



Sermon – 10/22/2023
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Verses Covered

Genesis 27:41

Genesis 32:11 – 12

Genesis 33:1 - 9

Romans 12:18

Let me invite you to open your Bibles with me. We're going to spend our time in Genesis 33 this morning. Genesis 33. But to get back there, we're going to start briefly in Genesis 27. And if you're a guest with us this morning, welcome home. We're a church that is Scripture fed and Spirit led. That's who we are. That's what we're all about. We center on God's word each week. And for the last months, we've been walking through the launch of our NEXT Initiative. And the best way to keep the momentum from that going is to keep doing what's at the heart of our Sunday gatherings. Opening God's word and trusting that His Spirit will change us. I want to start with a question this morning. Is there a relationship in your life right now that's broken? One that used to be warm but now it's cold. One that used to be life giving, now it's life draining. And maybe it happened when that argument went one comment too far. Maybe it happened when that text you meant to send about them, you actually sent to them. Never happened to me before. I've just heard that that can happen. But you think of it. Maybe it's that family member who's turned their back on you. Maybe it's that prodigal that's withdrawn from you. Maybe it's that roommate or trusted friend that you thought would always be there for you and now you feel this gap, the sense of loss, because that relationship is fractured. Is there any hope for relationships like that? How can we see breakthrough in the midst of the brokenness? What we're going to find this morning is in Genesis 33 that Jacob and his brother Esau see themselves in a similar situation. A point of deep brokenness. And what we'll find is that in the reconciliation that they experience with one another, it shows us a pathway towards the reconciliation in our broken relationships that we all long for.

But before we pick up in Genesis 33, I want us to start back in Genesis 27 and verse 41 because we need to remember how we got to this point. You see, what we know is that in the story of Jacob and Esau, they're these rival brothers from their father Isaac. And earlier in the story Jacob had deceived Esau and stolen his birthright in exchange for a bowl of stew. And then in Genesis 27 Jacob wears the first Halloween costume in recorded history. He puts that deer skin on there. Maybe some of y'all come into the fall festival next weekend, if you're not sure exactly how to dress up your kids, this could be an option for you. But he puts on that hairy pelt in order to deceive his blind and dying father to steal the blessing. And what we find in the aftermath of that

in Genesis 27:41 is what it is that sparked the tension that we'll find in the text in Genesis 33. Genesis 27:41 says,

⁴¹Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

So, Jacob flees in fear. He's facing a nightmare from his brother and yet in the midst of that, he experiences a dream in Genesis 28 that changes everything for him. He sees this stairway to heaven and these angels ascending and descending and it shows him God's faithfulness even in the midst of his fear. And then in the aftermath of that, here's what we find. In Genesis 32, if you want to slide over there, in verses 11 and 12, we see how this story advances towards Genesis 33 because now, Jacob has been exiled. He's been in this broken relationship for 20 years. And now God is calling him to return to his homeland and he knows that when he does that, he will likely have to come face to face with the exact brother he fears. But rather than recoil in fear and anxiety as he's done for the last 20 years, we see him in a different approach here in Genesis 32 beginning in verse 11 where it says, in in this prayer a God Jacob said to him,

¹¹Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children. ¹²But you said, I will surely do you good and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

In other words, Jacob appeals to God's covenant promise and this promise that he would raise up a multitude in praying for protection for deliverance. And right after that is the story we saw the last time we were in Genesis where Jacob wrestles with God and God blesses him. He gives him a new name, Israel. He walks out of there with a limp. And what I'm sure Jacob is expecting in this moment is that just after he wrestled with God, he's expecting to experience his brother, Esau, who he knows is on the way with 400 men and he's going to have to wrestle with him. What we're going to find as we turn our attention now to Genesis 33 is that when we truly encounter God just like Jacob did in Genesis 32, that's the pathway to finding the reconciliation and the restoration that all of us long for. And we're going to see that play out in Jacob's life in two primary ways. We're going to see first how Jacob moves from, he moves from resentment to reconciliation. So, notice that in verse 1, the way that he moves from resentment to reconciliation. Because you and I know broken relationships can foster resentment in our hearts. And sometimes it's that below the surface resentment that nobody else sees. You keep the mask up. They don't have any idea about it. Sometimes it's the resentment that bubbles over that everybody can notice. That seething anger that you have towards that person who has wronged you. And if anybody had a reason for resentment towards one another, it would be brothers like Jacob and Esau. Because of this clash before of all the ways that they had wronged each other and the 20 years that this had been left to fester. But what we find here in Genesis 33 is this movement of Jacob from resentment to reconciliation that can give us a window into what that type of reconciliation with others can look like in our own lives. So, think about it like this. The first thing that we must remember is the depths of our division. So, look at that division in verse 1 when it says,

¹And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female

servants. ²And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. ³He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

And can't you just see the tension in this moment? The waves of memories and emotions that would have flooded each one of their hearts as they looked across that field towards one another. And how is it that Jacob reacts in the moment? He doesn't bow up in superiority. He bows down in submission. Verse 3 tells us he bows seven times in this submissive state. And the reason he does that is because as Jacob has been marching towards his brother and he's looking back on the brokenness, he realizes the depths of that division. The hardship that he has experienced. The difficulties that his brother would have experienced. And he knows the only pathway forward is to recognize the depths of that difficulty in the past so that they may make things right in the present. So, how does Esau respond? Look, beginning in verse 8 because we'll also see second that we must reconnect with the right perspective. Verse 4 tells us,

⁴But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. ⁵And when Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children, he said, "Who are these with you?" Jacob said, "The children whom God has graciously given to your servant." ⁶Then the servants drew near, they and their children, and bowed down. ⁷Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down. And last Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. ⁸Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company that I met?" Jacob answered, "To find favor in the sight of my lord."

So, when they reconnect the unexpected happens. I'm sure when Jacob found out that Esau was coming with 400 men, he was ready for a WWE style Royal Rumble. But instead, he gets more like a hallmark movie channel reconciliation. A fair warning, guys. Hallmark Christmas movie season is coming. Stay strong. We can make it for another year. But how is that this reconciliation take place? What is it that unlocks that sort of process? It's because Jacob comes there with the right perspective. You see, when Esau sees all of the people and all of the gifts that show up, he looks at Jacob in verse 5 and he says, what's the deal? What is this all about? And what Jacob could've done is poured salt in the wound and said, "Hey, remember that blessing that I stole from you? How do you like me now? These are the possessions that I have that could have been yours." But instead of that, he doesn't pour salt on the wound. He brings a word of comfort. He doesn't rub it in. Instead, he gives credit to God for his gracious provision in his life. And when they reconnect through that right perspective, it softens the blow in a way that opens the breakthrough that's about to happen starting in verse 9.

The third thing we'll notice here is that we must reconcile with the right heart. Okay, so look at what it says in verse 9,

⁹But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself." ¹⁰And Jacob said, "No, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me. ¹¹Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." Thus he urged him, and he took it.

So, what happens here? Jacob offers a sacrifice, a gift, in order to satisfy the wrath of Esau. In order to make payment and to make right what had been wronged. And what is, what we find it culminating to in verse 10 is he uses this interesting phrase, if you look back there. For I have seen your face which is like seeing the face of God and you have accepted me. What does that mean? Well, what we know is right before this in Genesis 32 when Jacob had wrestled with God, there's a sense in which he had seen his face and from seeing his face he experienced his grace. And now as he comes face to face with his own brother in the seeing of his face, it's as if he is experiencing yet again that grace that he doesn't deserve. That gift that he didn't earn. That reconciliation that he could not have achieved on his own. So, the question we ought to be thinking about this morning is what does this passage mean for the broken relationships in our lives? Uh so think back to that one that immediately came to mind when I prompted you with that question earlier in the message. You know, I look around this room and I know the stories of pain in your heart, the prodigals that have left you. The teenage daughters that are in rebellion. The best friendships that have been severed in ways that seem like there will be no healing. There's no pain quite like the pain of a broken relationship. Jacob and Esau experienced it then. Maybe you're experiencing it today. And what this text is reminding us of is it took 20 years for this conversation to happen. 20. And when it finally did, there was a joyful reconciliation that took place. And the main thing that kept it from happening until that point was fear. An uncertainty of how you would be received if you pursued the reconciliation that you longed for. How it would come across if the initiative that you thought they ought to be showing to you was shown by you towards them instead. And even as we see this passage playing out in Jacob and Esau's life, it reminds me of what the apostle Paul says in Romans 12:18. In this to take the initiative in the pursuit of reconciliation. Paul says this,

¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

You see that phrase, live peaceably? That's what it means to pursue quick reconciliation when your marriage has a disruption through a disagreement. That's what it means to repent to your children and apologize and reconcile the relationship after you have overreacted yet again to their disobedience. It's what it looks like to live peaceably with roommates who don't do the dishes when they ought to or always leaving their garbage around and you're constantly stepping up to fill the gap and they're not even aware. We see Jacob and Esau taking the step to live peaceably in a way that pushes forward to us our need to do the same thing. And what we find here is that through this first half of the chapter, Jacob is moving from resentment to reconciliation.

But that's not the only thing going on in the text. The second big piece of this I want you to see is down in verse 20. Where we find Jacob also moving from resistance to restoration. So, we find as Genesis 33 unfolds that Jacob doesn't just move from resentment to reconciliation but also from resistance to this sense of restoration. And where had we seen that resistance taking place? He had been resisting God's plan for his life for years. Through deceiving his brother out of his birthright, through deceiving his dad out of the blessing, through deceiving his father-in-law out of his possessions. But now, Jacob's life has been changed. He's no longer resisting the plan of God. And through that faithful walk back towards the promised land that God has called him to, he begins to experience the restoration of the covenant promises in several ways that come to life through the text. You'll notice starting in verse 12 that the first thing Jacob experiences is that God restores his protection. So, notice what happens in verse 12.

¹²Then Esau said, “Let us journey on our way, and I will go ahead of you.” ¹³But Jacob said, “My lord knows that the children are frail, and that the nursing flocks and herds are a care to me. If they are driven hard for one day, all the flocks will die. ¹⁴Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, at the pace of the livestock that are ahead of me and at the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir.”

So, notice what happens after the reconciliation, Esau tries to offer Jacob protection. He says, come with me. I've got you. You can come home where I am going and I will protect you. But instead of turning to Esau's protection, Jacob turns to God's protection. He declines that offer. The certainty of safety walks away from that and instead, walks by faith towards a different path. He says, “I can't follow you there. I'll come later on.” And why is it that he turns away from Esau's offer of protection? Well, what he knows is that despite the peace that has just been restored between them, Esau is not walking with God. Esau is married to foreign women. Esau is walking in disobedience. And if Jacob goes down that path, his reconciliation with Esau may actually lead to his own destruction. You see one of the things that we need to understand this morning is that reconciliation doesn't always entail full reconnection. Just because we make a relationship right with someone, it may be wrong for us to lock in with them again. And that could be true in the relationships that you're pursuing healing in today. He looks to God for his protection, not Esau. And notice how the text goes on beginning in verse 15, we see second that God restores Jacob's path. So, it says there in verse 15,

¹⁵So Esau said, “Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.” But he said, “What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.” ¹⁶So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. ¹⁷But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

So, here's what happens. After Jacob rejects Esau's offer to come with Esau, Esau says, I'll tell you what, I'll leave some of my people with you. They'll protect you. They'll bring you along. I'll take care of you. And yet again, Jacob refuses. Why? Because the Lord is calling him to a different path. He restores him to a path that's going to bring him back into the promised land, independence on God, and not an independence on Esau. And as we hear more about this path, for those of you that are familiar with your Bible, you might hear echoes of the Exodus right here in this passage. So, you'll notice for example, in verse 17, there's this town mentioned by the name of Succoth. And if you were to look ahead in Exodus 12, after the Passover of Israel and that that final plague sweeps through the nation of Egypt and Pharaoh finally says, “Get out of here.” This the first place that Israel stops is they flee from their enemy is another town called Succoth. And as they cross the Red Sea and they enter into the wilderness, the text tells us about how they lived in booths just like the ones that Jacob has built for his livestock here. These temporary shelters reminding them that this is not yet their home. It's the path to the promised land. So, what Jacob was experiencing in miniature, the entire nation of Israel would experience in a much greater way later on. Which takes us to the last part of this passage where third we see how God restores Jacob's place It says beginning in verse 18,

¹⁸And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way, on the way from Paddan-aram, and he camped before the city. ¹⁹And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of the land on which he had pitched his tent. ²⁰There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

So, think about this moment. He stopped for a season in Succoth. He had these temporary booths. But now, he presses on to this place called Shechem. And do you see where it says there in verse 18, it was in the land of Canaan. Now, why is that significant? This is a place that God has promised to His people all the way back to Abraham. Remember, as we've looked at this book, the covenant promise we've described over and over like this. God's people living in God's place carrying out God's purpose. And now, for the first time in the 20 years of Jacob's life, since that rupture with Esau, he's back in the land. God has restored the place. And not only is he there, he spends the money to purchase this land where his tents were laid and now he yet again has a foothold. A small glimpse that one day would preview how this promise would be coming true throughout all the land of Canaan. And that's why it's significant that he gives this place a name. Look back at it in verse 20 at the altar that he names there in worship for what God has done. When God restores his place, he renews his faith. And he does it with this name of this altar, El-Elohe-Israel. What does that mean? It means, God, the God of Israel. Now, why is this significant? Well, in the past, in Genesis 31, when Jacob had made a covenant with his father-in-law, Laban, to go their separate ways, he swore to that covenant on the basis of the fear of his father, Isaac. And what we talked about months ago when we came across that passage is that signal to us that Jacob had not yet made his faith his own. It was still his father's faith, his father's fear. But now, as his life has been changed, as he's experienced the reconciliation and the restoration he's longed for, he doesn't name this altar after the fear of Isaac. He names it after God, the God of Israel. It's not, it's no longer his God, it's my God. He has made his faith his own. You see, as we look at this text, one of my fears for us as a church is we would see this reconciliation that takes place between Jacob and Esau and we might find ourselves in the danger of falling into one of two traps we see in the text, if we try to pursue reconciliation with others.

So, the first trap that you might fall into is a trap that had ensnared Jacob for 20 years. He lived in fear of that hard conversation. He worried about going home. And so every time he thought about it and thought, "Man, at some point, I need to get there." He shrunk back. He wouldn't do it. He wouldn't initiate the reconciliation. And perhaps, that's where you find yourself this morning in that broken relationship. You know what you ought to do. You know what you want to do. But you can't bring yourself to do it. You're living in the same kind of fear as Jacob. But when Jacob's fear turns to faith, God shepherds the conversation. Now, I don't want you to hear me saying to you, that's a guarantee that if you initiate it, all will be made right between you and them. But what I am telling you is when you initiate it, if you do it in that Romans 12 type of way we already talked about, to live peaceably with all men, God will be with you in the middle of that moment and He'll sustain you. But guess what? There's an even bigger danger than to follow the path of Jacob. The bigger danger is that we might follow the path of Esau. And what was his path? Well, what we find here in Genesis 33 is that Esau runs to his brother. He embraces him. There is this joyful reconciliation from one brother to another. But we walk away from this text. In fact, we walk away from the entire story of Esau in the book of Genesis, and we never see him pursue the same reconciliation with God. He gets it right with the brother in the relationship that he'd been broken with but he misses the much more significant need to make his relationship right with God. In fact, when you look back at this text, there are three times that Jacob refers to God as they're in this reconciliation process. Esau never mentions him. When Jacob tries to offer him of his provisions, Esau's responses, I have enough. In other words, I'm good without your stuff and I'm good without the God of your stuff. Even though there was this horizontal reconciliation between him and his brother, there was never that vertical reconciliation between him and his heavenly

Father. Do you find yourself like Esau this morning? Maybe you see yourself in the same place. You look inward and you say, I have enough. I don't need God. There's no reason that I need to turn to Him. See, if you find yourself there today, Genesis 33 is chock full of hope for someone just like you. Who comes face to face with the reality that they've tried to live at peace with other people, but you've never experienced the true peace of God that comes only through Jesus Christ. Where do we see that hope here? Well, we see that hope in the moment of this reconciliation. When you look back at verse 4 and it describes this picture of two brothers and Esau running to his brother, embracing him in his arms. The next time we get a picture just like that is in the New Testament as Jesus tells a parable in Luke 15 of the story of the prodigal son. This one who had squandered his inheritance, gone to a far country, living in his own way, wondering if his dad will ever receive him back, ever forgive him for his mistakes. And when the prodigal comes home, the father doesn't sit there on the porch saying, "It's about time. What took you so long?" What did his father do? He runs to his wayward son that's come home in the exact kind of way we see happen here in verse 4. That's the kind of reconciling God we follow. But it's not just about the moment. We see a picture of the Gospel in the place where this all takes place after this reconciliation when Jacob enters into the promised land and he settles in Shechem and buys this field. That same place and that same field shows up later in the story of Jesus. John chapter 4. He's passing by and He comes to a well in need of water and this Samaritan woman comes to Him and in John 4:5, it tells us that this took place in that same location where Jacob had bought that field. And in that same place where he went after this reconciliation happens, Jesus offers to her and to us the same type of reconciliation we need with God. When He tells her that He is the living water who will finally quench the thirst of her desire to be made right with God. But best of all, this passage pictures the Gospel just simply through the act of reconciliation that takes place here. Don't miss the parallels between what happens when they're made right and what God does for us in Jesus Christ. Because here with Jacob and Esau, you saw them part of a family and that family is fractured. It is torn apart. Why? Because of sin. And as a result of that sin, there's a turning of the back towards one another. Jacob flees to a far country. He walks away from a right relationship with his family. But when he turns again and by faith he comes home, there is a restoration of the family. What is broken is now mended. What is fractured is now healed. What was destroyed is now reconciled. And each time that happens, whether it's in the life of Jacob and Esau or in the life of you and me as we pursue reconciliation with others, it's a picture of what God has done for us in Christ. We were born as children of God that through our sin, that family relationship was fractured. We turned our back on Him. We walked away in rebellion and we sought to make a way for ourself. We thought like Esau that we had enough apart from God. But God in His kindness doesn't leave us in his sin, our sin. He makes a way for prodigals to come home. He makes a way for the broken to find healing and for those who are in rebellion to find rescue. And that comes through the life and death His Son, Jesus Christ, who He sends here to take on the penalty for sin that you and I deserve. He satisfies God's wrath in the way that Jacob tried to satisfy Esau's wrath. He stands in our place so that we can stand in His place. Forgiven, set free, redeemed. Every one of us is longing for reconciliation and restoration. And what we see in Genesis 33 is that the only place to find that is in the place that this passage is pointing to. Through the blood of Jesus Christ. And the call of the Gospel to each one of us this morning is to remember this; forgiven people forgive people, redeemed people redeem people, reconciled people reconcile with people. Let's be the people of reconciliation right here at this church.

Will you pray with me?

Lord, I don't know what types of relational pain people walked in here with this morning, but I know You do. And I know you're the God that can meet us in our mess and the wounds in the brokenness and disappointment and bring healing, bring restoration, bring reconciliation. So, even now, God, if there's been a relationship that's been stirring on someone's heart this morning as we talk through this, would they not wait 20 years like Jacob? Would Your Spirit make a way for them to seek restoration today? And if there are those here that just like Esau have been seeking to make everything right with those around them but have never been made right with you God, would today be the day that they embrace the gift of reconciliation and restoration that You offer us in Jesus Christ. And Lord, would we be the kind of people that live a life and carry out a ministry of reconciliation in this church and in this community and around the world where as Romans 12 told us already, we would be the kind of people that live at peace with all men standing for truth as a light in the midst of darkness. We ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.