20261115 Genesis 27 In Spite of our Weaknesses – God Blesses us with His Grace

A few years ago, we had a man from Ireland come through our congregation. He was a curious sort indeed. He seemed to have a lot of strange behaviors, and when I asked him where these were from, he would say, "My family put the 'fun' in dysfunction." Well, what we're going to look at today is extreme familial dysfunction. Many of you in this room (or reading this message) might feel that your family was way more dysfunctional than any other. It may have been, but rest assured that there is a good dose of dysfunction in every family. The big idea today is that no matter what your background might be, no matter what your sin might be, no matter how dysfunctional your past might be, God's mercy and grace is greater still than all of that. That is not a Big Idea. That is a HUGE IDEA. This morning, we're going to read a story of a dysfunctional family. Like me, you might be tempted to try to look for the "bad guy" in the story. I know I always have tried to figure out who it is in this story. Who do you think the "bad guy" is? Let's work our way through the text.

Let us pray.

27 When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau his older son and said to him, "My son"; and he answered, "Here I am." 2 He said, "Behold, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. 3 Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, 4 and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die." (Genesis 27:1-4, ESV).

I do find this a bit curious because, according to scholars, Isaac at this time was nowhere near death. Isaac was 137 years old and Jacob and Esau were 77 years old. Isaac lived to be 180. The key thing here is that Isaac knew from the time of their birth that God intended for Jacob to receive the blessing of the first born over Esau. It is easy to deduce that because God had revealed it to Rebekah that Isaac certainly would have known it. Despite this prior revelation by God, Isaac instructed Esau to go into the field, and bring wild game, so that Isaac could bless Esau. This was a direct rejection of what God had said would take place.

5 ***Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it,*** 6 ***Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "I heard your father speak to your brother Esau,*** 7 ***'Bring me game and prepare for me delicious food, that I may eat it and bless you before the Lord before I die.'*** 8 ***Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you.*** 9 ***Go to the flock and bring me two good young goats, so that I may prepare from them delicious food for your father, such as he loves.*** 10 ***And you shall bring it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies."*** 11 ***But Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "Behold, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man.*** 12 ***Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him and bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing."*** 13 ***His mother said to him, "Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, bring them to me." (Genesis 27:5-13, ESV).***

Rebekah sat listening to what Isaac was saying, but instead of going to him and reminding him of what God had said, she began to hatch a plan to deceive him. Ladies, just because your husband is head of your home, does not mean that you should not inform him when you believe he is operating outside of the will of God. Instead of merely telling Isaac, she conceived of a plan to send Jacob out to the barnyard to bring in a couple of goats so they could be prepared like venison to deceive Isaac. Notice carefully what Jacob tells his mother. He does not say, "Hey mother, this isn't right. You shouldn't be deceiving father." Instead, Jacob is simply afraid that they will get caught in their deception. So, thus far in the narrative, Isaac is trying to thwart the will of God. Rebekah is lying to her husband, and Jacob is in on the deceit.

14 So he went and took them and brought them to his mother, and his mother prepared delicious food, such as his father loved. 15 Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her older son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. 16 And the skins of the young goats she put on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. 17 And she put the delicious food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.18 So he went in to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" 19 Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." 20 But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" He answered, "Because the Lord your God granted me success." 21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not." 22 So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." 23 And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands. So he blessed him. 24 He said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He answered, "I am." 25 Then he said, "Bring it near to me, that I may eat of my son's game and bless you." So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. (Genesis 27:14-25, ESV).

This is such an outlandish plan that it's quite difficult to believe it. Rebekah puts Esau's stinky clothes on Jacob and covers his neck, hands and arms with goat skins. I remember hearing this as a child in the congregation at St. Thomas' and feeling like it was unimaginable that Isaac couldn't tell that the hair was not real human hair. I don't know whether he could or not, but the most egregious and outrageous thing is that Jacob used God's name in vain. I realize that the Ten Commandments hadn't come into being yet, but lying was wrong even before the 10 Commandments existed.

I want to talk for a minute about "taking God's name in vain." I used to think that this phrase meant cussing and using God's name to damn this thing or that. That certainly is invoking God's name in vain, but using God's name in vain is much more subtle. It might include such things as mentioning your relationship with God in order gain favor or trust with someone else. I don't think it's categorically wrong to put a Christian symbol on your business card, but I wouldn't do it, and I've never done it. It would be too hard for me to



get away from the hope that someone might trust me more because they know that I'm a Christian (and I'm advertising that). We shouldn't ever need to put a symbol on our business card to make people think that we're trustworthy or that they ought to choose to use us because of our relationship with God. That's using God's name in vain. It's using His name to gain an advantage. But Jacob explained away to his father the rapidity of finding game as a "blessing from God." Wow! That's a biggie. That's a lie and it's using God's name for an advantage. And what was that advantage? It was God's blessing. Jacob was after the blessing even if he had to lie about it. They were all playing games with the blessings of God. May we never do that ourselves.

26 Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near and kiss me, my son." 27 So he came near and kissed him. And Isaac smelled the smell of his garments and blessed him and said, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed!28 May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. 29 Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!" (Genesis 27:26-29, ESV).

Well, the deed has now been done. Despite Isaac's efforts to thwart the will of God, God's will happens anyway. Jacob has been a liar and a thief, and yet, here he is receiving the blessing of God. Rebekah has probably been the least culpable of the group because she knew what God willed, but her real wrongdoing is that instead of letting God work it out, she did her best to "help God out." And Esau, who had despised his birthright, now wanted the blessing that came with that birthright. He sold that position of priority and the blessings that went along with it all for a temporary satisfaction of his flesh.

30 As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31 He also prepared delicious food and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me." 32 His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." 33 Then Isaac trembled very violently and said, "Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed." 34 As soon as Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" 35 But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing." 36 Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." Then he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" 37 Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Behold, I have made him lord over you, and all his brothers I have given to him for servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?" 38 Esau said to his father, "Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father." And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.39 Then Isaac his father

answered and said to him: "Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be, and away from the dew of heaven on high.[40] By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; but when you grow restless you shall break his yoke from your neck." (Genesis 27:30-40, ESV).

To our modern western minds, this irrevocable blessing is curious. Why couldn't Isaac just claim "foul" and do a restart? That's a good question. We must go back in time approximately 3,000 years. At that time, a patriarchal blessing was treated like a spiritual declaration. This means it was believed to come from God. Once it was spoken with intention under covenantal authority (think binding, unchanging contract law), it was done and done. It couldn't be undone.

1) It was viewed as a binding pronouncement.
2) Isaac had already authorized the wrong outcome. At least it was wrong in his eyes, even though it is what God said would happen.
3) Esau begged for the blessing, but to no avail. The blessings of God in this instance were what we call a zero-sum game. One got blessed. The other could not receive that same blessing.
4) God's sovereignty rules. That doesn't mean deception is "approved," but it does mean Isaac's attempt to reverse it is portrayed as impossible in practice.

[41] Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob." [42] But the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son and said to him, "Behold, your brother Esau comforts himself about you by planning to kill you. [43] Now therefore, my son, obey my voice. Arise, flee to Laban my brother in Haran [44] and stay with him a while, until your brother's fury turns away— [45] until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereft of you both in one day?" (Genesis 27:41-45, ESV).

So, out of fear, Rebekah sent Jacob to live in the house of her brother Laban, the swindler.

[46] Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I loathe my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women like these, one of the women of the land, what good will my life be to me?" (Genesis 27:46, ESV).

Esau shows his true colors of disrespect and disregard for his parents. He married pagan women (see Genesis 26:34-35). The chapter basically ends with Rebekah declaring that her life has no joy because of what Esau has done.

So if the Torah tells us how people are and how they should be, what can we learn out of this account?

1) God overcomes the choices of men and women to exercise His sovereignty in the world. God is working His purposes out.
2) Isaac was guilty of trying to subvert the will of God. He was also guilty of showing favoritism to one of his children over another. That always creates dysfunction in families.
3) Rebekah was guilty of not approaching her husband and respectfully reminding him of God's will for the two boy's lives. Instead, she engaged in deception and enlisted Jacob in her deception. She too created more dysfunction by favoring one child over another.
4) Jacob was guilty of engaging in the deception and he lied, claiming that God had led him to find wild game. He was guilty of using God's name in vain.
5) Esau was guilty of letting his physical appetites take precedence over his spiritual appetites. He had previously disregarded his birthright, and in despising it, he gave up the blessing that went along with it. Now he was weeping at the loss of something he had disdained.

Now here's the big thing. In spite of ALL OF THEIR DYSFUNCTION, and in spite of ALL OF THEIR PERSONAL FAILURES, God chose to work His purposes out and to bless these people. And the glorious thing is that He does the same thing with us.

God's mercy is not getting the punishment which we deserve. His grace is getting the favor and blessings which we do not deserve.

So how should be then live? The writer of Hebrews tells us,

> ***15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; 16 that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. 17 For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. (Hebrews 12:15-17, ESV).***

Big Idea:

The Bible is filled with stories of broken, deceptive people. This gives great credibility to Scripture. We learn that dysfunctional families can create great problems. Despite our missteps and mistakes, God rules sovereign in our lives. He gives us so much more grace than we could ever deserve.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.