

August 12, 2018

We Live, We Love: "Playing Favorites"

Genesis 27:41-46

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Sometimes, I read other people's sermon to see what they are saying about the text on which I am preaching for the upcoming Sunday. So, this week I checked out what people were saying about Jacob stealing Esau's blessing. Everyone, without exception said something like this - God's will cannot be thwarted. God meant for Jacob to get that blessing, and not Esau- and that is why it turned out the way it did. What!

What are you all talking about? And that was my problem with everyone's sermon, not one person talked about the other truth that is declared over and over again in this story - the way we treat other people has consequences for them and us.

Not a single person in this story comes up smelling like a rose. It starts with two parents, who have two entirely different ideas on how they want their children to turn out. Isaac's favorite is Esau, and thus he wants to give him the Abrahamic blessing (which was about receiving power and authority over others). Rebekah favored her other son Isaac and wanted him to not only receive the inheritance (which he got through deception - wealth), but the blessing (- power), as well.

Each parent begins separately plotting how to get what they want for their child, rather than working together to make sure both of their children get what they really need.

The first thing to note is that Isaac and Esau were planning a private rendezvous. It is important to know that when a

blessing was given, it was always a big event – a banquet of food, lots of people, a massive celebration.

Rather, Isaac and Esau decided this deal would be just between the two of them. Secrecy often indicates that you really know in your heart of hearts, that what you are about to do or have already done is not right.

Next, we see not only Isaac and Esau being secretive, but Rebekah and Jacob as well. It went down like this – Rebekah was listening at the tent flap, and the Hebrew describing this event is interesting. It is the word that reveals that this was a habit of Rebekah's – easesdropping. She was not willing to do what needed to be done face to face. Instead, she takes on what should be a team sport and turns it into an endeavor with the wrong partner. Some of us are teamed up with the wrong people. We will often talk to someone else first or even as the only person we talk to, whether it be a friend, co-worker or another member of the family before we talk to the person with whom the matter at hand involves.

Too many of us, make matters worse for all involved by not facing the person with whom the issue lies. Instead, we take matters into our own hands and try and manipulate the situation, so it turns out the way we want it to turn out. Rather than be willing to negotiate and compromise what is for the betterment of all.

At the height of a political corruption trial, the prosecuting attorney attacked a witness. "Isn't it true," he bellowed, "that you accepted five thousand dollars to *compromise* this case?" The witness stared out the window, as though he hadn't heard the question. "Isn't it true that you accepted five thousand dollars to *compromise* this case?" the lawyer repeated. The

witness still did not respond. Finally, the judge leaned over and said, "Sir, please answer the question." "Oh," the startled witness said, "I thought he was talking to you."

Isaac and Esau try and trick Rebekah and Jacob out of the blessing, and Rebekah and Jacob try and trick Isaac and Esau out of the blessing.

Now, let me just say, there was plenty of time for both of them to get out of the mess they were making for themselves and each other. And that is true most of the time for us as well. We have dug a small hole and then we are given the opportunity to fill that hole back up., yet we keep digging deeper and deeper, and then we look at the size of the hole and figure there is no turning back now. That's a fallacy, there is always time to turn back, make a U-turn, head in the other direction. There is always an opportunity to reverse the conspiracy, the trouble, that has been set in motion.

Yet, Rebekah's first shovel of dirt is when she tells Jacob her plan. What does he do – nothing, he just goes along with it. Next, she digs them both in deeper by cooking up the Isaac's favorite meal, and then she brings in the backhoe by sewing goat gloves and a vest. and then gives them to Jacob to wear in the deception of his father for the blessing.

In the face of favoritism and expectation not fulfilled, and personal plans feeling thwarted there is plotting. Whether you call it revenge, retaliation, getting what's yours, or getting even – it is all premeditated. And if you and I have time to think up a mean and punishing response, we also have time to let it go.

Yet, no one in this story, could let it go. Each was holding on to the way they wanted it to turn out. And in the end, one may

have gotten the goods, but even at that, everyone's life was rocked and even wrecked in the process.

Rebekah got that blessing for her son. Yet, he needed to move away because Esau was going to destroy him. And thus, Rebekah never saw her "favorite" son ever again.

Isaac ended up betrayed by his son and his wife. And for his later years, he had to deal with - that he had been had, not once but twice.

Esau lived out most of his years, consumed by wanting to even the score, and for him that meant nothing less than a total destruction and annihilation of his brother.

All had each other in contempt, and with that there was no abiding contentment for any of them.

Life rolled on, even after the blessing was given to Jacob. But, what kind of life was it? Did anyone really feel blessed in the end, or did they let their desire for power, preference, prestige, rob them of feel blessed.

What are you allowing to be taken from you? Maybe, you didn't get the family inheritance you thought you deserved, or maybe even needed. Maybe, you don't have the power and authority in your family that you think you should be yours and that you've earned?

Yet, living life feeling blessed is part of God's plan for each and every one of us. Yet, we can fail to see and receive the blessing, if we are too focused on our own plan for getting it. May you know the blessing of living in harmony with God and other starting this day and for all your days to come. Amen.

