

## Sermon Text for January 31, 2016

*by Rev. Robert K. Bronkema*

Hebrews 12:12-17, Genesis 25:27-34

### **“Seeing through our hunger”**

We had a celebration yesterday, I’m not sure if you heard about it. We welcomed into our family Lynn and Iori Alexis as our newest New Beginnings family. I can’t say enough how excited the team is, how impressed we are with Lynn and her ability to be a forward thinker and able to see the forest through the trees. You know what I’m the most excited about is that often as a church and as people when we reach out our hand to help, when we bring our hand back, we find that we have been helped even more than the person that we thought we were helping. There are so many things that we can learn, and one is being able to appreciate the simple blessings that come to us in life. So often when we are without hope, we lose track of those blessings. I think Lynn is going to make a great partner for us as we follow the resurrected Christ so that those who have lost hope may find it, those whose hearts are broken may be mended by the love of God.

Christ comes out in Genesis in the form of the one pushing us out of our comfort zone, Christ is the one who assures Sarah and Rebekah that the promises of God will always come true. Today, we preach Jesus as we find the risen Christ in the story of the lentil soup of Esau and Jacob.

Esau and Jacob, you don’t remember them from last week because you weren’t here, but let’s just say that they began on the wrong foot or the wrong heel, and we see today that their relationship gets no better as time goes on. Last week we hinted at the fact that at the core of conflict from within and without are people taking sides with other people, as opposed to people taking sides with our Savior Jesus Christ. This continues today, even at the beginning of the Scripture we even see mother and father taking sides. But that was last week, this week, at the core of today’s verses is the battle between immediate gratification and getting bogged down in today’s problems with the clarity that comes in being able to see God’s future through the present turmoil. Esau God hated because he only cared about the here and now, Jacob God loved because he could see past his hunger to the eternal. This is what we are called to do.

## **READ**

The rest of the movie is Williams' quest to be able to look beyond the immediate problem and be able to see the future which is so much greater and expansive than what the present in your face situation ever has to offer. It was a simple movie with a very strong message. Look beyond the immediate problem and see the expanse of opportunities that lie before us.

This is the same theme that pervades our Scriptures for today. Our Scripture begins by describing Esau as a hunter, a man of the field. I see Esau as someone who you wanted around when you need to get something done and he did it right away. He was someone very practical, could work with his hands, and yet not the most civilized and not the brightest person either. His vision was primarily limited to the here and now, the present. How to feed himself and his family, how to make it day by day. This is certainly true in this chapter, a little later on we see how he changes.

Jacob was very different. His name meant heel grabber, or usurper. Now his name can also mean May God Protect, and he is someone who was constantly in trouble and so that name is also fitting. His mom was probably always saying, Lord have mercy or protect my son. He was someone who constantly was looking for ways to get ahead and get over whatever obstacle was before him. Jacob was someone who had his head in the clouds, someone who liked to stay inside in the shade and the cool. We might call him a nerd or a geek today. He was quiet and pensive and probably pretty smart. He wasn't somebody who could fix a kitchen sink but had his eyes on the future.

The scene is Jacob stirring a pot of lentil stew. Have any of you ever had lentil stew? Our kids, one of their first solid meals was pasta and lentils and lentil soup. To this day we will have probably once a week lentils. It is good and hearty, but it isn't anything to get too excited about. Well Esau has just spent a week in the woods, he didn't catch anything, hasn't eaten anything in probably a week so he is famished. Just starving. Now Jacob was probably hungry too, but the difference between these two men in this scene is that Jacob is willing to wait to eat, he is willing to put off what he could have now while Esau, the practical down to earth guy couldn't see past his hunger, he couldn't wait. Jacob saw this as an opportunity for the future, while Esau saw it as an opportunity to address a present need.

You find in life that waiting can be done more easily if one doesn't doubt the outcome of what one is waiting for. For those of you who have ever had surgery, what is the most difficult time of the process. The majority of people would say before the surgery. When you are waiting, wondering, doubting. When you feel so uncertain as to what is going to happen that you can only think of dreadful things, the worst possible scenario. Christ teaches us in his resurrection that we are able to look to the future, count on it opening up and then be able to look away from this present darkness, be able to cast aside the doubt of survival and rely upon the fact that God is ultimately in control. Today we are asking the question of how do we, like Jacob, how do we believe the promises of God and choose to opt out of the easier, more available food, or options at our disposal which when chosen will deny the type of future that God would want for us. ?

Normally when we read this Scripture we portray poor Esau as the victim of unfair practice and Jacob as a dishonest scoundrel who steals away Esau's birthright. Why would God choose someone so underhanded to carry out his promises? I would argue that God challenges us to see past our immediate problems, our hungers and temptations in life and see to the endless possibilities that we receive in life.

Esau was famished so he states: "Let me have a swallow of that red stuff, I'm starving". The Hebrew is that crass, a swallow of the red stuff is a play on Esau and Edom which means ruddy or red like Esau when he was born. Jacob, aware of the possibility before him to usurp, to grab the birthright in exchange for this soup which was only temporal and wouldn't last long anyway, so he went for what any of us in this would logically do.

Now the birthright in those days was given to the oldest son. It wasn't all of the father's possessions but it was double of anything the other sons received. It was a big deal, it wasn't a minor request. But Esau not being able to see past his hunger says I'll die if I don't get something to eat, what good will my birthright be then? Pretty good reasoning right?

So often we would much rather take the food that we see enticing us, that is before us and give away our birthright, that which God promises to us, our future with him for immediate gratification. Christ, when he is tempted in the desert was in the perfect position to indulge in the immediate, to take advantage of what was offered to

him, but by doing so he would have sacrificed not only his mission but all of us as well. He was able to see past the immediate problem of his hunger, his pride, his power and see beyond in to God's plan for his life and ours.

So Jacob gives Esau bread and stew and then Esau ate, drank, rose up, and left. It didn't take much time for all of that to take place. In a span of thirty minutes of pleasure, satisfaction, taking care of an apparent immediate need in exchange for throwing away the most important thing in your life. Have you ever seen in stores the phrase it takes many hours to win a customer but only a few seconds to lose one. Here it took a few minutes to realize that he had completely changed his life forever. Have you ever had that experience in life when something happens, and not necessarily because of your fault, but an experience such as a death, or maybe a bad decision, something that takes an instant but it has changed your life completely.

When we gathered in our group to discuss what other things in life can you lose in an instant and then wish you had held onto it for the future. We talked about our virginity, and how that is something that we save for our future husband and wife. Boy, I sound old fashioned, don't I? I still believe, and I'm speaking from personal experience, that chastity before marriage is not only wise but possible.

One of the most disturbing aspects of our human nature is that we so easily trade the future promises of God for immediate gratification. Do I need to point out examples in culture to have you agree? Everything around us is geared to a sense that if you can't get what you want now then something is wrong with you. A friend of mine who was a Pastor lost his ordination because he had an affair with a parishioner. The question that I keep asking myself is how can you throw away your life, your family those things that are the most important to you in life, that which your life revolves around for something so temporal and superficial? I don't get it.

Esau did it, and Scripture states that when he did he despised his birthright. In fact he surely wants it back, but it now belongs to Jacob. We learn from Esau that once we miss the opportunity, once we give up what God has given to us for temporary and immediate gratification, we can't always get it back. Once you are unable to see the future because of your hunger you begin to despise the future because you don't know what it will hold if it is not of God's promise.

Our task in the midst of our hunger, as we seem to go from one crisis to another in our lives is to see beyond the four fingers, to see beyond our hunger, to see beyond the immediate crisis and concentrate on the promise of God's kingdom that we find in Christ Jesus. We are faced constantly with the decision of fulfilling our hunger or following God's plan of salvation in Christ Jesus which will be complete in the future.

God's will is done when we see beyond our hunger, our immediate problems. Jacob and Esau each had a choice. Esau chose to satisfy and concentrate on his immediate hunger. That was done, but he paid for it later. Jacob chose to allow himself to go hungry in the short term, but to satisfy his eternal call. The choice is ours to make daily, which one will you chose. Amen.