

Genesis (Genesis Part III)

*Week 1/8 “God of Blessings”
by the Rev’d Michael Marklew (04/10/2026)*

Bible Passage: Genesis 26.1-32

Lord open our hearts and minds to the ways in which you have and continue to bless us. Drive out fear and doubt and help us understand your word today. In Jesus Name. Amen.

Temperament, manner and public style are just a few ways that King Charles comes across differently to his mother, the late Queen Elizabeth II. The grandchildren come across differently as well.

Now unlike our Royals, Abraham’s son with his faltering faith, deception, impatience and delayed obedience, is almost a carbon copy of his famous dad.

Yes he has his differences, and his story is his own, but in many ways little has changed.

And here in Genesis 26 we see Isaac living out Abraham’s unfinished story, and in that story, we have three things.

1-Divine promise (vv.1-6)

God met with Abraham and promised to bless him and his descendants

Here, God meets with Isaac and promises to bless him and his descendants

2-Divine righteousness (vv.7-11)

Abraham, despite the promise and the blessing, did wrong. He faulted and he failed.

Here, despite the promise and the blessing, Isaac does wrong. He faults and he fails.

3-Divine blessing (vv.12-22)

Regardless of his failures, Abraham’s wells were filled with water; his family line continues; he wS blessed.

Regardless of Isaac’s failings, his wells will fill with water, his family line continues and he too is blessed.

Divine promise, righteousness, blessing and this is just the beginning, for Genesis is a rollercoaster of the faithfulness of God, despite human failings, a ride that carries on through the centuries, that is until the birth of Jesus.

For Jesus is the promise fulfilled; he is the divine righteousness, and through his finished work on the cross, we are truly blessed. That's where we land today.

But first, let's open Genesis 26 verse 1 and our first point.

1-Divine promise (v.1-6)

God met with Abraham and promised to bless him. God meets with Isaac and promises the same.

Now there was a famine in the land – besides the previous famine in Abraham's time – and Isaac went to Abimelek king of the Philistines in Gerar. The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, 'Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and 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. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions.' So Isaac stayed in Gerar. (Gen 26.1-6)

If this story sounds familiar, you are not mistaken, for the repetition of Abraham's story is clear and deliberate, starting with.

A famine in the land and a plan to go to Egypt (Genesis 12)

A stay in Gerar (Genesis 20)

a wife passed off as a sister (Genesis 12 and 20)

The beauty of said wife (Genesis 12)

Abimelech (a different king with the same name) has concerns about adultery with the wife and rebukes the deceiver (Genesis 20).

All of this is repeated in Isaac's story here, and it is striking, but not as striking as the simple truth that God's purposes cannot be thwarted by sin or by struggle.

His plan, his promises, are absolute.

Yet we must first speak of the sin.

Verse 7.

When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, 'She is my sister,' because he was afraid to say, 'She is my wife.' He thought, 'The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful.' (Gen 26.7)

Notice that Issac is fearing men instead of God (this will change), and notice that the apple hasn't fallen far from the tree, for this is father like son, and it is hardly a fearless walk with the Lord. It is more like cowering in fear and making a mockery of faith.

But we can hardly blame him.

His father did it twice, once in Egypt and again with another Abimelech in Gerar. Meaning it is likely that Isaac is working from his father's playbook, and in this, there is a lesson for us.

Our actions, both right and wrong, are often copied by those closest to us (x2)

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Early last week at the clergy muster in Toowoomba, that's the yearly gathering of western Anglican clergy, a time of prayer and praise, and even a bit of grumbling.

At the muster our senior minister Adam, gave a presentation on what it means to be a Christian leader. In everything that he said, my take home was this.

"Christian leadership amplifies character (for good or bad)" (X2)

Friends

Faced with struggle and danger, Abraham's true character was revealed and amplified in his son.

Faced with struggle and danger, Isaac's true character was revealed and amplified in his children too.

But how is this, our second point?

2-Divine Righteousness.

Well, we know how the story ends. It ends with Jesus. Divine righteousness imputed to us through faith in him.

No longer need we Christians repeat the sins of the past, but instead we are invited to embrace the new heart of flesh, given to us by the Spirit of God.

In Christ, we are apples falling from his tree, and no longer shackled to the sins of past generations.

Isaac repeats Abraham's failure. Jesus fulfills divine righteousness for us.

But I am getting ahead of myself.

Verse 8.

When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelek king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. So Abimelek summoned Isaac and said, 'She is really your wife! Why did you say, "She is my sister"?' Isaac answered him, 'Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her.' Then Abimelek said, 'What is this you have done to us? One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.' So Abimelek gave orders to all the people: 'Anyone who harms this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.' (Gen 26.8-11)

The penalty for adultery in this pagan society was death, and clearly ignorance of the women's marital status was no excuse, so Abimelech rebuked Isaac and ordered their protection.

And oh, what a contrast?

On one hand we have Isaac making a mockery of faith, by lying and cheating his way into their kingdom, and on the other we have a pagan king offering protection and blessing despite the deception.

Clearly God's hand is on this, God's blessing is with Isaac, despite his failings.

And this is helpful for you and me as well. For we can doubt that God is at work in and through us when we fail, when we sin, when we suffer setbacks. But no. Divine promise, and divine righteousness, belong to all those who are in Christ.

Failings matter, but they are never the end of our story and we are not shackled to the sins of the past. Meaning when we falter, there is an invitation to trust again in the God in whom we can be confident, will be faithful to his promise.

Forgiveness and restoration through His son Jesus Christ.

Our 3rd point.

3-Divine blessing.

Where we see how wells of water show God's blessing despite failure.

Verse 12.

Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the Lord blessed him. The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him. So all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up, filling them with earth. (Gen 26.12-15)

Swings and roundabouts my friends.

But seriously, jealousy is a dividing force. It is our 10th commandment “You Shall Not Covet”. A commandment given by God to us because of his love for us, and his desire to protect our families, friendship groups and churches from this powerful force that causes division and hurt.

But wait there is more.

Wells provide a dominant motif in the Scriptures. They are tangible evidence of divine blessing.

Wells are tangible evidence of divine blessing,

Where was the woman at the well blessed? By a well of course (it is in the name), and what was the blessing, the water of life, the word of God made flesh.

To fill up the wells is both a spiritual and a material act of war. Materially they are filling up the wells, spiritually they are thumbing it to the blessing, they are thumbing it to the Lord.

So, what does Isaac do? He complains to Abimelek, who, it would appear, unlike his people, responds out of fear of God’s blessing on Isaac and sends him away.

Verse 16

Then Abimelek said to Isaac, ‘Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us.’ So Isaac moved away from there and camped in the Valley of Gerar, where he settled. Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them. (Gen 26.16-18)

Remember, the wells are evidence of God’s blessing. To re-open them is tangible evidence of that blessing. That the blessing remains, that the blessing continues.

Verse 19

Isaac’s servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there. But the herdsmen of Gerar quarrelled with those of Isaac and said, ‘The water is ours!’ So he named the well Esek, because they disputed with him. Then they dug another well, but they quarrelled over that one also; so he named it Sitnah. He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarrelled over it. He named it Rehoboth, saying, ‘Now the Lord has given us room and we will flourish in the land.’ (Gen 26.19-22)

Finally, we are seeing some real faith in Isaac. No longer is he presenting his wife as his sister, but instead he is now turning the other cheek and keeping the peace.

And this is a big deal, for to fill in someone’s well in this arid and dry land is an act of war, one of the most serious crimes. Isaac has every right to fight back but instead chooses to dig another well.

To us this repeated digging of new wells may appear simply as a matter of avoiding conflict, or as a repeated act of survival, when in fact, it is so much more.

Remember the blessing.

Remember that wells are tangible evidence of divine blessing.

Abraham's well when re-dug still has water. Clear evidence that God blessed Abraham. Isaac digs his own well and discovers fresh water. Clear evidence that God is blessing Isaac.

And if God is blessing Isaac, why would he see any need to fight over the wells that the Philistines fill with dirt?

It is almost a victory dance for Isaac to say "who cares, for the well you have destroyed is the fruit of God's blessing and he will bless the next, just you wait and see".

And he digs another, yes, it is full of water.

And another, and again it's full of water. We know it is full of water for the quarrel is the same, the dispute continues.

Three times they dig, three times the well is clearly full of water. And when something happens three times in a row, you know that it can be no coincidence.

And this is why they don't quarrel over the 3rd well.

These Philistines can now see the blessing upon Isaac and his family, and they fear God because of it. And we know it is a fear of God because there can be no other reason to stop quarreling other than to realise that there is a divine blessing upon Isaac.

And it isn't just the Philistines, it is Isaac and his family too.

For in verse 25 he builds an altar to the Lord and pitches his tent. We won't read it, instead let's jump down to verse 26 and see what Abimelek has to say about all of this.

Verse 26

Meanwhile, Abimelek had come to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his personal advisor and Phicol the commander of his forces. Isaac asked them, 'Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?' They answered, 'We saw clearly that the Lord was with you; so we said, "There ought to be a sworn agreement between us"— between us and you. Let us make a treaty with you that you will do us no harm, just as we did not harm you but always treated you well and sent you away peacefully. And now you are blessed by the Lord.' (Gen 26.26-29)

Can we see why the Bible uses the language of living water with Jesus?

Friends.

No longer is the blessing located in a time and place, or in the digging of a physical well, but in the word and life of Jesus Christ.

The blessing is the word and life of Jesus Christ.

Let's wrap up.

1-Divine promise (vv.1-6)

God met with Abraham and promised to bless him and his descendants. God met with Isaac and promised to bless him and his descendants.

God meets with you in Jesus Christ and promises to bless you now and forever

2-Divine righteousness (vv.7-11)

Abraham, despite the promise and the blessing, did wrong. He faulted and he failed. Isaac, despite the promise and the blessing, does wrong. He faulted and he failed.

Yet Jesus never faulted and never failed, and more, Jesus died for your failures and your faults. His righteousness imputed upon you by faith.

Righteousness is to be right with God.

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When I lived in Newcastle, our house was a stone's throw from one of the busiest coal ports in the world.

(PHOTO)

Here is a photo of a couple of seals hitching a ride on the rudder of one of those ships.

That rudder might accommodate a couple of seals, but it is tiny compared to the size of the ship.

Friends, when we have faith, when we receive that divine promise, we receive righteousness, righteousness that turns us towards God, but like the small rudder on a big ship, it can take time to fully turn it around.

And this is where the blessings come. Constant reminders in life and in the word of God, that God is with us, even when failure and lack of faith knocks, blessings are always just around the corner.

Keep going, keep leaning in, for diving blessing is real.

3-Divine blessing (vv.12-22)

Regardless of his failures, Abraham's wells were filled with water, he was blessed. Regardless of Isaac's failings, his wells were filled with water, he was blessed.

And in Jesus, we have the living water and we are blessed.

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Lastly,

When God wanted to show Isaac that he was blessed, he didn't take away the opposition, he didn't initially remove Isaac's fear and his desire for deception, he simply showed him blessing, and then reminded him to not be afraid and Isaac praised God for it.

In Jesus we are blessed, far beyond Abraham and Isaac, and this is why we give praise and worship to our great and loving God.

In Christ, our wells are full of living water, water that spills over bringing relief to a dry and arid world, bringing relief, hope and others along with us.

Let us pray.

Thank you Father for Jesus. For his love and blessing upon us. Thank you for his sacrifice and for his righteousness lavished upon us. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen.
