

Genesis (The Promise-Keeping God)

*Week 2/8 “God has no grandchildren”
by the Rev’d Michael Marklew (11/10/2026)*

Bible Passage: Genesis 28:10-22

Father, open our hearts and minds to your word, help us to see your love even when we do not think we deserve it. In Jesus Name. Amen.

When Ally and I got married, we had an entire table with every seat taken just for our parents. Ten parents between the two of us, are we dysfunctional? Perhaps, but certainly not like we see today in Genesis 28.

What a mess it is. The levels of dysfunction in these Genesis families are hard to believe.

Take Abraham, later Abraham, his story is full of dysfunction, a wife passed off as a sister, not once but twice. A child to a handmaiden with his wife's blessing and a son sent away, all of it even though the Lord had said to him.

“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.” (Genesis 12:2)

And then we have Abraham's son Isaac. His story is hardly any different. Again, a wife passed off as a sister, favouritism between his sons, and a blessing given in error, but somehow irrevocable, and all of it even though the Lord had said to him.

“I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham.” (Genesis 26:3)

And last, but not least for today, is the grandson of Abraham, the son of Isaac, Jacob.

He tricks his brother out of his birthright for some bread and stew. Under his mother's instruction, he goes to great lengths to deceive his blind father and steal the blessing that was for his brother.

Granted, this happens before the Lord says to Jacob, “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.” In today's passage (Genesis 28:14b).

Yet, I am not sure if this makes it better or worse. At any rate, he goes on to favour his own son Joseph, causing his other children to hate him.

And I haven't even mentioned the extended family. The levels of dysfunction there are even more unbelievable.

Yet God chooses to use these people. His grace works through them, regardless of it all, and the blessing continues down the generations.

And it isn't just them, turn on the TV, or do some doom scrolling on social media, and we are quickly reminded of the dysfunction of our day and more importantly that God continues to use broken people like us.

He continues to forgive and set our path straight, and he continues to call all those who put their trust in Jesus, sons and daughters.

For God has no grandchildren. Only sons and daughters.

3 things today.

1-Performance (vv1-14)

Or lack thereof. The first half of Genesis 28 is an odd foundation for the greatest kept promise of all time.

2-Promise (vv.10-15)

What we see here is nothing less than a supreme display of divine grace, and not a matter of performance, for it is offered freely, it is unsought and many would argue undeserved.

Yet God out of his grace and faithfulness affirms the blessing that is now upon Jacob and eventually falls upon us through Jesus.

3-Payback (vv.16-22)

Clearly Jacob is taken back by the grace of God and offers God the best of what he has, a 1/10th, but is it a bargain? I don't think so, but it is a reciprocal affirmation of the blessing.

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First up

1-Performance (vv1-14)

A ruse, a deception, a stolen blessing.

Genesis 27 verse 28

May God give you heaven's dew and earth's richness –an abundance of grain and new wine. 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.' (Gen 27.28-29)

This blessing is given to Jacob by the blind Isaac on his deathbed. It is given by a father under the false pretence that the one receiving it is his brother Esau.

For It is a ruse, a deception of the highest order, and what is worse, is that this is no accident.

For Jacob, under the direction of his mother, knowingly and willingly deceives his blind father Isaac, by putting on his brother's clothes, answering as his brother and stealing the blessing that was intended for another.

It was a performance no less, but not the kind of performance one would expect in this situation or any for that matter. But here we are.

A promise of God in the midst of dysfunction, and on one hand, it matters not, for God would not be God if he could not use our mess for his glory and his purposes.

But on the other hand, I can't help but think of the pain and the hurt that this family could have avoided, had they paid more attention to God and trusted him more closely.

Either way, I for one, am grateful that God can use broken people, for such is his grace, such is the promise of God. Our second point.

2-Promise (vv.10-15)

It is God's world, it is God's plan and no failure of ours can thwart the promises of God.

Verse 10.

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. (Gen 28.10-12)

In a passage that could have easily made it into our perplexing passage series, is a dream of Jacob, a dream that begins with angels moving up and down, from heaven to earth and back again.

Now if this passage feels familiar, it might be because Jesus spoke similar words in John 1:51.

'Very truly I tell you, you will see "heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on" the Son of Man.' (John 1:51) (Gen 28.51)

It isn't a long bow to draw, to suggest that Jesus says this because he is the new Bethel, he is God's dwelling place. But I digress, and at this point it serves as a reminder that this dream is from God, that the message is from God, and that this is all part of his plan.

That Jacob would see heaven and that we see heaven in Christ.

Verse 13.

There above it stood the Lord, and he said: 'I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. (Gen 28.13)

Blink and miss it, but notice that God is standing, and standing in this culture is no small thing. If a king was to stand, it means that he is about to say something significant, that he is about to make a promise, give a blessing or issue a decree.

Meaning that there is no greater way to express the seriousness of this occasion than to have God stand and speak these words.

And also notice how God introduces himself as the Lord, the God of Abraham and the God of your father and the God of Isaac. Nowhere else in Scripture is this exact divine title used. This is given specifically to Jacob.

But what does all this mean?

It means that what God is about to say sits above the rise and fall of empires, and that God is both recalling the great promises and the blessings given to his forbearers and that it now applies to Jacob.

Verse 14

Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. (Gen 28.14)

Yes, this is the same Lord that had spoken to Abraham, Isaac and now to Jacob, and this time with clear force and authority.

Force and authority that I think is needed because Jacob is not settling in the land and receiving the promise as Abraham did, no, he is receiving the blessing while fleeing from his family and the land.

It is as if he is running away from the promise, it is as if his deception can somehow negate what God has said.

But No way. No failure can thwart the promises of God. Restated in verse 15.

I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.' (Gen 28.15)

Jacob's family may well be dysfunctional and he may have arrived here through deception, but God in his great mercy, as a matter of divine grace, sets forward the future story of Jacob's life.

God will be with him, God will keep him from disaster and ensure that what he has promised will come to be.

1-Performance.

It matters if we want to avoid a whole lot of trouble, but it does not stop God, it does not prevent his plans in the past, present or future.

Meaning, there is no need to doubt God when we stuff up. Of course our mistakes have consequences, but in and through him we will find forgiveness and come out the other side.

2-Promise.

This is God's world, this is his plan.

And lastly

3-Payback (vv.16-22)

Not a bargain, but a reciprocal affirmation in what is a child of God moment.

Verse 16

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.' He was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.' (Gen 28.16-17)

Remember what I said about Jesus, let's keep reading.

Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel,[e] though the city used to be called Luz. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord[f] will be my God and[g] this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.' (Gen 28.18-22)

This is Jacob's child of God moment, but first a couple of things.

1-The gate of heaven, and.

2-The gift.

The gate of heaven, Bethel means house of God, and this is why Jacob has given this place, this name.

But it is incomplete, and because Jesus uses the same imagery of himself, we can say that what is happening here is actually a foreshadowing of the one who is the true gate of heaven.

The same one who says. "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

And the gift. Is it a bargain, a promise by Jacob because God does his bit?

No. Tithing, giving 1/10th of one's income, became a fetish with the later Pharisees under the law of Moses, and I use the word fetish intentionally, because the Pharisees were not only fixated on tithing, not only enforcing it as a matter of legalism, but they drew pleasure from making others do the same.

But the gift, the gift at this point in time, is voluntary, a free will offering back to the God who provides. So for Jacob to give without compulsion, it means that he is truly invested.

Now don't get me wrong, I am not saying that we can't be invested without giving money, but I am saying that my family's giving increased, the more that we invested in the community of faith and despite decreasing income.

Jacob in this moment, through the dysfunction, through the running from the promise, has finally realised that he is a legitimate child of God and he leans in!

The promise is his, because God says it is.

And you know what else God says. He says? We are his children.

Romans 8:14 "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God."

Galatians 3:26 "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith"

And my personal favorite.

1 John 3:1-2

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:1-2)

God has no grandchildren.

Meaning, it is not enough to hear about God from others, or to be born into a Christian family. Each of us must choose faith for ourselves, each must receive the love of God in Christ, and become his sons and daughters.

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Let's wrap up the text.

1-Performance (vv1-14)

The first half of Genesis 28 is an odd foundation for the greatest promise of all time, but it serves as a reminder that God is sovereign, full of grace and that he is fully able to use broken people to do great things.

2-Promise (vv.10-15)

What we see here is nothing less than a supreme display of divine grace, and not a matter of performance, for it is offered freely, it is unsought and many would argue undeserved.

Yet God, out of his grace and faithfulness, affirms the blessing that is now upon Jacob and eventually falls upon all those who put their faith in Jesus.

And lastly,

3-Payback (vv.16-22)

Clearly Jacob is taken back by the grace of God, and offers God the best of what he has. It is no bargain, but it is a reciprocal affirmation of the blessing.

It is a practical demonstration that Jacob both believes the promise and is invested in seeing it through.

Let's Pray.

Thank you, Lord, for your great love, thank you that you choose to use us and bless us because of your goodness and grace and not because of our performance. In Jesus Name. Amen.
