



Sermon, Sunday August 27, 2023

“Look, I am about to Die”

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 25:19-34 ¹⁹ These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham’s son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, ²⁰ and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. ²¹ Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife because she was barren, and the LORD granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. ²² The children struggled together within her, and she said, “If it is to be this way, why do I live?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. ²³ And the LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other; the elder shall serve the younger.” ²⁴ When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵ The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle, so they named him Esau. ²⁶ Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau’s heel, so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. ²⁷ When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. ²⁸ Isaac loved Esau because he was fond of game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. ²⁹ Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. ³⁰ Esau said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!” (Therefore he was called Edom.) ³¹ Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” ³² Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?” ³³ Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Introduction: Two Episodes

Jacob lived the most eventful life among the patriarchs of the Old Testament. One of the many reasons why Jacob lived this kind of life was because he had several children. He had 12 sons. Jacob's twelve sons were to become the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jacob went to Egypt in his old age and died. That Jacob's life was difficult can be seen from his answers to the Pharaoh's questions in Egypt. **In Genesis 47:9, Jacob says, "My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers."**

Today's text can be said to be a precursor to the difficult years Jacob still had to live. In today's text, there are two episodes related to Jacob. The first episode is the story of Jacob's birth. Jacob was a twin and according to today's text the brothers fought while still in Rebekah's womb. Rebekah told God about this problem, and the Lord told her that the older brother would serve the younger one. The first story of today's text informs us that the hierarchy of older brother and younger brother will change.

This change in the hierarchy between the older brother and the younger brother is further embodied in the second episode of today's text. Rebekah's twin sons grew up to be adults. Esau, the older brother, became a hunter, and Jacob, a quiet character, mostly stayed at home.

However, according to today's text, Isaac, the father who liked meat, so he liked Esau, the hunter, and Rebekah, the mother, seems to have liked Jacob, who helped with housework. Then one day an incident happens. Esau returned home exhausted from hunting all day. When he saw his younger brother Jacob cooking lentil stew, Esau asked for a bowl of stew. Jacob replied give me your birthright for this bowl of lentil stew. Esau accepts Jacob's proposal, saying, **"I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?"** A transaction



is established between the two. By the way, the Bible evaluates this incident as “**Esau despised his birthright.**” (Genesis 25:34).

Body: What are these two stories trying to say?

What are these two stories trying to say? From the point of view of modern people, the story of buying and selling a birthright for the price of lentil stew seems absurd and funny. The record of Jacob and Esau in Genesis shows what kind of character they had. Esau had human charm to the point of selling his birthright for a bowl of lentil stew, and when he met his younger brother Jacob again, he treated him with the affection of flesh and blood. On the other hand, Jacob was good at taking advantage of others' weaknesses and deceiving them, as seen in the fact that he cheated his uncle Laban and stole his property. However, the Bible writer says that God chose Jacob. Why?

The Apostle Paul says this **in Romans 9:13, Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."**

The Lord did not love Jacob because he was right. Also, it is not that the Lord hated Esau because of his faults, rather it is the result of the Lord's unilateral choice. Sometimes, the choice God makes does not seem righteous in our eyes.

However, the Apostle Paul says **in Romans 9:14-15. "What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! (v.14) I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. (v. 15)".** These verses mean that we cannot judge the Lord's choice as righteous or unjust by human standards. Paul explains this with the parable of the potter. Just as a potter has the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use, God has the authority to love those he loves and hate those he hates.

However, we must not misunderstand these verses of the Bible. Paul's parable of the potter or the story of Jacob in today's text is not a one-sided split. Furthermore, it does not mean that the Lord is violent. This means that God's actions go beyond our standards of judgment.

As a creature, human perception is limited. Humans cannot judge God and His acts of government with our limited awareness. We always experience these limits of awareness in our daily lives. Sometimes we wish that the evil in this world would go away. When we think that way, we still cannot understand a God who tolerates evil. Truly, we do not know how deep God's mercy and compassion are. In fact, we may all be living thanks to those attributes of God.

Therefore, what we must realize is that God's actions are only one-sided in our eyes, but they are goodness and justice, and belong to the ultimate truth.

Then, what attitude should we take before God, who acts beyond human thoughts? It is an obedience that opens our heart to God's thoughts rather than being caught up in our own thoughts.

Like Esau in the story told in today's text, not only thinking about the reality of being hungry, but opening our heart to the birthright (God's blessing) given by the Lord. In ancient Jewish society, maintaining the birthright meant maintaining a relationship with God. So, in today's text, Esau's willingness to give up his birthright means that he lightly regarded his relationship with God. God cannot choose such a person. It was not because Esau was immoral, nor was it because his humanity was insignificant. It is because Esau ignored his relationship with God.

In that sense, Esau's confession **in Genesis 25:32, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?"**, is a statement lacking in faith. Esau's confession is that God (the source of life) is not as important, as eating and living. Of course, we must work hard in our finite lives, build a beautiful family, and live a healthy



and enjoyable life. We must also have specific life goals and plans to achieve them. So, it is important for us to emphasize a specific life to live a beautiful life.

However, those who pursue only this kind of life and are indifferent to God, the source of human life, and their relationship with Him, have no room for God in their souls. How does the Lord choose such a person to carry on his legacy?

Conclusion: A life that makes room for the Lord in our lives

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Now let's summarize today's message. In today's text, Esau, who took his birthright lightly, shows the typical behavior of modern people. Modern people live as if they know what is good for them. Many people live with the belief that it is beneficial to build a family, grow a business, check health, and plan for old age. We consider this a reality of life, so we get too preoccupied with these practical matters. However, there is no place for God, the source of life, in the lives of these people.

I wish you the blessing of living a life where you can make room for the Lord during our busy lives and in the harsh realities of life. **Proverbs 16:9 says, "In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps."** The Lord's good guidance will accompany us in a life that relies on the Lord for our lives, not our strength and ability. And to live such a life requires obedience towards the Lord. May our lives overflow with obedience to the Lord.

