

# Jacob—First in the Kingdom

Genesis 27:1 – 28:5 (Part 3)

Halifax: 20 March 2016, 10:30 AM

## Introduction:

Today in our study of Genesis, I want to again look at the account in Genesis 27.

- We have seen in this account how all four members of Isaac's family are contending for the blessing of the firstborn (either for themselves or for their son), and none of them understanding what the blessing really is.
  - They knew that it was a very special blessing...it would be through Abraham's offspring that the Messiah who would save the world would come.
- This account is full of tension as we watch while Isaac, having reached old age and having lost his sight,
  - sets out to bless Esau with the blessing of the firstborn son in disregard of God's oracle that had declared, at Jacob and Esau's birth, that the older (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob).
  - It was common practice in families for the firstborn son to become the priest of the family, to offer sacrifices for them and to lead them when his father was too old or had died,
    - And for Isaac's family, this blessing carried with it the extraordinary privilege of bringing forth the Messiah in the days to come!
- Isaac wants to bestow on Esau the sacred responsibility of being the priest of this home, for that was the right of the firstborn, and he was born first...
  - He wants to do this despite the oracle and even though Esau has shown himself to be disqualified for this privilege, not only by selling his birthright to Jacob (showing how little he cared for it) but also by marrying Hittite woman, the worst among the Canaanites, even though God had pronounced a curse on the Canaanites in the days to come.
- Isaac, knowing that his other son Jacob and his wife Rebekah would not approve of him blessing Esau arranges to bless Esau in a secret meeting. . .
  - But Rebekah overhears that plan and springs into action, setting up the means by which Jacob can pretend to be Esau and receive the blessing instead.
  - We saw that although Rebekah had faith, she ought to have also trusted God to fulfill His own word instead of resorting to deception.
    - She had faith in that she recognised the value of the blessing, but she lacked trust in that she thought she needed to employ deception to help God along.
    - She is like those ministers in the church who employ deception to get more people to come into the church.
- Her plan worked in that she successfully deceived Isaac so that he blessed Jacob instead of Esau,
  - But she gained nothing, and she lost much because by her deceit: she stirred up strife in her home so that Esau wanted to kill Jacob, and so that Jacob had to flee and so that she never saw him again (as far as we can tell).
    - She should have trusted the LORD and watched Him fulfill His promise instead of taking matters into her own hands.

- We saw that after he realised what had happened, Isaac repented of his folly of trying to redirect God's blessing and confessed that Jacob would indeed be blessed—
  - that God had spoken through him and that he could not reverse it—not because the words were magic, but because they were the declaration of God's will.

So far in looking at this account we have focused on three things...

- the importance of uniting in marriage with one whom God has blessed and not cursed...
- the folly of trying to redirect God's blessing, like Isaac did...
- and the failure of anxiously resorting to deception to obtain God's blessing (as Rebekah did) instead of trusting the LORD to fulfill His own promise to bless.

Today, I want to focus on Jacob and on the desire he had to be great in God's kingdom—

- which, as we shall see, was right in itself,
  - but quite wrong in the way he went about pursuing it.

And now I will once again read this account to you.

- I will begin this week in Genesis 27, verse 1 and read through verse 40.

**Gen 27:1 – 28:5:** Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, “My son.” And he answered him, “Here I am.”<sup>2</sup> Then he said, “Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death.<sup>3</sup> Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me.<sup>4</sup> And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring *it* to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.”<sup>5</sup> Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring *it*.<sup>6</sup> So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, “Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying,<sup>7</sup> ‘Bring me game and make savory food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.’<sup>8</sup> Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you.<sup>9</sup> Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves.<sup>10</sup> Then you shall take *it* to your father, that he may eat *it*, and that he may bless you before his death.”<sup>11</sup> And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “Look, Esau my brother *is* a hairy man, and I *am* a smooth-skinned man.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and

not a blessing.”<sup>13</sup> But his mother said to him, “Let your curse *be* on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get *them* for me.”<sup>14</sup> And he went and got *them* and brought *them* to his mother, and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved.<sup>15</sup> Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which *were* with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son.<sup>16</sup> And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.<sup>17</sup> Then she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.<sup>18</sup> So he went to his father and said, “My father.” And he said, “Here I am. Who *are* you, my son?”<sup>19</sup> Jacob said to his father, “I *am* Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.”<sup>20</sup> But Isaac said to his son, “How *is it* that you have found *it* so quickly, my son?” And he said, “Because the LORD your God brought *it* to me.”<sup>21</sup> Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you *are* really my son Esau or not.”<sup>22</sup> So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, “The voice *is* Jacob's voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau.”<sup>23</sup> And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him.<sup>24</sup> Then he said, “*Are* you really my son Esau?” He said, “I *am*.”<sup>25</sup> He said, “Bring *it*

near to me, and I will eat of my son's game, so that my soul may bless you." So he brought *it* near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. <sup>26</sup> Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near now and kiss me, my son." <sup>27</sup> And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: "Surely, the smell of my son *is* like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed. <sup>28</sup> Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. <sup>29</sup> Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed *be* everyone who curses you, and blessed *be* those who bless you!" <sup>30</sup> Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. <sup>31</sup> He also had made savory food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that your soul may bless me." <sup>32</sup> And his father Isaac said to him, "Who *are* you?" So he said, "I *am* your son, your firstborn, Esau." <sup>33</sup> Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, "Who? Where *is* the one who hunted game and brought *it* to me? I ate all *of it* before you came, and I have blessed him—*and* indeed he shall be blessed." <sup>34</sup> When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me—me also, O my father!" <sup>35</sup> But he said, "Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing." <sup>36</sup> And *Esau* said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!" And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" <sup>37</sup> Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?" <sup>38</sup> And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father?

Bless me—me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. <sup>39</sup> Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. <sup>40</sup> By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; and it shall come to pass, when you become restless, that you shall break his yoke from your neck." <sup>41</sup> So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob." <sup>42</sup> And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, "Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you *by intending* to kill you. <sup>43</sup> Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. <sup>44</sup> And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away, <sup>45</sup> until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?" <sup>46</sup> And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these *who are* the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?" <sup>28:1</sup> Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. <sup>2</sup> Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. <sup>3</sup> May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples; <sup>4</sup> and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham." <sup>5</sup> So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

May the LORD bless to us the reading and now the preaching of His Word.

One thing that is certain here—everyone in this family thought the blessing of the firstborn was a blessing greatly to be desired!

- All four of them are focused on seeing that blessing go where they want it to go!
  - They are divided about where they want it to land, but they are in agreement that it is a matter of great importance.
  - And indeed they were right!
    - It was a matter of tremendous importance!
    - Especially this blessing for this family because they were the family that had the privilege of bringing forth the Messiah through their seed.
      - The son who received this blessing would perform a great service to the kingdom of God!
      - He would truly be great in God's kingdom!

And this is where I want to begin the sermon today...

## **I. It is a good thing to desire to be great in God's kingdom!**

A. The desire for greatness in God's kingdom certainly did drive Jacob!

1. And it should have because greatness was a part of God's promise in His covenant.
  - From the very start, when He first came to Abram in Genesis 12, He declared to him (Genesis 12:2): **I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.**
    - Remember how we saw that God promised to Abram here the very things that the men at Babel had sought to obtain by their own works—to be great and to have a great name?
2. And now this same greatness had been expressly promised to Jacob.
  - God had declared that Isaac his father would be blessed with the same blessing that He had promised to Abraham,
    - and then while Jacob and Esau were striving in Rebekah's womb, the Lord had declared that Jacob would be the one who would have the privilege of the firstborn.
3. So Jacob wanted the blessing that the LORD had promised to him.
  - a. You can see this by his actions as recorded in Genesis!
    - He is obsessed with obtaining this blessing—
    - It is obvious in Genesis 25 that he had been looking for an opportunity to get Esau's birthright.
      - It immediately came to his mind when he saw Esau craving the supper he had just cooked—and he immediately thinks of purchasing it with the red stew...
  - b. And in the account we read in Genesis 27,

- We see that Jacob and his mother are both earnest about getting this blessing that God has promised to him...
    - Even though Jacob is well aware of the great risk involved if his efforts to deceive his father fail, the blessing is so important to him that he is willing to take the risk!
    - In v. 27, he says, **Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing.**
  - c. I do not say that his way of trying to obtain the blessing was right—it was clearly wrong to deceive his father...
    - But it was right for him to desire the full blessing that God had promised to him—it was very right!
- B. And I say, it is right for you to seek the greatness that God has promised to you in His covenant!
- He has not promised that you will bring forth the Messiah, but He has promised that He will make all of us great in His kingdom if we are in Jesus Christ!
    - He has promised to all of us a glorious eternal inheritance in His household!
    - He takes you as His very own child and heir, and He promises to make you great, to give you eternal life and exceeding greatness!
1. True faith seeks the greatness that God promises!
    - a. Paul tells us that he aspires to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!
      - For example, in Philippians 3:14, he says: **I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**
    - b. Likewise, the saints in general are commended for seeking a city whose builder and maker is God—eternal in the heavens.
      - They are after the great things that God had promised!
        - It would be dishonouring to God to have such a great blessing promised and to have no interest in obtaining it!
  2. So what about you?
    - a. Do you seek the blessing that God has for you?
      - 1) As a mom, do you seek to be a godly example?
        - to be a true blessing to your husband and to your children?
        - do you care about having a godly household that is blessed by God?
      - 2) And children, do you seek have God’s blessing as you grow up?
        - To be one who is kept by His power and grace and who does not rebel against your parents or against God?
        - Do you want your life to be great in His kingdom? To reach for the high calling of God in Christ as Paul did—or are your concerns somewhere else?
    - b. We live in a day when Satan has brought upon us a particular deception...
      - 1) It is a day when it is fashionable to be a failure in Christ’s kingdom.
        - It is seen as authentic to fail. Everyone respects you more.

- 2) A Christian mother is supposed to talk about all the struggles she has just keeping her home together...
  - She is supposed to talk about all the chaos and all the confusion and disorganisation that goes on in her home—and about dealing with the temper tantrums (as if they are something that is supposed to happen).
  - I don't mean that we should lie and pretend that we have it together when we don't, but we are children of Jesus Christ and we need to be seeking better things instead of boasting about how bad it all is!
- 3) I read a satirical article about a pastor who was struggling because he came to realisation that he was actually qualified for the ministry.
  - He had not been involved in any sex scandals, and he had not mishandled finances and he had faithful children...and he was humble and controlled his temper...
    - And everyone was starting to realise that he was actually biblically qualified to be a pastor!
    - They were very concerned, and he was having to face the truth.
  - Not that any pastor or elder should think that he is sufficient for the ministry—it is all of God—but shouldn't every minister and elder be biblically qualified?

TRANS> The point is well taken!

- We are not to accept mediocrity as God's redeemed people!
  - The Spirit of God is in us and He is at work to transform us and make us great!
  - We have been deceived into thinking that mediocrity is okay!
    - We do not strive for the greatness that God has promised to us!
- Jacob was right to cherish and pursue the blessing that God had promised him...
  - And it is right for you to do that too!

## II. But it is very important to understand what greatness in God's kingdom is!

- Just what is it to have God's blessing?

A. Jesus tells us squarely what it is to be great in His kingdom!

1. First, it is to be totally submissive to God—like a little child.
  - **Matthew 18:1-4: At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"** <sup>2</sup> Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, <sup>3</sup> and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."
  - A child (properly at least) does not try to run the show, but takes orders from his parents.
  - When we grow in grace, we more and more keep the commandments of God and submit to His will as Jesus did.
    - That is true greatness!
      - That is the greatness that the Son of God has had for all eternity—He always—not just as man—but always does what pleases the Father.

- We think greatness is taking over, but for us as human beings, greatness is rather in being taken over—being restored as God’s servants who obey Him.
2. Second, greatness in God’s kingdom is to be a servant who pours out his life for others.
- We read about this in Luke 22: **Luke 22:24-27: Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. <sup>25</sup> And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ <sup>26</sup> But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. <sup>27</sup> For who *is* greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? *Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.*”**
  - We think greatness is in controlling others so that they serve us, but true greatness is in pouring out our lives for the sake of others.
3. Third, Jesus tells us that greatness in His kingdom is learning to take up your cross with patience because of your love for the Lord and His church.
- As Luke 22:28 continues, Jesus commends His disciples as **“those who have continued with Me in My trials.”**
  - They had no idea what was coming because they did not understand the cross, but it was not from not being told.
    - In another passage where two of Jesus’ disciples (James and John) ask if they can sit on His right and left hand...
    - It is obvious that they are thinking about ease and greatness, but Jesus, thinking of bearing the cross, says to them, **Mark 10:38: You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?**
  - Over and over He tells His disciples that if they follow Him, it will not mean thrones and glory as they suppose, but suffering and rejection...
    - They will not become great in status, but in learning to possess their souls in patience and to bear the cross for Him—to keep on going in the face of rejection and hardship, constrained by His love.
    - That is the greatness they will attain!

TRANS> Now I can assure that anyone who seeks greatness in these three ways that Jesus describes—submitting to God, serving others, and bearing the cross with patience—will find the true blessing that Jesus has for His people!

- We live in a fallen world, and greatness in a fallen world means suffering and sacrificing for Jesus and His church!
    - That is the shape that love takes, that is the way of greatness!
- B. It is very obvious that Jacob did not understand this when he sought after blessing in God’s kingdom.
1. Just like Jesus’ disciples, he knew that the LORD was the only one who could bring salvation to him and make him great...
    - but he also thought that greatness was a competition with others in which you try to outdo them to attain the highest place.

- a. This is clearly seen in his actions...where he competes with Esau, playing on his weakness in chapter 25 to get him to sell his birthright,
    - And then in chapter 27, joining with his mother to deceive his own father!
    - What wickedness to go before the old dim sighted man who was his own father with his goat hair gloves and to lie to him again and again...
      - He declares again and again that he is Esau, Isaac's firstborn, and he even says that he got his game quickly because God gave it to him!
  - b. Now you be the judge!
    - Would you say that Jacob is in pursuit of the blessing Jesus talks about of laying down his life for others?
      - Is he interested in finding blessing by serving Esau and his aged father?
      - No, he is interested in trying to grab God's blessing away from them.
2. The greatness he was looking for was the greatness, not of serving, but of having dominion over others—of seizing control for himself and for his own purposes.
- The lesson that his father Isaac had been taught at Mt. Moriah when he was ready to forfeit his life as the firstborn son for the sake of his family had been forgotten.
    - Isaac would have done much better for his family if he had remembered this.
    - Instead of creating a household of strife, he would have set a child in the midst of them as an example of greatness...
      - A child who would come of Jacob to give His life as a sacrifice for the sake of His family!
  - How different their family would have been if this was the ideal!
    - Fathers, how different your family will be if you set up this child in the midst of your family—even Jesus, the Son who was born to die and who died to give us life.
  - Indeed, we can all attest, it is very easy to forget what true greatness is all about.
- C. So what sort of greatness are you looking for in God's kingdom?
1. Is it your expectation that blessing means that everything goes smoothly for you?
    - That you are able to have control and mastery over others?
    - Or is the greatness you seek that you would learn to lay down your life for others:
      - That you would be an example of patience in suffering to others...
      - That you would bear the burdens of others for the sake of Jesus Christ?
  2. I tell you, we have very little understanding of the greatness that the LORD has promised to us.
    - a. Like Jacob, and like Jesus' disciples, most of us don't understand this when we first come to the LORD for His blessing.
      - We realise, as they did, that blessing is only to be found with Him, but we do not at all grasp what the blessing entails.
      - We are blockheads—and sometimes it takes us years to understand this, but it is possible to understand it—Jesus' disciples came to understand it and all of us *ought* to understand it.



- b. But the whole church is very immature today when it comes to understanding the cross.
- We are blockheads like the disciples were before Jesus was crucified.
    - This is evident in three ways (three that I will mention at least)...
  - 1) First, that when it comes to the blessing of godliness, of self-control, of having a godly family, we think that is not possible in this world.
    - We find comfort in mediocrity and in expressing our failure and how our children have their temper tantrums.
    - We are like the lukewarm church that Jesus rebukes in Rev 3:14.
  - 2) Secondly, that we expect that by coming to Christ, we will be free from hardship and struggle—
    - that we will not have trouble with people hating us or with sickness or with our finances...
    - We think that God will never let war or economic ruin come our way.
    - The prosperity gospel continues to flourish and preach the kind of greatness in God's kingdom that Jacob and that Peter, James, and John were seeking—before they learned about the cross.
  - 3) Thirdly, our immaturity is seen in the shameful way that we despise the calling of women.
    - In 1 Timothy 5, for example, Paul describes the kind of woman in the church that is truly blessed—
      - What has she learned to do? To be the president of the bank? To gain honours in the military or the boxing rink?
      - No—she is the one who had been the wife of one man,
        - she is the one who is well reported for good works,
        - she has brought up children,
        - she has lodged strangers,
        - she has washed the saints feet,
        - she has relieved the afflicted,
        - she has diligently followed every good work (1 Tim 5:9-10).
      - But we say that such a woman has not made anything of her life.
        - We consider these things to be boring and unimportant.
          - These are the things that weak people do who are not able to make it in the world!
          - For a woman to devote herself to serving her husband, her children, and other people is to waste her life.
        - Don't get me wrong—there are woman in business who are commended—like Lydia...and the ideal virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 who buys and sells property...
          - But the focus of a godly woman is first of all the care of her husband and her children and of strangers and others.
          - Women who do this are made to feel inferior because we do not understand greatness today.
          - We think it is much more important to be a doctor or a lawyer.

TRANS> We are very confused, but I want to tell you the good news...

**III. Even though we do not understand what greatness is in God's kingdom, if we come to Him for blessing, He knows how to make us great!**

A. The most important place to start is to come to Jesus for salvation.

1. Surely you know that you are sinner—
  - Surely you know that you cannot save yourself.
  - Surely you know that God Almighty is the only one who can save you, the only one who can deliver you and make you great!
    - So the first thing is to come and put yourself in His hands...trust in that saving work that Jesus did on the cross to atone for sin.
    - You can't cover your sin or pretend it away, but you can trust in Jesus who was sacrificed for sinners.
  - And then also put yourself in His hands to renew your life and to make you great in His kingdom—to make you His holy child—to make you godly.
    - Take up your cross—be ready for hard things—and pursue godliness in His strength and in the strength of the Holy Spirit.
      - You will learn to drink His cup and to be baptised with His baptism.
2. Both Jacob and Jesus' disciples came to the LORD for His promised blessing even though they did not really understand the blessing and they got His blessing.
  - Despite Jacob's deceitful ways, you can see in the passage that we read that God's blessing is put upon Jacob twice...it is made certain to him
    - a. First, in verse 27-29...Genesis 27:27-29 where Isaac says: **“Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed. <sup>28</sup> Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. <sup>29</sup> Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!”**
      - You might say, but wait a minute, that sounds like the very thing you have been telling us is **not** the blessing—having control of others and prosperity.
        - Yes, it does sound like that to us,
          - but we must properly interpret it.
        - After telling His disciples what greatness is, Jesus tells them that they will be on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
          - But in this life, the nature of those thrones will involve laying down their lives for sake of their brethren...like they did!
          - And in the world to come, they will have eternal life.
      - The certainty is that Jacob will be blessed...
        - As Isaac says to Esau in verse 33, **“I have blessed him—and indeed, he shall be blessed.”**
        - If you have come to God for blessing, you too will “indeed be blessed.”

- b. And you see God’s blessing pronounced again by prophesy when Jacob is sent to Padan Aram...
- In Genesis 28:2-4, Isaac says to Jacob: **“Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother. <sup>3</sup> May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples; <sup>4</sup> and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.”**
  - Here the focus is more explicitly on the blessing that was first promised to Abraham.
    - In this way, God is making it very clear that He will bless Jacob even though he is yet a blockhead who doesn’t understand what the blessing will look like in this world.
- c. Did you know that this blessing is also pronounced on *you* by prophesy?
- It is!
    - God has promised in His sure word that He will bless all of those who come to Jesus.
    - He will forgive our sins and He will make us great—He will even make us to be sons and daughters in His kingdom.
    - He has promised that we will be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus—and that is **true** greatness.

TRANS> Come to Jesus and you *will* have God’s blessing.

- B. Consider how the LORD works in giving us His blessing even though we are blockheads.
1. You come to Jesus with great expectations of what His blessing of salvation will look like in your life!
    - a. You have many misconceptions about what the blessing really is.
      - You know that it involves forgiveness of sin and peace with God.
      - You know that it brings you eternal life and heaven.
    - b. But you struggle deeply because there are hard things—very hard things that you have to deal with.
      - You were told about bearing the cross, but now you are experiencing it.
        - You are treated unjustly, you suffer rejection, you are troubled by sickness or injury...
      - And God’s word confronts your selfishness and your pride,
        - And you struggle with your flesh that fights against you when you seek to lay down your life for the LORD and for others.
    - c. But all the while the LORD is at work in you to make you great in His kingdom—great in submission to Him, great in service to others, and great in bearing the cross with patience.
      - He is making you beautiful because you are His child, and there is much reshaping that must be done.

2. God is faithful to make His people truly great, even though we are blockheads.
  - a. In future sermons, we are going to see how God blesses Jacob by giving him all kinds of struggles and hardships...
    - and they will keep coming because Jacob will still not get it that what God wants is for him to lay down his life for others...
    - No, Jacob will keep on striving and competing to be blessed, but we will see that over the years, God will break him.
    - The day will come when Jacob will understand that God's blessing does not come by outfoxing others, but from the LORD alone.
      - His name will be changed to Israel because he will cry out to God and will not let Him go.
  - b. And likewise, we will see how Jacob's twelve sons must learn the same lessons...
    - We will see Judah go from selfishness to a man who is ready to die (or at least go to prison) in place of his brother for his father's sake.
    - And we will see how godly Joseph will learn the patience of bearing the cross.
  - c. But the encouragement for you is that God will do His work to bring His blessing to you just as He does it to bring His blessing to all His people.
    - The sooner you understand what greatness in His kingdom is, the better it will be for you—
    - You will not bumble around in pursuit of a blessing you don't understand the way Jacob did and the way Jesus' disciples did before Jesus was crucified...
      - but you will look more like the disciples did after Jesus was crucified when they suffered all things for Christ, but with understanding that the Lord was blessing them with the beauty of true greatness.

**Conclusion:** And now in closing, let us fill our hearts with love and devotion for the greatest one of all in the Kingdom of God!

- Our dear Lord Jesus Christ!
  - It is in Him we see what greatness truly looks like in a fallen world!
  - It looks like a life entirely poured out in service to His Father in heaven and His church on earth.
    - Only He could bear our sins because He is God the Son who willingly became man.
    - And though He hated sin more than any of us, and hated the rejection of His Father because of sin, yet He bore our sins before His Father to release us.
      - That is greatness!
  - As He Himself said: (Luke 22:26-30): **“He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. <sup>27</sup> For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves. <sup>28</sup> But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. <sup>29</sup> And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father**

**bestowed one upon Me, <sup>30</sup> that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”**

- He is giving us this kingdom where greatness is measured by giving rather than grabbing!
  - Come to Him, and He will make you great—in the way that He is great!
  - He blesses us, even when we are blockheads.