away and even when you want to go and run away and stray away I will hold on to you and the song we're going to sing this morning as we close is a song that reminds us of this truth that

Christ holds us fast he holds us fast to the very end and if he didn't none of us would make it but he does and so all who belong to Christ will make it home safely and that is amazing grace let's pray together Father thank you that we are never left alone to ourselves and by ourselves to deal with our past Lord you go before us you go before us Lord in ways that only you can would you help us oh Lord where there are broken relationships in our lives to take to heart what we've heard this morning and to trust you whichever side we find ourselves on and Lord may we remember that more than any other activity when we forgive we are resembling you when we forgive others they see in our face the face of God the one who enables forgiveness and makes it possible

Lord I pray that you would settle all of our hearts this morning who belong to Jesus and we will always belong to Jesus and I pray that those who do not know Christ I pray for children in particular Lord who know of the God of their mother and father but you're not their God Lord make them come to a place where they can say God is my God Lord would you be pleased to save the lost this morning for your own name sake we pray in Jesus name amen let's stand for a closing song