



The Sermon

Dr. Steven J. Lawson

Genesis 48:17-22

"The Great Reversal"

January 22, 2023

TRANSCRIPT

Well, I want you to take God's Word and turn with me to Genesis chapter 48, and today we're going to look at verses 17 through 22. I was scheduled to preach into chapter 49, but in looking at these verses, I just really cannot go any further, and so we'll be looking at verses 17 through 22 of Genesis 48. And the title of this message is "The Great Reversal," and I think you'll understand why. I want to begin reading in verse 17.

This is God's infallible Word which reads, "When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. Joseph said to his father, 'Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head.' But his father refused and said, 'I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.' He blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying, "May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!"' Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh. Then Israel said to Joseph, 'Behold, I'm about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.'" This will be our focus today as we look together into the Word of God. Let us go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, what a privilege it is for us to be able to gather together in a church like this of like-minded brothers and sisters and to be able to look into Your Word. And we pray that You would now grant us understanding and insight as only You can do, cause light to shine under the pages of this text. Use me as Your instrument, as Your tool. Fill me with Your Spirit, that I may be a precise and faithful teacher of Your Word. But more than that, may the Holy Spirit, who is the master teacher, may He attend each and every life here today and disclose to us the things that are found in this passage of Scripture. So Father, we ask now that You take over, take charge, and that You bring the truth home to every heart here today. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

In these verses we see the expectations that Joseph had for his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, long-standing expectations that he had for his two sons, completely reversed in a moment. Everything he had planned for these two boys was flipped, it was turned upside-down. And in this moment, the younger son Ephraim was blessed by Jacob with the greater blessing; and at the same time, the older son, who should have received the greater blessing, he now receives the lesser blessing. Everything was crisscrossed, everything was inverted from the natural order and from man's normal way of thinking. It all just pivoted in a moment.

And we should not be surprised by this, because God's kingdom is an upside-down kingdom, and so much about the kingdom of God is counterintuitive to man's way of thinking. Jesus Himself, who is the King who presides over the kingdom of God, said, "Those who died to self live, and those who live for self die." Jesus said, "Those who saved their life will lose it, and those who lose their life will find it." Everything was always upside-down. Jesus said, "The one who humbles himself will be exalted, and the one who exalts himself will be humbled."

Everything is backwards in the kingdom of God. The poor in spirit are those who are rich in grace, and those who are rich in themselves are poor in grace. Those who mourn are comforted. Those who are meek inherit the earth. Those who hunger and thirst are the ones who are satisfied and filled. Everything seems to be backwards in the kingdom of God.

God delights in raising up the lesser to do the greater work. Let me say that again: God delights to take the lesser and to raise up the lesser to do the greater works so that all the glory belongs to God. That's something of what we see. In fact, that is what we see in this very text, and that's why I can't just speed past this passage, because it is a reminder to me, and it should be to you, how God desires to run His kingdom. It is so opposite to the ways of the world.

And this should be a great encouragement to us here today. And most of us can identify with being the lesser in talent, in ability, in social position, in intelligence. We're the ones that God most often chooses to work through. And if you happen to be one here today who is greater in talent, greater in ability, greater in intelligence, and God uses you and raises you up, you are the exception, not the rule; and you should be humbly grateful that God has chosen to work through you, having granted so much to you. But nevertheless, the rest of us should be enormously encouraged today, that God delights to work through people just like you and me. So as we look at these verses, I need to reframe the picture here for a moment. I need to give you the historical background, which we looked at last time and even the time before last, so that these verses will really make sense to us.

In the previous verses, Joseph has gathered his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born in Egypt, and, no doubt, put them in his chariot and has ridden to Goshen to see their grandfather, his father, who is on his deathbed, who is dying; and this may be the last time they'll ever see Jacob alive. And as he comes, Jacob raises himself up in bed and positions himself to give the blessing to the two grandsons. And so Joseph, proud father that he is, positions his boys just right, where the older son Manasseh will receive the greater blessing and the right hand of Jacob will be upon him, and then the younger son is positioned in front of Jacob so that the left hand, which is the lesser blessing, will come on Ephraim.

And in that moment Jacob, who is being led by God at this point, pulls a reverse and crisscrosses his hands in a moment and lays the right hand on the lesser son and bestows the greater blessing on the lesser son, and then

the left hand upon the greater son, or the older son. And that is what has taken place, and we looked at it up until verse 16 last time, so we now step back into this unfolding narrative. It is the same scene in which we were looking at last week, and we pick it back up now in verse 17, and we will see Joseph's reaction to this, and then we will see Jacob's affirmation of this. And there are spiritual lessons for us to learn in this. That this really is but the tip of the iceberg for the whole kingdom of God for the way that God operates in His kingdom.

So the first thing that I want you to notice in verse 17, "Joseph's displeasure, Joseph's displeasure." Beginning in verse 17, "When Joseph saw that his father had laid his right hand" – that's the hand that we give the favored blessing – "on Ephraim's head, who was the younger son," – When Joseph saw this, no doubt, his eyeballs just about popped out of his head: "What is this, the younger now receiving the greater blessing?" And you see the response of Joseph – "it displeased him." It shocked him. This was totally unexpected.

And the beauty of the Hebrew language with which the Old Testament is written is seen in word studies. The New Testament is written in Greek, and the beauty is in the verb tenses. But when we see this word "displeased," let me give you some synonyms. He was appalled. He was shocked. He was distressed and really devastated. The word even means injured and hurt.

I mean, this hit Joseph hard in this moment, and the reason is Joseph had a plan for his sons' lives. Joseph had it all figured out. Joseph had an agenda in the way things are going to work out for his sons. He's a father who was holding his sons somewhat rather tightly and his grandsons rather tightly. And so that's why Joseph is now so displeased, because this isn't the way he had it figured out for his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to receive the blessing.

In fact, Joseph has spent their whole life grooming them in some ways for this moment. The firstborn son, he will be the leader. The firstborn son, he will be the tip of the spear. This firstborn son, Joseph has poured his life

into him to build up his character and to give him a sense of responsibility and to nurture his influence ability so that he can lead the others when the time comes. "But now what's going on? This wasn't my plan for my sons."

And so in the middle of verse 17 he does something very dramatic. Please note in the middle of verse 17, "He" - Joseph - "grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head." This word "grasp" means to literally seize something very strongly and to lay hold of it firmly. So he doesn't just gently lay his hand on his father's hand as it rests upon the head of Ephraim, he takes a very strong hold of his father's hand to try to move it over to Manasseh's head.

In verse 18, "Joseph said to his father, 'Not so,' - I mean he just out and out protests this and corrects his father - 'not so, this isn't the way it's supposed to be. Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn,'" pointing over to Manasseh. And now remember, Jacob is almost blind, he can barely see it, and Joseph may assume, "Well, I guess you can't see well enough to lay your hand upon the correct son. Not so, it's this son over here that you're supposed to lay your hand on."

But Jacob knew exactly what he was doing, because God was leading him with a spirit of prophecy that is not directly stated in the text, but is reasonably assumed he is able by God to see into the future and to see which way the blessing should go. So he says, "Not so." This might be the only time really anything negative would be portrayed of Joseph. "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand" - he becomes very directive with his father - "place your right hand on his head," - referring to Manasseh's head, as if to say, "Father, this is not what I had planned for my sons."

Now we have many fathers in this room today and many fathers who yet have children under your roof, and there's a very valuable lesson to learn here, that fathers are responsible to raise their children and develop them and be a part of maturing them; but we have to hold them with an open hand, because God has a path marked out for them, and God has a plan for

them, and it may not necessarily be what you think this child is to grow up to do and be. I mean, Joseph really has too tight of a grip, and has the agenda already laid out that is contrary to the will of God.

What flashed into my mind as I read this is Martin Luther, the great German Reformer, who grew up with a father who was a very stern and strict taskmaster. His father owned a coal mine and worked very hard and secured ownership of the coal mine, and he did not want his son Martin Luther to have to grow up in such a work situation, so he charted a path for his son Martin Luther to be a lawyer: "You're going to be a lawyer, son, and that's the path that you're to take."

And so Martin Luther - and this is before Luther was even converted - was very compliant to his father, and went to the University of Erfurt to study en route to be a lawyer. And one day he was returning from a visit to home and he was having to walk many miles to return to college to university, when he found himself in the middle of a thunderstorm. And lightning began to strike down there in Germany, and one lightning bolt came so close to him it knocked him to the ground, and in that split second, Luther cries out, "God, I will be a priest!" He was just terrified to death. And so Martin Luther, from that point on, pursued the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, until he was converted.

His father was devastated, his father was angered that "you have chosen a different path than the path that I have chosen for you." But God had a different plan; and praise God for this different plan, that Martin Luther would be raised up by God to be the chief Reformer that really turned Western civilization around, as he became the initial spark for the Reformation itself that has affected the world.

No, God's plans are not always the plans of a father for a child. And at the same time, I have to tell you about John Calvin. John Calvin grew up in France (Noyon, France), and his father Gerard also had it all figured out for Jean Cauvin (John Calvin): "You're going to be a priest in the Roman Catholic Church." And so he raised him to go into the church. In fact,

beginning at age nine, John Calvin received a salary from the Roman Catholic Church that would bankroll all of the education that he would need at the University of Paris, the University of Bordeaux, and the University of Orleans, this path that his father had marked out for him.

And so Calvin was very compliant and went down this path, because that was what his father wanted him to do, and he received a law degree; and after he received a law degree, his father passed away; and once his father passed away, he was able to pursue his real love, which at that point was classical literature. And so Calvin goes back, now that his father is no longer just really dominating his life, and receives a degree in classical literature that God will use to help him write the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, and eventually come to faith in Christ before he wrote *The Institutes*.

But here's the point. Calvin's father had this agenda already planned for his son's life, but God had a totally different plan for Calvin. And I think of Proverbs 16:1 which says, "Man plans his way," – and Proverbs commends making plans – "man plans his way, but God directs his steps," meaning God overrules man's plans according to His own sovereign purposes. Well, I think that illustrates what's going on here with Joseph, who already has it all figured out for Ephraim and Manasseh. But instead, God overrules through Jacob to crisscross his hands, and it goes in a totally different direction than what Joseph had planned.

So that leads us now to verse 19 and "Jacob's denial, Jacob's denial." Beginning in verse 19, "But his father refused." His father pushed away the hand of Joseph. Joseph's hand was much stronger and much younger, and the old, dying man has such a conviction about this he's able to push away his own son's hand. And this is what he says: "I know." Sounds like my father. "I know, my son, I know." And for something to be repeated twice in the Bible is for dramatic effect and for emphasis, kind of like, "Simon, Simon," to say it twice, or, "Lord, Lord."

That's what's going on here. I mean Jacob is so resolute in what he has done, he just repeats it and says, "I know, my son, I know," and what he is saying is, "I know what I'm doing," and in reality he's being led by God to do this. That leadership is not stated in the text, but it is clearly to be understood that it is God who is working through Jacob and, really, guiding him. And so Jacob says, "I know exactly what I'm doing, and this cannot be reversed; it's irrevocable."

So he continues in verse 19, "He" - referring to Manasseh - "also will become a people," and people here referred to a tribe. So there will be the tribe of Manasseh, and there will be many descendants that will come in future generations through Manasseh who's standing right there. And the fact that he received the lesser blessing does not mean he will not be blessed. He will be blessed, and he states so here in verse 19, and he says, "He also will be great." He will be great in number, he will be great in riches, he will be great in honor, he will be very important and very powerful.

"However," - you see this in verse 19 - "however," - meaning, on the other hand, and he now transitions to Ephraim who is the younger son - "however, his younger brother" - that's Ephraim - "shall be greater than he." The he refers to Manasseh. "Manasseh will be great, but Ephraim will be greater, and his descendants" - literally his seed - "shall become a multitude" - literally fullness - "of nations." Really referring to families with multiplied descendants and generations. And so Ephraim will become the greater.

And later in the history of the nation Israel when there is a divided kingdom and there's two tribes to the south, Judah and Benjamin, and there are ten tribes to the north, whenever Isaiah refers to the ten tribes to the north, the northern kingdom, he simply refers to them as Ephraim. Ephraim is the powerful leader, is the strongest of the tribes, and all ten are just referred to as Ephraim. And Hosea, when he refers to the northern kingdom does the same as well, and it verifies the greater influence that Ephraim had through his descendants.

Now we need to understand that Manasseh and Ephraim, they will not enter the Promised Land. It will be over 400 years later, after 400 years in Egyptian bondage, and in 40 years of Moses leading them in the wilderness, until Joshua will lead them across Jordan and into the Promised Land, there will be this greater fulfillment of what is being spoken here. And that is why I'm saying that there really is a spirit, a prophecy that is upon Jacob, as he is allowed to speak prophetically about the future outcome that will arise from these two sons.

Again, the younger will do the greater, the lesser will do the greater. And we've seen this all through the book of Genesis, this is a reoccurring note. And sometimes when we go through a long book like Genesis over an extended period of time sometimes we lose sight of some of the threads that run through the book. But this is one of the dominant truths that is re-woven through the chapters of Genesis. Let me just rehearse this for you. Listen to this.

We have already seen this, that God raised up Abel over Cain. God raised up Shem over Japheth, God raised up Abram over Nahor, God raised up Isaac over Ishmael, God raised up Jacob over Esau, and God raised up Joseph over Reuben. That's just the way God likes to operate. It's so counterintuitive to man's way of thinking, but God likes to do it this way, because He receives greater glory. And this will continue on throughout the Old Testament. God raised up Moses over Aaron. God raised up David over the other brothers to bring down Goliath. God raised up Solomon over his elder brothers. God delights in taking the younger. He delights in taking the lesser, in order to do the greater work.

I'll give you another example: Gideon. God came to Gideon and said, "Hail, thou warrior." And Gideon, almost looking around, "I guess he's talking to me. Me?" And he backpedals and begins to give an excuse, almost like, "You've come to the wrong person. Little me?" Gideon says, "My family is the least in Manasseh. So out of the whole tribe of Manasseh, we're the least." And then he said, "And I am the youngest in my father's house. So our house is the very least in the whole tribe, and I am the youngest in the

whole house, I'm at the bottom of the barrel." And God goes, "You're exactly the one that I'm going to work through to do great things."

And then you remember how he comes to Gideon and says, "You know, you just really have too many soldiers. You just have too much going for you. I need to strip this down so that there's only a handful of you," because God is saying, "I always like to work through the few, not the many." God likes to work through the remnant to turn everything upside-down. And so God had to weed through the larger numbers that Gideon had, because God likes to work in a totally different way than we would normally think.

And I'll give you one more example, which is Micah 5:2, when God had His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, enter the world. A prophecy was given by the prophet Micah hundreds of years before Christ came into the world. Listen to what this prophecy says concerning the coming of Christ into the world: "But as for you, Bethlehem, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel." God loves the points of entry into history through the little place, that's really nowhere, to have His Son born into this world. Do you see how it is that God chooses to operate?

And again, this should be a great encouragement to us here today, because you may be thinking something like this: "You know, I don't have everything going for me like other people do. I come from a very common background, maybe less than common background. I didn't graduate at the head of my class. I'm a slow reader. No one really even noticed me in high school." If that's what you're thinking, let me just tell you, you're exactly the kind of person God usually chooses to work through.

And this is no commitment to mediocrity, not at all. It's just as I told you last week, I'll tell you again this week: God delights to reach down to the bottom of the barrel to find His servants and to raise them up and to put them in a place of influence, because those who are lesser have to trust God, they have to lean on God, they have to rely upon God, they have to pray to God even more than those who are more gifted and are pretty much

able at times with self-reliance to try to pull things off. So be encouraged, you're just the kind of person God's looking for.

Finally, in verse 20, "Jacob's declaration." And so Jacob now follows by pronouncing another blessing, and as we look at verse 20, verse 20 is a troublesome verse to interpret. I had to read about ten commentaries to try to figure out what verse 20 is actually saying. And at one point, I even held my Bible upside-down to see if that would help give me insight. I even shook it to see if something would fall out. And many of the commentaries that I even read just kind of avoided even interacting with this. But here we go.

Verse 20, "He" - Jacob - "blessed them" - Ephraim and Manasseh - "that day, saying," - now what follows is a saying that will be repeated generation by generation by generation into the future, and he says, 'By you' - referring to Joseph - 'Israel' - and here Israel refers to the nation of Israel - 'you will pronounce' - and note, future tense; this is what will be pronounced in the future by people living who are Jews in the nation of Israel - 'saying, "May God make you," - the you here referring to future Israel - "may God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.'"

What this is is really almost - it's not a formula, but it became an adopted saying that when the nation Israel in the future will ask for God's blessing to be upon them, they will say, "May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh, to be greatly blessed."

Now think about this. Israel is a tiny little nation. It's strategically placed at the intersection of Europe and the Middle East and Africa. It's just a tiny little strip of land. The Promised Land is about the size of Dallas-Fort Worth. It's about the size of the metroplex. It's a tiny little sliver of land; and yet even to this day, the occupation of that little land, so much of world politics and world finances and world affairs revolves around this tiny little strip of land and the Jewish people who occupy it. There is no explanation for this apart from God.

And so in the future when they are this tiny little nation, and there are the mighty Egyptians, and there are the towering Babylonians, and there are the Assyrians and the Medes and the Persians, and there are the Canaanites, as they are surrounded by powerful nations with force, this little people will say, "May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh," where again that the lesser, the lesser nation in population and in size and in muscle power will actually receive the greater blessing.

And presently Israel is an apostate nation outside of the blessing of God. and I believe, according to Romans 11, that in the end of the age all Israel will be saved, and there will be a great gathering in of unbelieving Jews into the kingdom of God, putting faith in Jesus Christ. But until then, there will be this repeated - it's really like a prayer: "May God bless you like Ephraim and Manasseh."

So, verse 21, "Then Israel" - and now in verse 21 Israel refers to Jacob who - this is almost like the principle of federal headship, where the one will represent the many, where Jacob represents the whole nation; and here it refers to Jacob. "Then Israel said to Joseph, 'Behold, I'm about to die.'" That's a true statement. He's not playing for sympathy here, he truly is on his deathbed, he truly is about to die, he's come to the end of his life. Strength is leaving him, and death is certain and fast approaching.

But would you please notice as we look at this verse, there's no fear of death, there's no dread. Instead, he's calm and confident as he faces death. Why? Because he is a believer in God, and he knows that when he dies he will graduate to glory and he'll go immediately into the presence of God. And I think what we are seeing here is what God does for His people when they come to this point to the end of their life. God gives a greater grace; some call it dying grace.

There may be a fear somewhat in you of what it will be like on that day. Just know that God doesn't give that grace until you need it. And when that time comes, God gives to His children dying grace, that they may remain strong in their faith and have peace that surpasses all comprehension. God

attends to His own people in that hour of need as they approach death. And I think that we see that evidenced here even in Jacob's life.

He then says in verse 21, "But God be with you." He is about to depart, he knows he is soon to no longer be with them, he is dying, and he now bestows, really, the expression of the greatest blessing that could ever be upon any person; it is that "God is with you, that God is with you to provide for you, and to protect you, and to comfort you, and to care for you, and to counsel you, that God will be with you, that He is all-sufficient, that if you have God, you have everything. And if you do not have God in your life, you have nothing of any value whatsoever. God will be everything that that you need." And Jesus Himself says this to us in Matthew 28:20, "Lo, I'm with you always, even to the end of the age."

And let me just make this application as you think about your life and whatever it is God calls upon you to do. If it is the will of God, the Lord is with you to provide for you everything that you need, that no task will ever be too great, and no responsibility ever too demanding, but that if Christ is with you, He will enable you to fulfill it. Obviously in and of ourselves we're all inadequate. Jesus said, "Apart from Me, you can do nothing." In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul talks about how inadequate we are in ourselves. But Christ is hyper-adequate, more than adequate to fulfill everything in us that needs to be fulfilled.

And then he says at the end of verse 21, "and bring you back to the land of your fathers." Well, that will not take place for over 400 years. And so again, as Jacob says this, he really says this with God-given insight into the future. We would call it a spirit of prophecy, that the future is being made known to Jacob, and Jacob as a mouthpiece for that future reality. And yes, the day will come when the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh will be led into the Promised Land. And that reality did take place when Joshua led the people of God across Jordan and into the Promised Land.

So, verse 22, and we'll wrap this up: "I" - Jacob - "give you" - Joseph - "one portion more than your brothers." A couple things to say about this.

He's referring to land that Jacob really, again, is a mouthpiece for God, speaking here, will give to the tribe under Joseph, "will give you greater land," and in fact, a double portion of land.

And we need to understand that God is not an equal opportunity employer. God is not a socialist. God has not gone woke. God is free to give to some more than He gives to others when He distributes grace and mercy. If God was to give us what we truly deserve, we'd be in hell right now. You don't want justice; you want mercy, you want grace.

And if it's grace, then you don't deserve anything. And if God gives to some more than He gives to you, you have no basis whatsoever to say anything to God like, "Well, that's not fair," because let me tell you again, you don't want fair. Fair is eternal punishment and condemnation in the lake of fire and brimstone that is more real than Dallas, Texas. You don't want that.

And so if it's by grace and if it's by mercy at the discretion of the sovereign will of God, then God is free to give or to withhold. Remember Job said in Job 1:21, "The Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." And in this case, by divine sovereignty and by sovereign grace, God is free to give to Joseph twice as much as He gives to the other brothers, and no one can raise a complaint who has spiritual eyes to see.

There's a real lesson for us to learn in this, that in the Christian life God does give some greater blessings than He gives to others. Now He gives us the same forgiveness and He gives us the same righteousness in the act of justification by faith. It's been said the ground at the foot of the cross is level, and we all stand equally forgiven and equally justified by saving grace. And yet as we live our Christian lives, God gives to some greater gifts in service, greater open doors to advance, greater opportunities to serve.

Even by the placement of where God positions us, even geographically and providentially and circumstantially, it's not all the same. In fact, some here

today will be granted the blessing to live longer, more days here upon the earth. Others here today will live fewer days upon the earth. Some will die with your family surrounding you, others will die by yourself. Some will die with believing family around you, others here today will die without believers around you in your family.

So it's not all the same; same salvation, but difference in the distribution of day by day God's blessings. And anything that we receive from the Lord is a gift that we have not worked for, that we have not earned; and there should be great contentment with what we have. And if we see someone else with a double portion of blessing, we must guard our hearts from envy or greed or covetousness. Or if someone is elevated above me to serve in a ministry in a certain capacity and I still have to wait, that's God's sovereign prerogative to bless some more than others in different ways.

God is God. And again, God is not a socialist, where everyone gets the same salary, and everyone lives in the same government-owned apartment, and everyone gets the same distribution of gas and the same distribution of food. That's not the way the kingdom of God operates. It is run by God's sovereign prerogative; and He may give a double blessing to one and only a single blessing to another. I trust that God opens your eyes to see this truth in Scripture.

And so, verse 22, "I" - Jacob - "give you" - Joseph - "one portion more than your brothers." By the way, just a footnote. The word "portion," you may have it in the margin of a reference Bible in your lap, it's the Hebrew word *shekem*, which means ridge or mountain ridge; and there's a play on words here, because the land that will go to Joseph's descendants will be in the hill country, the mountainous area, which is also an advantageous portion of land because of the elevation, and superior position of defense against marching armies in a cooler terrain in this arid land. Even the land that is apportioned to Joseph's descendants is a superior piece of real estate.

Well, let me finish. The end of verse 22 he says, Jacob is the speaker, "which I" - Jacob - "took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow." This is a reference to a piece of land that Jacob had purchased from Hamor who was the king of, interestingly enough, Shechem. And they came and took the land away from Jacob, and Jacob's sons fought and took it back, their rightful possession. And so that is the reference here.

So as we bring this to conclusion, I think we clearly see here that God delights - I'll say it again - in taking the lesser person and doing a greater work through him or her; and that fathers must hold their children with an open hand and allow God to direct the path that they will take. Now as I close this, let me say something personal to you.

There needs to be a great reversal in your life. You came into this world born in a state of sin. Before you ever committed acts of sin, sin, it was already charged to you because of Adam's sin; and because of the sin nature that you inherited at the moment of conception, you came out of your mother's womb speaking lies. And so you entered this world under the condemnation of God. You entered this world under the wrath of God because you're a sinner and because you sin. And the wages of sin is death, which ultimately speaks of the second death, which is eternal punishment. And sometimes people say, "Yeah, hell is separation from God." People in hell only wish they could be separated from God, because God is in hell also, because He's omnipresent, and God is the inflictor of punishment upon those who are in hell. There's no place where God does not exist.

And so we all entered this world in this spiritual state of being lost, of perishing, and being condemned. And there needs to be the great reversal in your life. There needs to be for God to take His right hand and to lay it upon you and to impart to you not just the greater blessing, but the greatest blessing that could ever be bestowed upon your head and upon your soul. It is the blessing of forgiveness of sin. It is the blessing of being clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is the blessing of God indwelling you by His Holy Spirit. It is the blessing of being adopted into God's family. It is the blessing of Jesus preparing a place for you in heaven.

There is no greater blessing. And the only way to have this blessing is for you to be a believer and God's Son Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of Man. He alone is the Savior of the world. And in order for God to reverse what has happened in your life and to impart the greatest blessing is for you to come to the end of yourself, for you to repent of your sin, for you to deny yourself and take up a cross and become a follower of Jesus Christ, for you to surrender your life to Jesus Christ, for you to submit to His lordship and embrace Him by faith as Lord and Savior. If you would do that, God's right hand would rest upon your head, and there would be the imparting of grace upon grace upon grace to your life.

I would assume most of us in this room have come to that place in life where we have recognized that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, the wages of sin is death, and we have recognized our eyes have been opened to receive Christ as Lord and Savior. But here today in a crowd this large there would obviously be more than a few who have not yet been awakened to this reality of your need for God's blessing of salvation to be given to you. There's nothing you do to earn it. There's nothing that you can do to deserve it. There is no merit that you can achieve. There are no good works that can induce the right hand of God to lay His hand upon you and to impart blessing to you. You must come as a beggar with an empty hand, and humble yourself beneath the mighty hand of God. And if you will come in lowliness of spirit, with saving faith, entrusting your soul to Jesus Christ, then God the Father will open the treasure vault of heaven and He will bestow the riches, the riches of redemption and reconciliation and all of the benefits that were won at the cross through Jesus Christ.

And so if you've never done that, I urge you to do that this moment in your heart of hearts. No one else knowing to your left or to your right, just quietly, silently in your heart, "Lord Jesus, I commit my life to You. I believe that You are the Son of God. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. I believe that You were raised from the dead, that You are seated at the right hand of God the Father, and I take You at Your word, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." If you have never done that, this could be the greatest moment in your life, this could be the greatest day in your life, when you would enter into the family of God, and with all of the blessings of heaven imparted to you. May that be so in your life. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father in heaven, thank You for the richness of this passage that we have looked at today. We stand amazed that You carry out Your work in such a different way than how we see the world operate. And the world is drawn to the rich, to the famous, to the mighty, to the strong, to carry out its agenda. And there are a few like that in the kingdom; but for the most part, You reverse the natural order, and You lay Your hand upon those who are lowly in spirit, and for the most part are unknown by this world that crucified Your Son Jesus Christ. So for those here today who are without Christ, may today be their day of entrance into the kingdom. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

As I conclude this service, I want you to hear the blessing of Aaron upon the people of God, and then we're dismissed. "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you; the Lord be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance on you; may the Lord give you peace." May this be the blessing that is upon you as you leave here today. God bless you.