



DATE: November 16, 2008

TEXT: Genesis 29:16-30

TITLE: "Genesis XIX: Twenty Years with Jacob"

We are looking at the life of Jacob. Again, allow me to remind you of the overall lesson from the book of Genesis. God reveals himself to humanity. Beginning in the Garden of Eden and continuing to our text this morning God continues to reveal Himself to his creation. Humanity rejected the general revelation.. That is where God revealed Himself to all of humanity. So God has chosen specific revelation. He has chosen to reveal himself tot he world through one family.. The family of Abraham. But remember this... the family of Abraham was far, far from perfect. The Bible never pictures the Patriarchs as perfect people... as a matter of fact, in many instances they are not even very good people. The amazing truth is this... in spite of the sin of man... God continues to love humanity. In spite of the sin of men..... God continues to reveal himself to humanity. This is clearly seen in our text this morning.

This morning we are covering twenty years in the life of Jacob. We are covering 3 chapters of Genesis. Allow me to briefly summerize theses chapters. I invite you to read them on

your own to fill in the details. Jacob deceives his father and betrays his brother. He flees for this his life. He has this wonderful dream of Jacob's ladder. Genesis 29:i begins with the sentence "**Then Jacob continued his journey and arrived in the land of the eastern people.**"

Jacob goes to a well. He encounters a beautiful girl there by the name of Rachel. Yes, this account is purposely a similar account of the finding of her future mother-in-law Rebekeh. Jacob quickly discovers she is the daughter of Laban, his uncle. He performs some macho, manly things to impress the girl and then goes to meet his uncle. The next three chapters are a relationship battle between Jacob and Laban. They trick and manipulate each other over money and over relationships. Jacob wants to marry Rachel. Jacob has no money so no payment for the bride. Laban tells him to work for 7 years and then he can marry his daughter. Sure enough Jacob works 7 years ... they have a wedding... they have a wedding night... and lo and behold he discovers that Laban had switched daughters... he had married Leah. How could this have take place? Most commentators attribute this to three things... veils, darkness, and drunkenness. Jacob, as you might have guesses was very angry. Angry at Laban and very angry at Leah. He

never forgave her. He goes back to Laban... still wants to marry Rachel. Laban agrees for an additional 7 years labor. He marries Rachel and works for 7 years. He loves Rachel and does not love Leah. Leah has many children, Rebekeh is barren. The women engage in a baby contest... who can have the most sons. In order to win this contest they both give Jacob their servant girls. Jacob ends up having 12 sons and at least one daughter from these 4 wives. These 12 sons become very important. Important in the rest of Genesis and important in the entire nation of Israel. They become the 12 tribes of Israel. In *Genesis 29 and 30* we see the birth of 11 of the 12 sons. The 12th son is born when Jacob returns to Canaan. Here is a list of the 12. Their names are very indicative of the family situation.

<u>Child</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Meaning of name</u>
Reuben	Leah	Misery.....The Lord has seen my misery
Simeon	Leah	Heard....the Lord heard that I am not loved
Levi	Leah	Attached...now my husband will be attached to me
Judah	Leah	Praise....this time I will praise the Lord
Dan	Bilhah (maid of Rachel)	Vindicated Rachel says God has vindicated her
Naphtali	Bilhah	struggle I am in a struggle with my sister
Gad	Zilpha (maid of Leah)	good fortune I am winning the contest with Rachel
Asher	Zilpha	happy. I am winning the contest with Rachel
Issachar	Leah	Reward Leah is rewarded with more sons
Zebulum	Leah	Honor. More children for Leah
(Dinah)	Leah	(Becomes important in Geneses 34)
Joseph	Rachel	may he add may the Lord give me another child
Benjamin	Rachel	son of my right hand (Genesis 36:16) Rachel dies

during childbirth

Let me finish up the events. Jacob now goes to Laban and demands that he be allowed to return to his homeland. Jacob and Laban both try to trick each other to divide up the flocks of sheep. By the hand of the Lord Jacob's flocks increase and Laban's decrease. After six years of this... Jacob lies to Laban and gathers his family and flocks and makes a run for Canaan. Laban pursues, but in a dream from God is told not to attack and kill Jacob. Rachel steals from her father the family gods but is not caught. They end up parting with a peace treaty. That's it.

Allow me to share some lesson from these chapters.

Lesson # 1 You reap what you sow. Notice in this story how almost every element of it reflects upon an earlier story. This is done purposely by Moses and the redactors to provide lesson to the readers. The section purposely begins with a very similar story of finding a wife by a well... but the servant of Abraham acts in a much more honorable and godly manner than Jacob. Let us also see a number of other examples of reaping what you sow

First, All three chapters are built around the concept of deception. Laban constantly deceives Jacob. He uses his family ties to basically have a slave for 20 years. He certainly

deceives Jacob in the giving of his daughters. Both try to deceive each other in the splitting of the sheep. Rachel ends up deceiving her father. There is a strange story of Leah and Rachel bargaining for Jacob for the night based on deception and the use of mandrakes. What goes around comes around. Jacob, whose name means “deceiver” ends up being deceived again and again. You sow what you reap. True also with us. I am amazed when people react with surprise when bad things happen to them after making choices that are not the will of God. We live in a day and age of sexual promiscuity. The result is STD’s. The result in women who are degraded. The result are unwanted children. The result is many, many broken families. We reap what we sow... do not be surprised by the crop.

Second, see the destructiveness nature of favoritism. We saw this two weeks ago with the story of Isaac and Rebekeh and their favoritism of their sons... we now see it in favoritism of wives. Let me say this... Leah was not an innocent bystander. She was part of the plot. She lived a life striving against Rachel. She names almost every one of her children (except Judah) to spite her sister. Every time Rachel heard a name she was reminded of her barrenness.

Favoritism destroys this family. They never learn... we will soon get into the story of Joseph... the favored son of Jacob.

The lesson is this... don't favor one wife over another. No, that is not the lesson, but I should say God never endorses polygamy in scripture. Scripture is clear that God desire one wife for one husband. That is taught again and again in scripture beginning with Adam and Eve. However, the bible does recognize the fact of polygamy. It is almost always negative. Which, of course, only makes sense. It could never work. Jealousy and hatred would always be the case.

The lesson again is... treat those around us in love and care. You do not need to be friends with everyone.... you do not even need to like everyone... but let your witness be the love and care you have for everyone regardless of your emotions.

Lesson # 2 Notice the danger of false pursuits. We see two false pursuits in our text.

First, Jacob pursued beauty. We see this description of Leah and Rachel in *Genesis 29:16-17*

Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17 Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful.

This is an expression meaning not too pretty. With veils all you could see was the eyes.

We too live in a day and age that outward beauty is valued almost above all else. This false value destroys many individuals. So many adolescents are severely damaged because of negative self-images based on an unreal expectation given to them by society. Kim works in a high school. She comes home many, many days deeply saddened by the pain of so many of her students. Students who are very nice kids... but do not like themselves. The pursuit of outward beauty and the false valuation of outward beauty destroys many people. As Christians, let us stand against this false value. As Christians let us make a point of loving individuals because they are God creation.

Second, We see the false pursuit of love. Poor Leah. She spent her entire life trying to be loved. Imagine the pain of seeing her sister loved even before the marriage. It caused her to be desperate. Imagine the pain of year after year after year seeing her husband love her sister and not her. You read these chapters with an open heart and you see pain and more pain.

We too live in a world that seeks love above anything else. I worked for a number of years with the New Castle Crisis Pregnancy Center. I counseled girls who were in their 2nd or 3rd

or 4th crisis pregnancy. Most were in their early to late 20's. All had children with different fathers. Every one of them were pursuing love... at almost any cost. They just wanted to be loved and accepted. They just feared loneliness above all else.

The truth is this.... the pursuit of human love will never bring the fulfillment God desires for His children. All humans fail. All humans make mistakes...and truthfully... all humans die. Love is given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. His love is absolutely reliable. He will never leave us. He will never fail us. And his love is eternal.

Leah, at some point in her life realized this. She named her 4th son Judah. This means... praise be to the Lord. One of the central themes of this chapter is struggle for inheritance.... both material inheritance and spiritual inheritance. Truthfully Joseph got most of the material inheritance... but Joseph, in the long run was not God's choice for the spiritual inheritance. Not one of Rachel's children... one of Leah's.... Judah became the line of blessing.

I will end with the lesson I began with... God blesses his children even when we are far from perfect. We see that in the life of Jacob... we see that in our lives. Praise be to God.