

The Price is Wrong
Genesis 25:21–34

January 23, 2005

SERMON NOTES

A. Introduction — what criteria do I use to distinguish true value from false?

B. A Tale of Two Boys Genesis 25:21–28

1. what mistake did Isaac and Rebekah not repeat of Abram and Sarah?

2. when God answered Isaac's prayer, what problem did that cause Rebekkah?

3. in what ways were these two twins non-identical? ... alike?

Esau

Jacob

Gen 25:25-26

Gen 33:4

Gen 27:11

Gen 32

C. A Pot of Stew ("Mess of Pottage") Genesis 25:29–34

1. what aspects of Esau's character are revealed here?

2. what aspects of Jacob's character are revealed here?

3. what are other instances of people despising their spiritual interest?

a. Psalm 106:24–25

b. Zechariah 11:12–13, Luke 23:21

4. what is the reason spiritual values are the more important

a. 2 Peter 3:11–13?

b. Mark 8:36

D. On which will I place the greater value?

A. Introduction

1. the Lutheran theologian Helmut Thielicke tells this story —{2}.
 - a. I once heard of a child who was raising a frightful cry because he had shoved his hand into the opening of a very expensive Chinese vase and then couldn't pull it out again. Parents and neighbours tugged with might and main on the child's arm, with the poor creature howling out loud all the while.
 - b. Finally there was nothing left to do but to break the beautiful, expensive vase. And then as the mournful heap of shards lay there, it became clear why the child had been so hopelessly stuck. His little fist grasped a paltry penny which he had spied in the bottom of the vase and of which he, in his childish ignorance, would not let go.
 - c. this is a story of misplaced values
 - (A) what misplaced values that child had!
 - (B) what a bad bargain to exchange a priceless vase for a single, copper penny!
 - (C) yet, in our Scripture reading today,
 - (1) we find a grownup man
 - (2) who made an equally bad bargain
 - (3) who made an equally poor exchange
2. that is what I wish to emphasize among the various lessons that are presented to us in this passage this morning
 - a. what is it that has real value? What really doesn't matter?
 - b. are we trading treasures for mere dust?
 - c. when I was in grade three or four
 - (A) I got into a trading spree with Clare, a kid in the class
 - (B) I cannot remember with what I started
 - (C) but, I traded it with Clare for a cap gun and some caps
 - (D) when the caps were gone, and I had run out of money to buy more, I complained to Clare
 - (E) he was very happy to trade me a balloon for the gun
 - (F) and the balloon burst!

d. enough said!

3. so where do we place our values?

B. A Tale of Two Boys

1. We pick up the history of these two boys

a. from the point where their parents, Isaac and Rebekah

b. deeply in love after 20 years of marriage

c. were just as deeply sorrowful because they had not been blessed with a child

d. but, notice if you will, that

(A) either because of the more spiritual nature of Rebekah

(B) or that Isaac had learned from his father Abraham

(C) or a combination of the two

(D) they did not make the same mistake as Isaac's parents when they were still called Abram and Sarai

(1) where Abram listened to Sarai's plan "to help God"

(2) so Abram took Sarai's maidservant Hagar to be the mother of Ishmael

(3) a decision causing many future problems

(E) no, Isaac rather in faith waited for God and upon God

e. and the Lord granted the desire of Isaac and Rebekah and she conceived a child

2. but God's answer to prayer raised a problem

a. verse 22a (NKJV): **But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?"**

b. every one of you who is a parent knows all about the concerns and questions that you have during that period while you are awaiting the moment of birth

(A) but Rebekah didn't have an obstetrician handy

(B) there was no ultra-sound to give details

(C) maybe the handy mid-wife had had no such experience

c. so, we read, verse 22b (NKJV): **So she went to inquire of the Lord.**

- (A) now how she did this, we are not told
- (B) perhaps she went to see Abraham
 - (1) yes, I know that verse 8 of this chapter records the death and burial of Abraham
 - (2) but that is the reporting style found in Scripture
 - (3) if you check the dates and ages of those concerned you will find that Abraham survived 15 years past this point in the story of Isaac and Rebecca
 - (4) moreover, Abraham was a prophet (which you can verify for yourself by looking at Genesis 20)
- (C) or maybe she went to see Abraham's priest, the king of Salem whose name was Melchizedek
- (D) well, however she did so, she took her problem to God
- d. the Lord had an answer and a promise, verse 23 (NKJV): *"Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."*
 - (A) we won't dwell upon this
 - (B) but it does go some way towards explaining some of Rebekah's later attitudes and actions

3. The Non-Identical Twins

- a. you have heard of siblings being "alike as two peas in a pod" — well, Jacob and Esau were just the opposite
- b. it showed up right from birth
 - (A) a father I know was relating how his child was so hairy at birth that if he hadn't known better he would have thought that they had made a mistake
 - (B) well, that the first son who *"came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau"* (verse 25, NKJV).
 - (C) and then Jacob was born — nothing the same~
- c. but it was in more than appearances
 - (A) if you had had the choice between these two
 - (B) between Jacob and Esau
 - (C) which would you have chosen
 - (1) to be a friend?
 - (2) to be your business partner?

- (3) to be your boss?
- (D) most of us would have chosen Esau
 - (1) he was a “Hail fellow! Well met” sort of guy
 - (2) today he would have played on the football, the hockey, or some other team at school
 - (3) he wasn’t lazy
 - (a) with all of Isaac’s herd’s they could get food whenever they liked by going and selecting it
 - (b) but Esau would hunt
 - ⌘ and as the word suggests
 - ⌘ hunting is work
 - ⌘ you don’t just go out and bang! that’s it
 - ⌘ it’s looking, seeking, tracking; it’s work
 - (4) this is the sort of person who always has a story, a yarn, a tale to tell
 - (a) so people would like Esau
 - (b) when Jacob returned many years later, Esau had 400 men following him; he had prospered
 - (5) yes, he could lose his temper — with Jacob as a brother who wouldn’t — but it didn’t last; when Jacob returned, how did Esau react? Genesis 33:4 (NkJV): *“But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.”*
- (E) and Isaac his father was no different
 - (1) he loved this big, rough son who could bring game
 - (2) and what a lesson here about favouritism
- d. then we have Jacob
 - (A) perhaps the best summary of his character is found in his own words when he went to fool Isaac into blessing him rather than Esau,
 - (1) Genesis 27: 11 (AV): And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: ”
 - (2) “smooth” that seems to sum up Jacob to a “T”
 - (3) not just of skin, but “smooth” and slick in dealing
 - (B) read the story of how Jacob schemes as he prepares to meet his brother again — it’s found in Genesis 32
 - (1) he sends presents bit by bit

- (2) he divides his party into smaller groups
- (3) he prepares for any eventuality
- (4) always thinking, always planning for his own good

4. but there is one more all important comparison

- a. both of these men, like every other man and woman that has ever been born, were sinners
- b. and Esau was a good-natured, likeable man of the world — but he was just that: a man of the world, a natural man
- c. but in Jacob, for all of his faults and failings there existed a deep yearning and hunger after the spiritual, after God — maybe he learned this from his father and mother; or maybe from grandfather Abraham (who lived until he was 14 or so) — nevertheless, Jacob valued spiritual things
- d. perhaps it was this, along with what God had promised to her, that caused Rebekah to love Jacob as she did
- e. and it was this differing value system between these two brothers that comes to the forefront in this encounter between them of which we read this morning.

C. A Pot of Stew

1. at this juncture we come to the crux of this history

- a. Esau has been out hunting — not too successfully, it seems because he is absolutely famished — so who and what does he first encounter when he arrives home?
 - (A) Jacob ... Jacob cooking a marvellous smelling stew
 - (B) so, Esau, a here and now sort of person, he only thinks of what is expedient for the moment — such as when he sees that his parents are upset by his Hittite wives, goes out and adds another wife, a second cousin, a daughter of Ishmael
 - (C) Esau can think of nothing but that savoury stew and his own empty stomach; and he asks:
 - (D) verse 30 (NKJV): ["Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary."](#)
 - (E) now there is no doubt, with all the flocks and staff owned by Isaac, that if he had walked a little farther, he could have had any food he wanted free of charge
 - (F) but Esau's senses rule his sensibility; his stomach rules his feet — maybe this was a bad attitude he learned from his father Isaac who loved Esau for the food he got

- (G) Esau pleads: "Please feed me!"
- b. well, Jacob is never one to let an opportunity pass by where he may garner a few shekels or more
 - (A) "OK," says Jacob, "Let's make a deal and sign it!"
 - (B) well, what he actually said was (verse 31, NKJV): "Sell me your birthright as of this day" and then (verse 33, NKJV): "Swear to me as of this day."
 - (C) now the voice of Esau's conscience may have spoken to him and said, "Wait Esau; the price is wrong!" but Esau wasn't listening and conscience was shut up.
 - (D) Hebrew 12: 6 tells us that Esau was a profane person, that is an unspiritual person, who for a bite of food, a morsel of meat, despised his birthright
 - (E) so, he asks (verse 32, NKJV): "Look, I am about to die; so what profit shall this birthright be to me?"
 - (1) now this is a pretty illogical statement: for if he was about to enter eternity, was that not the time to be most concerned about the spiritual? Wasn't that the time to hold onto spiritual things?
 - (2) but to the natural heart, God's promises seem to be but vague, valueless, powerless things — why? Because the natural man doesn't know God.
 - (3) to such a man, only what he can see, or touch, or hear, or taste, or smell — like that pot of stew — are of any meaning: what a false idea!
 - (F) "then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. So Esau despised his birthright." (Verse 34, NKJV)
- 2. Esau wasn't the first and wasn't the last person who has sold out his or her spiritual interest for a mess of pottage; and no matter how good it smells, the price is always wrong
 - a. Psalm 106:24-25 tells about Israel on the borders of the land of Canaan (NKJV): "Then they despised the pleasant land; They did not believe His word, But complained in their tents, And did not heed the voice of the Lord."
 - b. later they despised the Messiah of God and cried out to the Roman governor, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"
 - c. but the judgement of faith is much different, even as we are encouraged in 2 Peter 3:11–13 (NAS): "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy

conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”

D. Conclusion

1. what folly it is to part with our interest and opportunity with God, with Christ, with heaven, to take instead the terribly bad bargain of the riches, honours and pleasures of this world!
 - a. Jesus said, “what shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul”? (Mark 8:36)
 - b. is there someone here this morning who has begun to let “the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word” and diminish your interest in the things of God? — to trade it all for what is but a mere mess of pottage; a pot of stew?
 - c. then turn today and lay hold of what really matters: of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour
2. I pray that every one of you here this morning will be able to sing with a full heart the words of our closing hymn as you go on your way in the coming week: “The greatest thing in all the world is knowing You! ... is loving You! ... is serving You!” —^{3}.

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. “How to Believe Again” by Helmut Thielicke, in Leadership, 1985 Spring issue – Kerux illustrations #1991
3. “The Greatest Thing” by Mark Pendergrass, © 1977 by Sparrow Song *et alii*