

Bridgeway Community Church
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August 15, 2021

I SAW ESAU

A Summer Character Study by Dr. Anderson

HOLD ONTO YOUR BIRTHRIGHT

Genesis 25:21-34 (NIV, 1984)

²¹ Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. ²² The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord.

²³ The Lord said to her,

"Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples from within you will be separated;
one people will be stronger than the other,
and the older will serve the younger."

²⁴ When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁵ The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. ²⁶ After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

²⁷ The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. ²⁸ Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

²⁹ Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. ³⁰ He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.)

³¹ Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."

³² "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?"

³³ But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.

³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left.

So Esau despised his birthright.

ESAU

- The older twin
- Hairy and red (name means “hairy” and/or “red”)
- So, we can basically call him - “**DIRTY HARRY!**”
- Skilled hunter
Loved & favored by his dad
- Famished from hunting - “Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I am famished!” (Genesis 25:30)

JACOB

- The younger twin
- Came out of the womb pulling on his brother’s heel
- Jacob’s name means “*grasping the heel or deceiver*”
- Deal maker
- Opportunistic

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN FAMISHED?

Not hungry, but “*famished*”!

Definition of *famished*:

- Extremely hungry
- Intensely hungry
- “To suffer or cause to suffer extreme hunger; starve, starve to death” (Merriam-Webster)

Esau found himself in this place of decision.

- His *appetite* was stronger than *his ability to analyze*
- His *hunger* was stronger than his *head*

Esau’s brother, Jacob, took advantage of his brother’s weak condition and swindled him with a deal that he couldn’t refuse.

- Jacob says to his famished brother, “First sell me your birthright.” (Genesis 25:31)
- A birthright is the “*right to be recognized as firstborn*” and all the benefits that come with it, including the **inheritance**, the **leadership of the family** and the **judicial authority** of the father.

- The birthright was legally and rightfully Esau's, but Esau traded it—something of great positional & lasting value for something of temporary & fleeting value in order to satisfy his appetite.
- **Sounds like some of the choices we make, doesn't it?**
Whether it is our physical appetites, sexual or emotional appetites, or even the appetite of our tempers to release a flood of anger upon another, we make choices to satisfy our temporary desires, instead of fighting for the more lasting and eternal values.

Three LIFE LESSONS From Esau that will Help you Hold onto What is Rightfully Yours:

1. BEWARE OF WEASELS IN YOUR WAY

THERE ARE PEOPLE **WHO WANT WHAT YOU HAVE** BUT ARE NOT WILLING TO WORK FOR IT. INSTEAD THEY WEASEL FOR IT! "You want what I have without having to go through what I went through!" Some folks want **the crown** without going through **the cross**!

- There are "**workers**" and then there are "**weasels**".
- Jacob was a weasel!
- There are "Jacobs" (weasels & deceivers) all around you
- There are "Jacobs" that will "grab onto your heel"! They will ride you coat tails and hang on to your heel and then try to make their own deal.

WARNING: Some of them may even be family!

- This was Esau's brother!! His TWIN brother!
- **Some "family" members can't be trusted!** They will offer you something that *will cost you more than you want to pay and keep you longer than you want to stay!*

2. BE FIERCELY COMMITTED TO WHAT'S FIRST!

Jacob uses the word "**first**" twice (v. 31 & 33)

- Jacob replied, "**FIRST**, sell me your birthright." (v.31)

- But Jacob said, “Swear to me **FIRST**. So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.” (v.33)

IF GOD IS FIRST, then be fiercely committed to Him in your **living and in your giving**. Jesus said: “Seek **FIRST** the kingdom of and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33, NIV84)

When you hear the word “**FIRST**”, pause to make sure it’s a good deal.

- At the end of the day, it is all about **choices and priorities**.
- We have a choice how **we spend our time, our money, our relationships**
 - Is your marriage a priority? Spending time with your children? Preparing for school or your professional career? Becoming debt-free? Spending time with God? Spending time with important friends?
 - Don’t give up your priorities, your values! Don’t give up your position of integrity for something of lesser, temporal value.
- **Don’t allow your appetite to rob you of your birthright!** — [Create a reminder of this phrase.] Tweet it. Create a meme with it! Put it on a 3x5 card or a post-it note.
- **DONT ALLOW YOUR APPETITE TO ROB YOU OF YOUR BIRTHRIGHT!**

We all have appetites (physical, sexual, power, position, popularity, fame, money.)
What appetites or habits have the strongest pull in your life?

Hebrews 12 says: “Let us throw off everything that hinders and **the sin that so easily entangles...**” (Hebrews 12:1, NIV84)

The King James Version says: “...the sin that easily besets us” (Hebrew 12:1)

Do you have a “**besetting**” sin or a “**habitual vice**” that hinders you from your rightful place?

- Many of you have temptations! You have habits, addictions, vices, proclivities, and tendencies that easily beset you.

- **Esau had an appetite. It was natural. It was human.** But even natural and human appetites *can lead us into trouble!*

THE POINT OF TODAY'S SERMON IS THIS: DON'T ALLOW YOUR APPETITE TO ROB YOU OF YOUR BIRTHRIGHT!

Esau's hunger was stronger than his desire to hold onto his position. He quickly evaluated his birthright as being of lesser value than satisfying his hunger.

- Had Esau held on and gone to his father or mother, had he held on and negotiated harder with his brother, had he held on and prayed for greater strength to resist his urges—***what would have happened?***
- **We don't know because Esau did not hold on. But you and I can!**

The Bible says: "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13, NIV84)

3. BRING YOUR APPETITES UNDER CONTROL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- **[Like] Jesus in the desert** - The ultimate deceiver tried to make a bad deal by appealing to Jesus' appetite.
 - The **first Adam** looked and took hold of the fruit and ate it.
 - The **second Adam** (Jesus) took another approach that is instructive for us.
- It says in 1 John 2:16: "For everything in the world, the **lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life** - comes not from the Father but from the world." (1 John 2:16, NIV84)
- These **3 AREAS OF ATTACK** (the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life) are the same areas of attack that the devil uses on us as well.
 - He tried to use it on Jesus, but failed.
 - It worked on **Adam and Eve**; it worked on **Esau**—and It works on us *when we are not putting our appetites under the control of the Holy Spirit.*

JESUS' EXAMPLE (Matthew 4:1-11)

- **First, the devil appealed to Jesus's flesh**

- “If you are the son of God, tell these stones to become bread” (Matthew 4:3, NIV84)
- Jesus answered: “It is written, Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4, NIV84; Deuteronomy 8:3)
- **Second, the devil appealed to Jesus’s pride**
 - “Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. IF you are the Son of God, he said, throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’ (Matthew 4:5-6, NIV84) — **Note:** The devil knows the word of God too!
 - **The first Adam gave in after the first round** of the deal was offered!
 - **Esau gave in after the first round** of the deal was offered!
 - Jesus returned the negotiation with **a rebuttal**. “It is also written: Do not put the Lord your God to the test.” (Matthew 4:7, NIV84; Deuteronomy 6:16)
 - Jesus did not accept a “**shortcut to the crown.**” He was willing to go through the hard work and *not weasel his way* to glory
- **Third, the devil appealed to Jesus’s eyes**
 - “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and splendor. All this I will give you, he said, if you will bow down and worship me.” (**Matthew 4:8-9**)
 - Jesus answered him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” (**Matthew 4:10; Deuteronomy 6:13**)
 - It was tempting but Jesus didn’t want His crown without the cross!
 - Without the cross He would not have gotten you and me! **We were worth it for Jesus to resist.**

Someone said: “In order to say NO to a burning desire, you have to have a deeper YES burning within.” Do you have a stronger burning desire within to say YES to?

Jesus said NO to Satan because He was saying YES to us and YES to his Father!

- What is your deeper burning YES within to hold onto your priorities and to the royalty of your birthright?
- Are you willing to exchange your priorities for a lesser bowl of soup?
 - You may be hungry or thirsty as a **divorced, widowed or single man or woman**, but do you have a deeper burning desire with to resist the sex culture that besets us in this day and age?
 - You may be a hungry or thirsty **spouse who needs emotional or sexual attention** outside of your marriage. Are you willing to take in that bowl of soup through an affair or watching porn to satisfy the priority of your vows?
 - You may be hungry and thirsty for **a promotion or a position at work**; a business opportunity or financial deal that could set you up for life, but are you willing to give up the position of integrity that you have to cut an unethical deal?

What are your priorities, children of God? *To seek God and his righteousness OR to give up your birthright for a bowl of temporarily satisfying soup?*

- This is not an easy sermon for me to preach, [because] I have had my share of Esau moments.
- **Oh, I saw Esau!** I saw Esau in myself, in my ministry, in my marriage, in my money—I [even] saw Esau this week.

Esau is that “Dirty Hairy” in all of us

- rough around the edges, hard working
- hungry, thirsty, passionate
- **vulnerable and on the edge of losing what is important over what is expedient or temporarily satisfying.**

[Yes, Esau enjoyed his soup.] The problem was what happened afterwards.

“Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.” (Genesis 25:34)

— **The very thing you cherished now becomes the very thing you despise because you didn’t properly value it.**

The Contemporary English Version puts it like this: "...and when Esau had finished eating and drinking, he just got up and left, **showing how little he thought of his rights as the firstborn.**" (Genesis 25:34b CEV)

— Sometimes you don't see the value in something until after you lose it!

CONCLUSION

Three Life Lessons that will help us hold on to what is rightfully ours

1. **Beware of weasels in your way**
2. **Be fiercely committed to what's first**
3. **Bring your appetites under the control of the Holy Spirit**

A PERSONAL WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

- Some of you may be saying right now in your life, "I Saw Esau".
- You may be staring at that bowl of tempting soup right now...*on your job, in your home, on your computer screen, or on your phone..*

[If so:]

1. **Repeat God's Word out loud** (like Jesus did)
2. **Resist the Devil and he will flee from you** (like Jesus did)
3. **Receive the ministry of God's angels** (like Jesus did)

The Word of God says that the angels ministered to Jesus after he successfully fended off the devil. — "Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him." (Matthew 4:11)

- When **Esau** was done eating, he got up and left.
- When **Adam** was done eating, he and Eve were kicked out of the Garden.
- When **Jesus** stood against the temptation, **the DEVIL LEFT HIM!!** (and angels swooped in)

[Final] declaration & exhortation:

- "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your **STAND** against the devil's schemes." (**Ephesians 6:11**) Therefore put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes you may be able to **STAND** your ground, and after you have done everything to STAND...**STAND firm then!**" (Ephesians 6:11, 13-14a, NIV84)

AMEN & AMEN!