

April 14, 2024  
The Third Sunday of Easter  
Pastor Matt Duerr

### “God’s Narrative: Two Kingdoms”

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. As we continue through God's narrative, we pick up where we left off last week, The love story of Isaac and Rebekah. But we saw that wasn't all perfect. Rebecca was barren. And so, like Father Abraham. Isaac prayed about it. Rebekah became pregnant with twins, and they were fighting inside her womb and like Isaac and like Abraham, she went to the Lord to ask, “Why is this happening to me?” The Lord told her, because you have two children, and they will become two nations. But the older will serve the younger.

We pick up there. Those two children were born. First Esau was born. We read that he was red, that he was hairy with hair all over his back, all over his body. And he grew to become a skillful hunter, man of the field, an outdoorsman, an individual who his father Isaac loved. He was a man's man. Jacob was born immediately after, and he was literally holding Esau's foot. But he was not red nor hairy. He was not an outdoorsman. His skin was smooth. And he was well, shall we say, a mama's boy. And Rebekah loved him.

Well, fulfillment of prophecy begins. As we now look to Genesis Chapter 25. We find Jacob cooking in the kitchen and Esau returns home from the hunt, he comes back from the field, and we read he was exhausted. And so, he says to his brother Jacob, again I quote, “let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted.” And a little theme begins here. He was born red, hairy, he wants red stew. And we read, therefore his name was called Edom, which means red. So, he began to be called Edom. Jacob responds to his request for some red stew by saying very simply, “sell me your birthright now.” This isn't a question. It's a demand. You want food? Give me the birthright. Esau’s response starts to open up the door for us to understand him a little better. He exaggerates a bit, he says, ‘I'm about to die.’ Of what use is a birthright to me?’

Let's just take a little moment here to delve into the birthright. When we look at Deuteronomy 21:17, we see that the eldest, the one who got the birthright, received a double portion of the inheritance, so financially it was important. Secondly, we see that the birthright also carried with it a level of responsibility and leadership of the family. It was to be the father figure for the next generation, and he was to lead by example like Abraham had done. And again, if we go back to Genesis chapter 26 verse 5, this is how the Lord describes Abraham. He blessed him in all things, because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, kept my commandments, kept my statutes, kept my law. So as the father figure, you're also to be obedient and the example of obedience to God and God's word. And finally, with the birthright came the blessing of the covenant, that through you all nations will be blessed.

So, Jacob says, sell it to me now, Esau says, 'what good is it to me if I'm dead already?' Jacob says swear to me now that you're going to do it. And Esau did. He sold all of that for a bowl of stew. Thus we read, Esau despised his birthright. And when we go to Hebrews chapter 12, we read we are to strive for peace and holiness; see to it that no one is; and then there's this whole list of sins, you know that among you, there's no one who is sexually immoral, there are no liars, there's no etcetera, etcetera. But also make sure there is no one who is unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a meal. Unholy means not set apart.

But within God's family, what are we set apart for? Well, that's why our responsive reading here this morning comes in first Peter 2, verse nine. Please take this to heart. "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may declare the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light." This is our baptismal birthright. We are set apart for this. Keep that in mind, we're going to come back to it.

We're going back now to Esau and Jacob. The division really begins in the very next chapter, Genesis 27. We read when Isaac was old and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his son, to him. He said to him, 'I'm old, I don't know the day of my death, go and hunt, and let me quote this, "Prepare for me delicious food such as I love." Then bring it to me so that I may eat and bless you. Esau went right to work. He went out to hunt. Meanwhile, Rebekah had overheard this conversation. And she went, and she

got Jacob, told Jacob, 'Go to the flock, select two young goats, bring them back so that I may prepare; let me quote this again, "delicious food for your father, such as he loves." She's going to make it just like Esau did. Realistically, Esau probably learned how to cook from his mom. You're going to take it to your dad, and you're going to get him to give you the birthright.

Well, Jacob comes back with, Well, Mom, there's a problem with this. My brother, he saw, he's big, he's smelly, he's hairy. Dad will know it's not me, even though he can't see me. So, Rebekah went and took Esau's best garments, which would smell like him, and put them on Jacob. Then she took the skin of the young goats, put some on the smooth part of the back of his neck and on the top of his hands, and sent him in to Isaac with the food. And Isaac says, 'you have the voice of my son Jacob, but you have a smell, the outdoor smell of my son Esau. And you feel like him, you're hairy. And the food? It tastes like his. And so, he blessed Jacob and gave him the birthright, gave him the covenant that was first given to Abraham and passed on to Isaac, and now was passed on to Jacob.

In the very end of this chapter, we read that Esau came home and we read, "now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing which his father had blessed him." And that led Esau to two things. Number 1, I'm going to wait until Dad dies. Once Dad dies, Jacob dies. I'll kill him. And Rebekah heard him talking about this and so, well, let's say that she plays the Abraham and Isaac card. She goes to her husband Isaac and says, 'I loathe my life because of the Hittite women.' Now you might say the Hittite women, why is that bad because there are these Hittites and Canaanites around her?

No, if we if we back up just a little bit, we also see that not only did Esau despise his birthright, but Esau also despised his grandfather and his dad, and their not being unequally yoked. He had married two heathen women; two Hittite women, and we read they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah. And so, she goes to Isaac if Jacob marries one? And Isaac harkens back to how he got Rebekah, and says, 'go ahead, send Jacob back to Bethuel, to Uncle Laban, that he may get a wife from our family, from our people.

And it's on the way running away from his brother, the older who will serve the younger, that Jacob stops, lays down at night, and he has a dream. We usually call about it, call it by the name 'Jacob's Ladder.' You probably have

sung the song “We are climbing Jacob's Ladder. Every rung goes higher, higher.” It was an amazing dream. It was a dream where Jacob saw a ladder going from earth up to heaven and angels coming down and going up the ladder and God the Father, Almighty at the top. And Jacob is overcome. And God says to him, I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of the covenant. And God then proclaims the covenant to Jacob, that through him all people will be blessed. Through him the Messiah will come. When Jacob wakes up, he says ‘surely the Lord is in this place, how awesome is this place!’ It's exactly what Peter echoed in our Gospel on the Mount of Transfiguration. “It is good, Lord, to be here. Let me build three booths. One for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah. It's awesome to be in the presence of God. ”

But my question is. Are we like Peter? Do we echo Jacob? Do we say right here, right now, “Surely God is in this place. How awesome is this place!” Because his people are in this place. And like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we are God's people. We are God's people of the new covenant established by Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection from the dead. We are His people, and we have a call. Which we've already heard, both in the responsive reading and earlier in this sermon.

We are called to be a holy nation of people. A chosen race. That we need to clear the excellencies of Him who has called us out of the darkness and into his marvelous light. We aren't a race by skin color, we're race by faith in Jesus Christ who binds us together into one people. This building, the location of it, Lodi, Foothill, Jackson, Valley Springs, that doesn't matter. Buildings don't matter. The location doesn't matter. The name doesn't matter.

What matters is this, Jesus Christ said He would not leave us, that He would be with us always to the very end of the age. He is here. We are here. We are studying His word. And that's what should lead us all to say, “Surely God is in this place. How awesome is this place because we are the family of God.

In His Name, Amen.