

Jacob in the Wilderness

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Genesis 29 verse 1. Then Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the east. As he looked, he saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep lying beside it.

For out of that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the well's mouth was large, and when all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep.

And put the stone back in its place over the mouth of the well. Jacob said, My brothers, where do you come from? They said, We are from Haran.

He said to them, Do you know Laban, the son of Nahor? They said, We know him. He said to them, Is it well with him?

[1 : 06] They said, It is well. And see, Rachel, his daughter, is coming with the sheep. He said, Behold, it is still high day. It is not time for the livestock to be gathered together.

Water the sheep and go pasture them. But they said, We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together. And the stone is rolled away from the mouth of the well.

Then we will water the sheep. While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess.

Now, as soon as Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban, his mother's brother, Jacob came near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth and watered the flock of Laban, his mother's brother.

Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud. And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kinsman and he was Rebecca's son. And she ran and told her father.

[2 : 12] As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he ran to meet him and embraced him and kissed him and brought him into his house. Jacob told Laban all these things and Laban said to him, Surely you are my bone and my flesh.

And he stayed with him a month. Then Laban said to Jacob, Because you are my kinsman, shall you therefore serve me for nothing?

Tell me, what shall your wages be? Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah. The name of the younger was Rachel.

Leah's eyes were weak. But Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance. Jacob loved Rachel. And he said, I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter, Rachel.

Laban said, It is better that I give her to you than I should give her to any other man. Stay with me. So Jacob served seven years for Rachel.

[3 : 26] And they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her. Then Jacob said to Laban, Give me my wife that I may go into her. For my time is completed.

So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast. But in the evening, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob and he went into her.

Laban gave his female servant Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her servant. And in the morning, behold, it was Leah. And Jacob said to Laban, What is this you have done to me?

Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me? Laban said, It is not so done in our country to give the younger before the firstborn.

Complete the week with this one. And we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years.

[4 : 36] Jacob did so and completed the week. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. Laban gave his female servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her servant.

So Jacob went in to Rachel also. And he loved Rachel more than Leah and served Laban for another seven years. Verse 31, When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb.

But Rachel was barren. Leah conceived and bore a son and she called his name Reuben. For she said, Because the Lord has looked upon my affliction, for now my husband will love me.

She conceived again and bore a son and said, Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also. She called his name Simeon.

And again she conceived and bore a son and said, Now this time my husband will be attached to me because I am born in three sons. Therefore his name was called Levi.

[5 : 46] And she conceived and bore a son. She conceived again and bore a son and said, This time I will praise the Lord. Therefore she called his name Judah.

Then she ceased bearing. This is the word of God. Thanks be to God. What never feels like Christmas to me each year until I watch It's a Wonderful Life.

The 1940s classic starring Jimmy Stewart tells the story of George Bailey. George is the oldest son of Peter Bailey, the president of a small bank in the little town of Bedford Falls.

George though is a man of vision and dreams. He wants to shake the dust off that crummy little town. He wants to climb mountain and swim and far off streams and sleep underneath the stars just because he can.

He wants to travel the world to Italy and Greece, the Parthenon and the Colosseum. But the story of his life is one of continual setbacks.

[6 : 56] He saves up the money to travel the world as soon as he finishes high school. But his father dies of a sudden stroke. And George is forced to stay home and run the old bank.

Four years later he prepares to leave again only to be stuck again running the bank in that small town. George finally settles down to life in Bedford Falls and gets married.

It seems that this is his chance though to see the world. He plans an elaborate honeymoon to New York City and a week in Bermuda. But again, there's a run at the bank.

And George lends all the money he saved to keep the bank from going under. It is agonizing to watch. My kids are like, why do we have to watch this again?

Again. But George begins to realize that all the setbacks are making him into the man that he needs to be.

[8 : 02] Making him to love the things he needs to love. Again and again in the Bible, the main figures in the Bible are called to endure painful setbacks in the plan of God.

Abraham, as we've studied, receives the promise but must wander through the wilderness waiting for 25 years for the promised son to arrive.

Moses knows the purpose of God for his life but must flee to Midian to marry the daughter of Jethro and to wait. When God first calls a man, he usually calls him into the wilderness for a while.

It seems the first lesson the Lord wants all his disciples to learn is the work he's doing in them is much more important than any work he'll do through them. So too this morning we find Jacob in a bit of his own wilderness.

He's received the promise just verses ago that God would meet him, God would be with him, God would bless him. He saw the ladder, he saw the vision of the Lord but God brings him now into the path of Laban, the only man in the Bible more conniving than he is.

[9 : 15] Laban misleads him, deceives him and keeps him as little more than a household slave for 20 years. But Jacob's not alone in the wilderness in this story.

This is life under the shadow of the fall. Leah is dumped off on Jacob and made to be his wife.

She quickly gets pregnant but longs to be loved. Rachel too, though she is the wife that Jacob loves, she has no children and watches everyone around her get pregnant.

This is the world east of Eden, a world we know so well, a world overrun with cheaters, with those trying to make a buck and willing to dispose of anybody in their way.

It's a world aching with emptiness, of deferred hopes, broken promises, shattered dreams. It's a world of self-inflicted pain, filled with repeat offenders who keep running to money, sex and power, even though we know they never satisfy.

[10 : 29] It's the wilderness. It's the valley of the shadow of death. But the Lord is here. The Lord brings Jacob here.

The Lord brings us out here to make us who he wants to be. He wants us to know that the work he's doing in us is much more important than the work he'll do through us. But I believe Genesis 29 has something else to teach us.

It's a lesson we must learn to be of any use to the Lord. You don't have to know a lot of things to make a difference in the world. You don't have to master a lot of things to make a dent in the world for Christ.

But you have to learn this. And in a word, what it is, is there is a love that is deeper than any pit, constant through every trouble in Christ. There is a love that is deeper than any pit, constant through every trouble in Christ.

So we're going to break this out as we break down this passage. The first point is the patriarch is prayerless. The patriarch is prayerless.

[11 : 35] Jacob is the patriarch. He's one of our patriarchs, and he's in here. Patriarch is a good thing, not a good thing in our culture, in case you were wondering. But he's prayerless here. This is the first little part of our passage.

After seeing the vision of God, the angels ascending and descending on the ladder. After receiving the promise of God and committing to follow him, Jacob kind of rushes into the rest of his journey.

Remember, his mother sent him to her brother Laban to find a wife. She didn't want him to marry one of them Canaanite women. So she sent him to her brother Laban to marry a wife, to find a wife.

And so he goes with the confidence that God is with him. Look in verse 1. It says he went on his journey. Literally, it says he lifted his feet. He's running.

He's pumped. Immediately, it seems like the Lord answers. Look in verse 2. As he looked, he saw a well in the field. And behold, three flocks of sheep lying there.

- [12 : 35] The narrator freezes the scene, as it were. Look. A well. Wow. We're meant to immediately think about Genesis 24, where Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac and met this woman at the well.

Well, this is like one of those romantic serendipity scenes is what we're meant to see here. We're meant to get a good look at this well and expect that Jacob, too, is going to find a wife there.

And there's shepherds lying around, and Jacob begins to talk with them. He says, where do you come from? He says, we're from Haran. And at that point, the buzzer should be going off in your head, because that's where Abraham came from.

He said to them, and obviously Rebecca. He said to them, do you know Laban, the son of Nahor? We know him. Heck yeah. Is it well with him?

It is well. And here comes Rachel right now, walking up with her flock. So Jacob knows already that he's in the right place. And it seems like the right girl is showing up right now at all.

- [13 : 49] It's just aligning. The stars are aligning perfectly. So he says, you know, he doesn't want any of the shepherds around. Doesn't want a third wheel. So he says, can you guys get lost, essentially?

He said, we can't do it. Like a couple knots on a log. They said, we can't roll the stone off. We can't do it right now. Jacob steps up and rolls the stone off.

Look at verse 9. While he's still speaking with them, Rachel comes. As soon as Jacob saw Rachel and the sheep, Jacob came near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth.

Now, if you thought Jacob was kind of a limp-wristed sort of guy, because Esau was the one out in the field, well, this is not the way it is. He is Herculean strength to roll this stone off with no one else's help.

It's a miracle. Samson-like. Then he kisses Rachel and weeps aloud. He runs to her father, Laban. Laban welcomes him.

- [14 : 54] Though we have no word from the Lord yet, the Lord seems to be answering his prayer with providence. There's a well. There's a girl. It just so happens to be the daughter of her mother's brother.

Surely, just as all roads lead to Rome, all signs must point to the providence of God here. But perhaps we shouldn't move so fast. If we compare this well seen with the one in Genesis 24, we find some things strikingly absent.

If you remember that servant, I know it's been eight weeks or something. Unlike Abraham's servant, Jacob does not pray for God's direction.

Unlike Abraham's servant, Jacob does not devise a way to confirm God's blessing on the whole scene.

Unlike Abraham's servant, Jacob does not study Rachel's character, but seems to only study her appearance. Unlike Abraham's servant, Jacob does not praise God.

- [16 : 08] In fact, he doesn't even mention God in the whole scene. Even later, in chapter 30, which we didn't read, when Rachel's struggling with barrenness, Jacob proves to be there and throughout this scene, the prayerless patriarch.

Doesn't even pray for Rachel like Abraham did and like Isaac did when they were barren. If we look a little bit closer, while he was in the right place, he seems to be there at the wrong time.

They say it's not time to water. It's not time for the sheep to be gathered. It's not time to water them, which is exactly what Jacob does. Now, if we know the way time functions in Genesis, it's meant to underline providence.

It's not time for the well to be uncovered, for the flock to be watered. And while removing the stone is an impressive feat, unlike the stone pillars in Genesis 28 and in 31, there's no reference to God in reference to this stone.

What's going on? It seems that Jacob is doing what he's always done. Impatient.

[17 : 29] Taking matters into his own hands. Controlling the outcomes. Armed with that knowledge, we know there is a showdown about to take place with this man, Laban.

Jacob proves to be the prayerless patriarch. In our search for the will of God. You know, in a moment like this, we're in a very different place in the history of redemption.

So in searching for the will of God, we must ask ourselves as well, are we patient? Do we jump through the first open door? Do we chase the first available girl?

Do you love me? Do you not? I mean, sometimes we just, the first available one that says, I'll go with you, regardless of what scripture says. Do we search the scriptures?

You know, in general, God doesn't care where you live or what you do for work. That's the basic reading of scripture. So no need to wait on dreams, visions, liver shivers, or writing in the sky.

[18 : 35] What God cares about is very clear. He cares about purity and truth and compassion and hospitality and love and worship. So if you build a life based on all those things, then the rest where you live and what you do for work will just fall into place.

Do we seek counsel? I remember reading the story. I immediately chuckled because of the way it was with me and my buddies, hopeless romantics when we were in college, all Christians, but hopelessly wanting to find that one for us.

You know, and I read the story about a buddy. He said his buddy went and asked a girl if they could go to date, and the girl said, no, the Holy Spirit told me no. No?

No? He said? Yeah, he said no and never. Now, I believe in the Holy Ghost, but let's not bring him into our relational messes.

Okay? We speak confidently where scripture speaks confidently. The prayerless patriarch drifting along.

[19 : 49] Now, obviously, just like our lives, even with our missteps, God is at work. And that's what we're going to see. God brought him out here in the wilderness.

And God brought him out there to work in him. Point two, the deceiver is deceived. The deceiver is deceived.

After living in his home for a month, Laban comes to him and says, what should I pay you? What shall your wage be? Now, this is quite revealing.

There's no doubt Jacob has already told Laban of his desire to find a wife. That's why he's there. You know what I mean? That was right there at the beginning. There's no doubt Jacob's already told Laban that he loves Rachel.

Like, that's obvious as well. But Laban does not do what he should have done with family. He should have helped him build a home. He should have helped him find a wife.

[20 : 49] He should have given his daughter. But he approaches Jacob with a contract. What should I pay? I mean, it sounds nice, but it's actually horrible.

He's reducing a blood relationship, a family relationship, to little more than a contract. Tells us a lot about Laban, which will be confirmed in a few moments.

Now, the narrator pauses the conversation. Look there with me in verse 16. The narrator pauses the conversation to give us a little bit more knowledge about Laban's children, Laban's daughters.

Now, Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah. The name of the younger was Rachel. Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance.

They're telling us something we need to learn. Now, all the commentators kind of wrestle with what this reference to Leah's eyes mean. Some say tender.

[21 : 52] That's literally what it, the opposite of hard is kind of what it's used for in most other places in the Old Testament. Some say delicate. Some say broken. But if the narrator was talking about the quality of her eyes, how far she could see or how well she could see, surely he would have compared her eyes with Rachel's eyes.

But he doesn't. He compares the quality of her eyes, or appears to, with Rachel's appearance. So whatever is wrong with her eyes, we don't actually know, but the narrator is saying whatever's wrong with her eyes has made her ugly.

That's the plain facts. Rachel was beautiful. Leah was ugly. Jacob loved Rachel, as we've already seen, so he answers Laban's question very carefully.

So it resumes the dialogue in verse 18. The narrator tells us Jacob loved Rachel, which we already knew, but it's nice to have confirmation. Then he says, I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.

I will serve you seven years for your daughter Rachel. Now, Jacob is trying to make an offer for Rachel that Laban cannot refuse. Now, this girl, he must be very attracted to her because he said, I'll serve you seven years for this daughter, this girl.

[23 : 14] But he's actually making a big mistake here. Now, Laban is an all-time scoundrel, and you must never let a scoundrel know your weakness. Just like Superman can't let anybody know about his kryptonite, or Samson about his long hair.

You know what comes down after he lets it out to Delilah. So Jacob should have never let this scoundrel Laban know what his weakness was. He had a weakness for that girl.

Because Laban, being the man he is, will soon take advantage of his weakness. To Jacob's proposal, look there in verse 19, look at the way Laban responds. I'll serve you seven years for your daughter.

He says, it's better that I give her to you than I should give her to any other man. Stay with me. Now, that's not exactly a yes. You know, that's a very shrewdly ambiguous answer.

But Laban, I mean, Jacob is blinded by love, as they say. Seven years go by and they sing to him but a few days because he's in love. After the seven years are up, Jacob goes to Laban and says, give me my wife.

[24 : 27] My time has been completed. Laban gathers everybody together and throws a big feast, a big celebration.

Now, this is a wedding feast with the best food and the best wine and it's the best wedding because Jacob has been loving this girl for seven years.

I remember the first marriage I did was a buddy of mine and, you know, we lived together for a little while and then we're in the same campus ministry and, you know, they liked each other for like four years, you know, since they were like 18.

It was the worst kept secret. So, at their wedding, we're just partying down and celebrating. They're finally married. Well, that's what everybody was thinking. Jacob is finally getting his girl.

How awesome is it? Now, we don't, we're not told, but we assume Rachel's there too, decked out with a veil, but there nonetheless. Later that evening, Laban is supposed to go and deliver the bride to Jacob, the father, to give her away.

- [25 : 33] Laban waits until it's evening until Jacob is good and drunk, but instead of taking Rachel, he takes Leah to Jacob. Jacob takes the bride into his tent and sleeps with her and in the morning, he realizes it's Leah.

What? Look at verse 25, there with me in the morning. Behold, what? I mean, that's that behold word that we've seen throughout here. Behold, it was Leah that scoundrel deceived him.

Look at Jacob go straight to Laban. What is this you've done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?

You conniving scoundrel. Now, Laban makes some lame excuse and says, well, she was the younger daughter and so we couldn't marry her off until we married off the older daughter, but the reality is Laban had a problem.

Leah was ugly. Now, I'm not making a joke here. Laban viewed Leah as a problem. That's very clear in the text. I don't have time to unpack it all, but he couldn't give Leah away to anyone.

- [26 : 58] There was no line. No one wanted her. When he saw Jacob's weakness for Rachel, he didn't even want her around. When he saw the weakness for Rachel, he saw an opportunity to throw off Leah on Jacob.

So he basically says, listen, you're stuck with Leah. Finish the week out. I'll give you Rachel too for seven more years. And so, the narrator tells us what we already know.

Verse 30, so Jacob went into Rachel at the end of the week. And he loved Rachel more than Leah and served Laban for another seven years. And what are we to make of all this?

First off, did you notice that Jacob says, why have you deceived me? Why? That's the same word Isaac used for what Jacob did for him.

The only other time in Genesis. The deceiver is deceived. By getting Jacob intoxicated with wine and hiding Leah behind the veil and in the darkness of night, Laban deceives him just as Jacob deceived Isaac by hiding behind the hairy skin the smell of Esau's clothing and the tasty stew.

- [28 : 24] The deceiver is deceived. Now, why though? And this is where I disagree with some commentators, although there are some that agree with me, so I'm not going out on my own here.

But, you know, is this God giving Jacob what he deserved? Surely that's what it is. man reaps what he sows.

Is this God making Jacob lie in the bed he made? I don't think so. Now, there's no end to it. God wanting to give us what we deserve, there's no end to that.

I think what's going on here, I mean, it's true to some degree, cheaters tend to meet their match. So, you start cheating, eventually, somebody's going to cheat you and change the game.

I think what's going on here is God's sending a signal to Jacob, I know how you got the blessing. I brought you out here to bend your knee, to humble you, to break you down in a good way.

- [29 : 42] The Lord is saying to Jacob, I know you cheated your way into the blessing, now I'm going to make you the kind of man I will bless. That's what's going on. John Flavel, one of my favorite authors, says, afflictions fall not by causality, but by counsel.

Afflictions fall not by causality, not by causes lining together, not by happenstances, not by random events or anything. He's saying they fall by counsel. Whose counsel? The Lord's.

Remember, the Lord is more concerned about the work he's going to do in Jacob than the work he's going to do through him. So the Lord has brought him into this trouble to change him and the same is true with us every time it comes.

Secondly, as Tim Keller helped me see, in the morning it is always Leah. In the morning it's always Leah. One commentator said about that phrase, behold it was Leah, that this moment is a miniature of man's delusion experienced from the Garden of Eden onward.

So it's a miniature of man's delusion from the Garden of Eden onward. What he's saying is, Jacob's hoping for Rachel but getting Leah is a miniature of the delusion sinful man has experienced from Eden.

[31 : 05] What he's getting at is this delusion that happens when we put ultimate hopes in earthly things. If we put our hope in anything in this world, it will always fail.

It's always a delusion. The hook is always hidden. It always disappoints. If you put your hope in a better marriage, if we put our hope in a better community, if we put our hope in a better career, if we put our hope in a better family, put our hope in a better vacation, in the morning, it will always be Leah.

Always. Have you read, I found it so fascinating, do you know when the happiest moment of your vacation is? The happiest moment of your vacation studies say is before you leave.

It's before you leave. after that, nothing reaches your expectations. When you're pulling out of the driveway on vacation, just know it's all going downhill.

Yeah. See when that bus attire comes in, it's all going downhill. You may say, wait, wait, wait, wait, but if I had a better marriage, or a better job, if I had that, if I had the best marriage, or the best job, then I'd be happy, but that's not true either.

[32 : 32] Ultimate hopes cannot ever rest in earthly things. Now, C.S. Lewis, and this is a long quote, don't always include long quotes, but it's so helpful. He says, most people, if they really learn to look into their own heart, which is what we must do, would know that they do want and want acutely, that means want intensely, something that cannot be had in this world.

There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they will never keep their promise. The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love, or first think of some foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us, are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning can ever really satisfy.

I am not speaking of what would ordinarily be called unsuccessful marriages, unsuccessful holidays, that's just a vacation, or careers. I am speaking about the best possible ones.

There was something we grasp at in the first moment of longing which just fades away in reality. The wife may be a good wife, husband may be a good husband, the hotels and scenery may have been excellent and chemistry may be a very interesting job, but something has invaded us, something has evaded us in that first longing, such that longing that makes us put an ultimate longing into something earthly, always fail.

In the morning it's always Leah. Roll over tomorrow, it's Leah. Now, don't say that to your wife. But everything east of Eden is broken.

[34 : 15] at its best, everything east of Eden can only leave us longing for heaven. Just like Lewis' famous maxim, he said, if I find something, if I find that there's something in me that cannot be satisfied with anything in this world, I must be made for another world.

Oh, beloved, there's a love that's deeper than any pit constant through every trouble. it can't be found in this world. Point three, the despised is loved.

The final verses of chapter 30, which a number of people put into a different order, would separate the sermon, they would end the sermon where I just did.

But I think it's important for finishing what, Moses has been teaching here. The final verses of chapter 30 focus on Leah. Leah is the girl no one wanted.

Laban didn't want her, he dumped her off on Jacob. How's that for dead? Jacob didn't want her either. But the Lord saw her and loved her.

[35 : 33] Look at verse 30. One, when the Lord saw Leah was hated, he opened her womb. Rachel was barren. Twice the narrator says she was hated.

Once there in verse 30, verse 33, she says it, the Lord heard that I am hated. But the Lord opened her womb during these verses, during these seven years, she's blessed with seven children, the perfect number of children.

seven, not literally, but seven is the perfect number. She's blessed with more children than Bilhah, Zilpah, and Rachel combined.

But she longs for the love she's never felt. Her first son, she names Reuben, literally she said, literally it means see a son, see a son, the Lord has blessed me, surely now my husband will see me and love me.

He will not, if he will not love me for who I am, perhaps he'll love me for what I give him. Her second son is Simeon, it sounds like here, and so she says the Lord has heard my cry, and so he's blessed me with another son.

[36 : 58] Her third son is Levi, which means attached. Now, she says, now my husband will be attached to me, because I've given him three sons. It's a deeply distressing several verses.

These boys do not fill her with joy. We've seen so much joy at the arrival of sons in the book of Genesis, but they do not arrive with joy, because what she longs for more than anything else is love.

She's been thrown out with the trash her whole life. discarded. After she gives birth, the narrator includes, unlike any of the other places, her longings.

What are those little cries? Those are her cries. Oh, Lord, maybe he would love me now. Maybe he'd be attached to me now. She longs to be seen and cherished and loved.

Is there anything more distressing? Years ago, before becoming a Christian, I was introduced to the musical Rent.

[38 : 11] Most people I haven't heard of it. It's a long time ago. It's a musical describing the lives of people dying with AIDS, trying to discover the meaning of life, trying to pay the rent.

It's set in New York City and came out in the mid-90s. It includes explicit language and explicit content, so I wouldn't recommend complete listening.

There's a song, though, that still rattles me. There's a scene where they're at a support group, all these individuals with AIDS.

Positive. singing, will I lose my dignity? Will someone care?

Will I wake tomorrow from this nightmare? It's a beautiful song that just keeps repeating those lines. Will I lose my dignity? What will happen? Will my body just fall apart?

[39 : 23] Will everyone see and mock me or whatever? Will I be just little more than what Leah was? An undignified, unwanted. Will someone care for me?

Will someone notice me? Will I wake tomorrow from this nightmare? And I just feel that's exactly what Leah's crying now. Will someone care?

Will I wake tomorrow from this nightmare? Some of you have been crying that this week. Is there anybody out there?

Does anybody see me? Does anybody care about me? Does anybody love me? Does anybody want me around? Am I stuck in this nightmare and will this nightmare ever end?

wonderfully, Leah gives birth to a fourth son.

[40 : 31] She names him Judah. Says, this time I'll praise the Lord. Our passage concludes, then she ceased bearing children.

It's as if the Lord is saying, you're done having kids for now, my daughter, because you have learned there is someone who cares, someone who loves you, and it is me.

That's what that means. Not only that, Leah is done having children now because Judah is the promised son.

The savior of the world is the lion of the tribe of Judah making Leah one of the many surprising mothers of Jesus Christ.

Leah is the girl nobody wanted, but she is the girl that God loved. What's going on here? At the age of 20, a student in theology in Scotland, George Matheson, was engaged to be married but began going blind.

[41 : 47] He told his fiancée that he was going blind and she broke the engagement. She felt she could not go through life with a blind husband.

She left him. Matheson wrote two books of theology before going blind. History can only imagine what he would have been capable of if he retained his sight.

In God's providence, his sister offered to care for him. With his help, he began serving as a pastor, preaching to as many as 1,500 people each week blind.

20 years later, his sister fell in love. It was time for her to leave and have her own home.

The night before her wedding, George's whole family left town to prepare for the wedding. He was in his home alone, facing the prospect of living the rest of his life alone and in the dark.

[42 : 56] no doubt also facing fresh waves of grief from his broken engagement. In the pain and anguish of that moment, Matheson sat down and wrote a hymn that we're going to sing in a few minutes.

It took him five minutes and he didn't make a single edit. He said, Oh, love, it will not let me go.

I rest my weary soul in thee. I give thee back the life I owe that in thine ocean depths its flow might richer fuller be.

Oh, light that follows all my way, I yield my flickering torch to thee. My heart restores its borrowed ray that in thy sunshines blaze its day might brighter, fairer be.

Oh, joy that seekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee. I trace the rainbow through the rain and feel the promise is not in vain. That morn shall tearless be.

[44 : 09] Oh, cross that lifteth up my head, I dare not ask to fly from thee. I lie in dust, life's glory dead, and from the ground their bosoms, blossoms red, life shall eternal be.

Beloved, there's a love that's deeper than any pit, constant through every trouble in Christ. There's a love in the wilderness. There's a love you can find among all the shattered hopes and dreams.

There's a love you can find no matter how many times you've squandered your chances, how long you've been battered and beaten. There's a love that will satisfy you and ruin you for this world. There's a love that heaven will put in you before it puts you in heaven.

There's a love that will reconcile you to God forever. There's a love that for God so loved the world that he did not spare his own son but gave him up for you.

Whoever believes in him might have everlasting life. So will you turn to that love that will not fail? Will you turn from all the imposter, all the counterfeits, all the fakes to Jesus Christ?

[45 : 25] There's a man called love. Not that we loved God as Jenna so wonderfully read but that God loved us and gave himself as a propitiation for our sins satisfying the wrath of God we deserve so that we might receive the inheritance not of a good son but of the son the promised son and worship him forever.

May God help us. Father in heaven we hide ourselves in thee. There is a love that will not let us go and we run to him.

Oh Lord let us leave every weight and sin that clings so closely fix our eyes on Jesus the founder and the perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame so that he might bring many sons and daughters to glory.

We praise you. In Christ's name. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

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