

Genesis 25:19-34 - 9th Sunday After Pentecost

“Exchange rates and poor choices”

PART ONE – The Story

Every time I take families through the Baptism Orientation course; I say this to them. By virtue of your child's birth they are part of your family. Over time they will learn what it means to be a Smith, Brown or Jones. How do my kids learn to be a McLean? I have not once set them down; and given them a lecture – kids don't learn that way. Kids learn through story. I have told them hundreds of stories; some only a couple of sentences long. Those stories start making connections; those stories are the way that they get to know me; not just me now; but as I was when I was a mechanic, when I lived with my 4 sisters; when I lived in the country; when I was a powerless 5 year old. These stories are critical for their understanding of who they are. Stories also were the glue for Aboriginal and other tribal cultures.

If we don't know our past; we will NEVER be comfortable with our future. That's why adopted kids often want to find out about their past; that's why the ABC has a programme called Australian story; that's why the only link we have with our past is story. Without story, I have no link with my Scottish ancestry; without story; I am cut off from the past here at PoP. I've only been here for 3 years; but if I'm going to be a good pastor, I need to hear the story of the past 20.

If we know our past; we will face the future with confidence. For years we have not believed that as a culture as a society. For years we have forgotten history. We have made such huge technological leaps; we have moved so far; we have arrogantly said that, “If it hasn't happened in the last 30 years it wasn't worth happening”. And that has led us to a society that despises age; and if a society despises age; they despise wisdom. That's what I have been telling Brisbane through the recent ‘wisdom culture’ notices on the sign.

Guys, the information age is over; and what will replace it is the ‘Wisdom Age’. And the church is well placed; because we have wisdom - we have story.

And so when I speak to baptism families; I say, by virtue of their birth; your children will become, Jones', and Smiths and Browns. Kid's start developing an interest in family around 4 years of age; and never stops. By virtue of their citizenship; they will learn what it means to be Australian; this starts with stories of Captain Cook, and the aboriginal inhabitants years before white man; and who John Howard is. This starts around 6 or 7 years of age. And by virtue of their baptism; all of the faith stories belong to them as well; Creation, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau; King David, Solomon, Jesus, Paul, Matthew Mark, Luke and John. These are our stories; and this can start from birth. See how easy it is to share the faith with children? Just share the story. Just like stories about when you were little; just like stories that make us Australian. The bible is story. The bible is salvation story. Kid's love story. Adults love story. Share the story. And so, today our Genesis story continues.

PART TWO

Abraham had Isaac and Ishmael. Isaac the second born carries the family line through. Isaac meets and marries Rebekah at age 40. Just like her mother in law; she couldn't have children; but we are told that Isaac prayed to God and she became pregnant. I'm sure he did a bit more than just pray! It reminds me of what Martin Luther said once, “Pray as if it all depends on God; and work as if it all depends on you”. I'm sure that Isaac prayed and, well, worked hard.

She had a tough pregnancy; the twins were giving her curry. They fought inside the womb. It was so tough for her, Rebekah even questioned her reason for living; her thoughts turned dark, “Why am I alive? What purpose do I have here?”. From my experience, when people start talking like that; they start contemplating self-harm; they start to contemplate suicide. It would honestly surprise me if anyone would get through life without at least thinking about suicide at least one point in their life. Perhaps even Rebekah, lovely Rebekah. Just proves she's human.

But she is lucky, she gets through it by God telling her that these guys are fighting because inside of you are two nations; they will always fight for control and supremacy; but the younger will win; the eldest child will serve the youngest. Again that's so real life. Many of our marriages, many of our families, and churches and governments are about control; and when it's about control; we get winners and losers.

Esau, the eldest, was born a hairy red kid; Jacob came out grabbing onto the heel of his brother. Esau was the outdoor lad; grew up to be a hunter. Jacob was the indoor PlayStation type. Interesting how the Bible puts it, “Jacob was a quiet man who liked to live in tents”. Real men it seems lived under the stars those

days; tents? Ha; they are for wusses. How things change- we go to water if we don't have running hot water... ..back to Scripture...[read Genesis 25:29-34]

Let's get it straight what a travesty that was. Your birth rite; your inheritance was everything in those days. When Mum or Dad joking (or sometimes not so jokingly) says, "I'll cut you out of the will"; we know that's the last great rejection that anyone could give. Esau for the sake of his belly; for the sake of one meal; cut himself out of the will; Esau self selected out.

But it's more than money; way more than money. Some of you know the eternal rejection of being cut out of the will, being cut out of the family. My Grandfather was cut off from his family because he married a German during the 2nd World War; It's not the money; it's the eternal separation of father and son, it's the cutting off from blessing; it's making it in the world without Mum and Dad's moral support; and not because of death - because we can't control death; but because of choice. It's the same reason that divorce is harder than death, because divorce is rejection by choice, not rejection by circumstance.

Esau gives up all his blessing, all his birthright; all for a lousy meal. Esau gives up something important, and in exchange gets something that doesn't last. Sounds like a bad deal to me – but the thing is; we are masters of bad exchanges. Let me explain:

- A year 9 girl for the sake of popularity gives up her virginity. She may be popular for a short while; but she can never get her virginity back. Not a good exchange.
- A worker spend long hours hoping to snag a promotion. Once they get it, they turn around and their family is gone. Not a good exchange.
- A couple give up little luxuries all their life as they save for a great retirement; but one of them dies. Not a good exchange
- An old man has a disagreement with someone at church; and decides to leave. Community is broken forever. . Not a good exchange
- A mother says what's really on her mind to her 20-year-old child; they don't speak for 8 months. Not a good exchange.

You see we are masters at giving up much; for receiving little. It's like a bad exchange rate. But that's life. We just do it. Fortunately another exchange has been made for us. We call it the Great Exchange. In exchange for our sin; God has given us life.

In exchange for our poor sexual choices; we get forgiveness. Many of you here today were that year 9 who, looking for love; found sex instead. Those people will probably say to the year 9's here today; "Look, It's not worth it; give me my time again; I wouldn't do it" but the fact that you are sitting here today means that you have understood the Gospel; you have understood that God exchanges our poor choices for forgiveness.

Most people think that church is about having all good people here. Well this church isn't about that; this church takes God's grace seriously, and God's grace means that all of us who have made poor choices; all of us who have not made good exchanges – people like you and me; are able to enjoy God's warmth.

We like to take Romans 8 seriously. "There is no condemnation for those who are Christ Jesus... for God has done what the law could not do: by sending his son ... to deal with sin".

So for you who have made poor choices; and that my friend is all of us; there is no condemnation for us who are in Christ Jesus. That's the radical message of grace that we teach here. That's the radical message of Grace that the Bible teaches.

Andrew McLean July 2005 (AP10)

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