

Like Father, Like Son

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles and let's open them up this morning to Genesis chapter 26. Genesis chapter 26. We're continuing our series through the book of Genesis.

And if you don't have your own Bible with you this morning, that's okay. We provide those in the seat back nearby. It should be one in the seat back in front of you. I think our passage this morning is on page 18 or thereabouts, 18 or 19.

You will want to have a copy of God's Word open with you as we walk through this passage together. So Genesis chapter 26. And when you found it, let's stand this morning in honor of the reading of the Word of God.

Now there was a famine in the land besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech, king of the Philistines. And the Lord appeared to him and said, Do not go down to Egypt.

Dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land. And I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands.

[1:12] And I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

Because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. So Isaac settled in Gerar. And when the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said, She is my sister.

For he feared to say, my wife, thinking, Lest the men of the place should kill me because of Rebekah, because she was attractive in appearance. When he had been there a long time, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out of a window and saw Isaac laughing with Rebekah, his wife.

So Abimelech called Isaac and said, Behold, she is your wife. How then could you say she is my sister? Isaac said to him, Because I thought, lest I die because of her.

Abimelech said, What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us. So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

[2:23] And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The Lord blessed him. And the man became rich and gained more and more until he became very wealthy. He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants.

So that the Philistines envied him. Now the Philistines had stopped and filled with earth all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father. And Abimelech said to Isaac, Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we.

So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the valley of Gerar and settled there. And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham.

And he gave them the names that his father had given them. But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, The water is ours.

So he called the name of that well, Isek, because they contended with him. Then they dug another well and they quarreled over that one also. So he called its name Sitna.

[3:31] And he moved from there and dug another well. And they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, saying, For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

From there he went up to Beersheba. And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake.

So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well. When Abimelech went to him from Gerar with Ahuzeth, his advisor, and Phicol, the commander of his army, Isaac said to him, Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?

And they said, We see plainly that the Lord has been with you. So we said, Let there be a sworn pact between us, between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good, and have sent you away in peace.

You are now the blessed of the Lord. So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths, and Isaac sent them on their way, and they departed from him in peace.

[4:53] That same day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well they had dug, and said to him, We have found water. He called its name Sheba. Therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.

When Esau was 40 years old, he took Judith, the daughter of Beeri, the Hittite, to be his wife, and Basamat, the daughter of Elon, the Hittite, and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.

The grass withers, and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Father, we ask now as we open up your word, as we step back into what seems like a familiar story.

God, would you teach us yet again? Would you open up our eyes to see and our ears to hear and our hearts to receive the truth this morning? We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. You've probably heard the phrase, History repeats itself. Mark Twain would say, No, history does not repeat itself, but it often rhymes. Most of you are familiar with the story of the Titanic.

[5:58] I assume the Titanic was billed as the unsinkable ship, but we all know, of course, how that turned out. The captain of the ship, Edward Smith, he ignored repeated warnings, several warnings, before eventually crashing into the iceberg and sinking the Titanic, ultimately leading to the death of over 1,500 passengers.

What you may not be as familiar with is the story of the Titan. The Titan was a much smaller vessel than the Titanic. It was a submersible vessel.

It could only hold maybe five people, but it actually met a similar fate as the Titanic. The submersible Titan imploded about three years ago on its way down into the depths of the ocean to explore, guess what?

The wreckage of the Titanic. And the similarities between the two stories are pretty eerie when you start digging into it. Just like the designers of the Titanic, the designers of the Titan thought that their design, their vessel, was unsinkable.

And just like Captain Smith of the Titanic, Captain Rush of the Titan, ignored many clear and repeated warnings. Just like the Titanic, the Titan now is destroyed along with the lives of all those who were on board.

[7:22] If you pay attention, if you live long enough, you might notice some of these repeated rhymes and different events throughout history. You might have seen some several repeated instances even in your own life.

And as you read through the Bible, it's interesting, you see a lot of this repetition even in the pages of Scripture. Our passage this morning ought to sound very familiar to you.

If you were here when we preached through Genesis chapter 12 and then again with Genesis chapter 20, what you'll notice is that many of the same events that Abraham went through in chapter 12 and in chapter 20 are happening again here a generation later in the life of Isaac.

This is not accidental. When we see this sort of repetition in Scripture, I think we're meant to stop and ask ourselves, why is history repeating like this?

We're meant to connect the dots and see what is it that connects these similar events and then to take it one step beyond that to see what is it that connects us to these events.

[8:30] Is there any similarities here between Abraham's experience and then Isaac's experience and then all the way to us and our experience in Christ? And what I think you'll see as we walk through the passage this morning is that yes, there is many, many, many rhymes with our own experience.

Here's the big idea this morning for us. We, like Isaac, and like Abraham before him, face all sorts of problems in this life.

But we do so with all the confidence of the promises of God for us in Christ. And we'll see this in two parts this morning.

If you're taking notes, this will be our outline. We'll see both the promises first and then second, we'll see the problems. So let's look first here at the promises. The promises.

Look there with me, starting in verse one. And I wonder if you notice the way that this chapter is structured, it's sort of like a sandwich. Now you have these promises of God here followed by all sorts of dramatic problems.

[9:34] And then at the end, it ends again with these same glorious promises of God. So we have promises, problems, promises. We should notice also that this story is out of chronological order.

Did you notice that? You know, last week we saw the birth of Jacob and Esau. We're supposed to be moving on. But now Moses is bringing us back. We're going back in time to this story of Isaac journeying through the land.

It's like Moses is telling us. This similar cycle of sin, opposition, trials, problems, problems, problems that happened with Abraham that's carrying on here with Isaac.

So we can probably safely assume that's going to keep happening with Jacob and on and on and on down the line all the way to you, Christian. We see here in verse 1, a famine in the land forces Isaac to relocate, just like with Abraham in chapter 12 where a famine forced Abraham to sojourn in Egypt.

So here, this repetition, a famine forces Isaac to relocate to Gerar in the Negev. Here a whole generation later, not much has really changed, has it?

[10:48] The land is still rough. The terrain is still harsh. There's still famine. And now Isaac, like Abraham before him, he's still a sojourner.

He's still living in tents. He has no permanent dwelling here in the land that God's promised would be his. I think it's clear to us that yes, God has promised this, but the realization of his promise is yet to come.

It's not immediate. It's not instant gratification. There's a delay here where God's people must live by faith in the promises of God.

So this famine has forced Isaac to pick up and relocate. He goes down to Gerar, and here he encounters Abimelech. Now, I don't know if this is the same Abimelech that Abraham dealt with in chapter 20 when he went down to Gerar or not.

It could be, but not necessarily. That name Abimelech is actually a title. It means son of the king. And so while it could be the same guy, it could also just be another guy in the same position.

[11:58] That's what I tend to think. But regardless, Isaac goes down to the king of the land, but as he goes down into enemy territory, as he goes wandering through the desert, as he walks in the middle of famine, look what happens.

He encounters the true king. The Lord speaks to Isaac. And more than that, verse 2, it says that the Lord appears to Isaac.

And this is the same language that we see other places where this is a physical, visible manifestation of the presence of God. It's what we call a theophany. God appears in visible form to come and speak with Isaac.

And what does he say? Do not go down to Egypt. Dwell in the land of which I will tell you. Sojourn in this land. You know, that might not have been what Isaac wanted to hear.

Don't go down to Egypt where it's lush and plentiful and where the crops are growing and where there's plenty of water. Keep wandering, keep living as a sojourner, stay right here in the middle of this empty desert, stay right here in the middle of this famine.

[13:15] That's probably not the counsel that he wanted to hear, don't you think? You and I, it's human nature that we want to seek out ease and comfort, don't we?

I mean, naturally, when we're in the middle of some sort of trial, we want God to lead us out of that as quickly as possible. But sometimes, we should recognize, even in the midst of incredible difficulty, sometimes, we are exactly where God wants us to be.

We may not want to hear that, but listen to the assurance that God gives him here. He says, Isaac, I will be with you.

This Emmanuel promise, promise God with us, and I will bless you. For to you and to your offspring, I will give all these lands.

I will establish the oath that I gave to Abraham, your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven. I will give your offspring all these lands, and in your offspring, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

[14:34] It's as if to say, Isaac, I know your circumstances are difficult. Isaac, I know that you're in the middle of a famine. Isaac, I know that my promises have been slow in your eyes to come to pass, but my promises have not changed, and I will do it in my time.

Do these promises sound familiar to you? This is an echo, almost exactly an echo, this rhyme, this repetition. The Lord is reaffirming the promises that He made to Abraham.

Only now, it's to Isaac a generation later. Only did you notice a slight difference in the promises?

Verse 3, He says, to your offspring, I will give all these lands.

as small hint that maybe, maybe Canaan is not the only piece of land that's promised to God's people.

In fact, as we see later on and we flip over to the pages of the New Testament, Romans chapter 4 tells us clearly that Abraham and his offspring, that is, all those who share the faith of Abraham, will be heirs not just of Canaan, but heirs of the whole world.

[15:48] All these lands will come to the one true people of God. All those who trust in the promises of God. Or as we can say on this side of the cross, all those who trust in the promises of God in Christ.

Hebrews chapter 11 says that by faith, that is, faith in the promises of God, by faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.

And he went out not knowing where he was going. And by faith, he went to live in the land of promise as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

Why? For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. See, Abraham and Isaac were content to live in harsh circumstances, to live as sojourners, to live in the midst of great difficulty, to live in enemy territory.

Why? Because they trusted by faith that God had promised a better eternal home for them. Not just Canaan, the whole world renewed.

[17:11] the new heavens and the new earth. All creation freed from the curse of sin. A world where there is no famine.

Can you imagine? A world where there is no sin. A world where we no longer move from place to place, dwelling in temporary shelters, but a place where we are finally home.

Church, do you realize in Christ we share this promise? It's God's promises that carry us through our time here as an exile. We, like Isaac, are sojourners in a land that belongs to us, that's been promised to us, but not quite yet.

We are exiles and strangers in a land that we know will one day be full of beauty and free from the effects of the curse of sin, but not quite yet.

Right now it's prone to all sorts of famine and danger and harsh conditions, but one day soon and very soon God has promised us Christ will come, Jesus will return, and all the world will be remade.

[18:20] All the world will be freed from sin and it will all be ours. All who have faith in Christ share this glorious promise.

The time is coming when we will inherit the land, but in the meantime, like Isaac, we face all sorts of problems, don't we? Let's look here a second to the problems that we face.

While we wonder here as sojourners and exiles waiting for these promises to come to pass, we face all sorts of problems, don't we? Amen? I'm glad I'm not the only one.

And these problems come at us from two main directions. We face both internal problems and we face external problems. And we see both of them here in the passage.

Look with me starting in verse 7. And here we see some of the internal problems that Isaac's facing. Isaac shows up and Gerar and verse 7 says that the men of the place begin asking about his wife, Rebecca, because apparently she's very beautiful in appearance.

[19:31] And so what does he do? Like Abraham before him, he lies. He tells everybody that his wife is his sister.

Why? To save his own skin. Right? To protect himself so his own life would be spared. I mean, at least when Abraham did it, it was kind of a half lie, right? Sarah was his half sister.

I know that's weird. Times were different back then. But here, I mean, it's just a complete full out, flat out lie. Didn't God just promise like two seconds ago?

Didn't God just promise that I will give you as numerous offspring as the stars in the sky? Didn't he just promise that through your offspring all the earth will be blessed?

But here, Isaac, just like Abraham before him, he shows this deep disregard for the faithfulness of God. And like Abraham before him, he takes matters into his own hands and this hero of the faith lies to preserve his own life.

[20:35] Now, let me chase a quick rabbit trail here. This is one reason why we as good Protestants don't venerate the saints like our Catholic friends do, right?

You know what I mean by veneration of the saints. Our Catholic friends, they honor the saints, they want to be reminded of their lives and so they'll put up images of them throughout their churches, they'll give lessons from their lives, all that is fine enough.

But then they take it one step further and they will pray to these men and seek their intercession that these men might pray on their behalf to the Lord.

They seek their blessing that some of their righteousness might be overflowed and credited to their account. So they lift these men up to this place of reverence and honor but it seems to me that they miss the fact that even these great heroes of the faith like you and I are sinners in need of a Savior. You know, maybe one reason why Moses goes back in time to give us this story is to make sure we don't miss the fact that Isaac like you and I is a sinner. Just like Abraham before him was a sinner.

[21:53] We may not have that problem of veneration of the saints but I wonder, you know, church, your favorite Bible teacher and the one whose Bible study you buy right when it comes out the one whose sermon podcast you're quick to soak up the pastor, the preacher, the teacher that's ministry has just blessed you tremendously.

Do we remember that they too are a sinner in need of a Savior? Isaac tells us a lie here and proves himself to be a sinner and verse 8 says that they were actually able to keep this up for a long time. They lived in the land for a long time until Abimelech looks out of the window and he sees Isaac laughing with his wife except I think that's kind of an unclear translation.

I don't know exactly what they were doing but it was enough that Abimelech saw it and he knew that that was not his sister. He knew instantly that he had been lied to that they are in fact married and so this king calls him out and says what have you done to us?

You've put us in the position where anyone here could have lain with your wife and you would have brought this guilt upon us. Isaac has put the king and his people in this position where even unknowingly they could have done something sinful and broken the seventh commandment and committed adultery.

[23:20] Isn't it shocking to you that this pagan king seems more sensitive to righteousness than Isaac? He seems a little bit more sensitive to the dangers of sin than this father of the faith?

Here yet again just as we saw with Abraham this pagan king looks more righteous than this chosen vessel of the Lord. What a shame.

Isaac's in a world of trouble isn't he? But ask yourself whose fault is that? This whole situation this whole issue here is entirely of Isaac's own doing at the core of this problem is Isaac's own sin and often church that is the first layer of problems that we have to deal with.

I know you go through problems and you experience trials we all do but when you face these trials you face these problems you walk through these issues in your life how often do you stop and ask how much of this problem is because of me?

Yes of course we face an enemy we have external issues we live in a fallen world we're going to get to all that in a minute but before we point the finger outward and go and blame others even go and blame the devil himself we need to stop and ask how much of my suffering is tied to my own sinful choices and Peter tells us we just read in 1 Peter that we shouldn't be surprised when the fiery trials come upon you Christian you will encounter suffering but then he goes on to say but don't suffer as a murderer and don't suffer as a thief and don't suffer as an evildoer don't suffer as a meddler in other words you are going to suffer but don't bring it upon yourself because of your own sin but of course we also see here Isaac faces also great external problems as well just as we do church look there starting in verse 12 it says after all this apparently despite

[25:36] Isaac's sin God continues to bless Isaac doesn't he and despite the famine in the land it says Isaac sowed in that land and he reaped in the same year a hundred fold I don't know much about agriculture or farming but that seems pretty impressive to me to sow seed in the midst of a famine and in the same year to reap a hundred fold I mean he is flourishing there he's reaping an incredible harvest Isaac gets a taste here of this future blessing that God has promised he becomes rich he gains flocks he gains herds he gains servants and with all of that guess what he also gains enemies the Philistines they see his success and they see the blessing of God in his life and it says that they envied him Abimelech the king he doesn't like how strong and prosperous and successful

Isaac is becoming he's a threat now so he tells him to get out and the Philistines go a step further than that don't they they go and they get a bunch of dirt and they fill up all the wells that Abraham dug they fill them up with dirt and this is not a subtle message is it the message is we want to snuff you out you don't belong here in this land look at what Isaac does verse 17 it says Isaac leaves he goes to the valley of Gerar and what does he do he digs up those same wells again those same wells that Abraham his father dug and he gives them names not new names he gives them the same old names that Abraham his father gave him what's he doing it's almost like he's saying you can try to stop us but God has promised me this land and so yeah you can try to snuff me out but it's not going to work what is he doing he faces this external opposition how by clinging to and living in light of the promises of God verse 19 says they dug in the valley and guess what they find water God here even in the midst of famine and here even with all the Philistines filling up the wells with dirt and here with the king sending Isaac out as a wanderer yet again God provides this blessing of water and with it yet again there's an issue the herdsmen of Gerar they contend with Isaac's herdsmen and they say this water is ours and so what does Isaac do he names that well a sack which means contention it's like he's getting used to this by now right problems and promises problems and promises so what does he do he moves on he digs another well and apparently that well also produces water here's some blessing and guess what there's another fight and so he names that well Sitna which means enmity and so what does he do it's probably time to give up now right probably time just to throw it throw in the towel and move on and be done no Isaac moves on and he digs yet another well and finally at last it says there is peace so he calls its name Rehoboth which means room saying the Lord has made room for us and we shall be fruitful in the land church do you see this beautiful picture of the Christian experience do you see how how this rhymes with our experience in Christ the Lord has told us I will put enmity between you and the woman Genesis 3 between your seed and her seed ultimately this is enmity it's contention between Christ and the enemy Satan but it's also enmity it's contention between the offspring of Satan and the offspring of God and Christ in every age and in every place God's people are at war contending with the forces of evil we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers against the

authorities against the cosmic powers over this present darkness against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places we face an enemy that prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour we shouldn't be surprised then church when trials come our way if you want to live a life of faithfulness to Christ then church you can expect the enemy will want to snuff you out stop you from doing so but those who persevere in Christ like Isaac eventually will overcome come the trial is not forever the good news is the opposition is not forever the good news is eventually all who persevere will know the full blessing of knowing the Lord eventually those who persevere will know the peace that God has promised free from our enemies

I wonder what sort of opposition faces you believer what would keep you from prayer this week what would keep you from spending time in the word this week what would prevent you from sharing the gospel with a friend this week a neighbor this week a family member this week what would prevent you from coming and gathering with God's people for worship next Sunday what would prevent you from spending time building up one another in conversations about the Lord and in discipleship this week the enemy would love to fill those wells up with dirt we face these issues these trials by like

[32:12] Isaac clinging to the promises of God for us in Christ look there with me to verse 26 after all of this all of these problems we see the Lord appears yet again to Isaac and yet again he speaks and yet again he reminds him and us of his promises he says I am the God of your father Abraham fear not I am with you I will bless you I will multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake how does Isaac respond he says he builds an altar and he worships the Lord and he pitches his tent there in the land and he digs another well this passage ends with another reminder of these unshakable promises of God much has changed since the beginning of the chapter Isaac's been through a lot but the promises of God have not changed his faithfulness has not changed and if you wondered well what about his enemies are they gone yet no no they're not but we get here at the end of this passage some resolution here starting in verse 26 don't we this passage ends with a reversal and with a reminder as for

Abimelech he comes to Isaac with his advisor and with his military commander and Isaac at this point he puffs out his chest a little bit doesn't he he's like what are you doing here don't you hate me you sent me away and he's right isn't he but look how they respond they say we see plainly that the Lord has been with you we see plainly that the Lord has been with you make a covenant with us that you'll do us no harm just as just as we've done you no harm and have done nothing but good to you and have sent you away in peace that's not exactly true is it but Isaac doesn't make an issue of it God is giving him peace in the land he is despite all the apparent issues God is making a way here to fulfill his promises it's a reversal in Isaac's favor and so he makes a feast they eat and they drink the next morning they go out in peace and that same day Isaac's servants come and tell him they've dug a well and he calls it

Sheba which means oh there's a complete reversal in Isaac's favor it seems finally like everything's going to be okay with Isaac doesn't it except we know better we get snapped back to the present here in verse 34 and we're reminded a generation later problems still remain we still have these issues Esau is marrying Hittite women he's making life bitter for Isaac and for Rebecca the promises remain but so do the problems we get a small taste of blessing but it's always mixed up with all of these issues and this is exactly how it is with us in Christ until he comes isn't it church John Calvin says something interesting about this passage he says that this history teaches us that the blessings of God which pertain to the present earthly life are never pure and perfect but are always mixed with some troubles is that true with your experience blessings in this life are always mixed up with trial and problems children are a blessing from the Lord but that blessing is not without trial money is a blessing from the Lord but that blessing is not without trial homes are a blessing from the Lord but you get

HOAs that make your life miserable blessing often comes with difficulty why he says these blessings are mixed with troubles lest quiet and indulgence should render us negligent it's to remind us church that like Isaac we are not yet home we must persevere to the true blessing that remains ahead of us for all who know the Lord Jesus Christ by faith a true unbothered undiluted unmixed blessing is yet ahead of us church but until then we are sojourners the problems remain and so do

the promises church until he comes if you wrestle with patterns of sin in your own life take heart so did

Abraham and so did Isaac and so does every single pastor you look up to so do I and so does every hero of the faith everyone but Jesus who was tempted and tried in every way as we are yet without sin the only hope for sinners like us is that Christ Jesus has come to live and to die and to rise for us so that any sinner who trust in him will be forgiven of their sin and made heirs of all these wonderful promises of God and if you face opposition in this life as the church certainly does then friend take heart so has every part and member of the body of Christ throughout all the ages from Abraham and Isaac and to Paul and to Peter and to every believer everywhere but church we face this opposition with confidence that Christ has already won Christ has overcome the world

[38:19] Christ has defeated every sin Christ has defeated our enemy and one day all the world will be ours free from every hand of opposition what a hope until then we are sojourners and exiles wanderers and pilgrims a letter to Diognetus written at the end of the fourth century he's commenting on this he says Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality or language or customs They do not inhabit separate cities of their own or speak a strange dialect or follow some outlandish way of life with regard to dress and food and manner of life in general they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in whether it's Greek or foreign and yet there is something extraordinary about their lives they live in their own countries as though they were only passing through and they play their full role as citizens but labor under all the disabilities of aliens any country can be their homeland but for them their homeland wherever it may be is as a foreign country they pass their days upon earth but they are citizens of heaven church we are sojourners passing through enduring every trial clinging to the promises of God for us in Christ let's pray father we pray that we would realize this identity that we would realize that we are not yet home that the blessings of this life are partial at best that it's always full of opposition and trial

God we pray that we would cling to the certainty of your promise Lord that there is hope ahead of us God that there is forgiveness of sin to be had right now by faith in Christ and there is an eternity of unmixed blessing ahead of us for those that know you Lord we pray God would you lead us to live in light of these promises we pray in Jesus name Amen