



Sermon – 07/09/2023

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Verses Covered

Genesis 29:1 - 35

Genesis 30:1 - 24

Well, as you grab a seat, let me invite you to open your Bibles with me. We're going to be back in Genesis in Genesis 29 starting in verse 1. And if you're a guest with us for the first time here at Central, welcome home. We've been journeying through Genesis and seeing the way that God's word written many years ago comes to life for us today. And one of the things I want you to know if you're a guest, we've got a Connect Card in the seat back right in front of you. We'd love for you to fill that out. Bring that out to our welcome desk following the service so we can learn more about you. But speaking of cards, I don't know if you noticed, for those of you that are here regularly, we have the tables we normally use for the Lord's Supper out and they've got some cards just like this one stacked on them. And today, we're going to take a step that's a little different than what we normally do. And what we're going to do is use these cards to bring encouragement to the next generation. So, following the message during the response time, I'm going to ask you to come to these tables, grab a card, take a pen if you need it, and here's what we're going to do. We're going to spend some time today writing words of encouragement to the students in our high school and middle school ministry. Have you ever thought about how hard it is right now to be a high schooler or a middle schooler in this culture? I mean, just think about it. The complexity of it with social media and a secular culture that's shifting against them and all of these things that oppose their pursuit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And we're a church that at its heart, it longs for every generation to reach the next generation. So, what we're going to do is fill these encouragement cards out. And as you think about, even during the message, what you might write, you might know a student up there. You might have a student up there. We're not going to write it to a specific one of them but you can keep that in mind. We want to challenge them with Bible verses, or short prayers, or words of encouragement that will strengthen them for what God has called them to in the future.

Now, as we turn attention to Genesis. Let's pick back up in the story. Remember, Genesis is now centered on the story of Jacob. And last time, we found that when he encountered the presence of God, it changed everything for him. Because God's presence changes our trajectory. But this morning, stepping into Genesis 29, what we find is Jacob doesn't encounter the presence of God, he encounters the presence of drama. There's drama all over the place. Maybe you saw it this

week that the actors in Hollywood have gone on strike and the last time that happened, the Fall TV lineup included a lot of reality TV shows. Well, they got a tailor-made script for one of those right here in this Texas morning. It could be the ancient near Eastern version of The Bachelor or maybe Real Housewives of Canaan. I don't know what they would call it but there's a mess going on. And what we're going to find in this passage is that God meets His people in the mess and moves them toward the Messiah. So, let's pick up now beginning in Genesis 29 in verse 1. Here's what God's perfect word has to say to us today.

¹Then Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the east. ²And as he looked, he saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep lying beside it, for out of that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the well's mouth was large, ³and when all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place over the mouth of the well. ⁴Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where do you come from?" They said, "We are from Haran." ⁵And he said, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" They said, "We know him." ⁶And he said to them, "Is it well with him?" They said, "It is well; and see, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep!" ⁷He said, "Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered together. Water the sheep and go, pasture them." ⁸But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together and the stone is rolled away from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep." ⁹While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. ¹⁰Now as soon as Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, Jacob came near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. ¹¹Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud. ¹²And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kinsman, and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father. ¹³As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he ran to meet him and brought him to his house. Jacob told Laban all these things, ¹⁴and Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh!" And he stayed with him a month. ¹⁵Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" ¹⁶Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance. ¹⁸Jacob loved Rachel. And he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." ¹⁹Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than I should give her to any other man; stay with me." ²⁰So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

Now, this week, our country is celebrating a big, well-known birthday and it's not of a celebrity or an athlete. It's of a piece of technology called the James Webb Space Telescope. It turned a year old this week. And we know the Bible says that the heavens are telling of the glory of God and perhaps we get no clearer picture these days than what we find from technology like this. And I want you to see the image on the screen that they released to mark the one year anniversary of this telescope. This is an image of an area of space called Rho Ophiuchi. It's the closest part in the universe where there is the birthplace of stars occurring. And if you were to look closely in this image, you would see about 50 different stars all about the same size and shape of the sun being born in this area. And so you notice as you look at that screen, you see this simultaneous picture

of there's chaos and complexity but at the same time, there's beauty. And that's what happens when stars are born. Well we see something similar this morning in Genesis 29. A different kind of star is born. You remember the promise that God gave to Abraham that he echoed later to Isaac. He says, one day, I will raise up offspring for you that will number as great as the numbers of the stars of the heavens and in this text, as Jacob gives birth to the children who will one day become the twelve tribes of the people of God, we see stars forming. The same chaos, the same complexity as in that image, the same mess. This is a messy passage today and it reminds me of the reality that if we're being honest, for many of us, our life is a mess even right now. Maybe it's a mess because of the choices you've made. The direction you're heading. Maybe for others, it's a mess because of what others have done to you or withheld from you. Maybe it's a mess because of something in your past or maybe it's a mess because of the stress and anxiety you feel in your future. The question we need to wrestle with today is where is God in the mess? See, Jacob is living a messy life. We find in this passage that from this mess comes people who don't just shape the story of Genesis but of the entire Bible. We start to the promise of a new people coming true in the birth of the next generation. And what we find here is not just the birth of children but a new nation. The people of God, the twelve tribes of Israel find their beginning right here. And here's the big idea we're going to see in this passage today.

What we find in Genesis 29 is that God meets us in the middle of our mess and He moves us toward His mission. And that reality is going to unfold in several ways starting back in the portion of the passage we just read. We're going to see first, a new direction but the same providence. A new direction but the same providence. So, what is the providence of God? Maybe that's not a familiar term for you. It's the idea that when God in His infinite wisdom and power works for the good of His creation and for His people. It's how He provides for us. And what we find in this passage is Jacob is on the run. He's in desperate need of God's provision. He is needing the providence of God to show up in his life and God shows up to him and provides for him in several important ways that still ring true today. So, notice back in verses 1 through 8, God first provides a new foundation. We've talked about this before with Jacob. He's one of the most unlikable characters in all of Genesis. A trickster, a deceiver, looking out for himself. And yet we find ourselves in the story of Jacob over and over again rooting for the anti-hero. And the reason is because we know that the promises of God come through him. That the covenant advances through this son. And while he's on the run, his old foundations are shaken. God brings a new foundation for him at this well. You'll see it down there in verse 6 in the way that he asked this question to the shepherds. He says to them, "is it well with him" referring to Laban? And they said, it is well. And see, Rachel is daughter is coming with the sheep. And in this moment, Jacob is experiencing the hope of a new foundation. For one, he's found the foundation of provision through this water and now, he's hoping he's found the foundation of protection through his reconnection with the family. But notice what else God provides.

The second thing here down in verses 9 through 12, God provides a new family. So, notice what happens when Rachel comes to the well. If you remember when I read the passage, it tells us that all of the shepherds gather around this well and they wait 'til they all show up so they can water the flock at one time. And part of the reason for that is it has a stone over the top of it, very heavy, that must be rolled away. But what we find here in this passage, look down at the second half of verse 10. Look at what Jacob does when Rachel draws near. It says, Jacob came near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth and watered the flock of Laban, his mother's brother, then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud. So, what happens? Jacob is so overwhelmed with desire for Rachel

that he has overcome with what seems like supernatural power. It's like a world's strongest man competition. It's like the feats of strength in Festivus. He pulls a little Hulkmania. He bust out the 24" pythons and he moves that stone away himself. He waters the sheep. He waters the flock. Then he gives her a kiss. Now, just as a side note for you guys that aren't yet married, this is not good dating advice. Get him some water then give him a kiss is not the answer. You don't just go and fill up their Stanley, give them a smooch, and that's the way into their heart. It doesn't work that way. Instead, what we see happening here is a family kiss, a familial kiss, this reconnection. He realizes now God is providing for me a new family. And along with that, we see starting down in verse 13 that third, God provides a new future.

So, what happens? Rachel leaves and she runs to tell Laban. She gives him the news and he comes out to them and he says in an echo of Genesis 2, you are my bone and you are my flesh. He brings him into the household. He stays for a month and he offers him his choice of the future. If you work for me, what do you want in exchange? And what does he want? He wants to marry one of Laban's two daughters. We see the text talking about these two daughters and their differences back in verse 17. Notice what it says.

¹⁷Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form.

And what we need to understand is it would be normal in that culture for the firstborn, in this case Leah, to be married first. And yet in this case, when Jacob asked for the hand of one of Laban's daughters, he asked for Rachel and not Leah. And Laban grants that. Leah's rejected. She's undesired. It seems as if she's unlovable. But what we need to recognize even in this part of the passage is that this is not the only time in the Bible that the person who is the head of the covenant people of God encounters a woman at a well and welcomes her as a bride. In fact, this story right here in Genesis 29 of Jacob at the well is pointing forward to the son of Jacob who's to come in Jesus. And think about the parallels between right here and what takes place with the Samaritan woman at the well in John chapter 4. So, you can see the similarities. When Rachel walks up, he rolls the stone away and he gives her living, her flock, living water to drink that will satisfy them for a moment. But when Jesus stands before the Samaritan woman. What does he offer her? He offers her living water that will satisfy not just for the moment but for a lifetime, for eternity. This about this parallel. Right before this passage, Jacob encountered the presence of God in his dream and then he experiences this woman at the well. We fast forward to John chapter 4 and what Jesus is explaining to her and to us is He Himself is the presence of God. Jesus looked at the woman in John 4 and He tells her something greater than Jacob is here. And it's Him. Moments like this with Jacob at his well are anticipating and looking forward the coming of a son of Jacob who will provide for the spiritually thirsty, the parched, the desperate, the living water we can't find on our own.

Now, what does that have to do with you and me today? Everything. Especially if you find yourself in the middle of a mess today. You see, Jacob was a mess. A deceiver, a trickster, always looking out for himself. He ended up with multiple wives. The woman at the well for Jesus, that Samaritan woman was in the same boat. Her life was a mess, a deceiver, who ended up with multiple husbands. And in each case, we find that the God of the universe comes to them and meets them in their mess. He doesn't turn his back on them. He doesn't walk away. We see Jesus pursuing them. And if that's true back then, can't we trust it to be true today? No matter where you find yourself, whatever high or low, whatever hang up or hardship, whatever joy or sorrow,

whatever shame and guilt, no matter how messy you find your life, how messy you find your heart, you have a Savior who wants to meet your mess with living water. To wash it clean, to set you free, to put you on a new path rooted in the same providence. We see that right here in the text. But as it unfolds, there's a second movement, a second thing we need to notice starting down in verse 20, we also see a new deception but the same pattern. So, let's pick up the text. We're about to have a plot twist here down in verse 20 when it says,

²⁰So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her. ²¹Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed." ²²So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast. ²³But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he went in to her. ²⁴(Laban gave his female servant Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her servant.) ²⁵And in the morning, behold, it was Leah!

Can you imagine this moment? Wow! What happened? After seven long years, Jacob comes to Laban and says, "Hey, it's time." They go through, they register at Amazon, they get their wedding# together, they get everything together for the big day. They have the moment. The feast happens and they do the last song. They send them out with sparklers. He rides away on his getaway camel back to his place. And we don't know exactly what happened. We don't know how it is that he didn't quite realize it was Leah instead of Rachel but here's what we do know. What we know is that the trickster has now been tricked. That Laban has taken Jacob's deception up to the next level. I mean, just think about all the similarities between how Jacob deceived his father, Isaac, into the blessing and how Laban deceives Jacob into taking Leah as his wife. It starts with the fact that just like his father, Jacob was misled by what he was fed. Just like his father, Jacob is in the darkness. Just like his father in the blindness of the moment, he is touching the skin of the one that he thinks is his beloved but is actually the one that he doesn't care for at all. The deceiver has been deceived. And it's happened by the same pattern. But notice in the aftermath of that, we also see how this new deception is solved by the same type of pattern. I put solved in air quotes here because what happens in response actually makes the moment even messier than it already was. So, look back at the end of verse 25 to see what happens next.

And Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?" ²⁶Laban said, "It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years." ²⁸Jacob did so, and completed her week. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. ²⁹(Laban gave his female servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her servant.) ³⁰So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved her more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years.

So, how does Jacob react? He's shocked. How could this be? He's angry. He's furious at Laban. He comes to him and at the end of verse 25, he asked the question, "Why then have you deceived me?" And you see that word deceived right at the end of verse 25? It's the exact same root word as what's used back in Genesis 27 when Jacob deceives his own father. In other words, why have you done to me what I did to my dad? And he, how does he answer him? Laban says to, gives him an answer rooted in both an explanation and a negotiation. The explanation is we don't do that kind of thing around here. I know you got the birthright instead of your older brother. That's

not how things work in our community. The older goes before the younger. But then he offers him a deal. He says, I tell you what, give me another 7 years of your work and in exchange for that, you can have a buy one get one free and have Rachel also. And he agrees. And in this attempt to offer a solution to the mess, they make the mess work. Jacob had been deceived. The woman he woke up with was not the one he was expecting. But if he was seeking to honor God's design for marriage even though he would have not chosen this path on his own, the righteous thing to do to follow out God's design would have been to spend his days in a one flesh union with her alone. But instead of following God's design, he compounds the chaos. He multiplies the mess by following further and further into disobedience. And that's not a new pattern with him. It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve fall into sin and they cover their own nakedness, they hide in shame. They seek to fix the mess but end up making it even worse. That pattern happens over and over again in the Bible and in everyone of our lives. I mean, think about this. Isn't this a complicated way for a marriage to start? You end up unknowingly with multiple wives. You got drama with your in-laws. There's infighting between them. There's favoritism. And what happens is you begin to see your spouse as an adversary to defeat rather than an ally to defend. That's where we find Jacob with his two wives. And what I recognize is that even though this might be one of the first messy marriages in the Bible, it's not the last. And if we're being honest this morning in our community and even in this church, there are marriages right now that are a mess. They're hanging on by a thread. They're struggling. You present it as if everything's great but yet you're dying inside. It's like you're living as disinterested roommates side by side coexisting instead of experiencing all that God has designed you to experience a marriage.

It's one of the reasons our church offers a powerful ministry called Re-engage for married couples. Over the course of a semester on Wednesday nights, we invest in your marriage to help you grow in your relationship with Christ and grow in your relationship with one another to strengthen what God has designed for you to experience. Why? Because we know at Central that satan hates marriage. That every marriage is a reminder to him because it is a picture of the Gospel. It's a reminder that his time is up. That his kingdom will fail. And so, he always is trying to subvert our marriages to undermine them, to destroy them. To lead them astray. And whether you find yourself this morning just looking at your marriage and thinking, "You know what? We need a refresh." Or maybe today you're thinking, "We need a resurrection." We want to walk alongside you through this Re-engage ministry. Jacob's marriage from day one is a mess. And God meets him in that mess and he wants to meet us in the mess of our marriages as well. But this unexpected twist in this marriage is not the end of this story for today. There's a third thing I want you to notice starting down in verse 31. The third reality we see in the text is that there are new descendants but the same promise. New descendants but the same promise. So, Jacob has unexpectedly married Leah. Now, he is expectantly married Rachel. And what happens in the aftermath? Look down at verse 31 and let's see how it plays out.

³¹When the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

³²And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben, for she said, "Because the LORD has looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me."

³³She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also." And she called his name Simeon. ³⁴Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will be attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore his name was called Levi. ³⁵And she

conceived again and bore a son, and said, “This time I will praise the LORD.” Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she ceased bearing.

So, do you know what the most popular baby names are for boys and girls right now? The last 6 years, the number one boy's name in America is Liam. Now, I was curious how many Liam's do we have in here? I looked it up. We got about 19 or 20 Liam's here at Central. What about for girls for the last 4 years? The top name has been Olivia. And apparently, that one's pretty popular here because there's 39 Olivia's here at Central. Then, then I was looking the numbers and I thought, well, you got these twelve sons that are born to Jacob. I wonder how many of those names show up. So, you, as you'd expect, Dan and Joseph, Levi, some of those are there. But I think we've only got one Zebulon, one of our guys named Zeb. We've got no Naphtalis, no Issachars, no Gads. So, if you ladies and and expectant families are looking for a name that's not too overused these days, that could be for you. Have you ever noticed for most of us today we select baby names based on how they sound rather than what they mean. It's got a good ring to it. It goes with our last name or it picks up on something that's important to us. It's based on how we sound, not what it means. But in the biblical times, in this day and age, there was an intentional effort for that name to signal something. That there's a significance to the meaning. And what we find here in this passage is not just the birth of new descendants but also the birth of a new nation. The twelve tribes of Israel are wrapped in swaddling clothes in this passage. And what happens here is that each name has a meaning that reveals the problems that this family is facing. It reveals the mess that they find themselves in. And what we'll see as these names unfold is that even in the middle of this mess, the same covenant promise is moving forward. So, in this part of the passage we just read we'll notice first that God opens Leah's womb before he opens her heart to the promise. So, Rachel and Leah are now married to Jacob. And even though Jacob doesn't prefer Leah, God shows His favor to her by opening her womb first. And notice the way she describes the meaning of the names of her first three sons. Look at the end of verse 32. It says,

³²she called her name Reuben, “Because the Lord had looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me.

Or at the end of verse 33

³³Because the Lord has heard me that I am hated, he has given me this son also.” And she called his name Simeon.

Or how about at the end of verse 34.

³⁴Now this time my husband will be attached to me because I have born him three sons.” Therefore his name was called Levi.

Do you see the pattern that's here? In each of these three names, she is naming her son with her husband in view. Maybe now, he'll finally love me. Maybe now, I'll receive his approval. Maybe now, I'll find his favor. And in each time it doesn't happen. But you'll notice a shift, a turning point in the naming of this fourth child. At the end of verse 35, it tells us about this fourth one. This time, I will praise the Lord. Therefore, she called his name Judah. So, after God opens her womb, here it seems as if He's opened her heart. This time, the child is not with the view towards her heaven, or earthly husband but her heavenly father. This time I'll praise the Lord. And we'll

learn later of the significance of this one who is born here, Judah. But for now, look at a second reality that picks up at the start of chapter 30. We see how desperation closes Rachel's heart and opens the womb of two servants. So, pick up in the passage to see what happens next. Chapter 30, verse 1,

¹When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!" ²Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" ³Then she said, "Here is my servant Bilhah; go in to her, so that she may give birth on my behalf, that even I may have children through her." ⁴So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her. ⁵And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. ⁶Then Rachel said, "God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son." Therefore she called his name Dan. ⁷Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. ⁸Then Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and have prevailed." So she called his name Naphtali. ⁹When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, she took her own servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰Then Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. ¹¹And Leah said, "Good fortune has come!" so she called his name Gad. ¹²Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. ¹³And Leah said, "Happy am I! For women have called me happy." So she called his name Asher.

Doesn't this feel a bit like the premiere of the second season of Real Housewives of Canaan? I mean, things just explode. Can't you feel Rachel's bitterness and her desperation? Can't you sense her envy? Perhaps for the first time she's ever been jealous toward her older sister in her entire life and Rachel lashes out her husband and he responds in fury. Why? Because infertility can give birth to instability. And I just want to speak for a moment to those of you in the room even now that find yourself grappling in that same set of circumstances. Staring at another month with a negative test wondering why God won't provide the child you want. Wondering how long. This text doesn't give us a magic formula for how it is that you might get the child you long for. But it does tell us that a sovereign God has the power to open wounds and to close them. But the greater thing it's speaking to you this morning about is not if God will bring you a child but how you're called to live in that season of waiting. Infertility can lead to instability. We see that show up here in the rivalry, the strife, the desperation, this opposition that happens. They want to take matters into their own hands. And we can be tempted in the exact same way today. You see, what happens is Rachel's desperation drives her to disobedience. She takes matters into her own hands. She gives her servant to Jacob and he has two more children from her. Then, Leah sees that and recognizes, I'm not having kids of my own anymore. She gives her servant to Jacob and has two more kids after that. And in this moment, we see this cycle where desperation drives further disobedience that leads to greater destruction.

Which brings us to the last part of this passage I want us to see this morning down in verse 14. And the third thing we notice in this section is that Leah closes her heart again before God opens up Rachel's womb. So read down with me starting in verse 14 down to verse 24 when it says,

¹⁴In the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." ¹⁵But she said to her, "Is it a small matter that you have taken away my

husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?" Rachel said, "Then he may lie with you tonight in exchange for your son's mandrakes." ¹⁶And when Jacob came from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he lay with her that night. ¹⁷And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. ¹⁸Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my servant to my husband." So she called his name Issachar. ¹⁹And Leah conceived again, and she bore Jacob a sixth son. ²⁰Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will honor me, because I have borne him six sons." So she called his name Zebulun. ²¹Afterward she bore a daughter and called her name Dinah.

But listen to this. Verse 22.

²²Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. ²³She conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach." ²⁴And she called his name Joseph, saying, "May the LORD add to me another son!"

See, what we find here in this last section are two more turning points. To begin with, we see a negotiation play out. So, Reuben's off in the field during the harvest time. Leah's son, and he brings back these mandrakes. He gives them to his mom. Rachel comes up and asks for some. And she says, Leah says to her, "So not only do you take away my husband but you want to take away my mandrakes as well." And the negotiation starts up here. And for an item of food, a birthright is sold. It's an echo of Genesis 27. There's this exchange that takes place. And so, Leah now gets to be with Jacob. And as a result of that, two more sons and a daughter, come. But then there's another turning point that takes place here. After we see Leah's heart close, and you know it closes by looking back there in verse 20 when it says in the second half, now my husband will honor me because I have born him six sons. Her pregnancies, her new children are back focused on her earthly husband rather than her heavenly father. But as her heart is closed, Rachel's womb is open in verse 22. Do you see what happens there? It tells us God listened to her and opened her womb. There's a transformation that takes place. Finally, the son she's long for. She's desperately pleaded for God's provision. Now, He gives it and look at the name she gives him. Joseph and notice the meaning at the end of verse 24. May the Lord add to me another son. In other words, one is not enough. Her desperation for God's provision is now replaced by disappointment in God's provision. One is not enough. She wants more. Even as her womb is open, we see her heart is closed to God's design.

But as we come to a close this morning, I want you to think about this reality. There's a danger when you come to a passage like this that we get so caught up in the meanings of the names that we miss the meaning of the moment. And this is a huge moment in the story line of Scripture. In fact, I want you to see the significant of this moment back in at the end of verse 34 of chapter 29. Because we moved past this the first time through when we're talking about Leah's first set of children born at the end of 29:34.

Therefore his name was called Levi. ³⁵And she conceived again and bore a son, "This time I will praise the LORD," she said. Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she ceased bearing.

Now, why are these two names significant? Levi and Judah. Well, from unlovable Leah comes the line that would one day be the priest. And from undesirable Leah comes the line of Judah that would one day bring the kings. And what we know from later on in Genesis and throughout Scripture is that from unlovable Leah comes the love of God, the Savior of the world, the son of Jacob, the lion of the tribe of Judah. And why is that significant? What is God trying to show us? Here is it, here it is. The significance of Jesus coming from unlovable Leah is not just based on the fact that he comes from someone like her but that he comes for some people like her. It shows us the way in which He is going to come. The way I heard pastor Tim Keller explain the significance of this. He said, the reason why God, quote, goes after Leah and not Rachel while he makes the girl who nobody wanted into the mother of Jesus, the bearer of the messianic line, the bearer of salvation of the world, is not just that he likes the underdog but because that is the Gospel. When God came to Earth in Jesus Christ, He was the son of Leah. Oh yes, he was. He became the man nobody wanted. He was born in a manger. He had no beauty that we should desire Him. He came to His own and His own received Him not. And at the end, nobody wanted Him. Everybody abandoned Him. Even His Father in heaven didn't want Him. Remember, Jesus cried out on the cross, "My God, my God. Why have You forsaken Me." Who Jesus came from points to who He came for. He comes from the unlovable so that He can come for the unlovable. He comes from the despised so He can come for the despised. He comes from those who are rejected so that He can come for those who are rejected. And that's what gives us the strength this morning to keep pressing on in the mess. Because we know that even in the middle of the mess, God meets us in this moment and moves us towards His Messiah.

Will you pray with me?

Father, I'm praying for every person in this room, those capturing it by video. If there are people here that find themselves in a mess this morning, would you create a sense of hope, of renewal, of reset, of cleansing? They come in here heavy laden and burdened. Would You give them rest for their souls knowing that Your yoke is easy and Your burden is light? And Father, even now in a moment as we prepare to move and grab these encouragement cards and take a few minutes to fill them out, I know that the students that will read these messages, many of them find themselves in a mess today. Hard pressed and crushed by a lost and dying world around them. Hard pressed and crushed by an unattainable expectations that others and themselves put on them. And I pray that even these short words, these prayers, these Bible verses would strengthen them for all that You've called them to this coming semester. And as we turn our hearts to a time of response, would Your Spirit be at work amongst our people today? We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

Well in just a moment, we'll stand and sing as we normally do. But like I mentioned, I want to invite you to make your way out of your seat down to these tables. Grab one of these cards, one of these pens. And after we sing the response song, we'll give you a chance to sit down and to write something out on those towards our students. So, even now, perhaps the Lord will stir your heart in that direction. And as we do that, we'll have ministers here at the front who would love to pray with you or talk about next steps with Jesus. Or maybe you just need some time around these steps to come to the Lord, lay your mess at His feet and ask Him to work now in the same way we saw Him work in. Whatever way God is moving this morning, let's stand as we respond to His work in our lives.