

Life in a foreign Land

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[0:00] In Genesis, tracking through the life of Jacob. And as we do so, we come to Genesis 34. So if you have a Bible, turn with me there to Genesis 34.

Or you can turn in your bulletin or any device that you might have. This is God's word, Genesis 34. Now Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land.

And when Shechem, the son of Hamor, the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her. And his soul was drawn to Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. So Shechem spoke to his father, Hamor, saying, Get me this girl for my wife. Now Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah, but his sons were with his livestock in the field.

[1:03] So Jacob held his peace until they came. And Hamor, the father of Shechem, went out to Jacob to speak with him. And the sons of Jacob had come in from the field as soon as they heard of it.

And the men were indignant and very angry because he had done an outrageous thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter. For such a thing must not be done.

But Hamor spoke with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him to be his wife. Make marriages with us. Give your daughters to us.

Take our daughters for yourselves. You shall dwell with us, and the land shall be open to you. Dwell and trade in it. Get property in it. Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, Let me find favor in your eyes.

Whatever you say to me, I will give you. Ask for me as a great, a bride price, and gift as you will. And I will give whatever you say to me.

[2:05] Only give me the young woman to be my wife. The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully because he had defiled their sister Dinah. They said to them, We cannot do this thing to give our sister to the one who is uncircumcised.

For what would be a disgrace to us? Only on this condition will we agree with you, that you will become as we are by every male among you being circumcised.

Then we will give our daughters to you. We will take your daughters to ourselves. We will dwell with you and become one people. But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter, and we will be gone.

Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor's son Shechem. The young man did not delay to do the thing because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. Now he was the most honored of all his father's house.

So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, These men are at peace with us. Let them dwell in the land and trade in it.

[3:12] For behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters as wives. Let us give them our daughters. Only on this condition will the men agree to dwell with us, to become one people, when every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised.

Will not their livestock, their property, and all the beasts be ours? Only let us agree with them. They will dwell with us. And all who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and his son Shechem.

And every male was circumcised and all who went out of the gate of his city. On the third day, when they were sore, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords, came against the city while it felt secure, and killed all the males.

They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with a sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house and went away. The sons of Jacob's came upon the slain and plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister.

They took their flocks, their herds, their donkeys, whatever was in the city and in the field, all their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, and all that was in the houses, they captured and plundered.

[4:31] And then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Let's pray.

Lord, we come to your word this morning, knowing it's useful for us, knowing that you have spoken through it. Father, we ask this morning that you might use it in our lives, that you might work in our hearts to see it as good and to see it as holy.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Where were you when? What were you doing when it happened?

Well, what happened? What are you talking about? That question seems kind of appropriate, as Britt prayed earlier today, about the events of 9-11.

But when we think back on significant events in world history or our nation's history, maybe that have even transpired in our lifetime, we think about when we heard the news or we watched the event unfold on TV.

[5:49] Where were you when JFK was shot? Were you listening to it on the radio? Were you born yet? Where were you when we landed on the moon?

Were you born yet? Some of the same questions arise. What about the fall of the Berlin Wall? What were your actions? Did you rejoice? Did you dance? What about O.J. Simpson's road trip through Los Angeles?

What were you doing while that was going on? I was riding shotgun in a U-Haul, listening to it on the radio. Some of these events are pretty serious and significant events in our national history, our national togetherness, what weaves us together.

Some are more lighthearted rather than somber. Did you watch the last season or last episode of Seinfeld, the longest running sitcom in history?

But if you think about the events of September 11th, that comes more to the fore when we ask the question, where were you when? What were you doing when you heard the news?

[6:59] Were you sitting in class? Were you worried for friends, for family members? Were you there? Were you there? Would it unfold it? Or were you not even born?

The events of 9-11, whether it altered the trajectory of your own life, the decisions that you've made for vocation, for what not to do, as it's caused so many Americans around this world to do, around this nation and this world, it's changed so many people.

But immediately after that, questions probably bubbled up in your heart. Questions in your mind about justice, goodness, and evil.

Maybe they shook you to the core. Maybe you were so shocked it took you a couple days to think about, how could God allow this? Where are you, God?

How could you let this happen to all these people? And I think that's why the events of 9-11 are so much more impactful.

[8:07] Maybe it's because I'm a young whippersnapper and I watched it happen. But it confronts our sense of justice and our sense of judgment and mercy and makes us look evil in the face.

And then those questions bubble up in our hearts and our mind. And then we cry out for justice and say, where are you, God?

What are you doing? How can you be good and let something like this happen? But that cry is not simply a cry for justice as it is a frustration with evil, knowing that it shouldn't be like this.

And if we're honest this morning, when we read a text like that, we ask the very same questions.

Where are you, God, in the midst of this? Are Jacob's sons right to execute justice in this way?

Should they have done that? God, if you're good, if you're merciful, why would you let this happen to this woman? How could you?

[9:21] How could you let this happen? This is wrong. Something must be done about it. And this morning we see from this text, as in the events of something like 9-11, when we're confronted with real darkness, real evil, we're confronted with this idea that we often ask those questions and we want justice.

And how does that work when we have a merciful and loving God? How does that fit together? It seems so strange that those two can coexist.

But we must hold fast to the greatness of the mercy of God. Not just for ourselves, but when events like this happen. So this morning, as we look at this text, we're going to do something that's going to make every math science person cringe and every English person rejoice.

Okay? We're going to look at the plot really quickly. We're going to move from there and look at the characters. Because this is a story, after all. First, let's look at the story.

Now, as we've read this, and if we're even not even following the narrative closely at all, we can get really lost. And this story can be difficult to follow.

[10 : 43] There's a lot going on and there's a lot of people involved. And oh yeah, by the way, Shechem is the place and the name of the guy. Okay? There are numerous finer details and they switch conversations between people.

And so this story, though, begins with something really simple. But that doesn't make it easy. It's what I warned you about at the beginning of worship. That Dinah, the daughter to Leah and Jacob, who now lives in Shechem, journeys out into the city and then she's raped by this man, Shechem, in the city of Shechem.

He's infatuated with her and he tells his dad, Hamor, go get her. I want her to be my wife. And then Jacob, her father, hears of this, what's happened, these events.

And instead of being outraged, he entertains a suitor. He entertains a proposal for her hand in marriage.

And there's one problem here. Jacob's sons hear of this and they're angered. And Hamor continues the sales pitch. Let my son keep Dinah.

[11 : 57] And if you do, we can become one big happy family. We'll live together. We'll share resources together. We'll share the land. We'll trade together. All of those things.

And then the son pipes up and says, in fact, this is so important to me. I don't care what I have to give you. Name your price. I'll give it to you.

Now Jacob's sons hatch a plan. And in doing so, it's a deception. Sure, you can keep her on one condition. You become like us and you become circumcised.

And then and only then can we become one people. And Shechem and Hamor say, all right, you got a deal. And then they go back to their own people and somehow they convince them to be circumcised.

They go to the city gates where business is held and they pitch their plan and they convince them and all the people are convinced this is what we should do.

[12 : 57] And all the men are circumcised. And when they recovered from their surgery, or while they were recovering, Dinah's brothers come in, Simeon and Levi, and they killed all the men of the city.

They killed Hamor. They killed Shechem. They rescued their sister. And then the rest of the brothers take all the stuff, all the women, all the property, all the animals.

They take it all. Every last bit of it. That's the plot. Now, what about the characters? The characters of the stories will spend most of our time.

Because it's through them we see what's really going on. I tracked us through the plot of the story, but it doesn't tell us why. It doesn't tell us what's going on in their hearts as they're navigating this situation.

And from that, we're going to see how we can understand where God is and how he's working.

Now, when we read the opening verses of this chapter, we cannot be helped but move to pity, move to sadness, and maybe then very quickly move to outrage at what's gone on.

[14 : 16] Is it wrong? Absolutely. Is it evil? Yes. Is it tragic? Yes. Look at verse 1. Dinah, the daughter of Leah, who she born to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land.

At first glance, that seems pretty innocuous. But we have to remember, we took a break last week from our story or the story of Jacob. But if we remember the last time we looked at Jacob, he was supposed to go back to the land and he settled just a little bit short in Shechem.

And as he did, he was drawn in to the land in the prospect of becoming wealthy, comfortable, happy. And now, his daughter is drawn out from the confines, the safety of his own home, into this strange land.

His daughter puts herself in a position that is dangerous. Does that mean it's her fault? No. What happened to her?

Should it have happened to her? No. But she still was drawn into the foreign city, to the women. She went out to see them.

[15 : 30] And whenever we see that contrast between the foreigners and then God's people, it's negative. She's drawn out to see them, to look at their ways.

Why am I making such a big deal about this? I'm not saying Dinah deserved what happened to her. That's not what I'm saying at all. In fact, I'm saying something very opposite, that those two things can coexist, that Dinah sinned and going out to the city and looking and being drawn to this world. And also, what happened to her was really wicked. It was brutal and wrong. But her heart was being wooed away by the ladies of this land. That's the first character.

The next group of characters are Shechem and Hamor. So again, I mentioned Shechem is the place. Shechem is also the son of Hamor, the one who does this to her.

Verse 2. He's the prince of the land. He saw her. He seized her. He lay with her. He humiliated her. He enters into the story with despicable actions.

[16 : 46] It's not an accident. It's not a mixed communication of intentions. It is evil from the start. The way it's phrased is he is the one doing the action.

He's doing all these things. And in some distorted way, it doesn't end there. He says this. That he, or the writer says this about it.

That his soul was drawn to Dinah. He loved the young woman and he spoke tenderly to her. That's not what we think about when we think about the brutality of an event like this.

In some weird way, he's infatuated infatuated with her. He's obsessed with her. And that's why he says to his dad with such authority, go get her for me.

Man, it's the same demanding, matter-of-fact speech that Samson uses when he says to his dad and he sees that Philistine woman, get her for me.

[17 : 48] Now, it's under different pretenses, but it's still that same demand that he is blinded by sin, by his own lust and he says to his parents, go get her.

That's the same type of language here. But it doesn't end there, the story of Shechem and Hamor. Then they negotiate with the future father-in-law or so they think.

They come to negotiate and the conversation picks up in verse 8. He spoke to them saying, the soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him to be his wife.

Their conversation is a trap. A trap from the beginning. A trap that God's people were trying to avoid, that God reminded them of time and time again not to be entangled with foreign people and foreign wives and foreign lands.

And the trap is this. And we see it really clearly as he goes on. Make marriages with us. Give us your daughters. Take our daughters for yourselves. You shall dwell with us and the land shall be open to you.

[19 : 02] Dwell and trade in it and get property in it. That's the trap. That's exactly what Satan does to Adam in the garden if you think about it.

It's not a complete opposite reversal of God's truth. It's a shade off. Satan says what to Adam? Did God really say that?

It's a slight distortion. Not attacking outright but a twisting. And here it's through Hamor. You have a promise of land.

You have a promise of children. You have a promise of abundance. Come. Now here's your chance for it. with our wives and giving your daughters.

At this point Shechem pipes up and says hey I really want her. If I've found favor in your eyes he says in verse 11 then give her to me. No remorse.

[19 : 57] No repentance. The picture here is of a hardness of heart. We can't look past that. You might be thinking seriously man? After what you've done your desire desire is so strong that you're going to give any price.

But tactically if you want to woo her wouldn't you apologize for this? For what's happened? Now here's a nugget in here that we don't get until we go to the end of the story.

It's not that Dinah has gone back to Jacob and they're asking for her back but they have held her as we'll see later. They've held her in captivity and they're saying let us keep her.

Now during these negotiations and these conversations when we look through them through the lens of Shechem having this hardness of heart this brutality we see how much more evil the actions are.

Now Shechem and Hamor as characters are not done yet. Then they go and convince their countrymen but they don't tell them the whole story. They don't tell them of what they've done to Dinah or what Shechem has done to Dinah.

[21:11] They come to them and they pitch to them in pragmatic terms hey we should do this because it's going to make us rich. After all who doesn't want to get rich? Look at verse 20 with me as we keep going through the narrative.

They say this they came to the gate of their city they spoke to the men of their city and they said these men are at peace with us let them dwell in the land and trade in it for behold the land is large enough for them.

Let us take their daughters as wives let us give them our daughters only on this condition with all the men or will all the men agree to dwell with us to become one people and every male is going to be circumcised as they are circumcised.

So in the same scene that we saw where Lot was at the city of the gates where all the important people gather they pitch this idea we're going to be just like them and we're going to be circumcised like them.

Now if we think about it they've kind of set the hook and now they're just reeling them in as it goes on through the narrative. As Shechem and Hamor say this will not their livestock they're talking about Israel's livestock their property and their beast all be ours let us agree with them and they will dwell with us and in doing so they're reeling them in this allure of greed of property of animals gets them to agree to all be circumcised.

[22:43] Now when we read of Shechem and Hamor's actions it's really easy for us through their speech to divorce this coldness of heart how brutal all of this is but in that we see where their hearts are really at both Shechem and Hamor they're so blinded by sin that they're agreeing that they're going out of their way to manipulate their countrymen and they're so calm about it even though it's so wrong.

So what's done to Dinah is wrong without a doubt but what happens afterwards shows us how bad they really are. It's a gauge of their hearts how far they are from God.

Now the next group of characters are Jacob's sons. Jacob's sons if we're honest and we encounter this story we might identify with them because they put into practice what we're thinking as the story unfolds.

When the events against Dinah transpire where are they? They're out working in the fields and when they come in or when they hear of this they come in and where Jacob entertains the suitor they come up with this plan very quickly.

They go quickly very past their sadness to anger but jump back with me to verse 7. How it's written in verse 7 is the same exact language as God when he was saddened over sin over the sin of mankind when it got so bad that he was going to flood the whole earth.

[24:26] It uses the same exact language when he says they were indignant and very angry because he had done an outrageous thing in Israel. God says of himself or the writer says of God this and the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him to his heart.

It's the same wording. It's so bad it's so bad to be compared to the sin of all of mankind to flood the earth and then they come up with a plan as Shechem comes and says name your price so that I might have her they respond deceitfully and what do they do?

They said you need to become like us and be circumcised. They take something that should point to faith in God circumcision and they use it for their deceitful ends to kill them all and only then after we've become one people they say we will give you our sister and the trick of Jacob's son is not for monetary gain like Shechem and Hamor but instead it's for vengeance vengeance for their sister. Turn with me back to verse 25 on the third day after their plan had already been pitched and set in motion when they were sore the two sons of Jacob Simeon and Levi Dinah's brothers took their swords and came against the city while it felt secure and killed all the males.

They avenged what happened to her and they kill everyone and then they kill Shechem and Hamor not just the two who had executed this against their sister and we think through their actions we're confronted with this reality it doesn't seem right it's right to be angry it's right to want justice but then we have the words of Paul rolling around in our heads saying this never avenge yourselves but

[27:57] Waldo is in the midst of it you gotta look for that man in the red and white striped hat and shirt where is Jacob while all of this is going on in the pandemonium of his own sons the brutality of his own children and what's happened to his daughter where is he that's the question that's what we should walk away from this text Jacob is absent Jacob is silent Jacob is nowhere to be found where is Jacob when Dinah went out in the first place where is Jacob speaking up for his daughter when these suitors come knowing that they're the ones who executed this against his daughter it's not him that speaks up it's his sons where is he in all of this where is he when his sons hatched this plan where is Jacob oh there he is he comes on the scene at the very end and what does he say to his own sons who fought for the honor of his sister he says why did you do this you made me bad you made me evil stink in the eyes of these people are you serious

Shechem and Hamor why don't you come and judge Simeon and Levi and the reality is when we clamor for justice and judgment we are equally guilty before the Lord for we won't have to answer for the sin of Shechem the sin of Jacob the sin of Simeon or Levi we will answer for our own sin and we are held under judgment that same judgment that we want that same justice is pointed to Christ the one who gave of himself the one who didn't deserve to die and yet we call out and say where's justice just like Simeon and Levi we ask where God is and yet we sit silent knowing that our hearts condemn us where are you God God is on the cross in the form of Jesus he is God and man given of himself completely innocent and yet we clamor for justice and what retribution and it's meted out on the person of Jesus and we're called not to judgment but to delight in the mercy that we've been shown in Jesus he's the only person that didn't deserve to die and yet we call out asking for judgment knowing that we are the ones that put him there how do we live in a foreign land how do we live in this world where are you God when we need you he's offered to us in the gospel he's offered to us in Christ for he's overcome all evil and as we wait as ones with hope let us hold fast to the mercy of God let's pray

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