

Sermon Text for March 6, 2016

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

Romans 8:12-17, Genesis 27:30-40

“The most important day of your life”

If I were to ask you what was the most important day of your life, what would you say? If you are sitting by your wife or husband you would have to say the day we met. If you have kids then when they were born. If we were talking over lunch you'd say when you accepted Christ. But think about it, what was the most important day in your life, what are the candidates?

Now, if I were to ask you what was the most important historical event that has taken place in your lifetime, what would you say then? For me, that's an easy one. No event has changed our world in my lifetime like the 9/11 terror attacks. It has changed the politics and culture of this world like nothing else in my life. We went from living according to conviction to now making decisions based on the fear of an unknown and unseen enemy. This election season, now 15 years later, continues to stress the importance of being tough on terror. That wasn't a phrase that you ever heard before 2001. But more than the political landscape, it has changed the way that we view life, from that of optimism and hope, to that of fear and anger.

You know, I've often been torn by my role as pastor whether I am to say what I know will be popular or whether guided by the Holy Spirit I say that which may not be as accepted by the congregation and yet I know that is what God has placed on my heart to say. At Helen Hershey's service of resurrection last week it was so refreshing to hear her children speak with great humor, but also biting reality. I don't always feel completely freed to preach the truths of Scripture regardless of whether or not they may step on some of our toes. Pastors don't always feel that freedom. Pastors normally run the risk like the early prophets of saying things that are true and yet may not be pleasing to the people so the people do not listen and go elsewhere to hear what they want to hear. This is especially true when the messages are only slightly different between what the world says and what the church says.

One of my responsibilities on Sunday is to make sure that we don't take our lives or our relationship with Jesus Christ for granted. As often as I can I try to present opportunities where we can take inventory of what God has done for us. Let's read about Esau who like many of us took the blessings of God for granted and didn't live in the

fullness of them until it was too late and so ultimately he lost that blessing. It was too late for Esau once he realized it, let's realize it today and when we leave this church let us then live in the fullness of God's blessings.

A few weeks ago we saw the deceit of Jacob and Rebekah and today we see on Esau's most important day of his life, the disappointment that comes with not getting what is rightfully yours on this important day. Within the Christian life we would probably all be on the same page if we said that the most important day of your life is the day that you either had your children baptized, or the day that you were baptized. How many of us come to church on Sundays excited because we are living out our baptism on Sunday morning and looking forward to carrying out the promises that we made to God in front of a congregation like this one or even this one? We promised to turn our back on sin, we promised to raise our children in the church, we promised to live lives that reflect that of our Savior Jesus Christ, who is our Lord.

Even though we find ourselves within a Presbyterian Church, I'm guessing that those of us in the pews probably represent a whole bunch of different approaches to baptism. Our traditions vary from those who believe in infant to adult, from sprinkling to dunking and everything in-between. But at least there is one thing we can all agree on: God chose us to be his children even before we chose him. that's what Paul tells us in Romans. The day of our baptism is the most important day of our lives because it is then that we become children of God and realize the blessing that is reserved for us. Paul tells us that as a result of our baptism we are adopted into the family of Jesus, called His children. That's pretty important.

But what would happen if as an infant you were taken up to be baptized and 3 children before you went first and then the pastor said: "Sorry, the limit is 3 per day, I've run out of blessings", as if he were the one who owned the blessings. Or if as an adult you were getting ready to be dunked in the river and after the person who went before you the preacher said that's all the Holy Spirit I've got in me today. Sorry, no more left.

That's what happens with Esau today. Turn with me to Genesis, we are back, it feels good doesn't it? As I thought about this Scripture and agonized with Esau over his lost, or better yet stolen blessing, I couldn't help but think of how many things we have taken for granted in respect to our faith. As we follow along in the 90 day challenge it has been so encouraging to see people who are willing to pursue their faith and follow after what God would want for them in their lives.

Esau was someone who took the blessing for granted. He was like one of us who was born into a Christian family and attended church and went to Sunday School with the other children, so he just assumed that he was in and that the blessing of salvation from God was his to keep. That may sound familiar to some of us. He knew he was the firstborn, he thought he was entitled to receive the blessing so he went through life not claiming that blessing, not living in the fullness of that blessing. In fact when he had to choose between his birthright and a meal he chose the meal, taking for granted that since he was the eldest he would receive what was his at birth at a later day. Today we see the results of what happens when we take God's blessings for granted and think that we are entitled and due whatever God provides.

When Esau gets back from hunting and discovers how he had been deceived and how the blessing had been taken from him, it wasn't until then that he realized what he had lost. He realizes then the opportunity that he had but that in his complacency he had it taken from him. By the time he realizes it, it is too late. He couldn't get back what he had lost.

His father wants to give him the blessing, but he couldn't and the two of them mourn the lost blessing and the lost opportunity. Esau wants something so his father tells him that some day he would break loose, and the yoke would be broken from his neck. Because he had taken so much for granted, he had lost so much, and his chance was gone.

The most important day in our lives comes when we realize all that we have taken for granted in our lives. The most important day in our lives may come suddenly and without warning when we are going to be asked to account for what we have done and who we believe in. I think of this church and the opportunities that are provided for us, from Sunday School, to programs that are able to reach out to every age group. We are so blessed to be able to live out our faith in this church. But not everyone takes advantage of being able to do that.

Have we been living in the joy of being a child of God? Today I want us to remember our welcome into the family of God. Maybe it was in this church where you were baptized, married, baptized your kids. What were some of the most important days of your life that you celebrated in these walls? I've said this before, I've never seen or been a part of a church family that reflects the type of family a church ought to be in so many ways than this church. As a result of today I pray that a relationship with our Savior that can be on again off again at our pleasure depending on our mood and what we

are going through in life, I pray that this is gone. That our relationship will be on again and again and again.

I pray that because of today you are able to identify as the most important day in your life the day that you stopped taking for granted the blessings of God before it was too late. You know, those blessings come in various shapes and sizes. Of course the ultimate blessing is salvation found in Jesus Christ. Don't take that for granted. The blessing of your wife, or your husband, don't take it for granted. The blessing of your children who in spite of the times they drive you crazy, you can't imagine life without them. The blessings of your health, the blessings of your job, the blessings of a place to sleep tonight and meals to eat tomorrow. Do I need to go on?

Today could be the most important day of the rest of your life if you allow Almighty God to shake the complacency out of you. I pray that it doesn't take a loss, a tragedy like it did for Esau for us to stop taking God and his blessings for granted.

I encourage you to look at the Scripture at Romans which reminds us that nobody is entitled or due salvation because they have been born into a church family or because they have lived a certain life. Salvation comes only for those who are able to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior and who are able to live as Paul states in the Spirit of God. Once that happens then we are adopted into the family of God as God's children. Do not take God's blessings for granted but begin today to accept them and claim them as your own. Amen.