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Genesis 25:29-34

We Live, We Love: "Birth Order"

The Rev. Lynn P. Lampman

A decision was made on Dec. 26<sup>th</sup>, 1919 that would definitively shape two organizations for the next 85 years ; the decision was made by Harry Frazee, who sold one of his best players. The players name was George Herman Ruth, better known as "Babe" Ruth. For \$125,000, the owner of the Boston Red Sox sold the right of George Herman Ruth ("the Babe") to the dreaded New York Yankees.

For the next 85 years, the Boston Red Soxs lived under "The Curse of the Bambino". Babe Ruth, at the time was a pitcher, but he started dabbling in hitting and the year before he was traded, he hit 29 home runs, which wasn't all that bad for a pitcher, even back then. Once he was traded to the Yankees, he started to play every day. The first year with the Yankees, he hit 54 homes runs and drove in 135 RBIs. He followed that up in his 1921 campaign with 59 homes runs and 106 RBIs.

He went on to be one of the most prolific baseball players of all time. He took the Yankees to the World Series seven times and won it four times. He hit 714 home runs and was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame with more than a 95% election rate.

So, why in the world did Harry Frazee sell the rights to Babe Ruth? He needed cash. In addition to being the President and CEO of the Boston Red Sox, he also dabbled in Broadway theatrical productions. They were not doing so hot at the time, so he needed \$125,000 in cash for a \$300,000 loan.

In this series we are talking about relationships and this story of Esau selling his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew, hits us in all three ways when it comes to our relationship

1. With ourselves
2. With others
3. With God

Now, Esau was a hunter and Jacob was a gatherer. Esau comes in from hunting and is hungry, so he asks his brother for some stew. Esau has a craving, and the truth is - he is not going to starve to death, even though he says he is going to die. First problem for Esau and us -we have a craving, and then we may tend to exaggerate our situation to justify our actions.

What do we do with our cravings? See them for what they are. A momentary desire, which we can confuse with an essential need, or even see it as a catastrophe and earth shattering, if we don't get it. Yet, it really was nothing more than a few hunger pangs till he could get the next meal or get himself to his own refrigerator.

To add insult to injury, the hunter Esau upon eating the stew that he has drooled over due to its smell, discovers that there is no meat in it – no lamb, not wild game, just lentils. He sold his birthright for this; that which was nothing even close to an even exchange, much less a great deal.

Jacob is a more than just a little bit of a slick guy. He takes advantage of his brother's weakness and thus gets what he wants (the blessing of the firstborn, even though he is the second born) by playing into Esau's impulsiveness and focus on immediacy.

This story begs us to look at how we give into cravings, which are often trivial and in doing so we get not more than trinket, and thus, give up what is way more valuable – our treasure.

In addition, let us not put ourselves past being a Jacob. It is so tempting right, to take advantage of someone's weak moment, so as to change the situation to our advantage. Yet, in the end, these two brothers due to the way they treated one another end up in a lifetime of tension, ill feelings, and anxiety. Was it worth it?

Where we end up in life, can often be caused by what we allow within ourselves. Esau could only hear his belly growl, and thus he could not hear or see what was a bit further in front of him. He listened only to his own desire and craving, and thus failed to listen to and see the bigger blessing that was guaranteed to be his. The only person Esau hurt was himself; which is not what we can say of Jacob. Rather, Jacob's action hurt himself and Esau, and thus, this breach turned into a fault line that ran through their relationship for many, many years.

As if he had not done enough damage already, Esau's giving up his birthright (his treasure) for the stew (a trivial trinket) also has not only physical, but also spiritual implications. Because of his birthright as the firstborn son, Esau would have been able to claim a double portion of his father's inheritance. The amount would have been great. He would have also been given rule and authority over other members of his family.

Though the loss of physical things like money and leadership are sad in this story, the loss of spiritual blessings is even sadder. He gave up the right to be heir of the promised blessing. And so now, he would not inherit the land, nor a great name, nor protection from God. Esau chose the present,

the now, the immediate over the future, later and it will come to be.

So, how does this impact us? You may say to yourself, it's not in the cards for me to get a lot of money or possessions through family inheritance. Yet, scripture begs to differ. For over and over again in the New Testament we hear, that we too have an inheritance. We are heirs of the kingdom of God. Yet, if we are not careful, we will crave things that get in the way of us participating in and enjoying that inheritance. This happens when we crave that which does not contribute to that which is eternal, but rather only on that which is temporal – here today and gone tomorrow or in Esau's case, as quickly as getting up from the table after the meal is over.

So many things clamor for our time and attention. So many things demand our allegiance. So, where will we chose to focus? What will we say "no" to, so we can say "yes" to what is most important from God's perspective.

Our faith and trust in God, allows us to receive an inheritance and blessing. Yet, do we sell ourselves, others and God short when we concentrate on the trivial only to disregard and thus vanquish what is our greatest treasure.

This story begs us to:

- not give away our birthright for that which does not really satisfy.
- look past the immediate and toward the future.
- be aware of our weaknesses, and thus not give into them or let others manipulate us in our vulnerable state, for their own gain,
- put impulsivity in its place and think, really think before we act,

- keep our cravings at bay, knowing they can make us sell our soul, and not even look back.
- Claim all that you have been offered, as sons and daughters of the King, and heirs of kingdom where, love, peace, mercy, compassion and goodness reign.

Let's go through our junk drawer, and toss out all those trinkets that we have bought to date, and then pick up the will, that is God's will and then live, as those who will receive a truly great inheritance.