

Struggling to Prosper

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Preacher: John Lowrie

[0 : 0 0] together from Genesis 30. And you remember following the life of Jacob, and he was married. Now we left him last time with 11 sons and one daughter, and he now is interested in providing for his own family. And that's what we're looking at this evening. So, Genesis 30, reading from verse 25, after Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, Send me on my way so that I can go back to my own homeland. Give me my wives and children for whom I have served you, and I will be on my way. You know how much I have done for you. But Laban said to him, If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you.

He added, Name your wages, and I will pay them. Jacob said to him, You know how I have worked for you and how your livestock have fared under my care. The little you had before I came has increased greatly, and the Lord has blessed you wherever I have been. But now, when may I do something for my own household? What shall I give you? He asked. Don't give me anything, Jacob replied. But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them. Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb, and every spotted or speckled goat. They will be my wages, and my honesty will testify for me in the future. Whenever you check on the wages you have paid me, any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen. Agreed, said Laban.

Let it be as you have said. That same day he, Laban, removed all the male goats that were streaked or spotted, and all the speckled or spotted female goats, all that had white on them, and all the dark-colored lambs, and he placed them in the care of his sons. Then he put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob continued to tend the rest of Laban's flocks. Jacob, however, took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond and plain trees, and made white stripes on them by peeling the bark and exposing the white inner wood of the branches. Then he placed the peeled branches in all the watering troughs, so that they would be directly in front of the flocks when they came to drink. When the flocks were in heat and came to drink, they mated in front of the branches, and they bore young that were streaked or speckled or spotted. Jacob set apart the young of the flock by themselves, but made the rest face the streaked and dark-colored animals that belonged to Laban. Thus he made separate flocks for himself, and did not put them with Laban's animals. Whenever the stronger females were in heat,

Jacob would place the branches in the troughs in front of the animals, so that they would mate near the branches. But if the animals were weak, he would not place them there. So the weak animals went to Laban and the strong ones to Jacob. In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous, and came to own large flocks, and female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, Jacob has taken everything our father owned, and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father. And Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude towards him was not what it had been. Then the Lord said to Jacob, Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you. So Jacob sent work to Rachel and Leah, to come out to the fields where his flocks were. He said to them, I see that your father's attitude towards me is not what it was before, but the God of my father has been with me. 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.

[4 : 44] However, God has not allowed him to harm me. If he said, The speckled 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. In the breeding season, I once had a dream, in which I looked up and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled, or spotted. The angel of God said to me in the dream, Jacob. I answered, Here I am. And he said, Look up and see that all the male goats mating with the flocks are streaked, speckled, or spotted. For I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, and where you made a vow to me.

Now leave this land at once, and go back to your native land. Then Rachel and Leah replied, Do we still have any share in the inheritance of our father's estate? Does he not regard us as foreigners? Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us. Surely all the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you.

And we'll end our reading at the end of verse 16. Once again to the musicians and to the singers this evening, turn back with me please to Genesis chapter 30. A passage that's not the easiest to try and understand, especially what Jacob's up to in this chapter. But it's not difficult to apply. This morning's passage was a bit easier to understand, but a bit more difficult to apply. This is the opposite. This is easy to apply, but difficult to try and understand exactly what's happening in this passage. But the main things are clear to us.

But let's ask for God's help as we come to his word now. Our loving Father, we thank you for your word. And Lord, we want to thank you for the fact that we are found here, Lord, with our brothers and sisters, with our Bibles opened before us. We thank you, Lord, that we love your word. We can understand your word in a good measure. Lord, there was a time when we were not interested in you, your word. We would never have seen ourselves being in a church on a Sunday night. But we thank you for your grace and for your mercy. You have taken away a heart of stone and given us a heart of flesh.

And Lord, we need no man to teach us for the Holy Spirit himself is our teacher. So Father, I pray as we look at this passage together, I pray, Lord, that he would be our teacher and that he would take these things and really help us to apply them to our lives as individuals and help us, Lord, at the same time to understand how you work and your great plan of salvation for your people scattered throughout the world. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

[7 : 45] Amen. We'll continue our studies in the life of Jacob, one whose life, by his own words, he struggled in his life. You remember, he says, the years of my pilgrimage are 130.

My years have been few and difficult. I don't know if that's your testimony, whether it's not 130, but whether it's 62 or 72 or 82 or 42, whether you can say they've been few and difficult.

Jacob's life was difficult, and yet God was with him and God blessed him. And really, that's what we're looking at as we study this together. But we're not just looking at Jacob's life. We're applying this at two levels all the way through. We're looking at how God blessed him and dealt with him personally. He was the God of Abraham, his granddad, and the God of Jacob, but he was also his God personally. He entered into a personal covenant relationship with him.

But overall, it's this wider covenant that God would bless them, increase them as a nation, and that through them, all nations of the earth will be blessed. That is really the main thing here.

And we need to keep the main thing the main thing. So, we're looking at the big picture. At the same time, we're looking at that personal thing. And it's the same today with you and I, isn't it? That God is interested in global salvation. The Great Commission goes out into all the world, every tribe and tongue and nation. And he uses us towards that end in our witnessing and missionary work, gospel ministry. At the same time, he deals with you on a Monday morning, and he leads and he guides and he provides. So, there's those two strands. And as we look at Jacob's life, we will look at those two and apply it at those two levels. And that's what we're doing here just now. You remember Genesis 12, God chose one man, Abraham. Through him, he would bless him. Bless the nation, his nation. His descendants would be more than the sand on the seashore. Through him, all the nations will be blessed. He says the same thing to Isaac as well. And he says the same thing to Jacob.

[9 : 54] And you remember, he has this covenant promise. He has to flee from home. We are told the younger will serve the older, or the older will serve the younger, sorry, and that God will work through him, unlike Esau, in a special way. And through him, the covenant promises will come to pass. But he has to flee. We'll not go over the early stuff, but he has to flee. He deceives his father. He receives the blessing. He has to leave because his brother's going to kill him. He's off to Uncle Hare and 500 mile away. And there he's to take a wife from his own people. And en route, God meets him at Bethel.

And he promises. The promises of the covenant are reiterated to him. God promises to be with him, to protect him, to watch over him, to bring him back, and to provide for him. As Jacob says, if God will give me food to eat and clothes to wear, he will be my God. And that really was the catapult for sending him out. And we need to remember that. That wasn't just a one-off incident.

That really is what fuels everything in Jacob's life from then on to the grave, that God would be his God. You remember he arrived at Uncle Laban's. He loves his daughter, Rachel. He's deceived. He's tricked.

And instead of marrying her, he marries Leah. And he has to work seven years for Leah. You think it's Rachel. And then he has to work another seven years. He has to work 14 years. His working life is not easy. He gets a taste of his own medicine. And as he tricked his dad, so Laban tricked him as well.

And then last time, we see that God was very much operating in Laban's life. Here we see that he now, his family now begins to increase. And God is the active one. As we looked at this last time, with the whole messiness of trying to have kids and not have kids and two wives that were basically using Jacob as a football and God as a referee. And God decides who wins and who doesn't win.

[12 : 09] And all the way through this, it's really, despite all the activity of his two wives and the concubines or whatever, and Jacob as well, the most active one in this is God. He is the God who opens and closes wounds. He decides in the success of mandrakes or whatever plan and scheme they come up with, God. And you notice this throughout the whole of Scripture, even in Abraham's life, it was never going to be through Ishmael. It would be through Isaac. And it's the same with you and I. We need the sovereignty of God every day of our life. We can plan and we can organize. So, last time we saw the birth of the children of Jacob, the forerunners of the twelve tribes. He has eleven sons and one daughter. The twelve son, Benjamin, is foreseen that this will come. God will add to me another son, another blessing, and that is still to happen. But here is the genealogy of the twelve tribes. This must have been such an encouragement during the time in Egypt, how they came about as a nation. And in this messy, messy picture of how this comes about, God is still sovereign. And then the last time we looked at it at a personal level, two women, one looking for love, Leah, I just want to be loved.

Maybe my husband will love me. And God basically says, don't rely on the love of others. My love is enough. And God blesses Leah in so many ways. His love is worth more than ten thousand husbands.

And then Rachel, not so much looking for love, but looking for purpose. She's already loved by her husband, but she wants purpose. She wants to have kids, and only God can give others. She can't plan, she can't organize it herself. The love of God is all we need, and the purpose of God is all we need in our life. And then the last time we reminded ourselves that God's plan still comes to pass.

Both Leah and Rachel had children only because God gave them. The plan to build a nation is in God's hands. It's not in this strange family's hands, these ordinary people. Now we're up to this next stage.

Now that the birth of, now that Rachel has a child, and really that is the catalyst here. There's various things happening. Rachel now has a child. All of Jacob's yearnings for home are now reawakened.

[14 : 39] He wants to return home. His purpose in traveling to Haran has now been fulfilled. He now has his wives. He's worked 14 years for them, and he's got various children now. And his favorite wife now has given birth, and he wants to go back. He wants to return home. That was why he came. It was always the plan. And the time has come now from him to return home. But he doesn't just want to return home with his wife and children. He wants to be able to prosper his kids, to look after his family, which is perfectly natural. One of the commentators, in some ways, is quite harsh in what he says, but you get the idea. Here is Jacob. He's moved from being a con man, conning his dad, to this family man, and now he's becoming a businessman in his life. And this is the account where Jacob moves from being a copper to a prince and how God blesses him. It's such a key part in the life of Jacob. So let's look at this together. Three things I want us to note. First of all, God's provision. God's provision.

Jacob wants to go back home. Look at verse 25, the first verse we read. After Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, send me on my way so I can go back to my own homeland. That was always the plan. It was always the plan for him to return home. Remember that his mom said to him, now then, my son, Genesis 27, 43, flee at once to my brother Laban. Stay there for a while. Don't think they were planning in 14 years. Stay there for a while until your brother's fury subsides. When your brother is no longer angry with you, forgets what you did to him, I'll send word for you to come back from there. Possibly that his mom's died at this time, and he's going to return home. It was always the plan. But returning home seems to be more difficult than it was to leave, and that's what he's about to experience here. He left single, just one man and a stick. Now he's leaving with 11 sons and a daughter and two wives, or four wives, you could say. Legally, his wife's in that way.

But Uncle Laban wants to keep him there, he knows. But he wants to go back. Why? To provide for his own family. That's what he says to Laban. That's his main reason, he says. He's got these wives now, and he wants to look after himself. So he says in verse 25, 26, Give me my wives for whom I have served you, and I will be on my way. You know how much I have done for you, he says. And then he says in verse 29 and 30, You know how I have worked for you, and how your livestock has fared under my care. The little you came before I came has increased greatly. The Lord has blessed you wherever I have been, but now, when may I do something for my own household?

So he's saying, I've done so much for you. I've got all these kids. I've got these wives. I want to be able to provide for them. And that's a natural thing to want. You want that. You want what's best for you and for your family as well. Laban wants this. But Laban knows that God has blessed him.

He lives a charmed life. And he knows, and he says these strange words in verse 27, Please stay, he says. I've found favor. I've learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you. He obviously worships God, whatever you can call his God, differently.

[18 : 23] He just doesn't know the same God. And you'll see later on with his household gods and so forth. So Laban ignores his request and basically says, I'll give you a salary increase. Name your wages.

What will it be? I'll give you a company car, whatever it is. I know that I'm blessed if you stay here. So he says, Name your wages and I will pay them. Enter Jacob, the businessman.

He has a plan. And he says, What shall I give you? And he says, he comes up with this plan. Let me go through your flocks today and remove from every speckled and spotted sheep and so forth. So that's his wages. He looks at the flock. There's white, there's black, there's speckled. And he thinks, I'll have the speckled if you don't mind. And he has this plan. And that's his initial thing.

That's what he says to Laban. Give me these spotted ones, the ones that aren't so pure. I'll take them and so forth. And in many ways, he's doing this because he basically says, Don't give me anything.

He says in verse 31, maybe like his grandfather. Remember, Abraham says, I don't want you to say that you made me rich. So in other words, whatever happens, it won't be because of you. It will be because of what God has done or what he will do. So it doesn't really look like a good way to negotiate. He's taking these sheep that are rare and perhaps thinking of ones that are still to be born. But he has an elaborate plan, one that will trick Laban and so forth. And Laban agrees. You know the story. Agreed. He says, verse 34, let it be as you have said. And the animals are these dark lambs and the spotted and speckled ones are the goats. Now, in that day, the typical, the most common appearance of sheep and goats was the opposite coloration, white sheep and brown or black goats.

[20 : 31] And the animals designated by Joseph were fewer to begin with. He's not saying, give me all of these. And you can keep the dregs. He's going, give me these wacky, strange ones. And you keep all these other ones. And no wonder that Laban has just agreed. The words are out his mouth quick, so fast.

He's going, wow, this is a no-lose situation. And basically, I'll have these and he'll have these and there's hardly any left. But true to character, Laban has a plan. He doesn't intend in giving them anything. And as you say, he gains the upper hand. Verse 35, he removes all the ones that basically were entitled to Jacob, these speckled or streaked ones. He takes them and then puts them a three-day journey so he can't see them in the next field. He takes them far away. In other words, if Jacob is to acquire any flocks, he's going to have to find a way of breeding multicolored sheep from monochrome sheep. You've only got black and white. They'll either come out black or white. They're not going to come out speckled unless you've got at least a couple of speckled. He's been to class 101 in biology at least. And Laban knows this. So, he's leaving them nothing to work with.

He's such a real crafty, down-to-earth passage, this, isn't it? These two folk planning and scheming and Laban up to his tricks. But then you have this successful plan. He discovers that if you put partially stripped tree, you take a branch, you peel off the bark, and you put that in front of the goats as they mate, they will give birth to spotted offspring. Same with the black goats. If you put them in front of the white sheep, when they mate, they produce dark-colored lambs. That's his plan.

That's what he does. And not only that, he doesn't do this indiscriminately. He reserves this for the strongest of the flock. So, he takes the strongest white, the strongest that, he does these things with the branches, cuts them, gets them to mate. So, not only will this increase his flock, as he's thinking numerically, they will also be better quality than Laban. So, it's not just numerous, they will be more vigorous as well. And we are told in verse 43, these are the words, in this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous, came to own large flocks, female and male servants, camels and donkeys. The very mention of camels shows that he was exceptionally rich. It's one thing, they gave sheep and donkeys, but they gave camels, meant that you were wealthy. So, he really grows.

And we are told in verse 43, in this way, as I'm studying this, I'm thinking, well, that's basically saying that's how he became wealthy. How do you make sense of this? This is what's done my head in this week, trying to make sense of how this comes about. Because even the commentators are not so clear on this. They might say one thing in one passage, and then when it comes later on to hear about the dream and the vision that Jacob explains to his wives, God gave me a dream and I did this, then they say God did it. But the first bit, they say, well, he did it and so forth. Anyway, I'm going to throw out some suggestions how this happened. How did he prosper? Some folks say that that procedure that he was using was just a folk custom, and there was not really anything in it, a bit like the mandrakes. Take these mandrakes, you love kids, and you remember the mandrakes did not produce any children. It was really God that did this. The mandrakes were a big failure.

[24 : 23] They only served in Leah, having another couple of children that backfired. And so, folks say, well, that's all that was. It was a folk custom. That's what you did, but there's never really anything in it. Others say that it was divine intervention. God's practical help, that this is what God actually used. God used this, whether it was a folk custom or not. One of the commentators says this regarding that whole process of stripping the bark and so forth. Modern reproduction can explain technically how he succeeded by breeding animals that possessed the desired recessive genes, and furthered by selective breeding to multiply the stronger animals. But Jacob's knowledge, this commentator says, would have to have been dependent on learned experience as a seasoned herdsman or possibly by divine intervention in a dream. So, he says, this commentator saying, you could explain this perhaps by technically, by technical things, but Jacob really wouldn't have known that himself. He'd need to have been a seasoned herdsman unless God showed him this, that this is what you could do and that this would actually work. I don't know if that's the case.

I believe God spoke to him and God showed him this, and maybe he was a farmer beyond his years. I don't know if farmers still do this nowadays, use this method. I don't know whether God says, look, in 1960 they'll discover this, but I'm telling you this now. I don't know whether it's that's what that commentator was implying, that technically you could do this. I'm not too sure.

But maybe it was God's work alone. Regardless of what Jacob would do, God was going to use this. mandrakes, custom or not. God, as he was behind the births, would be this. Ultimately, verse 9 of chapter 31, Jacob attributes it to God, not through his acumen. God has taken away your father's livestock and given them to me. He mentions this. God is fulfilling his word. God is protecting him.

God is blessing him. God is bringing him back home. God did bless him. However, whatever way that it was done, I don't know scientifically, folk custom, or just God used this, this method. That's why it did say, in this way he prospered. And it's possibly because of that, either given to him by God or God just used it. We do not know. He had this vision and God showed him.

That's what he had to do. The angel, he said that that's what happened. That's why he did this. It wasn't. He read it in a book. So, God blessed him. So, here we see God providing for him. As a Christian, God can provide for you and I in ways that we don't always see coming. His ways are not our ways. We must not limit him in how he chooses to work in our lives. His ways are past finding out. So, that's all I want to say on that, God's provision. Secondly, God's guidance we see here.

[27 : 35] God guides us and moves us forward in various ways. Here are by far the most, the three most common ways. If you're ever wondering how God works in your life, this is it. God guides us as he guided Jacob, and a change is coming. He's been there for 14 years, year in, year out, making, feeding the flock, so forth. Things are changing now. He's got this new cattle, but he's at a crossroads in his life.

He's now going to leave Uncle Laban, the land of Haran, and move back home. He's now, so, a change is coming. How does this come about? How does God lead? How does God guide? He does it through his word, and that's what happens here. Verse 13 of chapter 31, God, after the vision, he says, do this, your flocks will increase. I am the God of Bethel, where you appointed a pillar, and you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once, and go back to your native land.

He's moving in response to God's direct word to him. He's not running away in that sense. It's not going to be easy for him to leave, but he's moving because God's word was clear. He's going back home, and God's word was clear to him. It's the same with us. Whenever we want to do something, we're often governed by God's word. Objectively, we read God's word, and we see clear guidance. It might be, don't do this, do that. If you said to me, the Lord's told me to open up a casino in Edinburgh, I would doubt whether that's God's will. That goes against God's word for so many reasons.

You don't often hear Christians saying something as wacky as that, but it can't go against God's word. That's not God's leading, but also subjectively as well, where the Holy Spirit comes in, and there's a verse, and it's hard to maybe sometimes convince others, but that verse is for you, and that's what you are to do at that time. God leads you through his word, and you just know now is the time for me to move, to do that thing, to change what you're doing, a new thing that you have to do. God will speak to us from his word. We should expect God to speak to us. That's why we read God's word, not just to warm our hearts, but Lord, what are you doing in my life at this time? There's a change coming about.

So, guidance through God's word. Secondly, guidance through circumstances. We are told here in chapter 31, verse 1 and 2, Laban's sons were now talking about Jacob. Verse 2, Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude towards him was not as it had been. The situation is now changing for Laban. Laban thought he was great. His sons thought he was great. He's blessing. He's a great worker, a hard worker, but now the situation is becoming frosty, and God is using that situation to make it easier for him to leave. He knows this. If they were holding him shoulder high and saying, I love you, Jacob, you think you're great. It might have been harder for him to leave, but sometimes God thrusts us out.

[30 : 49] He thinks, left to yourself, you'll drag your feet, a bit like Lot and so forth. You need to be thrown out, and that's what's happening here. God is using this. So, he says to him, right after we read that Laban is not so keen on him now. His attitude's changing. Then the Lord said to Jacob, go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you. So, in these two accounts, Laban, God speaks to Jacob and tells him to move on, and sometimes he does that with us. Our situation changes. That was very much the case for us leaving London. The situation was changing. Things weren't quite the same. It's how the Lord's moved me on from various pastorates. When the church has grown or whatever, you just know the situation's changing. Things have developed, and there's that sense of my work's finished, and it's time to move on. You know that in your own life, perhaps.

Maybe choosing a job, moving to a different area. Circumstances are coming. The pieces are now beginning to dovetail well. God is orchestrating things that he's providing an open door. You don't have to push it. If you're trying to push it, maybe the Lord is saying, no, the circumstances don't dictate.

We must beware of spitting the dummy and running away. I've known people come to me, the Lord's called me to the mission field, and then you realize they hate their work, they hate their boss. I've had their dreadful time in work, and suddenly they want to go to Papua New Guinea. And I'm thinking, really?

No, you need to stick at what you're doing. So, beware of difficulties in and of themselves are not enough for moving on. But for Jacob, this is right. His circumstances has changed, and God has said to him, move on. But also guidance through people. A meeting is called between the family. Verse 4 of chapter 31, he sends word to his two wives, Rachel and Leah, to come into the fields. And he explains to them, your father's miffed at me. You've changed my wages. However, God has been doing something. And he explains to them how the sheep and all this have come around through this dream, through this vision.

So, he says in verse 9, God has blessed me. In some ways, he's defending himself against their family. But he makes a case for departing. He has to have their help. He wants to take them with him, and so forth. And he's anxious to show that what's happening is of God. God is at work in this situation. And they weigh up the situation, and they say, you know, Jacob, you're dead right.

[33 : 26] Basically, the money that was coming our ways, he squandered out. Why are we staying here? There's nothing for us to stay here for, basically. He sold us, and so forth. Verse 16, surely all our wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and our children. So, do whatever God has told you.

So, here is a green light for them to move as a family. God will speak through his word, either objectively, subjectively. He will use through circumstances, but he will also work through the counsel of others. In the counsel of others is much wisdom. And so, that's why it's good to talk to other folks. I'm thinking of this. And they might say to you, dream on. Really? You're thinking of doing that. Others, if they're honest enough, they will say, I can see you doing that.

And we've got members of our family that are thinking of big steps just now, and we're trying to advise them. And I think that's the only thing that, in some ways, is holding them back a wee bit. Others, they're not 100% convinced this is the right time to do such and such. The word of God wouldn't be against what they're doing, and circumstances aren't quite ideal just now. So, those two things, perhaps, I don't know, don't seem to be quite right. And until the circumstances are right, and others can see this, then that might be right. And God works in that way. So, God has provided for him, and now God is leading him. He's leading him back. Circumstances have changed. Lastly, and with this, I'll close, God's blessing. This is a story that one of the commentators says has many readers a great sense of satisfaction. Poor Jacob has had a hard time with uncle, Laban, and he's getting a bit of his own medicine, a bit of comeuppance. This crafty old guy has cheated him 10 times, tricked him in marriage, tricked him in everything. It's amazing that

Jacob is stuck at this long, really, and now he's going to be compensated. And you can see why this is. But the story is more than that. As I said, we don't just apply this to him personally. Although, all this is happening to Jacob personally, and his family personally, they're suffering. God is working in their life to bless them. But behind this is the promise to the patriarchs that God would promise him offspring, a land, covenant relationship, and that all the blessings of the world would come through them. There's a bigger picture, a more important picture that's happening here as well. God's Word and God's plan, his faithfulness to one day bless the people of Scotland and Wales, and we will—Christ will come as we're thinking of this Holy Week. There's this promise to Jacob personally, 28, verse 15. I am with you. I will watch over you. Wherever you go, I will bring you back to this land. I will look over you. To Abraham, to Isaac as well, I will make you into a great nation. Bless you. Make your name great. You will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you. Whoever curses you, I will curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

And this is what God is doing. And it was difficult for Jacob to go back to the land. There'll come a time when it will be difficult for the nation to go back, when the tribes all go down to Egypt, and it will be more than Uncle Laban that they'll have to cope with to come out. It will be Pharaoh, and God will have to deliver them and bring them out. For you and I, there is a promise to us. There's a promise to the world. God so loved the world. He gave his only Son. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. This is always God's plan. Ultimately, it's to bless the world.

[37 : 16] And it will take more than a Laban or a bunch of Egyptians to hinder this. But there is a greater than Laban. There's a greater than the nation of Egypt. There's a greater than any nation.

What is holding the world in bondage is sin and judgment. That is what the world is under just now. That is a thing that has to be defeated. That's worse than any Uncle Laban where he's planning and scheming to bless us. Deliverance from sin and death and judgment. God has to be faithful to his promises, to Abraham, to Isaac and Jacob, the promises to Moses, the promises to King David, that he will send a deliverer, someone to deliver us, someone to sit on his throne. And you and I know this is Jesus. This is Easter. This is the death and the resurrection of Jesus. This will be the second coming of Jesus. His plan is still on course. The promise in Genesis 12 is still there today.

His plan is still on course. And that's what you can see here. It's not been derailed. The first two are personal to Jacob, but God's blessing to bless them, to bless them as a nation, wherever they are, and to bless ultimately the world is God's desire to lead and to guide and to bless.

I don't know about you, but if I read in Genesis that God had failed in any of his promises, I would doubt whether he could fulfill them later on in 2098 or whatever, whenever the Lord might return.

The best is yet to be in the wheels that God has set in motion through a dysfunctional family, through an ordinary family, will come to pass, regardless of Labans and Egyptians or whatever, regardless of even sin and death and judgment. God has found a way whereby all the nations of the earth will be blessed. And it's through his Son. It's through Jesus Christ. And we will celebrate, we will remember his death on Friday. We will rejoice in his resurrection on Sunday morning when we gather together. So take comfort, brothers and sisters, of what God is doing in your life personally. But don't just see it personally. See it globally and nationally. May the Lord help us to do this. We're going to stand and we're going to sing. It's an old song. I don't think I've sung this for a long time. I cannot tell why he whom angels worship. I like this song because it talks about, in the first half of the songs, there's loads of things that I don't know, but this I know, that he was born of Mary. There's loads of things you don't know what God is doing in your life, but there are many things that you do know. Rejoice in them. So let's stand and we'll sing this together.

[40 : 14] I cannot tell why he whom angels worship should set his love upon the sons of them.

While I am a shepherd, we should seek the wonders to bring them back. They know the tower fell.

But this I know that he was born of Mary, and Bethlehem's winter was his lonely home, and that he lived in Nazareth and labor. And so the Savior, Savior of the world is come.

I cannot tell how silently he suffered, as with his peace he graced his place of tears.

For how his heart upon the cross was broken, the crown of pain to three and thirty years.

[41 : 46] But this I know he heals the broken hearted, and stays our sin, and counts our lurking fear.

And lays the burden from the heavy laden, for yet the Savior, Savior of the world is he.

I cannot tell how he will win the nations, how he will play his earthly heritage.

And satisfy the feats and aspirations of these requests, of sinners and of saints.

I can wuelu expenses of parole, if ye will come. If ye, sweat, artistic reductions in here.

They do Taman told him, all the■■s will come. If ye will win the The waves,■■■ the Roman conquest of zero.

[43 : 06] I cannot tell a woman shall worship When at his bidding every storm is near Or who can't say how great the jubilation When all the hearts of men in love are filled But this I know the skies will fill with capture And near the spirit human voices sing And hear to him and hear to earth will answer At last the Savior, Savior of the world, praise me Wow, you just want to applaud after that, don't you?

I'll tell you, I don't think there's better singing in heaven than there was singing that song. You just think, if folk were walking by this church, they must think, they are so cheery, I am miserable. That was such one of the best.

That was great. Thanks to the musicians and to the singers. Let's just close in prayer. Our loving Father, our hearts are filled with great joy, Lord, about not only how you work in our lives and the peace that that brings us to know that you're in control, that you never leave us as individuals nor forsake us.

You lead, you guide, you provide, and you prepare the way for us. But, Lord, our hearts thrills most of all that Jesus is indeed the Savior of the world and one day he will return and every eye will see him and every knee will bow.

And we long for that day when there will be no more tears or sorrow or pain and there will be no more death. Lord, we long for that day. Hasten that day, we pray.

[45 : 03] Lord, continue to work in and through us for your glory. Help us, Lord. Lead us and guide us and use us, we pray, for your glory, the glory of your Son. We ask these things in his name.

Amen. Amen. Please be seated.