

Growing into the Promise

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Date: 15 May 2022

Preacher: Andrew Wingfield

[0 : 00] mix Thank you.

Thank you.

Good morning. Welcome. So good to see you, despite the rain. We had summer yesterday, and we have fall today.

But welcome. I do welcome you with joy in my heart to see you. Welcome to Union Baptist Church, to our Sunday morning service.

I welcome those who are sitting here, and I welcome those who are sitting at home listening through the live streaming. And I'd like to apologize because I understand there may be technical glitches with the live streaming.

[1 : 53] It's cleared up? Oh, wonderful. Praise God. Can you give God a bit of applause for that? It's cleared up. So those of you at home joining us through the live streaming, you are most welcome.

I'd like to borrow a few words from a song. The words go, everybody's welcome. Anyone can come together in the house of God.

Family together. Family together. The old and the young will join to worship as one.

Let's join together to worship the one true God with thankful hearts. Let's pray. Thank you, Father God, for your presence with us.

You promise to be with us always, even to the end of the age. With thankful hearts, we come to worship you, knowing that we are never alone, even when we don't feel your presence.

[3 : 06] Amen. Amen. Would you please stand and join me in reading the words of this wonderful song? I thought it would be nice to read a song this morning rather than sing one.

This song speaks of a thankful response to what Jesus did for us. Would you stand? The song is, Let the Redeemed of the Lord.

And I'd like you to read it as if you've been redeemed. Together. Let the Redeemed of the Lord enter his gates with thanksgiving in their hearts.

Let the Redeemed, the Redeemed of the Lord, come into his courts with a shout of praise. Let his house be filled with praise.

Let his house overflow with praise. Let his house be filled with songs of freedom. Celebrate the Lord's amazing grace.

[4 : 13] Let his children celebrate with dancing. Let his children clap their hands with joy.

Let his children celebrate salvation. For his love and mercy never fail. Praise the Lord, the rock of our salvation.

Praise the Lord, for he alone is God. Praise the Lord.

Lord Almighty reigns. And so we transition from reading to singing.

Thank you.

[5 : 53] Light of the world, you stepped down into darkness. Opened my eyes, let me see. Beauty that made this heart adore you. Hope of a life spent with you.

So here I am to worship, here I am to bow now, here I am to say that you're my God.

You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me.

King of all days, oh so highly exalted.

Glorious in heaven above. Oh God, I am to worship, here I am to bow down.

[7 : 20] came so here I am to worship here I am to bow down here I am to say that you're my God you're altogether lovely altogether worthy altogether wonderful floating me I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross and I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross and I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross and I'll never know

how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross so here I am to worship here I am to bow down here I am to bow down here I am to say that you're my God you're altogether lovely altogether worthy altogether worthy altogether wonderful to me wonderful wonderful to me so here I am to worship here I am to bow down here I am to say that you're my God my God my God you're altogether lovely altogether worthy altogether worthy altogether worthy altogether worthy altogether wonderful to me wonderful to me wonderful to me

Father we are here to worship we are here to bow down and say that you're our God open our eyes so we may see the beauty that made our hearts adore you in Jesus name amen please be seated I'm just going to make one quick announcement this evening we will have a service at 630 and this will be led by our youth and Ben and I encourage you to come I'm sure it will be a major blessing we'll now have an opening of the book by Karen and her team we've been looking at Issa and Jacob Karen has it ready for us Thanks Karen I'm not as tall as Judy in fact I'm not as tall as anybody really can you all count oh good you only have to count to seven so can we just have a quick rehearsal of this ready one two three four five six seven that's seven years gone just like that in a flash at least that's kind of what Jacob thought anyway

I think the team are ready but you're going to need to count so pay attention I've lost him there he is there he is okay Jacob ran Jacob ran and he ran Jacob had cheated his brother Esau and now his brother wanted to kill him I'll kill you so Jacob ran God watched God watched and watched he watched Jacob run he watched Jacob run and when Jacob was tired and could run no further when Jacob felt exhausted on the desert floor with only a stone for a pillow when Jacob was finally ready to listen God spoke he came to Jacob in a dream there was a ladder reaching right up to heaven with angels parading up and down and at the very top of the ladder stood God himself Jacob he said I am the God of your father Isaac and your grandfather Abraham and I'm here to make the same promise I made to them this land is yours your family will be great and one day through your family I'll do something wonderful for the whole world now you go and don't be afraid for you can always count on me to protect you Jacob woke up amazed he said thank you to God and he left a stone to mark that special place where he'd heard God's voice and then Jacob ran he ran and he ran this time he ran all the way to his uncle Laban's house where his mother had told him he would actually be safe and where God knew that he would learn an important lesson now Laban had two daughters the older daughter's name was Leah which means tired the younger daughter's name was Rachel which means lamb Rachel was beautiful and the moment Jacob set his eyes on her he knew this was the girl for him wonderful said his uncle Laban work for me for seven years and she shall be your wife seven years passed ready one two three three three three three four five six seven but Jacob was so in love with Rachel that it seemed no longer than a day the wedding was well attended it's magic isn't it it's just magic the wedding was well attended the dress was beautiful the dress was beautiful but when Jacob pulled aside the veil that hid his bride's face he found himself looking into Leah's eyes oh oh

[15 : 10] I forgot to tell you grinned Laban grinned Laban grinned Laban grinned Laban Leah Leah is my eldest daughter so she has to marry first but you can marry Rachel next week if you like as long as you promise to work for me for another seven years Jacob Jacob looked at the ground now the cheater knew just how it felt to be cheated what else could he do he waited a week and he married Rachel and he married Rachel laughter and he said he was a man and he said he waited a week but you can marry Rachel next week if you like as long as you promise to work for me for another seven years Jacob looked at the ground now the cheater knew just how it felt to be cheated what else could he do he waited a week and he married Rachel laughter and then he had to work for another seven years for his uncle Laban one two three four five six seven of course after all of that he headed home a very different man from the one who had run away

Jacob walked laughter he walked and he walked and then when he was no more than a day's walk away he saw his brother Esau his brother was walking towards him Jacob told his family to stay behind and he walked ahead to face his brother's anger he wasn't running now he believed that God would protect him and so God did because Esau was very different too and when he saw Jacob they ran together and they reached out and they hugged he hugged said Jacob and the two brothers the sons of Isaacs were brothers again thank you thank you thank you for your participation you were wonderful we're going to have a song now and after the song not in it not before it after the song the children and the young people will be leaving but before they do

I'm just going to say a prayer for them this morning dear heavenly father we just thank you Lord that you have blessed us here with all the young children in our church we ask Lord that you will take care of them this morning as they read your word and learn more about you look after their teachers and help them to explain we ask this in the precious name of Jesus Amen alright if we want to stand this might be a new song to some of you if you are at the holiday club it will not be a new song so if you are at the holiday club I need some nice strong singing and also we've got some a bit a little we've got a single action it's not an action song we've got a single action so in the chorus we've got some haze and I want a nice strong hey with a fist up in the air okay so let's practice hey very good right let's sing he's our rescuer he's our rescuer hey he's our rescuer hey we are free from sin forevermore oh how sweet the sound hey oh how grace abounds hey we will praise the Lord our rescuer there is good news for the captive good news for the shade there is good news for the one who walked away there is good news for the doubter there is good news for the doubter there is good news for the doubter the one who haze who fails for the good Lord has come to seek and save he's our rescuer, hey he's our rescuer, hey
He's our rescuer, hey! He's our rescuer, hey! We are free from sin forevermore. Oh how sweet the sound, hey! Oh how grace abounds, hey! We will praise the Lord our rescuer.
He is beauty for the blind man, riches for the poor. He is friendship for the one the world ignores.
[20 : 33] He is pasture for the weary, rest for those who strive. For the good Lord is the way, the truth, the life.

Yes, the good Lord is the way, the truth, the life. He's our rescuer, hey! He's our rescuer, hey! We are free from sin forevermore.

Oh how sweet the sound, hey! Oh how grace abounds, hey! We will praise the Lord our rescuer.

So come and be shameless, come and be fearless, come to the foot of Calvary.

There is redemption, come and be fearless, come to the foot of Calvary.

[21 : 44] There is redemption for every mission, here at the foot of Calvary.

There is redemption for every mission, here at the foot of Calvary.

There is redemption for the fiftyor, el smells at range, geography for the body, every εθεads eek, and the zob■ary are suffering. There Oh, how sweet the sound, hey!

Oh, how grace abounds, hey! We will praise the Lord, our rescuer. We will praise the Lord, our rescuer.

We will praise the Lord, our rescuer.

[23 : 20] We will praise the Lord, our rescuer.

For really putting some oomph into that, hey! Just a few announcements. So, Tuesday at 7.30, we're having the church members meeting here at Union in the sanctuary.

And I encourage you to come. Those who are members, please come. And I ask you today and tomorrow to pray. Pray for our church leaders.

Pray for our church. Pray for the meeting that we will enter that meeting with a spirit of unity and a joy. And I just wanted to make mention of the wall.

Can I have a pan of the wall? Our wall is growing. You can see there are bricks suddenly appearing where there were no bricks before.

[24 : 40] I see some red bricks, some yellow bricks, some pink bricks. And just to remind you, this is our wall of celebration of love. Our acts of love that we're doing in our community during this time of love we come.

So, again, as you do an act, come to church. Take a brick. There's a bag full of bricks there. I don't want him to come back to my home.

I want them on the wall. Can you write the act on it? Let me read some of the new bricks. Giving a gift was an act of love that somebody did this week.

Mowing neighbor's grass was another act of love. Walking someone's dog. And giving words of comfort to a neighbor who is going through a particularly difficult time.

There are things that we can all do. So, let's build that wall. And our Kaylee, that's the next thing on my list, is June 18 at 6 p.m.

[25 : 43] in the buildings at the back in the main hall. And it's to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and Margaret Conliffe's 100th birthday. That's a cause for celebration.

Tickets are available. You register on the church website and you pay at that time. And you indicate your eating preferences. It will be fun. You heard some bagpipe music earlier.

You're going to get a whole lot at the Kaylee. So, come and be festive. And the last announcement I'm going to ask Roger to make. Thank you, Judith.

You should have seen in your pews this morning a Christian Aid envelope. This is Christian Aid Week. Over the years, we've supported this particular opportunity to give to the work of Christian Aid overseas.

Their focus this year is the droughts that are going on in East Africa. And in particular, Zimbabwe. Although there are various drought situations that can get blocked out of the news these days.

[26 : 47] Because of other things that are in our minds and thoughts in Eastern Europe. So, do take... If you haven't got anything to give this morning. And you'd like to give.

Then take the envelope with you. And bring it back next week. And there will be a box in the information room. And there is one there already for this morning. But please do pay. If you're going to write a cheque.

Then please make it payable to Christian Aid. Not to the church. The cheques will then go straight off to Christian Aid. And I'll make sure that happens. So, do take one.

If you think you've got other people in your family. Or friends or neighbours. Who would like to be part of this Christian Aid Week collection. Then I do have some more envelopes available afterwards.

But otherwise, thank you very much for your contribution. As I said, there's an opportunity to give this morning in the box. If you want to do so, give it through the envelope. Or bring it back next week for collection then.

[27 : 42] Thank you very much indeed. Thank you. Yes. Thank you for removing the stone, Roger. Let's just settle our hearts.

And prepare to hear God's word. Father, thank you that your word is a lamp to our feet. To show us where to go.

And how to go. Thank you that our faith comes through hearing. And hearing your word. Prepare our hearts and minds to receive the word.

That is to be read by Pearlie. Give us ears to hear. The opening up of the deeper messages in your words through Andrew. Anoint his words.

So that the full power of your words. Will be felt by us all. In Jesus name. Amen. Readings from Genesis.

[29 : 00] Chapter 29. Then Jacob continued on his journey. And came to the land of the eastern peoples. There he saw a well in the field.

With three flocks of sheep lying near it. Because the flocks were watered from that well. The stone over the mouth of the well was large. When all the flocks were gathered there.

The shepherds would roll the stone away from the well's mouth. And water the sheep. Then they would return the stone to its place over the mouth of the well.

Jacob asked the shepherds. My brothers. Where are you from? We are from Haran. They replied. He said to them. Do you know Laban.

Nehal's grandson? Yes we know him. They answered. And Jacob asked them. Is he well? Yes he is.

[29 : 59] They said. And here comes his daughter. Rachel. With the sheep. Look. He said. The sun is high. And it is not time for the flocks to be gathered.

Water the sheep. And take them back to pasture. We can't. They replied. Until all the flocks are gathered. And the stone has been rolled away from the mouth of the well.

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

When Jacob saw Rachel. Daughter of Laban. His mother's brother. And Laban's sheep. He went over. And rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well. And watered his uncle's sheep.

Then Jacob kissed Rachel. And began to weep aloud. He had told Rachel. That he was a relative of her father. And a son of Rebecca.

[30 : 58] So she ran. And told her father. As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob. His sister's son. He hurried to meet him.

He embraced him. And kissed him. And brought him to his home. And there Jacob told him all these things. Then Laban said to him. You are my own flesh and blood.

After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month. Laban said to him. Just because you are a relative of mine. Should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be. Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah. And the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes. But Rachel was lovely in form. And beautiful. Jacob was in love with Rachel. And said I'll work for you.

[31 : 56] Seven years in return. For your younger daughter Rachel. Laban said. It's better that I give her to you. Than to some other man. Stay here with me.

So Jacob served seven years. To get Rachel. But they seemed like only a few days to him. Because of his love for her. Then Jacob said to Laban.

Give me my wife. My time is completed. And I want to lie with her. So Laban brought together. All the people of the place. And gave a feast.

But when evening came. He took his daughter. Leah. Leah. And gave her to Jacob. And Jacob laid with her. And Laban gave his servant.

Girl. Zilpah. To his daughter. As her servant. Her maid servant. When morning came. There was Leah. So Jacob say to Laban.

[32 : 55] What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel. Didn't I? Why? Why have you deceived me? Laban replied.

It is not our custom. Here to give the younger daughter. In marriage. Before the older one. Finish this daughter's bridal week. Then we will give you the younger one also.

In return for another seven years of work. And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah. Leah. And then Laban gave him. His daughter Rachel.

To be his wife. Laban gave his servant girl. Bilhah. To his daughter Rachel. For her maid servant. Jacob lay with Rachel also.

And he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban. Another seven years. When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved.

[33 : 52] He opened her womb. But Rachel was barren. Leah became pregnant. And gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben.

For she said. It is because. Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now. She conceived again. And when she gave birth to a son.

She said. Because the Lord heard that I am not loved. She gave me this one too. So she named him Simeon. Again she conceived. And when she gave birth to a son.

She said. Now at last my husband. Will have become attached to me. Because I have born him three sons. So he was named Levi. She conceived again.

And when she gave birth to a son. She said. This time. I will praise the Lord. So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children. Bless it be named Lord.

[34 : 56] Well good morning everyone. Thank you very much. Pearlie. For that reading. So we are continuing.

This journey. Through the amazing story. Of Jacob. The messed up guy. From the messed up family. An ancient figure. Who in many ways. Is a very modern figure.

A man who suffers. From inner emptiness. Desperate for other people's blessing. And other people's approval. And last week. We saw him on the run.

He was forced to flee. From his brother Esau. As we saw in the drama. This morning. After he cheated Esau. And his father. Out of his birthright. But there was a turning point.

For Jacob. As he had this amazing dream. In chapter 28. As he slept. With that rock for a pillow. And he had this amazing vision. Of the stairway to heaven.

[35 : 49] This ladder coming down. From heaven. Touching the earth. And God made a promise. To Abraham. In Genesis 28. He said. I will give you and your descendants.

The land on which you are lying. All peoples on earth. Will be blessed through you. And your offspring. I am with you. And will watch over you. And Jacob made a promise. Back to God. In return.

In chapter 28 verse 21. He said. The Lord will be my God. He's had this amazing vision. This amazing experience. He's recognised God's presence with him.

And he says. Yes. Now. The Lord will be. My God. I'm going to put God first. I'm going to continue to. To be aware of his presence. And to seek him. And to be prayerful. So I'd love to say.

That Jacob went on this journey. Trusting God. Putting God first. Seeking God. But instead. We have two chapters. Of complete drama. Because he didn't do that. And because he didn't do that. [36 : 46] Because he didn't make the Lord his God. He continued to struggle. With the problem. Of his inner emptiness. But what we'll see through all of this. Is that God. Is always faithful to his promises.

Even though humans. Are not. So if you turn with me. To the reading that Pearlie brought us. It's on page 31. And we're going to look at that together.

Working through. Chapter 29. Of Genesis. And we see at the start. Of chapter 29. That Jacob arrives at a well. And he sees their sheep.

Waiting to be watered. And he goes and greets the shepherds. And he finds out. That they're from Haran. Which is the home of his uncle. Laban. It turns out. That these shepherds. Work for his uncle. Now just to recap.

Back in chapter 27. Jacob's mum Rebecca. Had told him to go and stay. With her brother. Laban. Now I told you. That chapters 29 and 30. Are full of drama.

[37 : 41] Now I was thinking. What kind of movie. This might be. If it was a movie. I couldn't really decide. Because at times. It's a romance. It's a very romantic movie. At other times. It's a comedy. At other times.

It's a steamy. And sordid drama. Of lust. And love triangles. And jealousy. And at times. It's a clever thriller. About hustle. And deception. But verses 6 to 13.

Of chapter 29. Are definitely the romance. Parts. The shepherds say. In verse 6. Here is Laban. Rachel's daughter. With the sheep. And you can imagine. In the movie version. Of this.

The shot. Of beautiful Rachel. Walking through the hills. The breeze blowing. In her beautiful hair.

The afternoon sun. Lighting up her face. The romantic music. In the background. Now Jacob.

Meanwhile. Has not seen. This beautiful maiden yet. He continues his conversation. With the shepherds. Now he thinks. They're being lazy. That they should. Get on with watering the flocks.

But they explain. That they're waiting.

[38 : 33] For the others to come. And help them. Because they need help. There's a really. Really heavy stone. That's covering. The opening. Of the well. And then in verse 10. Jacob sees. Rachel.

So imagine the movie version. Cut to the slow motion. Of Rachel. With the breeze in her hair. And Jacob's pupils dilate. To the size of saucers. He is in love.

And he takes the opportunity. To impress her. At this point. Did you notice that? He rolls up his sleeves. Revealing his bulging forearms. And he strolls over. To the well. Don't trip up now Jacob.

You'll blow it. He doesn't trip up. Phew. He bends down. And single handedly. He rolls away. This massive stone. From the well. That several shepherds. Couldn't manage to roll away. Wow. Swoon.

What a man.

Now if you remember. 40 years. About 40 years before this. But a few chapters back. Jacob's grandfather. Abraham. Was trying to find a wife. For Isaac. And that also involved. A meeting at a well. But there was a big difference.

[39 : 28] There was a lot of prayer. On that occasion. There wasn't on this one. Jacob didn't have his eyes on God. His eyes were very much. On Rachel. And Rachel alone. After moving this heavy stone.

From the well. He went over. And he kissed. The beautiful Rachel. He's certainly not backward. In coming forward. Is he? However. Having shown his physical strength. He then shows his sensitive side. By weeping. He was overcome.

By emotion. By meeting up with these relatives. And meeting the woman. Of his dreams. So Jacob goes back. To Laban. His uncle. And he stays there. And he's offered.

A job. Now remember. This is homeless Jacob. On the run Jacob. Jobless Jacob. Who had to flee for his life. But in verse 15. Laban said to him. Just because. You're a relative of mine.

Should you work for me for nothing. Tell me what your wages should be. Now at the Cap Job Club. During lunch times. We have a slot called Food for Thought. Where we invite someone. To come and share a little bit. About their own story.

[40 : 25] And a little bit about their own faith as well. And I've done this a couple of times. And I've tried to. To relate what I've said. About stories from the Bible. About people finding work. So one time. I shared about Moses. Which was kind of like a reverse interview.

At the burning bush. When he was kind of setting out. All the reasons why he wasn't qualified. To do the job. And then last week. I talked about Jesus calling the disciples. Simon and Andrew. The fishermen. And it was like the quickest interview ever.

Because Jesus said. Right now. You're going to be fishers of men. And they said. Right. And they dropped everything. And they followed him. But this is a strange interview. Because Jacob gets asked. Well what should your wages be. Now I don't know if you've ever been.

In a situation in an interview. Where you've been asked that question. You've been asked to name that salary. That's quite a nice position to be in. You may have been in that position. Quite possibly. I'll bet.

That if you were in that position. You didn't ask for the interviewer's daughter. To be your salary. The thing is. Jacob is only interested. In one thing. He was completely besotted.

[41 : 21] With Rachel. So he said. I'll work seven years for you. In return for Rachel's hand. In marriage. Now some research suggests. That a typical bride price. Of that era.

You know. Bearing in mind. This was the era. Where bride price. Was the done thing. That the kind of going rate. Would have been. People think. About two years wages. So seven years wages. Is well over the expected price.

Well over the odds. Such is the extent. To which Jacob is besotted. With Rachel. So what is going on here? Well people like Jacob. With an inner emptiness.

Give themselves over. To the hope. Of finding. One true love. The idea that somewhere out there. Is the right person. And everything will be fine.

And wonderful. If I get that person. And I'll be fulfilled. And secured. And happy. And loved. We're told again. That Rachel had. A great figure. And was beautiful.

[42 : 15] However. She also had an older sister. Called Leah. And we're told that Leah. In the translation here. It says. She had weak eyes. It seems that something. Might have been a little bit lost. In the translation here.

It's clearly not saying. That she was a bit short sighted. The implication is very clearly. That she was ugly. Perhaps there was something funny. With her eyes. Perhaps it's saying. That she made other people's eyes hurt. I don't know.

But. She certainly wasn't easy on the eyes. As her sister. Very clearly was. So Jacob sent to work. With this insight. For seven years. And there's this really romantic comment.

They seemed like. Only a few days to him. Because of his love for her. Oh wow. So after the seven years. Jacob. Actually had to make the first move. To remind. Laban.

Of the deal. And in verse 21. He basically said to Laban. Give me my wife. I want to have sex with her. The NIV translation is more polite. But the original Hebrew. Is not.

[43 : 09] Right. And it comes across as very. Indiscreet. Bible scholars will tell you. That this is utterly crass. In the Hebrew. And it would have been totally shocking. For the original readers. Of this. But here is a man.

Who is emotionally. And sexually. Longing. Longing for something. To fill. The emptiness. In his life. And it's not just Jacob. Jacob is doing.

What we all do. To some extent. Our inner emptiness. Leads us. To pin all our hopes. And desires. On a person. Or perhaps a job. Or a home. Or whatever it might be for us.

Inner emptiness. Is often. Behind it. Verse 22. Laban organizes. The wedding feast. And you can imagine. The food. The wine. More wine.

More food. More wine. Laban was very careful. To keep Jacob's glass. Well topped up. And late in the evening. Probably after dark. The bride was brought out. But through it all.

[44 : 03] She remained very heavily veiled. And try not to imagine. The kind of. Like. White wedding dress veil. That we saw earlier. Think more of a burqa. Where you really can't see. Who's behind it. Right. And after many hours.

Of eating and drinking. Jacob takes his. Veiled bride. To the honeymoon suite. And you know. It was dark. And there was no electric lights. And you know the rest. And then.

Verse 25. It's. The twist. The shocker. The bombshell. It's the morning after. He wakes up in bed. With the wrong girl. He's consummated his marriage. To the ugly sister.

Not the one he loves. Verse 25. Says it very well. In just a few words. When morning came. There was Leah. There she was. And it was too late. Then.

Jacob had been deceived. By his uncle Laban. Who is now his father-in-law. So he storms off to Laban. What have. What is this you've done to me. Why have you deceived me. Jacob.

[44 : 58] The accomplished con artist. Had met his match. In Laban. How had he fallen for it. Well. As any con artist. Will tell you. You always find. Your victim's weakness. Their point of vulnerability. Isaac's weakness. Was food. That's how Jacob got to him. You go for the thing. That they can't resist. Jacob was vulnerable. He was so consumed. With getting Rachel. And Laban played into that.

If you look back. At what he said. He chosen his words. Very carefully. And Jacob actually heard. What he wanted to hear. Laban responds. Very calmly. Well around here. It's not the done thing. To put the younger. Before the older. And I expect. At that moment. A flaming spear. Exploded. Into Jacob's conscience. The word deceived. That he used.

Should have rung. A bell. That was exactly. The same word. That his father used. And Jacob now knows. He's done to me. Exactly what I did. To my father. He now knows.

[45 : 53] What it is. To be exploited. To be used. To be lied to. And he's broken. But it's not just. His life. That's broken. It's also Leah's. As we'll see shortly.

So Jacob then. Had to finish. The honeymoon week. With Leah. I mean. How awkward is that. Right? And then he got the girl. He wanted. Rachel. But then he had to work. Another seven years. To pay off her. Bride price.

And we see. As we go on. Into verse 31. From Leah's point of view. Her cycle of rejection. Continues. She was not loved. By her husband. It says. But. God loved her. And God blessed her. With the gift. Of a son. But she named. Her first son. Reuben. Which means. The Lord has seen. My misery. And she commented. Surely my husband. Will love me now. Now this is tragic. Isn't it? She's had a son. But she's utterly. Miserable. Because of her unrequited love. For Jacob. All she wants. Is for Jacob. To take notice of her.

[46 : 49] To be interested in her. To love her. But his affections. Are focused on his other wife. And you know. The absolute worst thing. For Leah. Is that. The other wife.

Is her beautiful sister. Just imagine. How it was for Leah. Growing up. She spent her whole life. As the ugly duckling. In the shadow. Of her beautiful sister. All the attention. Went to Rachel. Everyone talks about.

How beautiful she is. People. She constantly heard. People talking. Behind her back. Saying. Isn't it a shame. That Rachel got all the looks. And sometimes. Sniggering at her.

That was Leah's life. And it continues. She pinned all her hopes. On gaining the love. Of her husband. And she thought. Maybe if I can just. Bear him a son. He will love me now. But no. Still. No love. From Jacob. She has a second son. Verse 33. She names him Simeon. Because the Lord has heard. That she is not loved. By her husband. And it goes on.

[47 : 42] With her third son. She says. Perhaps now. My husband will become. Attached to me. So I'll call him Levi. Which means. Attached. All her son's names. Express her longing. For Jacob.

How is she handling. Her inner emptiness. It's the same way. That Jacob handled it. She's looking. For one true love. And this story. Shows us that. When we put our hopes. In one true love. Whatever that may be. Whether it's. A person. Or getting the right job. Or whatever. Whenever we make that. The main thing. There will always be. Disappointment. Jacob worked hard.

And strived. Seven years. For the one. He goes to bed. With the one. But in the morning. It was not the one. It was Leah. Oh the disappointment. That he faced.

And you know. When we yearn. And strive. And pin all our hopes. On one true love. That isn't the Lord. We go to bed with Rachel. And we wake up. With Leah. Forgive me.

[48 : 40] For putting it in crass terms. But Leah represents. Something here. The thing that we put. At the center. Always evades us. If it's not God. If your partner. Is your all. Any shortcomings.

And your partner. Becomes. A major threat to you. If you put. Family in the place of God. If you put sex. In the place of God. Even if you put. Your service in church. In the place of God. You'll be disappointed. And you'll still be left.

With a gaping hole. Of emptiness. So what's the answer. Well let's look. At what happened. To Leah. Because something changes. For Leah. In verse 35. In verse 35.

She gave birth to a son. And see here. She now stops yearning. For the love. Of the one. Who will always. Disappoint her. Instead. She switches. Her entire focus.

To the covenant God of love. Who has always loved her. And has always seen her. As beautiful. She said. This time. I will praise the Lord. So. She named him Judah. Meaning praise.
[49 : 35] It's all about God. And it's not about Jacob. This time. She realizes. That she can't make. Her husband's love. Her idol. And it's no coincidence. That if you follow. The line through Judah. Down through the family tree. You eventually get. To Jesus. Because this is a picture. Of the way. That God is going to save the world. Through Jesus. God doesn't say. Strong people. Good people. If you live strong lives. If you. If you're good. You can come up to heaven. That's not how it works. Jesus comes down. He dies on a cross. He fulfills the requirements. For you. Jesus is the ladder. That Jacob saw. Coming down. From heaven to earth. Making a way for us. And God gives Leah. The rejected. Unloved. Unlovely one. To be the great. Great. Great. Great. Etc. Grandmother. Of the Messiah. Because she was the rejected one. She was the weak one. The unloved one.
[50 : 27] That's how God's saving plan works. And that is good news. But as we keep seeing. God keeps his promises. People don't.

Just as Jacob failed in his promise to make the Lord his God. Leah failed in her promise to always praise God. If you read how she acts in the next chapter. So chapter 30 verses 1 to 24 are about the rivalry between Leah and Rachel in producing offspring. We could call this section fertility wars. I encourage you to read this whole chapter later. But I'll try to give you a quick summary. Now at this point Leah has four children. So it's 4-0 to Leah. What's going on for Rachel? Well chapter 30 verse 1. We see that Rachel has not had any children. And the beauty queen becomes the drama queen. She's jealous. Not just a little bit jealous. She is angry. She's a desperate woman. She's on the edge. Give me children or I'll die. She says. Her jealousy and anger are symptoms of the tragic love triangle.
[51 : 30] Between her and Jacob and Leah. Leah longs for what Rachel has. Her husband's love. Rachel longs for what Leah has. Children. Neither are able to enjoy what they do have. They're totally consumed by what they don't have. By the way. If you ever needed biblical evidence that polygamy is not a good idea. Look no further than this chapter. It's all here. It's a mess. And you might have noticed that Jacob in all this. What's he been doing? He has not been a great husband. He does hardly anything. He doesn't even name his children. He doesn't lead this broken hurting family. It seems he does very little except have sex quite frankly. That's all we see. And how does he respond here? Well he gets angry. Back at her. He has no tenderness or compassion. He responds with words of frustration and anger. In his frustration he recognises that he can't rely on his own devious schemes. He's helpless. He can't do what only God can do.
[52 : 27] Not that he prayed as his father Isaac did when his mother struggled with childlessness. And then we see that Rachel resigns herself to what her grandparents Abraham and Sarah foolishly resorted to in their attempts to manipulate things and speed up the process of God fulfilling his promise.

She brings on a sub. She offers her servant Bilhar to sleep with Jacob and give her children as a kind of surrogacy arrangement. Bilhar gives birth to two sons. So now it's 4-2 to Leah. And then Leah doesn't like her sister closing the gap on her. So she brings on her own sub. She gives her servant to Jacob to sleep with him. And she bears a son called Asher. Now the next bit in verses 14-16 is a little bit weird to be honest. It's a doping scandal. Where Rachel pays for this plant Mandrake. Which was known to be some kind of aphrodisiac or fertility treatment. She pays for that by giving her turn in Jacob's bed to Leah. And then Leah has two more sons. And now it's 7-2 to Leah. Then finally in verse 22 God remembered Rachel. He answered her prayer.
[53 : 32] She conceives and gives birth to Joseph. Now the next section verses 25-43 is actually fertility wars of a different kind. It's over goats and sheep between Laban and Jacob. You see Jacob decides that it's time to go back home. And he says to Laban look I've worked really hard for you. Let me go home with my wives and children. And Laban says okay well stop. Let me pay you for the work you've done.

Name your wages and I'll pay them. But Jacob's heard this before and he's not going to fall for it this time. So he comes up with a clever plan. He asks for all the speckled, spotted, patched or stripy sheep or goats.

Now this sounds like a bargain to Jacob. To Laban. But then Jacob sets about trying to manipulate things and do some kind of selective breeding so that there's a lot more speckled or spotted offspring and so that he gains more.

Now this is one of the comic parts of the story. The way he did this was to put stripy branches in front of certain animals, stronger animals when they were mating, in order to produce striped or speckled livestock.

[54 : 35] Now if anyone here breeds rabbits or guinea pigs or any other livestock, perhaps you could try this technique to see if it works. Now as far as Jacob could tell, it did work because he ended up with loads and loads of spotted, speckled, stripy sheep and goats.

According to the deal, they were his. So he ended up getting very rich. Well was it because of the ridiculous scheme with the branches? No, of course it wasn't. It was because God was keeping his promise to him to bless him and prosper him.

The promise that he'd forgotten up until that point. Well before we finish, I just want to dip into chapter 31 so you can see where this is headed. And then we'll see more of the story that we've had a preview of in the drama this morning.

We'll do more on that next week. But chapter 31 verse 3, God prompts Jacob and he says, Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives and I will be with you.

And then Jacob tells Rachel and Leah in verse 5. And notice, just try to notice the difference in Jacob that you hear now. So 31 verse 5. I see that your father's attitude toward me is not what it was before, but the God of my father has been with me.

[55 : 42] You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength, yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me. If he said the speckled ones will be your wages, then all the flocks gave birth to speckled young.

And if he said the streaked ones will be your wages, then all the flocks bore streaked young. So God has taken away your father's livestock and has given them to me. Do you see what's happened here?

Finally, he's acknowledged God. Things have been tough. Laban has given him a hard time, but God has been with him. God has kept his promises. God has not allowed the devious Laban to harm him more than he could cope with.

It wasn't Jacob's clever plans and stripy branches that caused him to get more speckled goats. It was all God. How do you respond if you have success, if you prosper?

Do you acknowledge God's goodness and thank him? Don't wait 20 years to acknowledge God's help like Jacob did. We see that Jacob is a different person now to the young man that arrived in Haran, who placed all his hopes in finding human love, who forgot God's promise and placed his confidence in himself.

[56 : 54] He has grown into God's promise through the discipline of God the Father. That's what God does as a father. As any father does, he disciplines us.

He disciplines his children to shape them and help them to grow. God takes us as we are, but he's not content to leave us as we are. Through all that messy stuff that went on with Laban and Leah and Rachel, he was disciplining Jacob.

In Laban, Jacob met his match and his means of discipline. His wives were also a means of discipline. He knew sibling rivalry from his own upbringing.

He then became subject to it from his wives. Through these hard years of drudgery and friction, God was at work behind the scenes. God being with us does not mean that life is a breeze.

It does mean that God will discipline us as a loving father. Hebrews 12 verse 7 says, Endure hardship as discipline. God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?

[57 : 56] We can expect to be disciplined because God loves us, because God is treating us as his children. God sometimes uses difficult situations and difficult people to teach us and discipline us.

Do you have difficult situations in your life right now? Do you have difficult people in your life right now? Are you aware, have you thought that God could be growing you as a person through them?

Do you trust God's promise to you that he is with you and that he can use these messy things to shape you and to grow you? Psalm 146 verse 5 says, Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God.

Do you trust in the God of Jacob? Is he your help? Or do you try to manipulate things to get the best outcome as Jacob used to do? Do you put your hope in God?

Or do you put your hope in something else or someone else as Jacob did, as Leah did? Anything else we hope in will only lead to disappointment. Do you trust that God keeps his promise to you even if you face difficult situations or difficult people?

[59 : 14] Is the Lord your God? Where is the deepest adoration of your heart pointed at? Turn it to God. He's the good Father and he is always faithful to his promises.

He will never disappoint you in the long term. Let's just take a moment to turn to him in prayer and respond to him. I'm going to invite Joel and the musicians to come up.

Joel is just going to play quietly as we reflect on God's word and what God might be saying to us through this.

Let's do this.

Lord God, you are the God of Jacob who keeps his promises always.

[60 : 46] We're sorry that so often we don't keep ours. So often we act like Jacob. So often we put our hopes in other things, in other people.

We don't put our hopes in you. We don't put our trust in you. We try to fill the God-shaped hole in our lives with anything other than you. We forget your presence with us through everything.

We forget that part of you being a father, part of your presence is your loving discipline. Help us to recognize what you're doing, to recognize the way you discipline us, even through very difficult situations or through difficult people that you put around us.

Help us to trust you, God of Jacob. Help us to put all our hope in you. We thank you that you always keep up your promises. We thank you that you never disappoint us.

Amen. And now as we prepare to gather around the Lord's table and to receive that wonderful reminder of what God has done for us, his saving work, we're going to stand and we're going to sing Behold the Lamb.

[61 : 56] Let's stand and sing together. Let's sing together. Let's sing together. Let's sing together. Behold the Lamb who bears our sins always made for us And we remember the promise made That all who come in faith Find forgiveness at the cross

So we share in this bread of life And we drink of his sacrifice As a sign of our bonds of peace Around the table of peace Around the table of peace The body of our Saviour Jesus Christ Torn for you Eat and remember The wounds that heal For the death that brings us life Makes a price To make us one

So we share In this bread of life And we drink Of his sacrifice As a sign Of our bonds of love Around the table of peace The blood that cleanses Every stain of sin Shed for you Drink and remember Drink and remember Each red death's cup That all may enter in To receive this life of God

So we share In this bread of life And we drink And we drink Of his sacrifice And we drink Of his sacrifice As a sign Of our bonds of peace The bonds of grace Around the table of peace Around the table of him And we drink And we drink And so with don S And so we drink And so with ballots And we drink And we drink And to remember our call to follow in the steps of Christ As his body here on earth

As we share in his suffering We proclaim Christ will come again And we'll join in the feast of hope Around the table of the King As we share in his suffering When the praise rise will come again And we'll join in the feast of hope Around the table of the King Please be seated

[67 : 11] We saw that Jacob does not keep his promises But we saw that God's promises are kept through Jesus Christ Like Jacob we often put our hopes in the wrong things But God's word tells us to put our hope in the eternal Jesus Christ Who died for us and rose again And he will come again So in the meantime what do we do?

We commemorate We remember Jesus' finished work of salvation on the cross So this is a personal invitation To the Lord's table Our acceptance is just between us and God No one else So don't even look at the person beside you So if you haven't received that promise And you don't feel ready to partake of this feast Just leave the cup And just listen And just wait for the Spirit to minister to you 1 Corinthians 11, 27-29 Reminds us to ensure That we come to the table In a worthy manner

Deserving of the body of Christ We should examine ourselves Before taking communion It says So then Whoever eats the bread And drinks the cup of the Lord In an unworthy manner Will be guilty of sinning Against the body and blood of the Lord Everyone ought to examine themselves Before they eat of the bread And drink from the cup For those who eat and drink Without discerning the body of Christ Eat and drink judgment on themselves Let's pray Loving Father God We want to come clean about our mistakes Show us those things That we have done That are not pleasing to you Forgive us Father For anger Pride Rebellion Unforgiveness Seeking our ways And not yours

As we come to communion Father We seek to prepare our hearts To be cleansed by Christ's sacrifice And transformed by the Holy Spirit We thankfully receive your grace Amen So Jesus tells us to do this In memory of him And that's also in Corinthians 11 23 to 26 And he says in verse 26 For whenever you eat This bread And drink this cup You proclaim the Lord's death Until he comes Let's give thanks For the bread Which represents Jesus' body Broken for us And the wine Representing his blood Spilled for us Thank you Father For Jesus Christ The bread of life The true vine You feed us

You feed us With the word Help us to recognize Our risen Christ In the breaking of the bread Which represents His body Beaten And scourged For us Thank you for the wine Representing his blood Shed for us Which brings us Cleansing Salvation Wholeness In Jesus name Amen Amen So Jesus gave thanks He took the bread He gave thanks And he broke it And he said This is my body Broken for you Do this In remembrance Of me So rustling time Can you open Your packages The top layer Has the wafer

[71 : 59] Which represents The bread Everybody has one If you don't Just shout And we'll get one To you So there's one Person here Pearlie do you have one Okay Let's just eat Remembering That God So loved the world That he gave His one And only son That whosoever Believes in him Should not perish But have everlasting life In the same way After supper He took the cup This is a really nice cup I suspect He took an earthenware cup And he says This cup

Is the new covenant In my blood Do this Whenever you drink it In remembrance Of me So let's drink Together So let's open our cups And we're going to Drink together To symbolize The unity That the spirit Brings to us The blood of Christ Was spilled for us Together And I like this bit I always put it in Your death Your death Oh Lord We commemorate Your resurrection We confess Your final coming We await Glory be to you Oh Christ Amen So we'll have

Our intercessions now Thank you Let's come before our Lord As we widen our prayers A little bit With intercessions Let's come before our Lord In prayer Gracious God And loving Heavenly Father We acknowledge your presence As we see all around us Your creation In the wonderful greens Of the trees And the colours And scents Of the plants And flowers And the happy sounding Bird song We give you the thanks And praise And praise you We never take for granted Your sovereign power As we see the seasons Come and go Margaret has seen A lot more seasons Than most of us Celebrating her 100th birthday Yesterday We thank you For her life Of faith in you And we just pray Your continued blessing On her We thank you That we've been blessed To know her It's that time of the year When some of the young people Of our fellowship Into the exam season And we pray That you will enable Each one of them To be diligent In their studies And have confidence For their future As the Love Wickham Event approaches We pray That all the planning Will be fruitful And that the planned service In the high street Will be a glorious witness To many in our town As Christians unite To worship you Remembering too The social action projects Taking place With the bricks behind And that many will see Your love Through the service Of your people We can wander As our experience In an exciting time At present Just one win away From promotion And we bring before you Benedict The chaplain there As he works amongst them And at the moment Is discussing the possibility Of a prayer room For them At Wickham there At Adams Park That would be fruitful too

We remember too The chaplain at the YMC Up at Cressex We pray you'll fill him With your love and care As he ministers To some very vulnerable people Living up there Wickham Youth for Christ Continue to work In our schools And we bring before you Erica and the team Give them inspiration Vision and direction As they lead assemblies And after school Children's clubs As well as Detached youth work project Befriending the students As they leave and head home Bring before you Lighthouse That will be operating In the summer We pray that you'll Provide the volunteers To help at the various sites Around the area We pray for the team At Lighthouse Central And also the individual teams Of trustees As they coordinate Their planning We pray that each lighthouse Held

will bring light Into the lives Of all those who attend Also remember Before you The work of Azalea Lord may they have

[77 : 02] Really good conversations And praying opportunities With the women On our streets Over time Building up friendships Enabling them To lead them to you The desperate situation Still exists in Ukraine Lord Lord we see communities Living under immense danger Living in bunkers With no water Or electricity We just can't imagine What it must be like But we just pray Into that situation That somehow They will be saved And brought to safety We thank you That many have been able To leave Ukraine And some have arrived Here in Wickham And we remember For you The Wickham Refugee Partnership As they organise hosts Open up their homes To accommodate them And other things as well It's only the start We pray for those refugees As they start to settle Into life That they would have Good communication And care Especially the children Going to school Enable them to settle In as quickly as they can

It can't be easy We also remember Lord the refugees And asylum seekers From other parts of the world Who are struggling Just as much But we pray That they would not Feel forgotten As the media attention Focuses elsewhere God willing On Tuesday We will be holding A church meeting Lord as the various Elders and deacons Bring before us The various items Give them assurance Of your will Which will enable us Your church Here at Union To know your leading As we go forward Into the future These are our prayers We bring before you In and through The precious name Of our Lord Jesus Amen So I got the feeling We didn't sing enough So we're going to do Some singing now

So would you stand And join us in singing And bear in mind In the sermon we saw People crying out To the Lord And the Lord answering So let's sense that That he hears us When we call You hear me You hear me When I call You are my morning song Though darkness Fills the night It cannot hide the light

Whom shall I fear? You crush the enemy Underneath my feet You are my sword You are my sword And shield Though troubles linger still Whom shall I fear?

I know who goes before me I know who stands behind The God of angel armies Is always by my side My strength is in your name For you alone can save You will deliver me You will deliver me Yours is the victory Whom shall I fear?

[81 : 18] Whom shall I fear? Whom shall I fear? Whom shall I fear? Whom shall I fear? I know who goes before me I know who stands behind The God of angel armies Is always by my side The one who reigns forever He is a friend of mine The God of angel armies Is always by my side And nothing fought against me Shall stand You hold the world You hold the world You hold the world You hold the world In your hands I'm holding all to your promises You are faithful

You are faithful You are faithful You are faithful You are faithful You are faithful You are faithful You are faithful You are faithful You are faithful You are faithful You know who goes before me You are who goes before me are faithful i know who goes before me i know who stands behind the god of angel armies is always by my side the one who reigns forever he is a friend of mine the god of angel armies is always by my side i know who goes before me i know who stands behind the god of angel armies is always by my side the one who reigns forever he is a friend of mine the god of angel armies is always by my side everyone needs compassion love that's never failing let mercy fall on me everyone needs forgiveness the kindness of the savior the hope of nation my god is mighty to save forever so take me as you find me all my fears and failures fill my life again i give my life to follow everything i believe in now i surrender savior my god is mighty to save he is mighty to save forever jesus jesus

jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus Amen.

Amen. And now for the blessing. And you may want to grab it, reach for it, because it's here, right here for you. And I'm taking it.

You know the best blessings come from the Bible? Nothing I say has any power. So I'm taking this from Ephesians 3, 16 to 20. I pray from his glorious unlimited resources, he will empower you with inner strength through the Spirit.

[88 : 06] Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.

And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.

May you experience the love of Christ through, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Now, all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Please join us for tea and coffee through the registration room. And have a blessed week in the power of the Holy Spirit.

[89 : 18] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.