

Sinful People, Faithful God

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[0 : 00] And I'm one of the pastors here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church. And it's my joy to bring God's word to you this morning. And we're continuing today in our series on Genesis, which tells the origin story of God's people, Israel.

This summer we are in the story of Isaac and Jacob, mostly Jacob, which shows up in chapters 25 through 36. And to a certain extent, it is the same theme as the Abraham story last summer.

We are continuing to ask, what does it look like to follow God in faith? But the story of Isaac and Jacob adds some more layers, some new themes that are introduced.

So if you were here with us two weeks ago, you'll remember that Isaac repeats the sins of Abraham. And so we talked about God's work in and through dysfunctional families.

Now, I warned you at that time, this was going to be a repeated theme that showed up again and guess what? This week we return to the same topic, God's work in and through dysfunctional families.

[1 : 08] God's faithfulness to sinful, rebellious people, people who trust themselves rather than God. Now, as we come to this story, I will share with you, this is one of the major stories in all of Scripture.

It is 42 verses that we're going to read this morning, but it is in fact only one sermon. So as I tell you from time to time, I will say something, not everything.

Also, in light of the fact that it is 42 verses, sometimes if we're honest, it can be hard to stay focused and keep on track as we read a long passage together. So if that's you, I have a job for you to help you stay awake.

I want you to count as we read together how many times the phrase delicious food shows up in this passage. Okay?

So mark delicious food is what you're looking for. Mark it, write the number at the bottom. We can hand them out. We'll grade each other's papers at the end of class. We are in Genesis chapter 26, starting at verse 34, which you will find on pages 7 through 9 of your worship guide.

[2 : 19] As we turn there, remember that this is God's word. And Isaiah chapter 40 tells us that the grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

And so that's why we read now Genesis chapter 26, starting at verse 34. When Esau was 40 years old, he took Judith, the daughter of Beri the Hittite, to be his wife, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.

Chapter 27. When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau, his older son, and said to him, My son.

And he answered, Here I am. He said, Behold, I am old. I do not know the day of my death. Now then, take your weapons, your quiver, and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.

Verse 5. Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, bring me game and prepare for me delicious food, that I may eat it and bless you before the Lord before I die.

[3 : 53] Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you. Go to the flock and bring me two good young goats, so that I may prepare from them delicious food, for your father, such as he loves.

And you shall bring it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies. But Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man.

Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him, and bring a curse upon myself, and not a blessing. His mother said to him, Let your curse be on me, my son.

Only obey my voice, and go, bring them to me. Verse 14, So he went and took them, and brought them to his mother, and his mother prepared delicious food, such as his father loved.

Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her older son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. And the skins of the young goats she put on his hands, and on the smooth part of his neck.

[5 : 00] And she put the delicious food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. Verse 18.

Excuse me. So he went into his father and said, My father. And he said, Here I am. Who are you, my son? Jacob said to his father, I am Esau, your firstborn.

I have done as you told me. Now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless you. But Isaac said to his son, How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son? He answered, Because the Lord your God granted me success.

Then Isaac said to Jacob, Please come near that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not.

So Jacob went near to Isaac, his father, who felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands.

[6 : 03] So he blessed him. He said, Are you really my son Esau? He answered, I am. Then he said, Bring it near to me, that I may eat of my son's game and bless you.

So he brought it near to him, and he ate, and he brought him wine, and he drank. Verse 26. Then his father Isaac said to him, Come near and kiss me, my son.

So he came near and kissed him. And Isaac smelled the smell of his garments and blessed him and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed.

May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. Let people serve you and nations bow down to you. Be Lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you.

Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you. As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

[7 : 10] He also prepared delicious food and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, Let my father arise and eat of his son's game that you may bless me. His father Isaac said to him, Who are you?

He answered, I am your son, your firstborn Isaac. Then Isaac trembled very violently and said, Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me?

And I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him. Yes, and he shall be blessed. Verse 34.

As soon as Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father.

But he said, Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing. Esau said, Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times.

He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing. Then he said, Have you not reserved a blessing for me?

[8 : 18] Isaac answered and said to Esau, Behold, I have made him lord over you. And all his brothers I have given to him for servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him.

What then can I do for you, my son? Esau said to his father, Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.

And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. Then Isaac his father answered and said to him, Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be, and away from the dew of heaven on high.

By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you shall break his yoke from your neck.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our father in heaven, we do thank you again this morning that you speak to us in your word, and we ask that you would do it.

[9 : 30] You'd do what you've promised to do, that by your spirit you would help us to understand spiritual things. You'd open our eyes, that you'd soften our hearts, that you would lift Christ high in our sight, in our vision, that we would grow in our love, in our affection, our reverence, our all, our obedience to him.

And we ask all of these things in Jesus' name. Amen. If you look on page 9 of your worship guide, you'll see a quote from *Revenge of the Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell, which says this, Communities have their own stories, and those stories are contagious.

And you might be thinking, wait, is Matthew confused? Is he preaching the same sermon from two weeks ago? Because this is not the first time you've seen this quote. This is, in fact, the same quote we printed in the worship guide when we were in Genesis chapter 26.

Now I told you about that quote because remember, I said this, families also have their own stories, and those stories are contagious.

So remember, there's a story that is driving the Abraham family, and it is this, it is all up to me to protect and provide for myself.

[10 : 51] That's the story that Abraham passed to Isaac. It's my cunning, it's my schemes, those are actually what are going to make the difference. I have to make it happen, I have to manage life, I have to make it work.

And when you live by this story, as we've seen, it means fearing man more than God, it means trusting in schemes more than God and his promises.

And so that's why, chapter 26, we saw Isaac lies about Rebekah in the same way that Abraham lied about Sarah. This is the default story, it's the story that Abraham and his descendants turn to, and this story continues to drive this family in this passage.

It explains the trickery and the lies that show up throughout. Now to understand all this scheming, we have to review one other thing. Remember from four weeks ago, chapter 25 of Genesis, there is a rivalry between Jacob's, Isaac's sons.

Okay, Jacob and Esau have a rivalry that started in their mother's womb. And it's actually worse than that, it's not just that they have a rivalry, it's that mom and dad have picked sides in this battle.

[12 : 11] Rebekah loves Jacob. Isaac loves Esau. With all that background, we come to this passage before us this morning, which is a story about who gets the blessing.

Who gets the blessing that God gave to Abraham? Remember we talked about the chain of custody, when the blessing gets passed from Abraham to Isaac. Now there's two sons, not one. Who does the blessing pass to? We're going to look at two things this morning. You'll see on page nine of your worship guide, our sermon title, *Sinful People, Faithful God*.

And that's our outline for right now. *Sinful people* comes first, and what I'm going to do essentially is this, I'm going to show you everyone's really bad behavior.

Okay? No one comes out of this story looking good. First, Isaac behaves poorly. Isaac has a scheme, verses one through four, and he summons Esau and only Esau to receive the blessing.

[13 : 24] This is not how this is supposed to work. If you're familiar with the story of Genesis, you know there's going to be another blessing seen in chapters 48 and 49 where Jacob calls all his sons.

Okay? You're supposed to bring the whole family in. Everyone takes part in this. And so Isaac is kind of doing this run-around play. He's going to try to do it so that one son and only one son gets everything.

He wants Esau to get all of it. Now there's an irony here. Had he not done this, Rebecca could not run the play that she ran. Okay? If he had brought both sons in, actually he would have prevented what happened to him.

By the way, he's also not really supposed to do this until he's about to die. He says in this passage, hey, I don't know when I'm going to die. Well, he doesn't die until Genesis chapter 35, which is over 20 years later.

So he's giving the blessing early and he's sneaky about it so he can only give it to one son. By the way, God already said in Genesis chapter 25 when the two sons were born that it was going to be Jacob who came out on top.

[14 : 43] So Esau's not just being sneaky, he's actually trying to subvert what God has already revealed. And in the blessing, he tries to reverse that. If you look at verse 29, he's setting it up because he thinks he's blessing Esau.

He's setting it up so that Esau actually ends up on top. Okay? So Jacob is a, so excuse me, Isaac is just a trickster here. And it gets worse.

What did we find out at the end of chapter 26? Esau has taken foreign wives. So Isaac should know that this son, by the way, it's not that they're foreign, it's that they're pagan.

That's the problem. We'll talk about that next week. Isaac should know that this son, this is for you military people, is unfit for command. And yet he's still going to give him the blessing.

Isaac behaves poorly. Isaac wants his favorite son to have the blessing.

[15:48] Well, guess what? Rebecca wants her favorite son to get everything. And so she has this scheme and her scheme is that Jacob pretends to be Esau.

That's verses 5 through 17. All this trickery, by the way, is not innocent at all. Remember, we looked at the ninth commandment in our confession of faith.

Rebecca and Isaac, excuse me, Rebecca and Jacob are breaking the Ten Commandments left and right. So track with me.

The third commandment says, do not use God's name in vain. Oh, look at verse 20. Isaac said to his son, how is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?

He answered, because the Lord your God granted me success. It's using God's name in vain. No, the Lord did not grant him success. He's lying through his teeth.

[16:50] Fifth commandment, honor your father and your mother. Here he is taking advantage of his father's old age and lying to him. This is only possible because Isaac actually can't see.

Okay, he's taking advantage of his father's infirmity. If that's not dishonoring, I don't know what is. Then we move on to the ninth commandment. Don't bear false testimony.

Jacob explicitly lies twice. Verses 19 and 23. He says, look, I am Esau. Of course, the whole performance is a lie. We don't need two verses to prove it.

The whole narrative ties up Rebecca as well. She is guilty as the planner of the deception. Rebecca and Jacob behave poorly.

Now, what about Isaac and Esau? We've already talked about Isaac a little bit, but we're going to talk about it more because it continues to get bad. Isaac and Esau both break the first commandment, which is this.

[17:52] You shall have no other gods before me. God is clearly not their first love. The author goes out of his way to tell us what Isaac loves more than anything else, which is what?

He loves that delicious food. Now, we already know that from chapter 25. Why does Isaac prefer Esau? It says it explicitly. Secondly, Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game.

This has been going on for years. And like father, like son, Esau has the same problem. What did Esau do in chapter 25? He sells his birthright for food.

Both father and son are ruled by their stomachs. By the way, I think I got the count wrong on delicious food as I was reading it.

How many did you guys get? Okay, yeah. I think I only, I only even had four in what I listed here, but it showed up even more than I realized because I didn't do my count right. Why does it show up six times?

[19:06] So that we can know without a doubt that there is nothing that Isaac loves more than food. Verse four, prepare for me delicious food such as I love.

Verse nine, go to the flock and bring me two good young goats that I may prepare for them delicious food for your father such as he loves.

Verse 14, and his mother prepared delicious food such as his father loved. Verse 31, this is now Esau.

He also prepared delicious food and brought it to his father. Esau gave up his birthright for vegetable stew.

Isaac now gives up his integrity, his faith in God for one nice meal.

[20:10] like father, like son. By the way, there's no rule that says you have to send your son to go do some special feat before you give the blessing.

Okay, so Isaac has just cooked this up so that he can have a nice meal. Remember, we get to see again how this works in Genesis chapters 48 and 49. Jacob does it. He doesn't send anyone to prepare him a meal.

Okay, he actually just blesses them. And that's what Isaac is supposed to do here. So he is just steered and ruled by his outrageous appetite. We're supposed to walk away from this thinking,

man, this is really gross.

Here's this man who has just completely lost the plot. What should he be doing? We found out at the end of chapter 26 that Esau got married when he was 40 years old.

Now that matters because we were told that Isaac married Rebecca when he was also 40 years old.

[21 : 24] So the timing is the same. What's different? Isaac should have been doing what Abraham did. Isaac should have been going out and finding godly spouses for his sons.

That's what Abraham did. Abraham sent his servant and said, I can't have my children marrying pagan wives. I need you to go find someone from among our own people. Isaac's lost the plot. He doesn't even realize what's supposed to be happening, how he's supposed to be taking responsibility and agency to carry on God's blessing. No, he is worried about his next meal. There's a whole other sermon, by the way, about how Isaac does not end well. And the author of Genesis goes out of his way in a way we don't have time to go into this morning to highlight how poorly Isaac ends his life.

Okay, I said both Isaac and Esau break the first commandment, you shall have no other gods before me. We've talked about Isaac, now it's time for Esau. Esau is also ruled by his appetite as we've discussed, not just his appetite for food, he's ruled by his lust for women.

[22 : 42] The end of 26, which we read, he decides to go get some foreign wives and what does verse 35 tell us? They made life bitter for Isaac and Rebecca.

Remember I said foreign wives, the problem is not that they're foreign, the problem is that they're pagan. So Esau has gone out, he's married women who do not worship the true and living God. They don't share the religion of the Abraham family. They're not people who follow after Yahweh and so it shouldn't surprise us that they make life so miserable for the extended family.

We're going to spend more time on that next week so I won't say any more. But in short, in case I haven't made it clear, everyone behaves poorly.

Isaac behaves badly. He tries to give the blessing to his favorite son even though God had already said that Isaac would rule. Excuse me, that Jacob would rule.

[23 : 49] He serves his stomach rather than God. Rebecca behaves badly. Rebecca deceives and dishonors the husband she should be protecting, especially because he's blind.

Jacob behaves badly. He deceives and dishonors his father, his father defrauds his brother, takes God's name in vain.

Esau behaves badly, marries pagan wives rather than women who fear the Lord. Everyone behaves badly.

But how does God behave? Remember I told you we have two points, sinful people, faithful God. We're going to turn now to faithful God.

God behaves is this. God accomplishes his purposes no matter what.

[25 : 01] In the midst of everyone's sin, God keeps his promise. Remember his promise, Genesis chapter 25. Jacob and Esau are in the womb.

he says the older will serve the younger. And what ends up happening? The older serves the younger.

Now that doesn't mean the end justifies the means. It doesn't make anyone's sin correct in this passage. What it means is this. No matter what your scheme, God will come out on top.

no matter the actions of men, God's end state will be accomplished. One commentator says this, it is clear that God can accomplish his holy purposes by using not merely unholy people, but even the unholy actions of those he has chosen.

it is not just that though, it is not just that God accomplishes his purposes no matter what, it is also that God is faithful to his people no matter what.

[26 : 23] God made a promise to Abraham. He made a promise to Abraham that his descendants would be as the sands on the seashore and the stars in the sky.

He promised to Abraham that his descendants would be the blessing to the nations. And you know what?

God is going to keep that promise. The men and women he has chosen break the Ten Commandments left and right.

God's promise is unbroken. God's kingdom. point is this. The generational sin of your family cannot stand in the way of the freight train of God's kingdom.

God no matter how powerful the forces that flow down to you from previous generations God is more powerful still.

[27 : 39] Jeremiah chapter 23 his word is like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces. there is nothing so powerful that God's word is not more powerful still.

Now I'm not peddling cheap grace here. Sometimes it's tempting for people to hear things like that and think oh so what Matthew's saying is I can do whatever I want and it doesn't matter.

No. In this one day and this one episode the Abraham family has made a mess that will echo for hundreds of years.

Next week you're going to see that Esau threatens to kill Jacob and so Jacob has to run away and doesn't see his brother again for 20 years.

Remember that Jacob is Rebecca's favorite son. She will never see him again. Isaac gets to watch this unfold in his old age as his sons are at each other's throats.

[29 : 03] By the way Esau's descendants become the Edomites and the Edomites are going to be a thorn in the side of God's people for hundreds hundreds of years.

This is not insignificant. I am not telling you, oh God is faithful, do whatever you want. No, I'm saying God is faithful, follow his commands. Choose the easy way, not the hard way.

It's the same quote from two weeks ago, page nine on your worship guide from Crime and punishment. Your worst sin is that you have destroyed and betrayed yourself for nothing.

Isaac, Jacob, Esau, and Rebekah have all thought that their scheming was going to be the answer and the only people they've punished are themselves.

One author says this, trusting God is hard, but failing to trust God is even harder. Trusting God is hard, failing to trust God is even harder.

[30 : 20] God will accomplish his purposes. God will keep the promises that he has made, and our actions still have consequences.

We can still betray ourselves, for nothing. Do you want to avoid pain? Do you want to do what's for your good and God's glory?

Proverbs chapter 3 tells us how to do that. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths.

Be not wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. Remember the story of the Abraham family.

It is all up to me and my cleverness and my skill and my ability to control and manage the world. God is all and the gospel tells the opposite story.

[31 : 30] The gospel tells the story of Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.

And I don't have to scheme and lie and plan for that to happen. what everyone in this story misses is to trust in God and his provision.

And as I've told you many times, we have even greater reasons to trust in God than Isaac and Jacob and Esau and Rebecca did. Because we've seen something, we look back to something that they only look forward to, which is the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

that God sends his one and only son to live the perfect life that we should have lived and to die the death that we deserved. If he did that, will he not do everything else?

Remember Romans chapter 8 verse 32. He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things.

[32 : 53] Sinful people, faithful God. What love could remember, no wrongs we have done, omniscient all-knowing, he counts not their sum.

Thrown into a sea, without bottom or shore, our sins they are many, his mercy is more. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you and we praise you that you keep your promise no matter what.

We ask that you would root that deep in our hearts that we would trust you rather than ourselves, that we would look to you and your provision more than anything else, that you would lead us.

Psalm 23 says, lead us streams of water. Ask all of these things in Jesus' name. Amen.