

The Switch

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[0:00] Let's hear the word of the Lord. Genesis chapter 29 verse 31 to 35.

! When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb.! But Rachel was barren, and Leah conceived and bore a son.

And she called his name Reuben. For she said, Because the Lord has looked upon my affliction, for now my husband will love me.

She conceived again and bore a son, and said, Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also. And she called his name Simeon.

Again, she conceived and bore a son, and said, Now, this time my husband will be attached to me. Because I have borne him three sons. Therefore his name was called Levi.

[1:06] And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, This time I will praise the Lord.

Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she ceased bearing.

This is the word of the Lord. Praise be to God. Thank you, Joe. Please take a seat. So we continue through the book of Genesis. And this story is getting juicier and juicier as it goes.

This is the historical breakdown of what happens to this family, from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob.

And honestly, it's been nothing but messy, plus messy, plus messy.

Christina and I, we love watching TV shows, after we've read the Bible, of course. Maybe our favorite one more recently is called Slow Horses. Has anyone watched Slow Horses on Apple TV? It's a very dry, British kind of TV show. Another one we've watched is The Pits, that we watched with Sarah while she was hanging out with us as well. That's also good. And as I was reading this journey that this family goes on, I can't help but imagine that this is just a TV show about a dysfunctional, ancient family.

[2:16] It just, actually, if I've never been more convinced right now as looking at this, that God's perfect plan works through imperfect people. Works through all the dysfunction. Works through all the mess.

And yet here we are, still recipients of grace. Recipients of the blessing. And let me just rewind your mind a little bit about this guy called Jacob. He steals his older brother's blessing. Okay, remember, he mocks his dad and says, oh, I am Esau.

And then he says, the Lord your God blessed me to go and get this very quickly, so it is me. Last week, though, Gabe shows us a little bit of a turnaround. The turnaround here is that actually, Jacob goes from saying, this is the Lord your God, Dad, to now, this is the Lord my God.

But he encounters God himself in the dream. And, of course, he doesn't do anything to deserve this. He is still just as messed up. He's running away from his older brother because he stole his blessing and because his older brother wants to kill him.

So his mom, who has been plotting with him, sends him away to uncle. And on the way to uncle, he has this dream and he encounters God. And he's like, surely, surely, chapter 28, verse 16, surely the Lord is in this place.

[3:26] And I did not know it. Wow, God has been with me. I just wasn't aware of it. And then he carries on later. Then the Lord shall be my God. No longer my dad's God.

He is now my God. And just when we think, oh, maybe the TV show can end here in the happily ever after, it does not. Even though he encounters God, even though he declares this is my God now, he still goes on a journey.

And we unravel a really interesting part of the story. I've had Joe read a little bit of it because we're actually going to go through 29 and 30. So we're going to fly through this story, which is why I didn't ask him to read all of it.

But let me set the scene. So he runs from his brother. He heads towards Uncle Laban. He sits at a well, still figuring out his life. Remember, at this point, he doesn't know this, but he's never going to see his mom again because of the deceit that they started.

And he sits at a well. And then when he sits at a well, he sees a group of shepherds come over.

These shepherds are here to hang out and wait for more shepherds to come. When the more shepherds come at this well, there's a big rock covering the well that they need the water to.

[4:33] So, but custom and tradition dictates that they wait for everyone to come together. They push the rock out together. And so they all have access to the water together. So it's fair.

So he's sat there waiting and he talks to these guys. And this is where chapter nine, if you're following in scripture, you can follow me here. He says this, verse four. My brothers, where do you come from?

They said, we are from Haran. He said, oh, I know someone from Haran. Do you know Laban, the son of Nahor? They said, we know him. He said, is it well with him? Is he doing okay? They said, it is well. See, Rachel, his daughter is coming with the sheep.

So you call it coincidence, but we call it here that God is continually paving the way for this deceiver, this messed up deceiver. God keeps pouring out blessing.

It doesn't seem fair, but this is how God works with all of us. And so they say, yeah, Laban's doing all right. Oh, there's his daughter coming.

[5:30] As soon as Jacob sees Rachel from afar, it is love at first sight. He sees her from afar and actually he tries to get rid of them. He's like, hey, haven't you guys got jobs to do?

Go, go, do something. And so he wants to hang out with them. And verse nine, while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. Now, as soon as Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban, his mother's brother, Jacob came near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth and watered the flock.

He's showing off. So they're supposed to wait for everyone to come and move the rock together.

The moment he sees the girl, he's like, guys, stand to the side. I will push this rock myself. Do you not know that I do high rocks? And so I pushed the rock myself.

Look how strong I am, Rachel. Fall in love with me now, please. And so he tries to impress her and he's very excited to see her. Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud because he realized, I am so messed up.

I've just lost my family. And how good is it that I'm sat at this random well in the middle of the day. And yet God would send me a relative. God would send me family.

[6:33] And he's relieved to the point where he's so excited. And Jacob then tells Rachel that her father's kinsman, actually, they're related, that he was Rebecca's son. And she ran and told her father.

As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister, he ran to meet him and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. Jacob told Laban all these things. So he breaks down to Uncle Laban. This is exactly what happened.

Now, he's a deceiver, remember. So I'm not here under any delusions that he's telling the full accurate story of what happened. He's probably putting himself in a decent light here. But Laban is very, very excited to see him.

And Laban said to him, surely you are my bone and my flesh. You are my family now. Pause. Just before you think that Laban is a good guy, we need to remember who Laban was.

Actually, Laban is super excited about seeing Jacob because it wasn't that long ago when he met another servant a few chapters before where Isaac sends his servant out to find his son Jacob's wife.

[7:36] Sorry, Abraham, Isaac. And so that's when he meets Rebecca, when the servant meets Rebecca. Do you remember that? And actually, Laban gets really rich from that interaction.

What happens is in order to get Rebecca's hand, they pay a dowry and actually get lots of ornaments. And so Laban gets very, very rich from this. And so he sat, suddenly hears from Rachel that that family has come again, that rich family has come again.

And what do you think he's doing? He's licking his lips. He's like, here we go again. And so he goes out, greets him, and he says, you are my family. Come and join me. And you know straight away that something is wrong because straight afterwards, verse 15, when Laban said to Jacob, because

you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing?

He hears the story about Jacob and he realizes something. He's like, okay, I probably stand a chance to get rich from this again. But this guy, he's just ran it from his family and he actually doesn't have much money. How can I take advantage of this situation?

I know. I'll bring him into my family and I'll make him work for me. And so then what he says is, tell me, what shall your wages be? Very quickly, without anyone realizing, Jacob turns from family to servant.

[8:53] Turns from someone who was supposed to be bone and flesh to suddenly, I will pay you and you'll work for me. You will become mine. I will own you and you will work for me.

Isn't this what happens when we go out and chase things and take matters into our own hands? Because very quickly, things can turn on us. And we turn from something that we think will complete us, but then owns us and corrupts us and turns us into servants instead.

He knows he doesn't have money, but he does know. Remember at this point now, verse 14 tells us, Jacob stays with Laban for a month. And he sees, Laban sees that Jacob is smitten over his daughter, Rachel.

So he's like, look, how can I pay you? And so what happens, they come into an arrangement. Now, Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance.

It's a really interesting way to describe two sisters. Leah's eyes were weak. People don't really truly know what that means, but it may be means that she has poor eyesight. But on the whole, we can just take from this that she just wasn't the prettier one out of the two.

[10:01] Just like how my brother is not the prettier one out of the two of I, what we see here is a very similar thing. And that's easily understood for you guys. But Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance.

She was not only good looking, she was actually attractive, sexually attractive. And so Laban knows what he's doing. And so he asked Jacob, well, how can I pay you? And then Jacob here says, well, I love Rachel.

I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter, Rachel. Bearing in mind, that's a lot of money. The average would have been one to two years, but he loved her so much. I will be willing to stay for seven years to work for you in order for me to be able to marry your daughter.

Laban says, well, it's better that I give it to you than to anyone else. So, OK, stay with me. And so Jacob stays for seven years. And this is so romantic, verse 20. And they seem to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

And then it comes to the wedding night. It comes to the wedding night. They have a big festival. They have a lot of fun. And from there, it's time to give his daughter to Jacob.

[11:05] But instead of giving him Rachel, he gives him Leah. Jacob doesn't realize because they've spent a whole week celebrating. It's pretty dark.

He's pretty drunk. So he gets given Leah. He doesn't know it until he wakes up the next morning. And verse 25, it says this. Can you see how much of a TV show this is?

And it's Jacob said to Laban, what is this you have done to me? Did I not serve you with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me? Oh, the irony in all of this. The deceiver is deceived. And the deceiver is outraged that he was deceived. The audience just sits and goes, serves you right. What comes around, God goes around, comes around.

Laban is a very smart man. He says this, verse 26. It is not so done in our country to give the younger before the firstborn. Remember, he knows what Jacob did.

[12:06] He knows that Jacob stole the blessing from his firstborn. So he's kind of going to him, Jacob, Jacob. You know what I did here. You know what this is about.

Don't you start telling me about deception. Don't you start telling me about firstborn. You know what's happened here. Jacob knows this. And so he says, fine.

So actually, Laban then says, complete the week of this one. And then we will give you the other in return for another seven years. So what turned out to be just trying to marry one person, he has to give up 14 years in order to be able to marry both of them.

Just in case you're wondering, if you're not familiar with the Bible, you're like, wait, does the Bible condone people, polygamy? Does the Bible condone this kind of deception?

Does the Bible condone marrying two sisters? The answer is no. It is simply just documenting history here. And actually, if you were to look at this, you will be able to see and deduce very quickly that marrying more than one wife, especially if they are sisters, is a terrible, terrible idea.

[13:12] No one should do this. I don't know why you want more than one wife. Here he has two, and he chooses sisters. And for the rest of his life, I can tell you he is going to be in pain. So just a side note here.

But here's where the main topic that I'm going to focus on today is verse 30. So Jacob went into Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah and served Laban for another seven years. 14 years he gives his life, and now we reach the passage that Joe read for us.

When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. There are 12 tribes of Israel. What we're about to see is how this came about, how the 12 children came. And I wish I could tell you it was through prayer and meditation and devotion and holiness. No, it is from complete chaos, dysfunction, envy, and mess.

St. Augustine talks about this idea of disordered loves. You look at the problems in the world right now, it's because we have disordered loves. We've put things in the wrong place. We have prioritized the wrong things.

[14:19] God tells us to love him and only him, but we prioritize all these other things, and we have all these disordered loves that come in, and now we have the consequence that we have in this world. So those disordered loves we can see here, and I'm going to use another term here, which is just misplaced desire.

When you desire the wrong thing, this is what comes about. When you desire the wrong thing, when you yearn for the wrong thing, this is what happens. What is that called?

It's called idolatry. Which now to a Chinese culture is quite a familiar word. It's like, well, don't have statues in your house. Don't kind of, just don't worship all these other things. But actually, idolatry, yes, is those things, but it is actually way more.

An idol is something that just isn't God. It's something that you put all your attention and your focus and your worth on. Tim Keller says, your idol, if you want to find out what your idol is, wherever your mind wanders to aimlessly, that's your idol.

The thing that your mind wanders to when you have a moment of space just to reflect and just to think. What are you most consumed by? Is it a relationship? Is it the stock market? Is it your job?

[15:24] Is it your social life? What is it? We all have these idols. John Calvin says, the human heart is a factory of idols. We can't help but desire.

We can't help but want. But it's those misplaced desires that cause us problems. And what you find here is misplaced desires all over.

Laban has a misplaced desire because all he wants is profit and personal gain. Jacob's misplaced desire is now he's found all his hope in this one woman.

Leah and Rachel is what we're going to study a little bit more today. You see that they also have their misplaced desires. Here's the problem when you have misplaced desires.

You put all your hope in one thing, hoping that you're going to get satisfaction and contentment from it. But actually very soon it turns against you. Tim Keller has this thing that when he's talking about this passage, he says, you go to bed with Leah.

[16:26] You go to bed thinking that it's Rachel, but you wake up in the morning and it's Leah. And he asks the question to all of us is, what are the things that we go to bed with, that we put all our hope in, thinking that it will be perfect for us, thinking that it will bring us complete and utter satisfaction, thinking that it's Rachel, but we wake up and actually it's quite the opposite.

It's not what we expected. It's not what we wanted. But before you know it, you've made decisions and you've gone down this slippery slope and you know where you want to be. You thought it was Rachel, but it turned out to be Leah.

Misplaced desires is what we're going to focus on today. Verse 31, when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, unloved is another translation, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

It's really interesting. This covenant family that was going to bless nations. Every generation there seems to be infertility. Almost just to show us that it's not going to be them that is going to do it.

It's only going to be God that does it. It's only going to be God who opens the womb. It seems to be God's MO also, that he seems to choose those who are despised and rejected and unloved.

[17:36] He seems to choose those. And so he sees late Leah. He opens her womb and Rachel was barren. And Leah conceives her first son and called his name Reuben, because the Lord has looked upon my affliction.

For now my husband will love me. It's interesting. So she has a baby. And yet what she really wants is her husband's affection. So she's like, finally. I mean, this is easy for us to identify, because I think there's traits of this even now in modern society.

But especially back then in the ancient world, a woman's sole purpose is to bear children. That is it. If you don't bear children, you are ashamed of the family. So for her and for Rachel, there's this race now to have babies.

And so Leah starts off first. It's 1-0 to Leah. She has a baby. She hopes that this baby brings her husband's love. It does not. She conceives again and bores a son.

2-0. Because the Lord has heard that I am hated. He has given me the son also. And just before halftime, she called his name Simeon. Again, she conceived and bore another son. And this time my husband will be attached to me, because it is now 3-0 to Leah.

[18:40] She's like, I'm good. I'm in a good place. Surely now, with three children, my husband will love me. Doesn't happen. Doesn't work. All right. We'll try again.

And then she conceived again and bore a son. And this time I will praise the Lord. Therefore, she called his name Judah. 4-0 to Leah. It's halftime. Then she ceased bearing. Can you just imagine the dynamics and the relationship between these two sisters right now?

Leah and Rachel. One. Remember, it's not even just about Jacob. Because Rachel would have been the prettier one from the beginning. So actually, this is what Leah would have had to put up with the whole of her life.

Being overlooked. Being unloved. Being unchosen. To the point where, when it's the wedding day, your father sneaks you in to a man's bedroom because he realizes, he thinks, that you won't ever get married.

So this is the only way you're going to get married. Imagine the heartbreak. Imagine the resentment. Feel how Leah is feeling.

[19:44] And yet the Lord sees and gives her babies. And you'd have thought of Rachel. Well, the pretty one. Everyone would have been just praising her for the whole of her life. Wow. And yet, is she happy?

No, she's not. Because why? She also has misplaced desires. When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, give me children or I shall die.

We're going to stop here and talk a little bit about the topic of envy. This dangerous, dangerous topic. Charles Swindle says, envy is the great enemy of peace.

It makes me think about all of us who are struggling through anxiety to some degree, whether it's a low-grade hum of anxiety, always thinking that you're not quite enough, or you're wanting something that someone else has.

This is it. In a city, we're surrounded by it. We're constantly being told what we don't have.

Constantly being told what other people have that we should try to have. But envy is the great enemy of peace.

[20:54] Roosevelt was the one who said, comparison is the thief of joy. Where does envy come from? It comes from comparison. It comes from looking at someone going, wow, that guy has a head full of hair.

And it's just such a waste. He just doesn't do anything with it. It's just so annoying. In fact, if I can't have it, neither should he.

And now I'm just stripped of joy because people are misusing God's blessings to them. Comparison is the thief of joy.

John Tyson said that comparison is the assassin of contentment. Do you feel content? As you look at your life, do you feel content?

Gab, you're shaking your head not fully. How many of us really do? Isn't that the battle? Paul says godliness leads to contentment, but how many of us are truly content? Or how many of us are actually just looking somewhere else?

[21:53] Going, oh, I want that. I need that. If I don't have that, what does Rachel say here? Give me children or I shall die. So even though Leah wants affection and attention, Rachel just wants babies.

Idolatry is when you have something so high in your priority list and if you don't get it, you feel as though it's not worth living your life anymore. That's what we see here. Reminds me of another story in the Bible when David and Saul, they beat Goliath.

We know David and Goliath. So even if you didn't grow up in the church, you probably have heard that story. And what happens? They beat the Philistines. They go home and everyone's just celebrating. Saul's celebrating. David's celebrating.

Everyone's celebrating. And then there is a chant. And it's in 1 Samuel 18 where they say, Saul has killed people by the thousands. And he's like, yes, I'm the man. And then turns out that's just the first line of the verse first because the second verse is, but David has killed people by the ten thousands.

And so even though Saul was like celebrating, yeah, thousands. And he's like, wait. Wait. You say thousands for me and ten thousands for him? It's just a story. It's just a song. It's just a poem.

[23:00] But he took it personally. He took it very personally. And from that moment on, Saul does not look at David in the same way. What is that? That is comparison, stealing, joy.

That is the assassin of contentment. That is the enemy of peace. It makes me think what we have. As you look elsewhere, as you look constantly elsewhere, what is the thing that you are holding on to?

What is your idol? Jacob is funny. So Rachel says, give me children or I shall die. Blames him completely. Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel and said, am I in the place of God who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?

What he's saying is, don't blame me. I'm doing the same thing. It's 4-0 this side and there's nothing here. I'm not doing anything different. And it tells me something else.

When we put all of our hope in the idol, when we put all of our satisfaction and contentment, our hopes for it onto one person, we will always, always fail. We experienced, and some of us got to see Trevor and Teresa get married yesterday and it was the most beautiful of weddings.

[24:16] But one thing that we like to say a lot to couples getting married or even those who are married is practicing the sentiment of looking your spouse in the eye and saying, you will never be enough for me.

In fact, if a wedding couple ever asked me to preach from Genesis 30 for their wedding, this is what I would say. No one's ever asked me to do it in the past, but maybe one day they will be.

I would say, your wife will never truly satisfy you. Your husband will never truly satisfy you. Your spouse will never truly satisfy you.

If you think that they will, what will happen is they won't and then you'll be disappointed and then you will crash. You cannot put a human being in the place of God.

God is the only one who can truly satisfy. So it's actually a beautiful thing when a couple romantically in love can look each other in the eye and go, you will never satisfy me fully. Only God can. What we see here is Leah and Rachel were both putting their hope in this one stupid man that is called Jacob.

[25:24] And you see how stupid he is because the story continues. Remember, it's 4-0. Keep track. Then she said, here is my servant Bilal. If I can't have a baby, let me give my servant to you so then she can have a baby on my behalf so at least I can catch up.

And so Jacob's like, yeah, sure, whatever. So she gave him her servant Bilal and Jacob went into her and guess what? Bilal conceives. So it's 4-1. Kind of. Not really, because it's not really Rachel's. But she's trying to put matters into her own hands. She's like, look, the camp of Leah is doing too well. Let's try and figure out another way, guys. This is the new strategy. We're going to use servants. And so that happens.

And then Rachel said, God has judged me and also heard my voice and give me a son. Therefore she called his name Dan. Rachel's servant Bilal then conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, with mighty wrestlings, I have wrestled with my sister and have prevailed. So she called his name Naphtali. It's 4-2. Leah's getting a little bit nervous because the score's getting a little bit tight. And remember, her womb is now closed because she has seized bearing at the end of 29.

[26:26] So then she goes, okay, well, if you're going to do that, then I will do that too. Subs, bring in my servant too. Let's go. And so what happens is, verse 9, when Leah saw that she had seized bearing, she took her servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.

And Jacob's like, sure, whatever. Then Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. And Leah said, good fortune has come. So she called his name Gad. Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. Whoa, 6-2.

Happy am I, verse 13. For women have called me happy, so she called his name Asher. You can see the ugly side of envy. You can see the ugly side of idolatry when you put someone in the place of God.

Someone who will never be able to satisfy you. We've all done this before. We've all thought that job would give us the ultimate satisfaction. We've all thought that relationship will help us feel better about ourselves.

And time and time again, it does not. And then we wonder why. This story sounds ridiculous. But yet it is the story of us. It is the story of our hearts putting our hope in the wrong things.

[27:30] The misplaced desires. And there's a really interesting story. In the days of wheat harvest, Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field and brought them to his mother, Leah. Reuben, at this point, was about 5-6 years old.

If you're interested, this whole thing happens in the space about 10-14 years. In my head, I was just like, the amount of nappies, the amount of sleepless nights, I don't even know how this is possible. So at this point, the firstborn, Reuben, is getting a little bit older. He's out in the field, just hanging out, and he finds mandrakes. Mandrakes, which is actually a fertility plant. It's an aphrodisiac. People would take it hoping that they would get pregnant from it.

And so, little boy Reuben runs around in the field, finds mandrakes, and brings them back home to his mom, Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, please give me some of your son's mandrakes.

Remember, they're living in the same house together.

And you imagine just the drama. And so, Rachel sees little Reuben come in with his fertility plant, and she's like, I want those mandrakes. And then, Leah completely overreacts in some ways and says, is it a small matter that you've taken away my husband?

[28:35] Would you take away my son's mandrakes also? So you've already taken my husband. Leave the mandrakes alone. The mandrakes belong to us. Why would you do that? Of course, Rachel is desperate because Rachel is 6'2 down.

So she's trying to think, how can I do this? Bear in mind here that Rachel is actually the head of the harem. She's in control. Why? Because she's the loved one. She's the favored one. So she actually gets to decide where her husband goes to spend the night.

Interesting, because it's the overreact because she's the younger one. But anyway, they strike a deal. Would you take away my son's mandrakes also? Rachel said, then he may lie with you tonight in exchange for your son's mandrakes.

So they make a deal. Mandrakes for the husband. Some wives are like, a plant for a husband?

Good deal. Jacob comes home from work and he gets told, Leah went out to me and said, you must come in to me for me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes.

And Jacob says, yeah, sure, whatever. And so he goes in with her. Rachel's happy because now she has a plant. So she's turned it into a soup and she's drinking it and she's just bathing in it.

[29:47] She's doing whatever she needs to do to pull the score back even. And yet, the most twisted thing happens here. She gives away, she takes the mandrakes, but actually, the fifth lady goes to Leah. Leah's womb opens again.

And even though she takes matters into her own hands, God listened to Leah, verse 17, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. Seven, two. God has given me my wages because I gave my servant to my husband.

So she called his name Issachar. And Leah conceived again and she bore Jacob a sixth son. God has endowed me with a good endowment. Now my husband will honor me because I have bore him six sons.

She called his name Zebulun. Afterwards, she bore a daughter and called her name Dina. the sad story of when we go chasing after idols, the sad story of us being engrossed in comparison that leads to envy, that kills contentment, kills peace, robs joy.

How often do we have that as children of God ourselves, not happy with what we've been given, looking elsewhere thinking, if only I had that, I will be happy. And yet here we see what happens, what are the consequences of that.

[31:05] Then something interesting happens and we're near the end of this story. Then God remembered Rachel and God listened to her and opened her womb. The word remembered there

isn't God saying, oh, sorry, I totally forgot about you, Rachel.

Did not remember that you existed. That's not what it is. It's the same remembered when God remembered Noah. What that remembered word means is that he acts on the promise that he had given before.

So he activates the promise. That's what he means. So when God remembers someone he's activating, he's putting into action what he had promised in the past. So then God remembered Rachel and God listened to her and opened her womb.

She conceived and bore a son and said, God has taken away my reproach and my shame. This is her first one, remember, even though it's seven to eight two now, but actually this is her first one because the years was from the servants.

And she called his name Joseph, which is a familiar name to us as we'll find out in later Genesis. And you think, oh, finally, she's got what she wants, right?

[32:06] Don't we have that moment when we finally get the job that we want, finally get the girl, finally get the guy, finally get the thing that we want? And you're like, now I am completely satisfied.

You imagine Rachel going, I have now completely found contentment, God, I trust you for the rest of my life. Is that what she says? It is not. What she says is, may the Lord add to me another son. She can't get enough. She realized even though she's got what she wanted, it still doesn't give her the true satisfaction that she needs. She needs to keep going. Isn't that the same as us? We get, we finally get what we want and actually we just keep wanting more.

Comparison. Envy. Leads us down this path, leads us to utter destruction and sad to say, this other son that she asks for, she eventually does get a few years later, but it leads to her death because as she bears Benjamin, Rachel dies.

these misplaced desires, they will mess you up. They will lead you down a path that you can't come back from. What is this?

[33:22] This is choosing the flesh. This is choosing to not trust God. This is sin. And what that does is leads to our destruction. But just before, actually let's just catch a breath.

We've got the 12 kids coming up now. Israel is sorted. The tribe is ready. But my goodness, how did it happen? We should take no pride in how we have the 12 tribes of Israel.

It happened because two sisters were trying to find contentment in purpose, in a person, and they end up in this very horrible war that leads to death.

The question is, what hope do we have? as we battle with envy, as we battle with comparison.

Let's put ourselves in the shoes of Leah once again. Henry Nouwen says this, self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us beloved.

[34:28] Imagine if Leah just knew that, that she was loved. all of this comes from a place where she was not loved. Bring it down to where we live right now, some of the actions that we see around the world, the consequences of pain and death.

How much of that can we trace back to the fact that people just don't feel loved? I would say a high chance. Henry Nouwen continues, the world tells us we are only as good as our performance, our beauty or our popularity.

God tells us our value was settled before the foundation of the world. Why do you come to church? Why do you come and sing some songs and sit here and listen?

We have the gathering statements and those are all true, but I was to boil it all down. If every single person who comes into this room and sits in the presence of God and hears the word of truth uttered over them that they would experience one thing and that they are loved.

Imagine if you walked out of here, head to the elevator, wait there, go down for lunch, but you're just filled with this profound sense that my goodness, I am loved. I don't need to go searching for this.

[35:45] I don't need to go chase after this. I don't need to envy. I don't need to compare because I am deeply loved and fully known by God.

Wouldn't that be beautiful? But instead, Dorothy Sayers says this, envy is the religion of the mediocre. It comforts them, it responds to the worries that gnaw at them deep down, and if it does not calm their hearts, it offers a surrogate peace by allowing them to project their own spiritual poverty onto others.

Envy is the religion of the mediocre. I think the message today is to stop envying. Do not covet. Do not look at someone else and go, I want that, or if I can't have that, neither should they. That goes directly against the heart of God. It goes directly against what he desires for you.

If he knew that you were truly loved, if you knew how loved you were by him, that is the key to all of this.

[36:53] But there are moments of hope as you look at this story. Verse 22, before Rachel has her first own baby, then God remembered Rachel and God listened to her and opened her.

What does that mean? She stopped taking matters into her own hands. She's gone to God. He listened to her, which means that she spoke to him. The woman who offered her servant as a way, the woman who tried to get a fertility plant to help her, the one who took matters into her own hands, finally realizes the only way to this is to God.

She's not perfect by any stretch. She still doesn't fully get it, but she's starting to get it a little bit. There's another example that Leah, even though she is engrossed in this battle, she also starts getting it too.

If we go back to the end of 29, she has three kids. Each time, she puts all the hope in that kid to bring her husband back to her, and it doesn't happen.

But by the fourth one, something changes. Remember, after Reuben, because the Lord has looked upon my affliction, my husband will now love me. That's number one. Simeon comes because I am hated.

[38:07] He has given me this son. And then now this time my husband will be attached to me. But by verse 35, and she conceived again and bore her son. This is the fourth son.

This time I will praise the Lord. The first three times I hope this does it. I hope this brings him back to me. And it doesn't work time after time after time again.

By the fourth time she starts to get it. This time I will praise the Lord. God still works through dysfunction, misplaced desires, and you see it happening right here.

This time I will praise the Lord. Therefore she called his name Judah. What is the significance of Judah? Leah, this unloved, ugly woman that was passed over time and time again, ends up being the mother of the Levites, ends up being the great, great, great, great grandmother of King David, ends up being the great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandmother of Jesus himself.

Can you see woven into this story so subtly is you see when someone finally chooses to trust in the Lord, when someone finally chooses to surrender the idols that they battle with and they choose to give praise and trust to God?

[39:41] Salvation comes. Down this line, not Rachel's line. Growing up, the uncles and aunts would have been like, well, Rachel's definitely the one who's going to be going places.

Leah has weak eyes, she can't even see properly. So you'd have thought, oh, this covenant of family is definitely going to go through Rachel, it's going to be the strong, it's going to be the highly accomplished, it's going to be the beautiful. But time and time again, God says, the way of the world is not the way of the kingdom.

In fact, I'm going to choose exactly what you don't think I will choose. The way of the kingdom of God is upside down. And yet, we still rely on the things of this world.

We still try to accumulate and collect as many rewards and awards and certificates and letters after our names as possible, thinking those are the things that are going to earn us recognition, those are the things that are going to earn us love, and yet what we see here, the tables turn time and time again, and what you see is God chooses the unchosen.

Jesus himself, coming from the line of Judah, ends up being despised and rejected. Isaiah 52 says this, our savior, you could not even look at because he was not much to look at.

[40:51] how much do we put our hope in the things that we think look great will help us further our lives and our accomplishments, and yet in the midst of this, we see someone breaking the cycle of sin, of envy, of comparison because he who had it all emptied himself taking the form of a servant, he breaks the cycle.

Jesus breaks the cycle. I'll finish by going back to Saul and David. Remember, Saul takes it personally. This song, he doesn't like the lyrics to this song.

But interestingly, Saul has a son, and in the same chapter in 1 Samuel 18, just before the song, you see his son Jonathan having just this beautiful relationship, friendship, with David.

To the point where there's one moment when Jonathan sees David and cares for him and brings him in, Jonathan actually takes off his own robe and puts it around David.

Remember, David is a shepherd's boy. Jonathan is the heir apparent. Jonathan is going to be king. And yet, in that moment of selflessness, of love, without a hint of envy, just imagine a second from where Jonathan sits.

[42:17] Everyone knows he's going to be king in the future. And then this David, this young boy, walks in. And people are singing this song that are saying how this David is actually better than your dad.

What do you think is going through Jonathan's mind? What if we were Jonathan? We were like, whoa, this guy's going to take my job. This guy's going to take my kingdom. But what does Jonathan do instead?

He takes off his robe and gives it to David. Breaks the cycle of envy, breaks the cycle of comparison, breaks the cycle of jealousy. We sit here today as recipients of a robe that belongs to a king but has now been placed around us.

Can you just imagine for a second? I know that we're all in just casual gear here, but just imagine for a moment that you have a robe placed around you that you do not deserve.

how silly that feels, but yet this robe is the most expensive thing that you'll ever touch. You don't deserve this. You can never afford this robe, and yet it's yours.

[43:27] Can you imagine wearing this robe and being filled with the gratitude of having this, yet looking across and going, well, I wish I had that. Oh, the robe looks better on that person than on me.

you won't care because you realize you did nothing to deserve this robe that you've got on you. Just like Jonathan, as the prince gives up his robe for David, the prince of heaven himself gives up his robe for us and breaks the cycle of envy, of discontentment, of comparison.

We're going to finish now by just asking ourselves, asking the Holy Spirit to show us what are the misplaced desires in our hearts. And we all have them. They're not bad things.

Honestly, every parent in the room, one of the biggest misplaced desires is what? Our children. We want what's best for our children. We want them to do well.

But we put them above God. And then when things don't go well, we can't sleep at night. We put our trust in something else.

[44:42] Maybe it's your work. Maybe what keeps you up at night is your work. Because you're afraid that if you don't do what you need to do, you won't climb up as fast as you want to climb up, or you may even lose the job that you believe that God gave you in the first place.

And if God gave it to you, then he's the one who's in control, right? Or it's a relationship. Maybe there's a relationship that you're just terrified of losing, or that you're just desperate to want to have. Well, I would sincerely ask you, is that a misplaced desire? Is that a disordered love? Let's spend a moment now just to reflect on that.

I can invite you just to close your eyes, bow your heads, whatever posture that you feel is appropriate for you. And let me lead us in a prayer.

God, we keep running in circles. we keep chasing after things that we think will give us true contentment.

[46:14] We keep keeping score, comparing what we have to what others have. But we can see from your word how ridiculous that looks.

we who were orphans, who were blind, lost, and dead, now sit in the most high place with a robe that does not belong to us.

How sad it is that our hearts would even try to covet and envy. love love enough. But we confess that it comes from a place of not knowing your love enough.

So, Holy Spirit, I ask that you would just highlight to us whether there is any greed of Laban, deceit of Jacob, resentment of Leah, and desires of Rachel that are not of you.

we sit as recipients of your grace.

[47:56] We sit as children who are fully loved. it's like you when you opened up the heavens before Jesus had done a single thing and you said, this is my son with whom I am well pleased, my beloved.

today would you declare the same thing over us, remind us of that truth.

to be fully known and fully loved is what we yearn for, is the desire that we have, but do not let that desire be misplaced.

