



KNOW • GROW • CONNECT • SERVE • GLORIFY

Eastminster Worship Services

Sunday, October 11, 2009

Never the Same: When the Word Changes You

Analyze This!

Genesis 28:10-19

Rev. Dr. Steven M. Marsh, Senior Pastor

Never the Same: When the Word Changes You. God's Word changed Abraham and his family forever. God gave Abraham a blessing. And he passed it on to Isaac. God's blessing to Abraham is the centerpiece of the Book of Genesis. The blessing is God's promise to bring certain benefits into the life of the holder: prosperity and peace; a permanent homeland and descendants blossoming into a great nation; the promise that a people will be a blessing to others.

The story of the promise made to Abraham, at this point in its development, involves four people. Four people and what they would do for that blessing; Isaac, Rebekah and their twin sons, Esau and Jacob; all four mishandled God's blessing. God's blessing is passed through deception and lies. Yet, God takes the broken and makes it new. He redeems the hard things in life. The broken parts of your life provide the best opportunities to have an encounter with God. Let's look at our characters.

Isaac. Isaac led a blessed life; a life he inherited from his father, Abraham. God blessed Isaac with a beautiful wife, Rebekah and twin sons Esau and Jacob. Isaac was a successful farmer. The rulers that surrounded Isaac wanted to stay on his good side. Even God himself appeared to Isaac and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham." Isaac had a blessed life!

Esau. Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of stew. God didn't matter to Esau. He married pagan wives who shared nothing of his godly heritage. Their gods were idols. Esau and his wives were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah. Esau squandered and was tricked out of the blessing.

Rebekah. Rebekah persuaded Jacob to carry out a scheme that would allow him to gain Isaac's blessing through trickery. Rebekah formed an audacious plan to deceive her husband. Rebekah

surrendered all things God valued to get Jacob the blessing. Rebekah dressed Jacob in Esau's best hunting clothes. She put goat hair on his exposed skin to mimic Esau's hairy body. She put food and bread into Jacob's hands and sent him on his way. Remember that Rebekah had been told by God that "the older will serve the younger." But as time went on, Rebekah doubted the certainty of that promise. Rebekah believed that her husband, who was aging and growing frail, would ruin it. Can anyone ruin the blessing God has promised?

Jacob. Jacob was a con artist. Isaac asked, "Who are you, my son?" That's a pregnant question for a son who took on the identity and the sin of the son who once "despised his birthright." Who was Jacob? Deceit always makes you someone else, someone false. It was true that Esau despised his birthright, but Jacob despised his integrity. Jacob managed to get Isaac's blessing. Eventually, God himself came to Jacob, drawing him into a deeper faith. Jacob got the girl of his dreams. His flocks multiplied. He had twelve sons. In the end Jacob surrendered his integrity to get what God would have given him for free. Jacob lived a blessed life.

Deception and lies; analyze that. God is faithful despite our sin. But what's the point?

We pick up the story with Jacob heading for Haran, the place God had told his grandfather Abraham to leave. It was nearly 600 miles north of his home in Beersheba; a journey of maybe a month. Haran was the place that Abraham received the promise that he would be a great nation, that God would make his name great and that God would bless him so that he and his descendants would be a blessing to all nations. Jacob, the newly anointed promise of blessing bearer, through deception and lies, began a journey. On his journey, he became tired and stopped at a place to rest. The text states that he picked up a stone, placed it under his head and lay down to sleep. During his sleep, Jacob had a dream. In his dream, Jacob saw a ladder reaching from the ground to heaven. On this ladder were angels ascending and descending. And Jacob heard the voice of God. And God told him that God was the father of Abraham and of Isaac. God also promised that the land on which Jacob slept would be given to him by God. God also reminded Jacob that his family would be a blessing to all nations. Finally, God also said that he would be with Jacob wherever he

went and that he would not leave Jacob until God had completed what God had promised. The promise is the same as the one made to Abraham and then again to Isaac. The only difference is that the land is now identified. Jacob lay down to sleep. When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he knew that God had been with him. Jacob was so moved by the dream that he named the place where he slept and had the vision of God, Bethel, which means the house of God. He anointed the stone which he used for a pillow as the marking sign of a holy place.

What Jacob learned that night is still true for those whom God blesses: no matter where life takes you, God is with you. Even in the deception and lies in which Jacob participated, God was with him. Even when the promise was made that the older would serve the younger, warranting no need for the deception and lies, God still used the deception and lies; God used the whole experience which came about because of disbelief to demonstrate how he was actually with Jacob. God saw in his dream a reality that we are not equipped to see: God is actually near us; through it all, even deception and lies.

God stood at the top of the stairs and spoke to Jacob identifying him as the man through whom he would build a great nation and from whom the Messiah would one day come. Jacob knew that God alone was the source of blessing, not him. Notice God's promise: "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go." Just as it was for Jacob, God's promises are our strength. Throughout our lives, this is the promise of God that will sustain us: "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go." It is what Jesus promised his disciples: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." It is what Paul promised us in Romans 8, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Oh the brokenness of deception and lies must be confessed and repented of. God's forgiveness is real. But through it all may we believe anew his promise that God can be trusted. He will fulfill his promise.

The promise of Abraham is simply this: no matter where life takes you, God will bring you home. For us, it is not only that holy land in Israel, but the new heavens and new earth, where life runs in the

rivers and grows on trees. We all have a yearning for a home we have never found. C. S. Lewis wrote, “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.” No matter where your life’s journey takes you; no matter how desolate or far from home; no matter how deception and lies may have been used as opposed to simple trust; God is with you and God will bring you home.

The dream Jacob had caused him to repent. He was convicted. Jacob offered a vow of service to God and worship of God. God kept his word to Jacob and Jacob kept his vow. What about you? Given God’s great promise to you, you need to vow that the Lord will be your God. Like Jacob, vow never to forget how near God is to you. Close your eyes often and remember how near are the stairs of God, how attendant are the angels to your care, how closely God watches you. Vow to give God credit for all the care he shows you; for the food and clothing he gives you, for the safety of your journey, for his presence in danger. Give him the glory for always being your spiritual home, for the promise that one day he will bring you to that bright land he has promised. Vow to give God a tribute, a tithe, from what he has given you. All this, so that you never forget that the blessings of your life are from him; that you are indebted to his love; even in the brokenness...the deception...the lies.

Never the Same: When the Word Changes You. The Word asserts that God is the author of life; that sin is deadly, but God has a way out of the predicament; that there is a way for a new beginning; that God’s intent for you and me is other than we deserve; that God will accomplish incredible things through you; that God remembers you even when you forget him; that God will wipe away your fear and enable you to go through anything in life with courage; that God’s tests build your faith like nothing can; that the broken parts of your life provide the best opportunities to have an encounter with God.

That dark night, between a rock and a hard place, Jacob saw and heard God in a way that changed his life. He saw that God was nearer to him than he ever imagined and that no matter where he was or where he’d go, God’s promise, “I am with you and will watch over you,” was his vigilant sentinel.

God has called the human race **to** a promise of blessing. God has called the human race **for** a

promise of blessing. God has called the human race to be a people **with** a promise of blessing. The promise of blessing is **to** salvation unto eternal life. The promise of blessing is **for** all who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The promise of blessing is to be shared **with** all who haven't heard the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The promise of blessing is to be taken seriously. It is about salvation.

The church is to introduce people **to** the promise; to let people know that the promise is **for** them; and lastly, to inform people that there is a responsibility to share the promise **with** others. In whom is the promise fulfilled? Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus Christ to you? Is there a place in your life where you feel broken? The broken parts of your life provide the best opportunities to have an encounter with God. God takes the broken and makes it new. He redeems the hard things in life. Let us pray!

Copyright © 2009
Steven M. Marsh
All Rights Reserved.

E A S T M I N S T E R P R E S B Y T E R I A N C H U R C H
1958 N. Webb Road • Wichita, Kansas 67206-3404 • p 316.634.0337 f 316.634.1496 • www.eastminster.org