

God's Elect Purposes

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Preacher: Malcolm Hazell

[0 : 00] Good morning, everybody. A wonderful welcome to you all. Welcome to Union Baptist Church.

It's great to see you all on this Sunday morning. It's great to be together as God's family to worship him together. We've been celebrating Easter over the last few weeks, and it's been a really busy time for the church. It's been a great time for the church in many ways. As we met with the elders last week, we were reflecting on what we've seen God doing over the last few weeks. We're really encouraged. We've got so much to be thankful for. We're so thankful for people sharing the good news on Easter Saturday out on the rye, giving daffodils to people, inviting people to the church, sharing what Easter is really about.

We're so thankful for the holiday club, for the 70 children that came for the week of holiday club, for the 44 of those children who joined us last Sunday for our celebration service for Discoverers, the new children's club that started on Friday, and that got off to a great start. And today we're starting a new sermon series looking at the life of Jacob in the book of Genesis. And it's a reminder that God has big plans, and God works his purposes and his plans out even when we mess up and even when we get things wrong. And that's really encouraging. And Malcolm will be sharing with us from Genesis later in the service as we start that new sermon series. Children, young people, you're going to be with us for the first part of the service, and then a little bit later on you'll go out to your groups. Well, let's prepare to worship God together. Can I invite you to stand, if you're able to, as we prepare ourselves to worship this morning. This is from Psalm 34.

I will extol the Lord at all times. His praise will always be on my lips. I will glory in the Lord. Let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me. Let us exalt his name together.

I sought the Lord and he answered me. He delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant. Their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called and the Lord heard him.

[2 : 12] He saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and he delivers them. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. Let's pray. Father God, we turn to you this morning and we know that you are good.

Lord, we thank you for all the evidence we see of you being at work among your people here. But even in the waiting and difficulties and challenges that we face, we know also that you are good. And we want to exalt your name together this morning. As we lift our praise to you today, may we taste and see even more that you are good. Amen. So we're going to sing together, praise is rising. His eyes are turning to you. We turn to you. Praise is rising. Eyes are turning to you. We turn to you. Oh, we're stirring, our sun yearning for you We love for you Cause when we see you, we find strength to face the day In your presence, your love is washed away Wash away Hosanna, Hosanna We want the Lord who saves us by your own love praises Hosanna, Hosanna We want the way in the world We want the way in the world And Lord Jesus

Hear the sounds of us returning to you We turn to you In your kingdom, broken lives are made new You make us new Cause when we see you, we find strength to face the day In your presence, all our fears are washed away

[5 : 24] Push away Hosanna, Hosanna You are the Lord who saves us And we love you all our praises Hosanna, Hosanna Hosanna Oh, have your way above us We welcome you here, Lord Jesus Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna Yes, Lord, you are worthy of all our praises And when we see you, we find strength to face the day Whatever is going on for us You heal brokenness, you restore us You make us new All we need is found in you

Lord, I'm just aware so often I turn to other things We turn to other things To try to find peace and security And contentment We seek those things without you And we're so sorry for that We recognise that all those things are found in you And what we need is you alone Who we need is you alone And we thank you for what you've done for us That you sent your son To make that sacrifice for us Dying for us So that we could be welcomed into your family So we could have this relationship with you And we're so thankful And we don't deserve any of this, Lord But we're just so grateful And we're just in awe of you We stand in awe of you And we worship you We join with all of heaven And all the angels to worship you And we continue to worship you now Let's sing, we bow our hearts We lift our hands

We lift our hands We turn our eyes to you again And we surrender to the truth That all we need is found in you Receive our adoration Jesus, love of God Receive our adoration How wonderful you are We choose to leave it all behind And turn our eyes To our surprise We upward call Of God in Christ You have a heart Lord, take our lives Receive our adoration Jesus, love of God Jesus, love of God Receive our adoration How wonderful you are Every song you sing Sing sounds Everything you've made Please sound All creation standing now Lifting up your name In the angel soul

We gather to your ancient throne Children in the father's arms Shouting out in your praise Receive our adoration Jesus, love of God Receive our adoration Receive our adoration Jesus, love of God Receive our adoration How wonderful you are

[11:08] You'll notice that my hand was not up I have been known to say to God Okay God I've learned patience Can I learn something new now Which perhaps shows in itself That I haven't really learned patience But being impatient Can have quite serious implications Quite serious complications That's what I'm trying to say If I could have my first slide please David We need a patience here Okay well while David's looking My first slide is of a cake in the oven And I don't know I'm not going to be sexist here And say ladies Have any of you ever been impatient And taken a cake out the oven before it's ready Yep yep My family actually quite like it When a cake's a bit gooey But sometimes if it's too early

It goes very flat It goes badly wrong Are we not getting them? No don't worry Okay well my next picture Is of some run of bean seedlings And Judy, Karen and I share an allotment And Judy can testify That very often I get carried away With an early summer Sunny spring day And I put the run of beans in too early And this always goes badly wrong Because then we have a cold night And they all die Don't they Judy?

So this year I've been really good And I have been patient And they are only just beginning To put their head through the soil In the summer house And those of you Kind of who are maybe Early twenties Upper teenage You may find that you're a bit impatient To find a life partner That can be something And if you let your impatience govern You can end up making a really bad choice And take it from me As someone who waited a long time It is worth waiting So that's an example Of where impatience Can have really bad consequences But the grown-ups are going to be looking At a story from Genesis today About two twins Jacob and Esau Now I don't know if any of you Fight with your siblings Grown-ups This might apply to you as well Okay But Jacob and Esau They fought Even while they were still in the womb

Their mum could feel them Fighting each other And when they were born Jacob came out first No Esau came out first Sorry And Jacob came out Holding on to his heel Even in the time of birth They were squabbling over Who was going to be first Oh here we go We've got some There they are Thank you Okay And they looked very different So the one with all the hair That's Esau He was called a hairy man He had lots of red hair And he was a real outdoors boy He became a hunter And Jacob On your left He was very smooth He was a real quiet Kind of home Home loving boy So they were so different These two twins But Esau As the eldest He should have been the one Who inherited the birthright God had given his blessing To Abraham Promised him To bless his descendants And that came down

Through Isaac Who was Esau And Jacob's father And that blessing Because of the way it worked Should have gone to the eldest son And Esau Just by a few Half a minute maybe Was the first born So He He should have had the blessing But as I say If you have the next slide You can see he liked going He was a hunter He liked being out and about And one day He'd been out hunting And he'd been out all day And he came in Absolutely exhausted And if you could Go to my next slide And he found That Jacob Had made this Really lovely stew And it smelled Absolutely gorgeous And he

wanted it Straight away He didn't want to stop And change And make something himself He wanted the stew That Jacob had made So he said to Jacob Give it to me I want it And Jacob was quite canny And he said to him You can only have it If you let me Have the blessing Have the birthright Now that

[15 : 38] This was not a good exchange This is one meal In exchange For All God's blessing And God's line Going through you But he made Esau made a really bad choice And he said Okay And he took He took it At the meal There he is And he forfeited God's blessing So My message to you This morning Is to wait For God's timing It's really hard I know how hard It is to be patient But it's worth waiting Bye Thank you very much Dawn Great to have a little bit Of a preview And Malcolm will be sharing More about Jacob And Esau And Isaac Later on I'm going to welcome Helen now Who's going to tell us Some very exciting news About Love Wickham Good morning And it is exciting I want to talk to you About serving In our local community

Now Many of us know About the One Can Trust And the incredible work That they do And we were talking To Joe And Kim Recently About the challenges They're currently facing Now Prior to the pandemic They were giving out About 450 food parcels A month Now that's Just one bag That's multiple bags To feed families Post-pandemic It's about 1,220 There were 140 New referrals To One Can Trust In February Alone And it's not just Food That is challenging People The fuel crisis And various other Challenges Are making life Difficult For people We live amongst They shared a story About one mum And she had Many needs But one of them Was her garden Very overgrown There was nowhere

For the children To play So a volunteer Went And tidied it up Suddenly She had somewhere For the children To play She felt better And because of that She then started A cookery class She started going To a drop-in cafe And her life Was transformed One small thing Made such A big difference Isn't that incredible?

So this morning I'm here to do Three things I want to challenge us I want to encourage us And I want to enable us First The challenge Well we have A vision As a church It's right here We want to see High Wycom Transformed Through loving Serving As a church We have a mission To be a community Of Christians Who love God Follow Jesus And share the hope That we have in him Isn't that great?

That's our vision That's our mission Now we do so many Brilliant things already The job club The epic holiday club Are just two fantastic examples But I wonder Could we do more?

[19 : 10] Could we Corporately Individually Reach out more? Well I want to Encourage you this morning Our verse for the year Is Ephesians Chapter 2 Verse 10 We are God's workmanship Created in Christ Jesus To do good works Which he created In advance For us to do Do you know We were all Crafted Created Designed We're all unique We all have Very different talents But we all Have talents We were all crafted And we were crafted To do The good works He prepared In advance For us to do Isn't that encouraging?

Isn't that exciting? Thank you I've got some nods So I want to empower you Next week We're going to launch Love Wickham Not this week This isn't even the launch It's something to look forward to Next Sunday This is just to Whet your appetite Just a mere Taster Because from next Sunday The 8th of May Until the 12th of June We have a whole Month Where we can Love Wickham Where we can be In the community And working Alongside people Using the gifts Using the skills That we were designed And given It could be small things It could be big things On Monday You're going to get An email Asking you What skills Do you think You have?

What time Might you have? How might You be able To help? Can I encourage You all Think about it Pray about it And let us know How you think You can work with us In the community Think of that story Doing one garden Made such a difference How can you How can we Make a difference?

And come back next week And we'll tell you more Thank you Brilliant Thank you so much Helen So just look out For that email Coming to you Tomorrow And if you can Respond to that By Friday And we'll share More about Love Wickham Including plans For the celebration The town-wide celebration Where we'll celebrate With all the other churches In the town In the high street On the 12th of June Now just a few things To draw to your attention The network course Is starting A new course This Wednesday If you haven't signed up Please do say You can sign up On the website Great opportunity To explore Your spiritual gifting Again explore How you can be How you can be Serving as part Of the church How you can be Serving in the community Very exciting Our job club Starts its second term This coming Wednesday As well Our second Steps to Employment Course

Do please pray for that And just on a practical level We're so thankful Our course is full We've got Between 8 and 10 people Coming on Wednesday And that means That we're going to need More people to come

And be Part of that course Is befriend us To get alongside people Just to encourage them To welcome them If you think That could be you Then please Please talk to myself Talk to our office Or talk to Rachel Dillon Also on a practical level If you think You might be able To make a homemade soup To be served At the job club Then do please speak To Judy Pantridge That would be That would be wonderful The Queen's Jubilee celebrations Are coming up For her Platinum Jubilee Those are coming up And on the 5th of June We're going to have A special service here To celebrate that That's a great one To invite your friends to It's going to be An all-age parade service Do consider inviting Your friends along to that As well as considering How you could work with People in your local Neighbourhood In your street Maybe have a celebration Together Great opportunities there To share God's love And as part of Those celebrations As a church On the 18th of June We're having a Kayleigh Wonderful opportunity To get together Do some dancing And you need to book Online for that Again it's a wonderful Opportunity to bring Your friends to [23 : 26] And you can book The tickets on Church Week The tickets are £5 each Finally this evening We've got an evening service We're going to be Sharing communion We're going to be Looking further At the story of Jacob And Isaac and Esau Do encourage you To come along To that time this evening Well we're going to Stand and sing A song now And we've got some Actions on this one So we want to see you Up and moving This is I'm a Friend of God Those of you who came To the Holiday Club Will be familiar with this And we're going to stand And we're going to Worship God together As we sing You hear me When I call

Is it true that you Are thinking of me Why you love me I love me I love you I love you I love you I love you Why you pray Oh God Because He prays Why you pray Oh God Why you pray Oh God Why you pray Oh God Because He prays Who am I That you are mine To love me That you hear me When I call Is it true that you are thinking of me

How you love me Is it true that you are thinking of me Is it true that you are thinking of me Who are you I love you I love you Who are you I love you I love you I love you I love you What you hold me In my Teddy I love you I love you What you care Why you see And you will You biscadaki God Almighty, Lord of glory, you have called me friend.

God Almighty, Lord of glory, you have called me friend.

God Almighty, Lord of glory, you have called me friend.

[27 : 11] Amen. Do please sit down. It's wonderful that God calls us friends. In a moment, the children and young people are going to go out to their groups.

Please, if you haven't already registered your children, if you can take them through the door on my left, and you'll be greeted by our registration team, and we'll get you checked in. Now, for the children, for this month, there's a take-home sheet.

I'd just like to draw attention to this to families. This explains what the children are doing in the iSearch Sunday morning groups during this month. They're going to be looking at Romans.

And in here, there's some stuff that you can discuss over mealtimes. As a family, there's a cool science experiment. There's some songs you can look up, and there's some other really cool activities on there. So I do commend that to you. Let's pray for our children and young people and their leaders.

Father God, we thank you so much that you call us friend, that we can be your friends. And I pray for our children and young people and their leaders this morning, that they will know that they are your friends, and they will just be able to explore getting to know you better and growing in that friendship this morning.

[28 : 12] I pray that you'll bless them with lots of fun and great time together, and really a great time of drawing closer to you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, so children and young people, you can make your way out through this way now, and we'll see you after the service.

That would be great. Let's pray foran■z, Amen.

God bless you. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. I'd like to welcome Titi who's going to come and lead us in our intercessions.

Thanks, Titi. Good morning, everyone.

[29 : 31] That song just got me thinking. How we're friends of God. It's really encouraging and it's so exciting as well. Let's bow our head and come to God with our prayers.

Father God, we want to thank you for your faithfulness, protection, and guidance over our lives. May your name be exalted always.

Father God, we pray for our world. May you revive it around, Lord, most especially with the war that's been going on between Russia and Ukraine.

Father God, we pray that you will send forth your spirit into the Russian government, Lord, and allow your peace and transformation to take place.

We pray for the lives that have been lost during this war. We pray. Right now, people have lost their hope.

[30 : 32] Please give them hope during this period and afterwards. Continue to send your peace, comfort, hope in the midst of all that's going on and create a better future for them, Lord.

Lord, please make a way where all seems impossible. Father God, we pray for all the supportive ministries that's contributing to Ukraine.

We pray that they do not run out of resources, Lord, and that you will continue to make a difference in the people's lives, especially the children and those mourning in their losses.

Father God, we pray for our UK government. We pray that you send forth your wisdom and impact their decision-making, Lord.

Help us as citizens to cope and deal with the current changes we are facing, most especially in our finances and the ongoing inflations.

[31 : 34] Lord, continue to provide for our needs and give us strength, Lord. Lord, we pray for Margaret Garge. Please help her in her recovery. We also pray for Pam Bot as she prepares for our scheduled chemotherapy, Lord.

We pray for successful treatments and that you, Lord, will grant her the strength to withstand the treatments. We also pray for Christine Bonham and her upcoming operation.

Help her to recover and uphold her with your strength and be with our family, Lord. Father God, we pray for our youth leaders.

We pray that you continue to uplift, strengthen, and guide them and fill them with your spirit as they lead. Thank you, Lord, for the successful commencement of iSearch Discovery Club.

We pray that you continue to be with all the children and leaders involved, especially Andrew, Miriam, Joel, and others. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the holiday club that took place in April.

[32 : 42] We pray that all the children involved will continue to serve you, walk in your way, and share the good news to those who are unbelievers.

We pray for the upcoming network course, Lord, that's starting on the 4th of May. We pray that everything will go well and that lives will be transformed, Lord.

Father God, from the book of 1 John 5, 14, help us as your children to be selfless and look out for the interests of others and have confidence in you that you will always answer our prayers.

Forgive us all our transgressions, Lord, and cover us with your blood always. Protect and guide us as we embark this new week, this new month.

Bless the works of our hands, and may we not labor in vain, Lord. We pray as the children and students have resumed back to school, Lord. Please guide them in their learning.

[33 : 46] We pray for all those going through bereavement currently, those we know. Please send your peace and comfort to them. In Jesus' name, we bring all our prayers to you.

And as we have learned this morning, help us to be patient, even when we are waiting for you to answer our prayers, Lord.

Amen. Amen. Thank you so much, Titi. Now we're going to sing again as we prepare to hear God's word and a song which we proclaim and remember and praise God for his wonderful work of salvation for each one of us.

Let's stand and sing together. Everyone needs compassion. Let's stand and sing together.

A love that's never failing. Let mercy fall on me. Everyone needs forgiveness.

[35 : 18] The kindness of a Savior. The hope of nations. Savior, He can move the mountains.

My God is mighty to save. He is mighty to save. Forever. Author of salvation.

He rose and conquered the grave. Jesus conquered the grave. So take me as you find me.

All my fears and failures filled my life again. I give my life to follow everything I believe in.

Now I surrender. Savior, He can move the mountains.

[36 : 46] My God is mighty to save. He is mighty to save. Forever, author of salvation.

He rose and conquered the grave. Jesus conquered the grave. Try your lion and let the whole world sing.

We're singing for the glory of the risen King. Jesus, try your lion and let the whole world sing.

We're singing for the glory of the risen King. Savior, He can move the mountains.

My God is mighty to save. He is mighty to save. Forever, author of salvation.

[37 : 49] He rose and conquered the grave. Jesus conquered the grave. Jesus conquered the grave. He conquered the grave. He can move the mountains.

My God is mighty to save. He is mighty to save. Forever, author of salvation.

He rose and conquered the grave. Jesus conquered the grave. Jesus conquered the grave. Good morning, church.

Our reading today is from Genesis 27, verse 1 to 14. In church Bibles, you will find this passage on page number 28.

Amen. When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau, his older son, and said to him, My son, here I am, he answered.

[39 : 10] Isaac said, I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death. Now then, get your equipment, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me.

Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like, and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.

Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, Look, I overheard your father, say to your brother Esau, Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the Lord before I die.

Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you. Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it.

Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies. Jacob said to Rebekah, his mother, But my brother Esau is a hairy man, while I have smooth skin.

[40 : 45] What if my father touches me? I will appear to be tricking him, and will bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing. His mother said to him, My son, let the curse fall on me.

Just do what I say. Go and get them for me. So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it.

Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau, her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goat skins.

Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and bread she had made. He went to his father and said, My father.

Yes, my son. He answered, Who is it? Jacob said to his father, I am Esau, your firstborn. I have done as you told me.

[41 : 57] Please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing. Isaac asked his son, How did you find it so quickly, my son?

The Lord your God gave me success, he replied. Then Isaac said to Jacob, Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not.

Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau. He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau.

So he proceeded to bless him. Are you really my son Esau? He asked, I am, he replied. Then he said, My son, Bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing.

Jacob brought it to him, and he ate, and he brought some wine, and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, Come here, my son, and kiss me.

[43 : 09] So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed.

May God give you heaven's dew and earth's richness, an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you, be Lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you.

May those who curse you be cursed, and those who bless you be blessed. After Isaac finished blessing him, and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting.

He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, My father, please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing.

His father Isaac asked him, Who are you? I'm your son, he answered, Your firstborn Esau. Isaac trembled violently and said, Who was it then, that hunted game and brought it to me?

[44 : 31] I ate it just before you came, and I blessed him, and indeed he will be blessed. When Esau heard of his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, Bless me, me too, my father.

But he said, Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing. Esau said, Isn't he rightly named Jacob? This is the second time he has taken advantage of me.

He took my birthright, and now he has taken my blessing. Then he asked, Haven't you reserved any blessing for me? Isaac answered Esau, I have made him lord over you, and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine.

So what can I possibly do for you, my son? Esau said to his father, Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father.

Then Esau wept aloud. His father Isaac answered him, Your dwelling will be away from the earth's richness, away from the dew of heaven above.

[45 : 48] You will live by the sword, and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck.

This is the word of God. Amen. Well, lovely to see you all.

How are you this morning? I'm struggling to get this up to the right level. Oh, Angie, you're stronger than me.

That's it. Oh, that's it. That's at the right level now. Thank you very much. Angie thought he was about to preach the sermon again there. It was very surreal last, two weeks ago, with Easter Sunday, seeing the service online, and hearing Andrew preach the sermon I drafted very, very well, by the way.

Very, very well. Can I just say how wonderful it is to be present, though, isn't it? How good it is to gather together. I mean, Easter Sunday is a pretty good day, isn't it? But so good to be together, and so good to see you all here.

[47 : 05] God bless you. I just wondered, when we were singing that song earlier about the Lord moving mountains, I wonder if any of you, I just felt the Spirit just speak to me.

Are there mountains that you were thinking of when you sung that song? Were there mountains? Want us just to pray about that, and then we'll ask God to speak to us through his word.

Let's pray, shall we? Father, it seems like there are very large mountains, globally, domestically, and in some of our lives, in some of our families, and they seem too big.

They're way bigger than we can deal with. And so we come to you, the God who moves mountains. We call out to you in our need.

This is why we come. For you are God, and we are your people. Hear our cry for help. Come quickly to save our God of our salvation.

[48 : 14] Hear our prayer. Amen. And Father, as we come to this challenging text of a broken family that you remarkably chose to use, for your good purposes, encourage us.

Give us wisdom to understand your word. And we pray, Father, that through the preaching of your word, that your blessing would flow through your people called by your name.

Hear our prayer, Lord. Amen. Amen. I was visiting somebody on a couple on Friday whose funeral I took some little while ago, and I was sharing with them about Genesis 27.

They're not, you know, it was a bit of a strange text to speak to them about. And they were deeply encouraged by this text. I don't know how you felt as you read it.

Did you get to the point of despairing as you saw this broken family? Well, may God illuminate our minds through this text.

[49 : 23] Now, this is the start of a short series in the book of Genesis looking at the person of Jacob. If you look at different texts and how often they're preached, this section of the Bible isn't preached that often.

I wonder why. But we believe that all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for our instruction, for building up us in the faith and in life.

So we're starting this series looking at the life of Jacob. Now, just to remind you of the family tree of Jacob, his grandfather was the big man, Abraham. Then there was Isaac, his dad, and then we've got Jacob and Jacob's brother, Esau.

Now, we find out that Jacob and Esau do not get on well. They are twins, but they're not really very connected.

And we'll see that coming through in the text. We find that the family is not relating well either. And even before birth, you find in the womb that the younger son, Jacob, is holding on to Esau's ankle. [50 : 33] And there's conflict of two nations in a womb. I don't know, I've never been pregnant, but babies are pretty tricky to have in a womb. But two nations in a womb, that sounds quite a lot, doesn't it?

In one womb. And we discover that even before Jacob and Esau are born, there is an ordering, a reordering that is declared by God.

We see this in Genesis 25, verse 23. Unlike the normal tradition, Rebecca hears from the Lord and it says that the elder will serve the younger.

God overturns the normal ordering of events. Normally, the elder would take double the portion of the inheritance as the firstborn and the family line would go down that one, as we see in our own royal family.

But God seems to love to overturn the normal pattern of things, not just here, but elsewhere in the Bible. For example, if we look in the New Testament in Matthew 19, verse 30, Jesus says the first are going to be and the last are going to be first.

[51 : 57] Are you feeling first today? Oh. And how about 1 Corinthians 1, 28? God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are so that no one may boast before him.

God is not the same as us. He does things differently and as his creatures we need to learn to submit to say to him even when we don't understand you know better than I.

This text will speak to us I think in a way a little bit of a way like that. So let's now have a look at our next slide where we see that God chooses a deeply dysfunctional family.

I don't know whether if you were trying to establish a whole new people that will be evidence to the world of God's blessing would you choose this family? You can participate with this one.

No. Just no. Just no. No. You know why would you choose this family? It's a complete disaster isn't it? I mean social workers family therapists I think they could write a thesis on this one.

[53 : 28] Let me just highlight a few things. Isaac and Rebecca don't seem to be talking. They're talking to their favourite sons but they're not talking to each other.

They're eavesdropping on each other but they're not talking to each other. Esau doesn't seem to be on speaking terms certainly not after the tricking that he's had and we find at the end of this text that he wants to kill Jacob.

So we've got death in the air and all parents I've always been told that you shouldn't have favourites. Have you ever as parents this is true? You shouldn't have favourites?

I must tell you a story about this. Sarah has always been convinced that she hasn't been treated entirely fairly in our family. I just thought I'd share this with you. And we've always, Dawn and I have always said, look, we have always tried to love you all equally.

Anyway, we looked at a video that Mike Birmingham very kindly put on a DVD for us which was on one of those tapes. And in this particular video, I have to say, my older son Robert was acting as a bit of a thug.

[54 : 43] Not just once, but many times. And the other two were pushed over. And it's all there in colour. And it was all the evidence my daughter needed.

See? I told you. None of our families, none of our families are perfect. I suspect many of us are thinking, hey, we're not doing too badly compared with this one.

It's not good to have favourites. Absolutely not. But how awful in this text where it says, Isaac loves Esau and Rebecca loves Jacob.

It's a sorry tale, isn't it? yet please note, and be encouraged by this, please note that it is through this family that God chooses to work in order to bring a promise of a new nation and a new people through whom all the nations of the world are going to be blessed.

Christ. Isn't that absolutely mind-blowingly glorious? God chooses what is not to confound the wise. [56 : 04] He can use a totally dysfunctional family. I think that is extremely good news today. Perhaps as you look at your own family, you may sort of on the Christmas card set out all the virtues and good points, but there's another story, isn't there, that isn't quite so good.

Well, be encouraged people of God. God can use even the broken families, even the worst broken family in the world to achieve his purposes.

I think that is really encouraging. God let's now work through the text and see what we can learn from this messy, destructive family, a family that is clearly caught by sin and brokenness, and we can learn from them.

By the way, we're not supposed to follow them in their examples. I don't think that's what the text is about. And I'm going to highlight the failings, and then I'm going to say let's repent of those things in our own lives.

Repentance is a great thing. It's about turning away from what we know to be wrong and to walk in the freedom of the children of God. So don't think of repentance as a bad thing. It's a wonderful thing. And so as we go through each of the characters we're going to be repenting of the things we can see that are wrong.

[57 : 30] And then we'll come perhaps to an even more wonderful gospel part at the end. So verses one through to four. We're going to look at the person of Isaac.

I'm just going to read these verses to you. When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see he called for Esau the older son and said to him my son here I am he answered Isaac said I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death.

Now then get your weapons and your quiver and your bow and go out into the open country and hunt some wild game for me. Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat so that I may give you my blessing before I die.

Isaac is elderly he is pretty blind as far as we can tell he thinks he's about to die and he thinks he ought to get around to doing a blessing but what seems to be on his mind more than that is having a nice meal.

Don't know whether you noticed that. He has a problem however the problem is this some years earlier God spoke to Rebecca and she told he told Rebecca that the elder would serve the younger.

[58 : 49] That's what God said the elder will serve the younger. Now we're not entirely sure in this text whether Isaac was aware of this.

One starts to feel he was. He obviously didn't particularly like that and so in his narrative here he doesn't talk about what God is wanting to do at this point he says I want to give you a blessing before I die but I really like that food you make.

Can you see what he's doing? It's very him focused. Now with all this at stake the very blessing of God flowing down through the nations ultimately to bring the Messiah he's thinking about his stomach.

Does anybody tend to do that? when's dinner? Make me some tasty food. It comes a couple of times did you notice?

This tasty food. Why does she need two goats? I don't know why. Anyway that was just a question. He doesn't seem to be focused upon meeting his maker. He's about to die.

[59 : 55] He's focused upon getting a very nice meal. In fact in Genesis 25 verse 28 it says that Isaac had a taste for wild game and loved Esau.

Why? Because he was a hunter. He liked his food so he liked his son because he got him the kind of food.

It's like I like Morrisons. You know I don't know I'm perhaps making it too contextual here. Friends this Isaac is self-indulgent don't you think?

Are there tastes that we have that draw us away from God that we're obsessed by that prioritise beyond worship prioritise beyond the service he's wanting us to do the good works he's prepared for us to do.

Let us be very careful. This led Isaac into a making a foolish decision. Couldn't he have just blessed him straight away? Why did he need to do a meal?

[61 : 07] This week it was reported that an MP was watching porn in the chambers of the houses of parliament. It's been horrible watching it on the news.

The shame the guy has. Friends we may not realise the damage we are doing to ourselves and to others.

So can I encourage you to repent of self indulgence whatever that might be. Shall we go on to Rebecca?

That was Isaac. Verses 5 to 10. I want you to notice whose son is whose in these verses. It's quite sad. Now Rebecca was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau.

Notice it wasn't her son. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back Rebecca said to her son Jacob look I overheard your father say to your brother Esau bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat so that I may give my blessing in the presence of the Lord before I die.

[62 : 18] And so it goes on. I want to just remind you of this family's story. They have had 20 years of barrenness longing for a child.

Eventually out of barrenness twins come. Don't you think this is glorious? Out of barrenness twins. Surely this will be something that brings this couple together.

Surely. Isaac says Esau's his son. Rebecca says Jacob's her son.

Isn't this sad? Just going on. She may have felt perhaps justified in backing Jacob.

After all she had had that revelation from God about the fact that the younger will be the leader not the older. The older will serve the younger.

[63 : 21] So maybe she thought I'm going to help God along here. I'm going to try to get the blessing to the right child. Do you see?

She may have been trying to do what she thought was the right thing. But certainly in my marriage and I hope in other relationships that you tend to sort of try to stand together.

I would say to Dawn, we must be a united front. Children have a way of spotting even a slither. Do you not notice? Anyway, sorry. There is not that kind of united front here, is there? Sadly. It's awful. So she may have justified her actions to herself.

I'm just trying to achieve the right thing perhaps with the wrong method. I don't know. I don't know what was going through her mind. But friends, godly ends are never justified by ungodly means.

[64 : 32] I'm sure God could have worked this out without this manipulation taking place. and in our own lives, I think sometimes we are tempted to manipulate.

You know, you're putting a CV together. I'm sure that will be happening in our job club as it starts again this week. And obviously you want to put yourself forward in the most positive light, but you don't tell lies on a CV.

Perhaps you're trying to win a contract, and you want to obviously please the client, but you don't tell half-truths. That would be wrong. And as followers of Jesus, when we tell people about the glorious gospel, we don't miss the challenges of the gospel out.

We want to speak the whole gospel of Jesus Christ. So let us, friends, repent of where we have thought that the end justified the means.

I wonder if there's an area there that we need to repent before God over. Shall we go on to Jacob? 11 to 29.

[65 : 47] I won't read that. It's quite a long passage. Jacob needs to repent, I think, of lying, and so do we if we find our self lying. You know, when his mother came to him and said, let's go and lie to dad, he could have said something like, are you serious?

Or, can't we talk to dad about this? He may not have heard that message that God gave you. But none of that happens, and his only concern is not really a concern about lying.

Did you notice? His only concern was about being found out. That was what he was worried about. And if he was found out, what was he worried about? He was worried about that he might get a curse rather than a blessing.

And his mother lies really by saying, well the curse can fall on me. What a horrible conversation. And where was she when Esau gets really angry?

She's like, oh Scarpa son, go, go, go. Terrible. So Jacob doesn't stand up for the truth. In fact, he does a Peter really.

[67 : 08] But the worst kind of Peter denial you could think of to his own father. Verse 19, Jacob says, I am Esau, your firstborn. Lie number one.

Shall we see the next lie? Verse 20, when asked how he found the game so quickly, he did not say I killed two of your goats. He says, oh the Lord gave me success.

How dare he speak of the Lord? Lie number two. Verse 24, when asked if he really is Esau, he says, I am.

Oh those words, I am. Lie number three. Three lies to receive a blessing. But the cost is very high to Jacob.

Did you spot the cost for him and his life? He ends up homeless. He's separated from his father and his mother. In fact, as you look at the text as it reads on, I don't think he ever saw his mother again.

[68:17] She may love him, but her actions separated her from him. He's estranged from his brother, fleeing for his life, and he flees into the hands of a really dodgy uncle.

He got his comeuppance with deceit and lying at the hands of his uncle. As Walter Scott says, oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive.

Friends, there is a time to say no to mum and dad if they're asking us to do something that is ungodly. There's a time to say no to our boss, to our friend, if they are conspiring us to deceive. But instead, how much better to follow the advice in 1 John 7, let us walk in the light as he is in the light, and what will happen? We're going to have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus will wash away every sin.

Hallelujah. Lastly, Esau. The lack of repentance we see in Esau. When Isaac realised that he's passed on the blessing to the wrong child, he trembles violently.

[69:41] I wonder if he thought he was actually going to an early grave at that point, I'm not sure. Because he knows that his words and actions had genuine and abiding power and were irrevocable because they'd been spoken before the Lord.

Esau, rather belatedly, pleads for his father's blessing, which is kind of strange when earlier in his life he'd been giving away his birthright for a bowl of soup.

The writer to the book of Hebrews helps us to understand this a little better. In Hebrews 12, verses 16 and 17, there's a warning. He warns his heroes against being like Esau.

And Esau's behavior is described as godless as he sold the rights of being the firstborn for a single meal. It would appear that he truly is his father's son.

If you think about it, Isaac liked his food, didn't he? So did Esau. Esau. And then when this all happens, Esau weeps with self-pity and frustration when he realizes not only has he lost the birthright, but also the blessing of his father.

[71:02] But neither does he submit at any point to God's elect purposes that may be at work here. If the blessing is now flowing through Jacob, wouldn't it be a good idea to stay on good terms with Jacob?

I know emotionally that may seem very difficult when this has all happened, but that might have been a somewhat better response. His tears at the loss of the blessing I think are a megaphone to you and to me, to listen and to notice the value and blessing of an inheritance, of a spiritual inheritance that cannot spoil or fade as members of God's family.

I wonder if at times we do not value that inheritance in the way that we should, that we worry more about a little material blessing here or there than what has been prepared for those who love God that eye has not seen or ear heard.

You see, brothers and sisters, if you are one of the elect, chosen of God, then you have an inheritance. You have a glorious inheritance.

And this message, I think, does come to us strongly and say, have we traded it for a bowl of soup? Have we forgotten how much treasure there is for us in Christ?

[72:49] I think it's worth us reflecting on that. Esau weeps with self-pity, but he doesn't repent. He doesn't say, what a fool I've been giving away my birthright.

please forgive me, Lord. He does none of that. In fact, as 2 Corinthians 7 verse 10, I think says, I think for him would have been such a help.

It says there, godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret. But what does worldly sorrow do? Worldly sorrow brings death.

That's what the text says. we have Esau with worldly sorrow, not with godly repentance. And I think we need to repent of a sorrow about the consequences of things, which is not a true repentance.

Do you follow me? So, four different areas for repentance. Repentance of self-indulgence, repentance of justifying the end and saying the means doesn't matter, repenting of lying and repenting of a lack of true repentance.

[74 : 13] All of these, I think, this text speaks to us about. But let's go on to something even more exciting. Blessing flows through this imperfect family and through the imperfect people of God.

It's a sad story about the messiness of sin, causing ruin in a family that we've just read. Yet, despite this, God's blessing still stands.

God is still at work in and through the line of Jacob. What does that mean, that his blessing is still at work in and through the line of Jacob? You see, there's one person whose presence in this narrative we haven't highlighted.

Certainly, it wasn't high up on Isaac's agenda. But as we look, we see that there's one behind all that's happening, the Lord God Almighty, who is the source of blessing, the ultimate source of blessing.

And the thing about it is that this family's awful failings and any family's petty failings is nothing compared with the blessing that the Lord Almighty pours out upon his elect.

[75 : 39] And I think it's important for us to notice this. Does Jacob deserve the blessing of God, do you think? Votes?

I don't think he deserves the blessing of God. In fact, I think I could stand quite self-righteously here and say I really think he's a very, very naughty boy.

Friends, do you deserve the blessing of Almighty God? God. We say no, but you know, sometimes we think we're quite nice.

Better than Jacob. I want you to notice that there is a person in this story who is the source of blessing and he chooses who he's going to choose.

It's something which we don't like, but God chooses people. He calls people. He's called you. He's called you his own.

[76 : 46] He's saved you and he's pouring his blessing upon you both in this world and in the world that is to come. This is the grace of God and the wisdom of God and it requires us to submit to his ways and to show great grace towards others in their failings and in their weakness and in their broken families.

This I believe is gospel good news to a broken world. That God is at work calling broken families. Our world is full of broken families. He's calling them and he wants to bless them and restore them. I want you to know that God is greater than your or my sin.

Is that good? His grace is bigger than our failings and our shame. Hallelujah. This is the gospel.

I wonder have we told people about this recently? God's plan is at work right down a line of sinners.

[78 : 05] I was chatting to one or two of you before the service saying what can you do with Jacob? Well it doesn't stop there though does it? King David a man after God's own heart and a few other hearts.

grace. He carries on choosing carries on blessing when we frankly don't deserve it. And through this broken family right down the line eventually comes the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's the one everything is pointing to. He is the fount of blessings. Do you know him? Do you love him? Do you treasure him?

I pray you do. Let me tell you a bit about him. Lies and deceit were spoken over Jesus Christ.

Do you know what he did? He just spoke the truth. Or even remained silent. Jesus was cut off from his father.

[79 : 23] I guess Jacob was wasn't he? In order to bear our sin. So that you and I could be grafted into this motley family line of Israel.

This is such grace. So that you and I could be sons and daughters of the living God. Hallelujah. friends, whatever you think about your situation, however bad the situation is that you're facing, Jacob tells you this, I believe.

God is greater than your sin. God is greater than evil. God is greater than deceit and lying. God is greater.

God is greater than grace. God is so strong, so determined and he wants to call people and he wants to bless people.

And the remarkable thing is he wants to use his church. Our vision is to see how we can transform by God through his loving, serving and worshipping church.

[80 : 35] I find it remarkable that he might be able to use me or you because I'm acutely aware of my weaknesses. I can invalidate myself by giving myself a very poor report score.

Can you? But he chooses to use the weak things of this world. Are you feeling weak? Good.

He might be able to show his glory then and his power and to show that his grace is big. And wonderfully God chooses to do all of this work through his church, his bride, whom he loves, even when we act like a Rebecca towards Isaac to him.

It is remarkable. All I want to say is all glory be to his name for he confounds the wisdom of the wise. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Our loving heavenly father, please forgive our foolish ways.

[81 : 51] Please come and heal and restore our broken families. Today we want to repent and turn away from self indulgence and ask for the blessing of godly contentment and a true and full relationship with you.

We want to repent of the belief that the end justifies the means and instead to walk with you in the freedom of the children of God and your truthful ways.

We want to repent of lying and half-truths. we ask that you would lead us to a true godly repentance, not worldly regret.

We praise you for you blessed us, not because we deserved it, but because you chose to. May we as a church be a source of blessing and transformation as we love and serve and worship you, Lord.

All glory be to your name. Amen. Amen. We're going to sing our final hymn.

[83 : 10] Just a reminder, do come through for tea and coffee afterwards and if you would value prayer, we've talked about some tough things this morning, then please pray with one another and ask the Lord to do a work of transformation and blessing in your life and your family.

Shall we stand and sing, guide me, O thou great Jehovah. I see you in water.

Bye. I am the Lord, the great Jehovah, filled with through this foreign land.

I am the Lord, the great Jehovah, filled with through this foreign land.

Red of heaven, red of heaven, fill me now and evermore.

[84 : 23] Fill me now and evermore. Fill me now and evermore.

Forward, come the crystal fountain, whence the healing's chief of flow.

Let the fiery cloudy pillow lead me on my journey through.

Softly lindle, strongly lindle, be thou still my strength and shielding.

Be thou still my strength and shield. Fill me now and evermore.

[85 : 26] Fill me now and evermore. Fill me now and evermore. Fill me now and evermore. Fill me now and evermore. Fill me now and evermore.

songs of praises, songs of praises I will ever give to Thee.

I will ever give to Thee. Amen. Do please stand to receive the blessing. You know, one of the things we've been reminded of today, and one of the great truths of the Gospel, is that we can receive the blessing from God, even though we don't deserve it. We can receive that blessing from God the Father, who is the source, that is given to us in the Son, who is the face of the Father, and we can enjoy that through the Holy Spirit. So you may like to just open your hands as we receive this blessing. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Do please sit down.

Thank you so much for joining us today. Do please join us for coffee. If you've got children or young people in their groups, please go up to collect them up in the hub, and then do stick around for a cup of tea or coffee. God bless you.

God bless you. Thank you. To the night, and through the darkness, your loving kindness, so through the shadows of my soul, home. The work is finished, the end is risen, Jesus Christ, our living hope.

[88 : 00] Who could imagine so great a mercy, what God could fathom such endless days?

The God of ages stepped out of glory to end my sin and end my shame.

The cross has stolen, I have forgiven, the King of kings brought me his own.

Beautiful Savior, I'm yours forever, Jesus Christ, our living hope.

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord who set me free! Hallelujah!

[89 : 11] The cross has lost its breath on me, you are broken and rechained, their salvation in your name. Jesus Christ, our living hope.

Hallelujah! Then came the morning that still the prophets, the very body began to be.

Out of the silence, the roaring lion, declared their grave as the lame of me.

The king of kings and the king came the morning that still the prophets, your very body began to be.
Out of the silence, the roaring lions, declare the rain, ask your pain for me.

[90 : 29] Oh Jesus, your glory is a victory. Oh hallelujah, praise the Lord who set me free.

Hallelujah, death and death and all sins will hold me. You have broken every day, there's a whisper
in your name.

Jesus Christ, my living hope. Jesus Christ, my living hope.

Oh God, you are my living hope.