

THE BLESSING

GENESIS 27:25- 34, JUDGES 13:5

June 19, 2016

Introduction¹

ILL. One day in school, Calvin, the precocious, smart-mouth kid of the Calvin and Hobbes comic strips, raised his hand in class. Warily, his bespectacled teacher, Mrs. Wormwood, asked, “You have a question, Calvin?”

Calvin replied, “Yes! What assurance do I have that this education is adequately preparing me for life in the 21st Century?” Waxing eloquent, he stood up and continued, “Am I getting the skills I’ll need to compete effectively in a tough, global economy?”

And dramatically ending his speech with a raised clenched fist, he proclaimed, “I want a high-paying job when I get out of here! I want opportunity! I want success!”

Approaching his desk and tapping it with her pointer, Mrs. Wormwood looked down at Calvin and said, “In that case, young man, I suggest you start working harder. What you get out of school depends upon what you put into it.” Calvin responded, “Oh. Then forget it.”

ILL. Fatherhood has changed over the years. I heard about a father being asked who was in charge at his home and answering, “Well, my wife bosses the children, my children boss the dog and cat, and I can say anything I want to the goldfish.”

God Does Not Change

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Society may be mandating a change in Fatherhood, however God’s perception of what the father is to be and do has not changed.

We will look at the 27th chapter of Genesis this morning on Isaac bestowing a father’s blessing on his son. This story is filled with intrigue as Jacob steals the blessing from Esau through cunning, lying and the help of his mother, but that will not be my focus this morning. I want us to look into this most intimate action of a father and son in the passing down of the blessing.

The love story of Isaac and Rebekah is one of the most moving and beautiful in the Bible. It was love at first sight for these two who were betrothed by their parents. Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebekah to wife (Genesis 25:20). They were married for 20 years before the birth of twins; Esau and Jacob. These two sons were as different as day and night, and as time progressed, Esau became the favorite of Isaac while Jacob was the favorite of Rebekah.

Esau was a “man of the field”, meaning that he supported his family by hunting and working in the fields. We would call him the “outdoors type” of man.

Jacob is described as a plain man meaning that he was a perfect or upright man; dwelling in tents - subsisting by breeding and tending cattle. This job was considered as the most perfect employment.

¹ A sermon by Melvin M. Newland, *The Blessing*, Sermon Central

Esau ensured that his father always had meat on the table, while Jacob was the apple of his mother's eye.

Fatherhood Requires Giving the Blessing.

Genesis 27:1 And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. 2 And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: 3 Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; 4 And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

Isaac, has grown old and blind. He senses his days are numbered so he begins the process of getting his affairs in order. He calls the oldest of the twins, his favorite and the oldest, and declares that it is the time of giving the blessing. But first, he would like for Esau to go hunting and bring him back a deer for him to eat, after which, he would pronounce the blessing to his oldest son.

Now a Jewish father's blessing was a formal delegation of the father's leadership and authority to his oldest son. As a reward to the oldest son assuming the leadership responsibilities of the family, he receives a second or "double portion" of his father's possessions.

The blessing not only was for the material leadership of the family, but also the spiritual headship as well. So the bestowing of the blessing was a very important event indeed.

What a day it must have been for Esau. His father gave him a personal audience, gave him a personal task to do. He was filled with anticipation of receiving his "birth right" as the eldest male of the family. He was going to receive his inheritance and begin his new role as the leader of the family.

Trouble is Brewing

Genesis 27:5 And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. 6 And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, 7 Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death. 8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. 9 Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: 10 And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. 11 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: 12 My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. 13 And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them.

14 And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. 15 And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son: 16 And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: 17 And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

So Esau leaves, and while he is gone, Rebecca, his mother, seizes the opportunity to secure the blessing for Jacob, who was her favorite. She quickly prepares some tasty food and tells Jacob to put on Esau's best clothes. To help fool blind old Isaac, she puts goatskins on Jacob's hands and arms to make them feel hairy. Then she sends him in with the food to ask for the blessing.

Genesis 27:18 And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? 19 And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. 20 And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought it to me. 21 And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. 22 And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. 23 And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. 24 And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am. 25 And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank.

Jacob carries out the deceit planned by his mother. Jacob claims to be Esau, and fulfills Isaac's commission. He brought him food, dressed in Esau's clothes, and faked the hairiness of Esau. And then asked to receive the blessing of the firstborn

Even though Isaac was suspicious, being old and blind, the charade passed and Isaac became Esau in Isaac's mind.

The Beauty of the Blessing

Genesis 27:27 And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed: 28 Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: 29 Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.

I will cover the four parts of the blessing in just a minute. We read that Jacob immediately left the presence of Isaac after the blessing.

Now Esau enters the picture after he had hunted and prepared food for his father.

Genesis 27:30 And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31 And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. 32 And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau. 33 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed. 34 And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. 35 And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. 36 And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? 37 And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son? 38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept. 39 And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be

the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; 40 And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

We can see from the emotions that poured out of Esau that the “blessing” was a substantial component for the rest of his life. He realized the enormity of what had transpired: he was in shock.

In the book “Good Grief” by Granger E. Westberg, he stated that there are ten stages of grief. Let me read them to you in light of Esau’s response to the news:

1. Shock and Denial
2. Emotions Erupt
3. Anger
4. Sickness
5. Panic
6. Guilt
7. Depression and Loneliness
8. Resistance
9. Hope
10. Affirming Reality

Now that we have the history of the situation, I want to focus on the beauty of the blessing. In this case it was stolen, but let us focus on the blessing for the remainder of our time.

In his book, “The Blessing”, Dr. Gary Smalley examines the blessing that Isaac bestowed upon Jacob. He says, “The blessing contains 4 ingredients that ought to be present in every home today.”

He goes on by saying, “And when those 4 ingredients are present, and practiced consistently, then our children grow up solid, secure and confident of themselves, able to go out into the world and function normally.” He goes on to say, “But if those ingredients are absent in the home, then too often the child ends up like Esau, steeped in bitterness and anger.

The First Ingredient is “A Father’s Touch”

Notice vs. 22, “Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him.” Vs. 26 says, “Then his father Isaac said to him, ‘Come here, my son, and kiss me.’”

Now this is not an isolated incident in scripture. Almost every time a blessing is bestowed in Hebrew culture, it involves touching the laying on of hands, a kiss, an embrace something that conveys acceptance and love.

The 10th chapter of the Gospel of Mark says that people brought children to Jesus so that He could touch them. Jesus took them and placed them on his knee, and laid His hands upon them, and the scripture says, “He blessed them.”

Jesus knew exactly what children need to feel loved and accepted. So He touched them and blessed them.

Dad’s, in today’s society of both parents working, an activities schedule that needs spreadsheets to keep track, a “meaningful touch” is vital in our homes, too. Communication becomes almost non-existent and that old meeting place, the “dinner table” is rarely used as a point of communication within families. The best way to communicate love to a very small child is by touching them, and holding them close.

Jacob was 40 years old when Isaac touched and kissed him to convey his blessing. No matter your age, personal contact – a handshake, a hug, a kiss, an embrace – is important to communicate love and acceptance.

The Second Ingredient is "A Father's Words"

"Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field. . ."

Now I suppose that today's child would not consider it a compliment to be told, "You smell like a field. I just wanted you to know that."

But to an old outdoorsman like Isaac, who thought he was speaking to Esau, the smell of a field about ready for harvest was a great smell. It was a compliment, a positive message that communicated his love.

I like to watch people. One day on our trip to France, Bruce and Kim were off exploring Sarlet and my wife was doing some shopping, I sat at a sidewalk café and just watched people. It was fascinating watching all the different cultures mixed together in one place. It was beautiful.

However, all too often, I see parents quick to criticize and remind children of their mistakes. Name calling has become the norm in correction: "You dummy", "You're lazy." "You're too fat." "Why can't you be like _____." I learned way to late that words of criticism really don't accomplish much. All they do is cause a child to withdraw.

Of course correction is part of the Father's duties, and constructive criticism can be a great tool. But it's more important to communicate love through words that say, "You're worth something. I'm glad that God gave you to us. You're better than any present I could ever receive."

As I look back on the way I raised my children, I wish I would have communicated more words that communicate acceptance and love. I now realize that they need to be spoken over and over again, even when our children stumble and fall. Father's, don't wait until the last minute to do it.

The Third Ingredient is "A Father's Encouragement"

"May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness an abundance of grain and new wine."

He's saying, "You're special, so God will give you the best He has to give." And it is especially important to teach your children, "You're so valuable that God even came into our world and died on the cross for you."

But it's not just by words. We teach this in a number of ways. A lot of times when a child comes, we're so busy. We have one eye on the TV and one eye on them, and we can't concentrate on what they're saying.

So when a child comes to talk to you, turn off the radio or TV set. Lay aside the newspaper, and listen to what they have to say!

That simple act communicates value. "You're worth something. You're more important to me than the ballgame or newspaper. You're a valuable part of our family. I'm glad God gave you to us. And whenever you have something you need to talk about, I'm here to listen."

The Fourth Ingredient is "A Father's Vision"

"May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed."

Isaac is helping him to raise his sights and see that his future is bright.

That is an important responsibility of parents, isn't it? We all know that passage in Proverbs 22:6 that says, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." We've always

made a spiritual application there, "Teach them the things of God and when they're old they will not forsake them."

But there is another application. We're to help our children find their niche, discover who they are, and why they've been made. God made them special.

So as they're growing up, help them understand their gifts and talents, and what they're best suited to do in life. Counsel and guide them to become the kind of person God wants them to be.

A word of Caution

And don't make the mistake some make as parents by trying to get our children to become what we want them to be, instead of being what God made them to be. I wonder how many people have tried to force their children into becoming something God never equipped them for, or intended them to be.

Our responsibility as parents is to help them see themselves for who they really are, and to help them prepare for a glorious future.

In summary, I firmly believe that the mortar that holds a Father and his children together is; a meaningful touch, a spoken message, assurance of their value, and picturing a glorious future.

Conclusion

This morning, God is the perfect parent who has conveyed to us all the ingredients of His blessing in just one verse of scripture. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

ILL. I think you are all familiar with the parable that we call the "Story of the Prodigal Son." Well, I want us to consider it again with a little different twist. Listen to the story in a modern setting as told by Philip Yancey in his book "What's so Amazing about Grace?"

Yancey tells of a prodigal daughter who grows up in Traverse City, MI. Disgusted with her old fashioned parents whom she believes overreact to her nose ring, the music she listens to, and the length of her skirts, she runs away. She ends up in Detroit where she meets a man who drives the biggest car she's ever seen.

The man with the big car – she calls him "Boss" – recognizes that since she's underage, men would pay premium for her. So she goes to work for him. Things seem good for a while – at least no one is trying to get her to change.

But then she gets sick for a few days, and it amazes her how quickly the boss turns mean. Before she knows it, she's out on the street without a penny to her name. She still turns a couple of tricks a night, and all the money goes to support her drug habit.

One night while sleeping on the metal grates of the city, she began to feel less like a woman of the world and more like a little girl. She begins to whimper. "God, why did I leave? My dog back home eats better than I do now." She realizes that more than anything in the world, she wants to go home.

Three straight calls home get three straight connections with the answering machine. Finally she leaves a message. "Mom, dad, its me. I was wondering about maybe coming home. I'm catching a bus up your way, and it'll get there about midnight tomorrow. If you're not there, I'll understand."

During the 7-hour bus ride, she's preparing a speech for her father. And when the bus comes to a stop in the Traverse City station, the driver announces a 15-minute stop - 15 minutes to decide her life.

She walks into the terminal not knowing what to expect. But not one of the thousand scenes that have played out in her mind prepares her for what she sees. There in the bus terminal in Traverse City, MI, stands a group of 40 brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, cousins and a grandmother, and a great-grandmother to boot.

They're all wearing party hats and blowing noise-makers, and taped across the wall of the terminal is a computer-generated banner that reads – "Welcome Home!"

Out of the crowd of well-wishers breaks her dad. She stares out through the tears quivering in her eyes and begins her memorized speech. He interrupts her, "Hush, child. We've no time for that. No time for apologies. We'll be late. A big party is waiting for you at home."

This morning we offer God's invitation. A loving Father reaches down to touch us, speak to us, tell us how valuable we are, and help us see the glorious future that we have in Him. If you have a decision to make this morning, we invite you to come. We pray that you will respond as we stand and sing.