

## Jacob and Esau are Reconciled

Genesis 33:1-11, Trinity Sunday XIX

October 11, 2015

Sermon Text, Genesis 33:1-11 (KJV):

*“And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant. Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord. And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself. And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me. Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it.”*

Beloved of the Lord.....Because the love of Christ is to always prevail in the Christian Church, it is of the utmost importance that brothers and sisters in a congregation live in peace with one another, true peace of heart without anger, hatred, or wrath. If there is a quarrel or division we should work hard to make peace and be reconciled, so the devil does not overthrow us or our brother by hatred. Galatians 6:10 says, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Philippians 2:3 says, “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*” Ephesians 4 tells us we are to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” In Psalm 34:14 God commands, “Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.” As we hear more today about Jacob and Esau, may God help us with His own tender love which saved us, for “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

I. The source of offense between Esau and Jacob. Briefly let us review the past between Jacob and Esau. Remember first that Rebecca, their mother, was told by God that the older child would serve the younger. Rebecca therefore knew as did Isaac, the birthright and Messianic promise rightly belonged to Jacob, not Esau. However, since father Isaac favored Esau over Jacob, Isaac would have sinned by giving the birthright and Messianic promise to Esau. This birthright, by the way, carried with it great wealth and earthly blessings after the father passed away. Of course we all remember the story of how Esau sold his birthright for

a bowl of soup. The Bible also says “Esau despised *his* birthright.” After the deception of Jacob and Rebecca which brought about the birthright being given to Jacob, the tears which Esau shed came because he was going to miss out on the earthly blessings of the birthright. In other words earthly blessings to him were more important than heavenly forgiveness through Christ. By selling his birthright we must understand Esau was really despising Christ and the Gospel, the Lord’s Anointed, the Son of God. That promise went to Jacob, by way of Isaac, and the Lord later revealed the same in the dream we call “Jacob’s ladder”, “In thee and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

While it is often debated if Jacob and Rebecca did evil in how they deceived Isaac, we can all confess the desire of Jacob and Rebecca for that birthright was godly and good, and it was clear father Isaac was going to sin against God as he had every intention of giving the birthright to Esau. Moreover, Esau’s behavior afterward, in his desire to murder Jacob, revealed he was not worthy of that Messianic promise either because he allowed anger to dominate and rule his heart rather than confessing his sin. May God thus help us all not to live in sinful anger bearing a grudge against our own brother. James 5:9 says, “Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.”

II. The importance of removing offense and living in peace, especially with our fellow Christians. The purpose of today’s lesson then is to teach us what true and God-pleasing reconciliation is. Regarding this reconciliation between Jacob and Esau, overall we must treat Esau as an unbeliever offended by Jacob’s deception, and Jacob is a believer who knows of the offense. This reunion was not a time for Jacob to justify his actions of deception, or explain how by God’s own promise the birthright belonged to Jacob, but rather it was a time to “Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.”

As for the good work of Jacob to remove the offense, understand first that Jacob sent many gifts first to Esau. This was why Esau had said, “What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And Jacob answered, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord.” These droves and droves of sheep and animals were gifts from Jacob to Esau, meant to pacify Esau’s anger, so Esau understood Jacob desired mercy. The second good work Jacob did to remove the offense is shown in verse three: as Jacob approached Esau, Jacob “bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.” Though humanly speaking the sins of Esau were greater and more numerous, Jacob is the one who bows seven times to Esau. In like manner it is usually the case that the stronger Christian is the first to do all good things to make peace and reconcile with the one they have grieved. Likewise the more proud and stubborn we are in our own heart, the harder it is to say “I’m sorry, please forgive me.”

What we ought to learn from Jacob today, is that Christians should not count or weigh or judge how great the sins of their brother toward them, for “charity shall cover a multitude of sins.” And when we discover there is a breach or division between us and our brother, for the love of Christ we ought to do everything we can to repair and heal that breach, “with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” And if it is the case they have sinned against us and wounded us, we are not to be arrogant and demand they come to us and repent, but we are to readily forgive them from our heart, even if they have not sought our forgiveness. For “I say not unto thee till seven times, but seventy times seven.” Ephesians 4:32 says the

same. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Another point which must be said is that as Christians, we should not take offense. If a brother insults our pride or honor or they hurt our feelings by words, what difference does it make? If a fellow Christian hurts you by evil words or deeds, don't take offense and get angry, but simply forgive. The sins of your neighbor, no matter how grievous, should affect you just as little as water rolling off a duck's back. I once heard a wise and elderly pastor say at a Pastoral Conference that "Pastors should never be offended about anything." He meant that pastors should be strong enough spiritually, so that when a brother or sister sins against them, they do not allow it to hurt them inside, namely they cannot allow their pride to be wounded, because only by pride comes contention. Thus if you are wounded by your neighbor's hurtful words, your problem is your pride which allows you to be wounded. But Jesus say, "whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

But just as certain as we should not take offense by the sins of our neighbor, neither should we give offense. What is an offense? We are not speaking here about "hurt feelings", but a Scriptural offense is a real sin against our neighbor which may cause them to stumble in their faith, or lead them into sin. Koehler writes, "An offense is anything that is likely to lead a person into unbelief, misbelieve, or sin, or anything whereby he is encouraged to continue therein." If then we teach someone God's Word falsely, or if we set a bad example as a Christian, or if we abuse our Christian liberty so that a weak Christian is injured, these are grave sins which turn that soul away from Christ, or we cause them to stumble as they approach Christ. And because we are our brother's keeper, it behooves all true Christians as much as possible, to heal these divisions and offenses which we ourselves have caused by our bad behavior, evil words, or careless use of liberty. This is why Jesus said, "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"

III. That which is broken, Christ alone can heal. The people then in our lives are somewhat like a glass vase or vessel which we ourselves have broken by our sins against them. If you can picture a room with various vessels of glass or fine pottery, how can we fix those on the floor we have broken?

The answer here is that which is broken, Christ alone can heal, *and Christ first heals us, so we can in turn go and heal others.* Consider then how our entire life is a living offense to God "for we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment". Yet Jesus did not cast us away because of our offenses, but Jesus came to this earth to remove and take away all our offenses. By taking our sins upon Himself, Jesus became a living offense before God, so God would cast Jesus away, but not us. Yet by this casting away of Jesus, His bitter sufferings and death, all our offenses were removed and peace was restored. Though we were once aliens and enemies of God by the wicked works of our mind, the Bible says "yet now hath God reconciled, in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight." We now through Jesus are not obstacles to heaven, nor is there any obstacle between us and heaven, for God has reconciled us to Himself in His own heart, through Jesus. God from His heart has freely forgiven us, and He even forgives us for all those times we have offended others and injured their faith. These sins are also forgiven, removed for Jesus' sake, and "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable mercy."

Therefore dear believer understand that through Jesus, God no longer look upon you as broken, but He looks upon you as healed.....healed, fixed, put back together as whole, even a new creature. All who believe on Him will not be condemned but are promised everlasting

life. But now that you are healed and fixed by Christ Himself, and you are restored as a good vessel prized highly in His house, it is your job and duty to go about and heal others by the same medicine whereby you were healed, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Knowing such a wonderful healing dear believer, do not give yourself over to anger and wrath, for that is the devil's kingdom, but live in the peace with God and neighbor, as it is written, "as much as lieth in you, live peaceable with all men." And since God has freely removed all your offenses and restored you into His good grace, strive daily for the same in your own life. Remove the offenses you have created, seek peace and pursue it. Christ can heal every wound, and with Christ there is strength to heal and be healed. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Amen.