

From Misery to Happiness

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[0 : 00] 9 Genesis chapter 29 as we consider our series of studies in the life of we left Jacob he was now a married man and we're going to take that back up again looking at chosen as part of the lineage of of the the patriarchs so we're going to read from Jack count of Jacob and his his two wives Rachel and Leah and their efforts to have children it's interesting the efforts that two women would go to to be mothers and and that's what we're considering this 31 encounter Jacob's children when the Lord saw that loved Rachel but didn't love Leah he enabled her to conceive but Rachel remained childless Leah became named him Reuben for she said it is because the Lord has seen my misery surely my husband will love me and when she gave birth to a son she she said because the Lord heard that I am not loved he gave me this one too again she conceived and when she gave birth to a son she says now at last my husband will become attached to me so she named him Levi she conceived again and when she gave birth to a son she said this time I named him Judah then she stopped having children but at least for a bit when Rachel saw that she was jealous of her sister so she said to

Jacob give me children or I'll die Jacob became angry with her and who has kept you from having children then she said here is Bilhah my servant sleep with her and I too can build a family through her so she gave him her servant Bilhah slept with her and she became pregnant and bore him a son then Rachel said God has vindicated me a son because of this she named him Dan Rachel's servant Bilhah can say then Rachel said I have had a great struggle with my sister and I have won so she when Leah saw that she had stopped having children she took her servant Zilpah and gave her servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son then Leah said what good fortune so Leah's servant Bilhah bore Jacob a second son then Leah said how happy I am the women will him asher during wheat harvest Reuben went out into the fields and found some man to his mother Leah Rachel said to Leah please give me some of your son's mandrakes enough that you took away my husband will you take my son's mandrakes too very well in return for your son's mandrakes so when Jacob came in from the fields that evening Leah went out to him she said I have hired you with my son's mandrakes so she he slept with her that night became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son then Leah said God has rewarded me for give so she named him Issachar Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son presented me with a precious gift this time my husband will treat me with honor because I so she named him Zebulun sometime later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah he listened to her and enabled her to conceive she became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said God has named him Joseph and said may the Lord add to me another son well hopefully you've been able to keep up with who was giving birth to who it really is a can of worms but before we do that let's stand and sing beautiful Savior all my days let's sing in praise Genesis chapter 29 and 30 you'll need this open as we refer to this quite a few times this evening in this family's life and seeking to establish what we learn from this account it's such an important account in scripture it's a formation of the tribes of Israel through Jacob and the the the concubines and so forth the servants quite a big big part to his word father we thank you for your word and we thank you for your word now we pray lord that salvation is beginning to unfold even in these early chapters of the book of Genesis we pray father for that ability to take picture of of salvation for the world through lord what you will do through individuals and ultimately through the nation of Israel that all the nations of the world will be blessed but also what you'll do personally and how you operate personally from the big issues the big things so father help us to speak these things into our situation our salvation day by day so father help us to understand these things we pray we ask these things in Jesus name amen program that I quite like I used to watch this a long time ago but I don't so much watch it now because all that the stories are rocky but I remember one episode I actually commented to Lucila on and it was a woman that went out on a surfboard and she was blown off the surfboard such that it dislocated her shoulder so sure enough the RNLI they're out to rescue her to see and her husband was on the shore maybe you've seen that episode her husband was on the shore and he's because he seemed

to be taking a long time to try and to get her fixed so then the the dinghy eventually dislocated shoulder and you would have thought that that the husband would have been over in sound after this this this this this rescue at sea but he was more taken up with these words he says uh I with the incredibly handsome RNL underly caressing his wife as he brought her off the boat and was nursing this this uh and then later on when the husband's trying to to show love to his wife saying get away from me and as I as I looked at that whole account and trying to read between the lines it wasn't just their marriage that needed rescued jealousy and so forth and whenever you have a a marriage that isn't pleasant that is not good and that's what we're looking at tonight we're looking at Jacob's life here uh really there's a lot happening here a personal level but really at a a deeper profound of Eden we'll we'll send against God God has a plan of salvation to bring us back he will choose individuals who will have looked at this we're looking at life of Jacob he was the the older would serve the younger and God has a plan for Jacob and through him to bless his descent elf sons or he's a living sons at this point and one daughter but through them they will become a nation they'll eventually go to Egypt them give them laws and rules and regulations land and and so forth and you know the the history of these things but through Jacob and Abraham and to Isaac and to this nation through them the nations will be blessed and the line of the tribe of Judah and uh who is the son of God he will be the savior of the world from these promises all the way back then but we're so familiar with this and it's good just to step back into when God is going to come up with some great plan of world salvation the materials he have every the best of men are men at best and we all have feet of clay every one of us so it was never ever going that he would work with uh all the way right through and that is what you see here if left to them this sovereign and through the mess of this family uh his plan will still be in course but not only especially these two women Rachel and Leah at a personal level so there's this bigger picture being formed person uh thing happening as well and you might be here and you might just think you're a small cog and a big god and who am I in the midst of all of what God is doing you are still very important and uh and we only that's what we're looking at this evening as we begin to look at that together so let's let's look at this you remember the the promise was given to to to uh Rebecca and to try and help God he has to flee from his home his brother's chasing after him he stole the blessing that the Esau fell his uncle Laban to find a wife from there uh 500 mile journey 50 mile into the journey he meets God at best he gives to his father and his grandfather God becomes his God personally enters and so forth then you looked at last time he comes to uncle Laban and the deceit medicine he tricked his brother into receiving the blessing still part of the the plan of God but nevertheless without this and then he is tricked he he wants Rachel he's given

Leah works seven years for her and uh for Rachel he's given Leah and he has to work for Rachel and in this account you after this they're married he has two wives the Bible's not against uh having more than one but it very much supports one man one woman you see this in the scriptures for the a man will leave his father be united to his wife and they will become one flesh polygamist marriage he's having in the scriptures and uh later on in Leviticus just a few chapters on in Leviticus 18 your wife's sister as a rival wife and have sexual relationships with her while your wife is still living but it's a disaster really for for Jacob in his situation so Jacob is now a polygamist in that sense two sisters he's married to two sisters it's not his choice he never chose this he just wanted Rachel well it is very messy multiple wives and so forth and yet despite all of his purposes out the promises that he made to him now trying to make sense I'm sure you know that just to look at what's happening here to break this down I'm going to go through this fairly quickly because there is a lot happening basically it's almost like a football match as I looked at this you've got two teams you've got Rachel you're fighting again Jacob is basically the football and God is the referee God decides how how to score and so forth so let me remind you the story Leah scores first because there's rival the object to the game is to see who can have the most children it's such an important thing for a woman and that and that identity and everything was not only to be married but to have children and uh and these two women decide thinking of the covenant promises or anything they're just living the life Rachel Leah strict for nothing uh before Rachel has any children Rachel uses her substitute for nothing she uses her substitute Bilha and uh she's given us a wife and in many ways was his wife and have to give a dowry or a gift or anything like that she produces two sons and uh score Leah for Rachel too Leah uses her substitute

Zilpa she uh produces then uh Leah then produces another two sons and one daughter scores she's one of her own and anticipates another one coming Benjamin may the Lord add to me another tribes are now complete they just need to expand God and behind all of this God is very much refereeing the situation he decides the success when and that is what really leaps out of us in this passage that their wounds are closed they can't the success of all of this match this uh contest is really down to the Lord Leah and Rachel were were going to become his wife God wasn't really mentioned during uncle Laban served seven years but now God really comes to the fore in this and he is a white they're planning and scheming and uh this must have been such an encouragement for God's people later in Egypt and Joseph and so forth you know the history and then God delivers them under the hand of Moses number of years after Genesis is written and all this stuff is pulled together they see how the 12 tribes were formed point of view there's nothing in this from a human point of view that you would hold up and say aren't we great it is just down to selfishness greed jealousy hurt bitterness failure and through all this God still works this evening from the perspective of the two women uh the two wives the two mothers from from the perspective and Leah the one who wasn't loved so

[13 : 06] I've got three points and I want to mention them this evening first of all and this is the account of Leah Leah uh that the not the not gives us a few snapshots of Jacob's early life of of married life the last time we looked at this last time Genesis 29 Jacob made love to Rachel also his love for Rachel Leah and in fact we're actually told that uh that he didn't love Leah at all Leah he loved Rachel it is a very sad thing and the plight of these two wives Leah can have children but she just wants to be loved that's really Rachel on the other hand is already loved she just wants to have children they want and that is what's happening here both of these women lack in one specific area for Leah and Leah longs for Jacob's love Rachel is desperate for children and and she's neglected Leah is neglected in the marriage she receives little care and attention he loves Rachel more he just doesn't love Leah doesn't love her at all verse 31 Leah was not love but the Lord sees things differently this this is what's very heartwarming about this left to Jacob in misery and it would have just been dreadful but verse 31 says when the Lord saw that Leah was not love that God is a prime mover in this but it is out of compassion that the Lord has for Leah Rachel at this point and opens the womb of Leah her sad and humble sister of God John Calvin says of this Jacob's extravagant love for Rachel was correct herve's honor from her husband and if he will not give it to her Yahweh will bestow glory that the Lord sees her situation and and and opens up her womb and she's given both of these women the not only do they conceive the very names of their children tell us usually when we choose names isn't it you sit with the book and what's my name means joy or you never name your children never again or what was I thinking of a real raw account that here are these women given children and they name their children as raw as that and and you see this you see this even in the naming of the children that are given to Leah process of thinking so first of all

Reuben verse 32 of 29 which makes it basically son surely my husband will love me now she says of being means then she gives birth to Simeon the Lord has heard that's what that means because the Lord is linking these children and the birth of them and the naming of them to her lack of love then when she gives birth to the third son now at last my husband will become attached to me one of the commentators says it's almost as if she appears to that maybe the love isn't going to be forthcoming so she almost lowers her standards and says he'll become and so forth her hope is fading and demanding less perhaps one of the commentators says it's just for salvation to enter the world through this this type of scenario and uh and it can change of mind and devotion Judah which means praise this time I will praise the Lord in other words from my husband it doesn't seem to be coming but I'm going to praise the Lord she's suddenly realizing God is giving me a personal level my husband's a waste of space but uh but God loves me this time I will praise the Lord and throughout all of this she uses the name Yahweh the the personal quite significant that's how she relates to God her God is personal and it's a very God is working in her blessing her and doing this and she acknowledges the personal name of God even in this this one point we can look for love and other things other people and there is no greater love than the love that Jesus has for you and for me than the love that

God for anything less really if she'd look to the Lord from day one she might not have been disappointed by and here is one you know the relationship that the Lord has with you and with his church he loves us he will never do anything other than love us his relationship with us is a deep love it's between a husband and a wife between those two people you will not find a better love a love go through life feeling unloved but to love the Lord is to have more love than ten sons-bands it's a love that never disappoints and that's what Leah has she has the love of the Lord who's she acknowledges us in the naming of Judah this time I will praise the Lord she's coming to realize this and lies just what's happening to her Leah's blood will through flow through Moses Jesus himself of Judah I mean what that's that's quite amazing when you think of us and the descendants that they will come from each of these 12 tribes or that certainly the sons that flow through King David through Moses through Jesus part of the she was loved more than she ever knew and maybe that's you you're looking for love and and no one will love us better than the Lord he has a plan and a purpose for us he's probably the savior and it's good for us to realize that and maybe at times we do need to come and say this time

I will look at secondly looking for purpose and this is Rachel Rachel was already loved is giving birth birth after birth after birth this is making matters a lot worse for Rachel it's humiliating in this way she becomes insane insanely jealous and the reason for the through childbearing it's a very pitiful situation that she finds herself in and in the midst that the blessing of childbirth belongs to God and she instead of of looking to God to Jacob give me children or I'll die she says in other words it's your children or my life isn't worth living and he becomes angry we are told in verse 2 of chapter 30 I might kept you from having children so Jacob questions her understanding of the providence of God you're not only God can do this and and yet Jacob in all of this is isn't blameless you remember her husband Isaac Jacob's father prays Lord open he prays for his wife Lord open up her doing this for

Rachel leave it with me I can't decide but I will pray for you she it's the women that are left through a lot of this just doing his thing and uh anyway despite one hand she uses her surrogate maid to step up the whole birth wars you'd think Sarah and Hagar uh Abraham and so forth they tried this trying planning and scheming and God says in this way she must have heard something of this but anyway she's determined to have a child so verse 3 here is Bill can bear children from for me and I too can build a family through her so she resorts to Bill becomes the wife of Jacob but the children would be Rachel's children she is her maid and you know what in that sense two children are born to Bill her and the heart of Rachel is revealed and then God has vindicated me she says verse 30 he's listened to my pleas giving me a son and uh but at this point she doesn't use the name Yahweh unlike Leah this personal name she uses a more generic name so in other words there's still not that bond with personal God who will help her she just acknowledges that God does this and uh behind all of this to score points against her sister I have had a great struggle with my sister and I have won it's very unbusters that loggerheads tea who can have the most children and uh so she names him naphtal it is all very sad not to be outdone Leah strikes back in a short time uses her maid and she is too gad which means good fortune and asher by this time she is ecstatic Leah is how happy I am she's floating in cloud nine how happy I am the score is six two the second half does that get in is it a game of two halves does it get better it just gets worse in the second aks uh now they get used if it's not just substitutes of other other women Rachel's mandrakes were basically a kind of aphrodisiac a fertility type drug that's what it was to say they actually work but it was believed in that day that if you want to conceive same as there are various ideas mandrakes a fertility drug or whatever song of

[22 : 49] Solomon talks about it being like a seven the mandrakes send out their fragrance and so forth in other words the mandrakes but things are getting fairly ugly and desperate now because that this this fertility thing this decides to use to hire Jacob and uh it's that Rachel controls who Jacob sleeps with whether it's her whether it's her sister she calls the uh that uh Rachel Leah speaks of Jacob as my husband and and you've taken him away look son's mandrakes as well Reuben's out gathers these for Leah Rachel sees them can I get them with Jacob so I think I've said it before verse 16 the most romantic line in the bible isn't there he has with his dungarees on it's the evening it's at night it's a hard shift and so forth who does he meet Leah goes out to sleep with me I have hired you with my son's mandrakes hired you can almost imagine that's it this is this is how the 12 tribes this is how God's plan of salvation is coming about it really is quite worrying as God this grace screams out of these pages we might not like it and you might think well am I really a sinner we're all sinners if there's one person in the tribe of Israel it will be by grace it's always by grace the sovereignty of God he is the referee he opens and closes wombs he decides who gives birth to who so and uh in some ways it backfires Leah without the the mandrakes gives birth to two more children and zebulun we don't quite know exactly it's quite unclear what zebulun means children are from the Lord Leah God listened to Leah verse 17 remember she'd stop having children her womb God has rewarded me so she named her son Issachar and she can God has presented me verse 20 with a precious gift this time my husband will treat me with honor son so she named him

Zebulun she has a daughter later on called Dinah the score is of Leah now what about Rachel how does it finish for her Rachel at this point come to an end of herself her has loved who's tried everything all the devices all the planning all the scheming all the surrogacies and so forth the mandrakes children she's born and she's born for about three more years at this time the man God steps in in his grace look at verse 22 then God remembered Rachel he listened he did this wasn't Rachel she stepped in and did this he's taken away my disgrace and and uh and we know the significance of Joseph and and so forth in the Bible it really is quite she says may the Lord add to me another son and she anticipates another son and we know that other son is is of tribes of Israel and this time she acknowledges Yahweh God is often God never becomes personal when you hear of answering prayers to others but when he does something for you it becomes the she realizes this Matthew Henry says this he says whatever we want it is God most wise holy and just that may do what he will with his own he is better to no man can do any wrong to any of his creatures the keys of the clouds in other words the weather of the weather of the heart are four keys which God has in his hands and which he entrusts neither to angels certain things in life that God says I will decide only I can decide whether you have love or purpose for if you are here tonight and you think do you know the love of God you will know the love of God he's demonstrated his love for Savior but purpose as well is down to God it's not through effort he gives in life and it's not through trying and that's what screams out grace sovereignty of to the Lord we live in a society that looks after number one you take whatever steps you can to look after to achieve your goals and ambition it's up to you but in this passage what screams out of this of life are down to God it is not down to us it is down to God God opens and closes wombs as he decides it is very real Leah and Ray God allowed it to happen both had been visited in their weakness and their needs by the grace of God a lot and this is a story of God's power his love and his grace triumphing over human sinless selfish people sinful people and and yet God was able to work I like this where the angels going up and down in it that God showed him in Bethel one of the commentators says this was in full operation here even throughout the scheming and manipulation the surrogate selling of intimacy and even the celebrating and the gloating even in the midst of all of these angels are working

God despite all of this despite the foolishness of others and we know Joseph what ultimate will happen to the 12 tribes what will happen to Jesus and we don't organize but left to ourself we can get into all sorts of trouble issues of life we have a big a big God it deals with the problem of having it deals with an unloving relationship between a husband and a wife it deals with conflict between of having children of infertility those are big issues it shows us that marriage needs it causes us to acknowledge that God ultimately is in control of these things he doesn't owe us a hundred these are a gift from God but God loves us and he cares for us and he is able really what screams out to us in these passages in the matters of love God look to people we he is his love is worth more than 10,000 sons or 10,000 husbands or on purpose it's not down to planning it is down to God's purpose in our life as he intervenes to guide us God blessed Rachel and Leah with children later on saying called Mary and she would say this my soul glorifies the Lord my spirit rejoices in God full of the humble state of his servant from now on all generations will call me blessed encourage us through the sovereignty and love and grace that we read in this passage we're going to stand and sing I think it's a new one you