# The Imperfect Reunion

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[0:00] Amen. Thanks, Alex. And yeah, brief plug again for the oral Bible translation workshop.! We were singing today, Jesus is worthy. No one else is worthy. And I just want to share! God is working. He's calling to himself people from every tribe, nation, and tongue. And to do that, we need the scripture in every language. We're reading from Genesis today. And people, there's people groups, languages that don't have the Bible. And God is working to reconcile all things to himself. So just invite us all to be part of that. That'll be Wednesday in two weeks.

But yeah, let me get a show of hands. Can I get hands up? Who here has ever been in a conflict with anybody? Hands. Who here has ever been in a conflict? Jojo, I don't see your hand up. There we go. Okay. No, we can put our hands up. We can put your hands up. I think everyone's hand in the room. I'm pretty sure should have gone up. Because I think everyone here has said something you've regretted to someone. Just like right now, example. We've all hurt someone, wronged someone. Or can think of someone who's done these things to you. Everyone's been in conflict with someone. Of course we have. And think about it now. Is there a family member that you're not on speaking terms with? Is there somebody that you can think of where the last conversation you had with them was an argument? Maybe even on the way here today, before we came to worship, you had an argument with someone. Is there anybody where if you walked into the room and saw them, you wouldn't want to make eye contact? Or you might just want to walk out? Can you think of someone like that? And this brings us to Genesis 33. Because Jacob, he's coming home after 20 years away.
He's about to face the brother that he wronged, that he has conflict with. Remember what happened? Jacob, he got Esau to trade his birthright for a bowl of soup. And then he deceived their father, Isaac, and stole his brother's blessing. He stole Esau's blessing. That got Esau mad. And Esau wanted to kill him. So Jacob ran away. And they haven't seen each other. They had no contact for 20 years. And now 20 years later, God tells Jacob to return home and promises him, I will be with you. But what about Esau? Does Esau still want to kill Jacob? Is Esau still upset? There is this unresolved conflict, 20 year long conflict that he has to face. And so Jacob sent messengers ahead. They returned with some news. Esau is coming to meet you, but he's coming with 400 men. He's coming with 400 men. And I don't think Jacob's thinking, wow, he's throwing me a big welcome home party. Because last time they talked, Esau said, I'm going to kill Jacob. And now he's coming with all his people. So Jacob's afraid. He divided up his camp. He prays. He sends gifts ahead, hoping that his brother will accept him. But before
Jacob meets Esau, we read last week that Jacob first had to meet God, struggle with God, wrestle with God. Jacob wrestled with God in the night. And in this wrestle, God dealt with Jacob, prepared him to meet Esau. Because Jacob spent so much of his life trying to secure the blessing, steal the blessing even by his own cleverness. He bargained, he schemed, he deceived. But in that wrestle, God showed him his strength, his cleverness couldn't save him. Just a single touch from God that put Jacob's hip out of joint.
[3:43] And all Jacob could do is hold on to God, hold on to God, cling to God, and ask him for a blessing. And God blesses him. And that's the context. That's the background. As Jacob comes into this meeting with Esau, he's humbled, he's wounded, and yet changed by God's grace. He will see Jacob, he bows down before his brother, gives generously back to him. Jacob has changed. But Jacob still has a long way to go.

And we'll see that receiving grace, encountering God doesn't mean we change overnight. We don't get, we're not made perfect overnight. Our relationships don't get reconciled overnight. Jacob is changed, but we still find ourselves in conflict. We still hurt each other in our selfishness.

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And so we need God's grace. We need continual grace to pursue reconciliation. And ultimately, we'll see that our hope rests in Jesus, who reconciles us back to God, and will finish his work in us. So that's what we'll see today as we read Genesis 23. So let's stand together as we read from God's word, Genesis chapter 33.

And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and 400 men with him. So he divided up, so he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female servants. And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother. But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him. And they wept. And when Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the woman and children, he said, who are these with you? Jacob said, the children whom God has graciously given your servant.

[5:34] Then the servants drew near, they and their children, and bowed down. Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down. And last Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. Esau said, what do you mean by all this company that I met? Jacob answered, to find favor in the sight of my Lord. But Esau said, I have enough, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself. Jacob said, no, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me. Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. Thus he urged him, and he took it. Then Esau said, let us journey on our way, and I'll go ahead of you. But Jacob said to him, my Lord knows that the children are frail, and that the nursing flock and herds are a care to me. If they are driven hard for one day, all the flocks will die. Let my Lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly at the pace of the livestock that are ahead of me, and at the pace of the children, until I come to my Lord in Seir. So Esau said, let me leave with you some of the people who are with me. But he said, what need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my Lord.

So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth. And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, on his way from Paddan Aram, and he camped before the city. And from the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent. Then he erected an altar and called it El Elohe Yisrael. This is the word of God. Please take a seat. Lord, thank you for your word. Your word is living and active, more precious than gold. It cuts into our hearts, and we pray that you speak to us today. Point us to Jesus. You are reconciling us to yourself through Jesus. Thank you for that in Jesus' name. Amen. So conflict and reconciliation. We'll see that in Jacob and Esau's story today.

First, look at verse 1. It says this, and Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming and 400 men with him. And James took us through what happened at the end of chapter 32 last week. There's this wrestle with God, and as James said, there's this dramatic scene in verse 1 here, that Jacob has wrestled with God all night, the whole night. The fight's over, day breaks, the sun is rising, Jacob looks up, and behold, there's Esau. That's the scene. Jacob has encountered God, but he still has to face his brother now. He's wrestled with God, but still has to face this unresolved conflict now. And that's familiar to us, isn't it? Because we can pray about a conflict. That's what Jacob did.

We can acknowledge our sin before God. We can wrestle with God about that conflict, but then still, we have to go and start that conversation. We still have to take a step and face the person that we have conflict with. And that can be scary, because what if they misunderstand you?

What if they reject you? What if you get hurt again? And that argument becomes even worse than before. Jacob knew a bit of that fear. In chapter 32, he said, chapter 32 says that Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. And he was afraid because he knew that Esau was coming, and he didn't know what Esau would think. They had this conflict in the background. And so Jacob was afraid, and that's why he divided up his camp, so that if Esau, because Jacob had 12 children, he had all these animals, so he thought that if Esau would attack one group, then maybe at least half his family could escape, right? At least he'd still preserve some of his family. Jacob also sent some gifts ahead, some animals ahead, hoping that that would appease his brother, that Esau might accept his gifts and forgive him. And then we see that Jacob, he sent all these people ahead of him, and

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then he puts himself right at the very back of the camp. He sends all these people forward, his children, his wives, his animals, and then he's at the very back. That's what happened in chapter 32. He's afraid. But now after wrestling with God, notice this in verse 3. He arranges his family, and verse 3 says, then Jacob, he himself went on before them. Do you see that now?
[9:58] Jacob steps forward. He goes ahead of his family to face the brother that he wronged after wrestling with God. He doesn't need every fear to disappear before he takes that step. I believe that Jacob probably, you know, wrestling with God, it didn't take away all his fears. He carries some of that with him now. But when he, in that night, his only hope was to cling to God, and now he has to do the same and trust God as he approaches Esau. And we need that trust too. As James reminded us last week, that beneath Jacob's fear of Esau was also a deeper struggle, not with man, but with God. Would he trust God? Would he trust God to protect him? Jacob's whole life, he thought he was contending with Esau. He needed to take this blessing from Esau. But the real struggle, James told us, was whether he would believe that God will provide for him, that God is enough for him, that God is with him, and will fight for him. And for us, seeking reconciliation, that can expose that same struggle.

Because it's easy maybe to take a step forward and reach out if we know, if we're sure that the other person understands us, that the other person is ready to forgive us and welcome us. We want to know that Esau's 400 men, they're carrying balloons rather than weapons. Then it's easy to take that step forward. God hasn't promised us their response, but he has promised to be with us. We can trust him with the outcome and take the step that we need to take. And notice here, Jacob doesn't just step to the front. Look at his posture towards Esau in verse three. He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother. And I think this could be partially motivated still by that fear. Jacob doesn't want to set off Esau and his 400 men.
But there's more to his actions than fear. Jacob approaches Esau with humility and submission. Jacob doesn't come beating his chest. He doesn't insist, hey, this blessing is mine. Remember Isaac's blessing to Jacob? Isaac said to Jacob, let people serve you and nations bow down to you. Be Lord over your brothers and may your mother's son bow down to you. The blessing is that Esau would bow down to Jacob, but Jacob doesn't try to exert that. He doesn't say, hey, this blessing is mine. You have to bow down to me. Rather, Jacob is the one who comes with humility and bow downs before Esau. And he even does it seven times. Also, we see here throughout this whole conversation, Jacob calls Esau, my Lord.
He's all, it's always Esau, my Lord. And I'm your servant. I'm your servant, Esau, my Lord. Jacob, he takes the lower place before the brother that, that he's wronged. And here we, we don't see Jacob giving an explicit apology for what he does, what he did before. But, but in a way, Jacob's actions are communicating humility and a desire to make peace with the brother that he offended. And remember that wrestle the night before God asked Jacob there, what is your name? What's your name? And the last time Jacob wanted the blessing, his father asked him, hey, who are you? My son, who are you, my son? And Jacob answered him, I am Esau, your firstborn. He lied about who he was in order to get this blessing from his father. And now Jacob, and, and, and, and, and in chapter 32, when Jacob was wrestling God, he wanted a blessing again. But that time he had to answer when God asked him, who are you? What is your name? He had to answer Jacob. He had to admit he is Jacob. And remember his name means that heel grabber, cheater, deceiver even, right? Esau said, is he not rightly named
Jacob for he has cheated me these two times. As East, as Jacob was wrestling with God, God made Jacob acknowledge his sin. Jacob can trick Isaac. He can trick Esau, but he can't trick God. He is naked and exposed before God, can't hide his sin. And yet God shows him grace and blesses him anyways. And this is what enables Jacob to have humility towards Esau. Before Jacob faced his brother, God confronts him with his own need for grace. And now having received grace, he can bow down before Jacob. And we need that humility too. It's easy to think of ways that others are wrong. They said that they hurt us.
[14:48] It's easy to remember the wrongs that others have committed. And here Esau was in the wrong too. Esau shouldn't have despised his birthright, right? Esau shouldn't have been impulsive. He, Esau shouldn't have threatened to kill Jacob. Jacob could have focused on that. I can't believe you try to kill me. Do you know how hard these 20 years were? Do you know how hard I slaved away for Laban because I had to run away from home because you tried to kill me? That's not what

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Jacob says. Are we willing to acknowledge our sin? Can we say, I'm sorry. I lied. I spoke harshly. I hurt you. Will you forgive me? God's grace enables us to own up to our sin. When we wrestle with God, we're forced to acknowledge that we come before him as sinners and we survive only by grace and mercy. And so we can also humble ourselves before others that we've hurt. That's what Jacob does. And how, but then how will Esau respond? Because Jacob can humble himself all he wants before his brother, but he can't make his brother forgive him. He can't force that response. And last we heard from Esau is I'm going to kill my brother. That's the last word he's spoken. And now he's approaching with his men. I look at verse four. It says this, but Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him. And they wept. Imagine that moment.

Jacob, he's, he's worried. He doesn't know what's going to happen. He's on the floor, bowing down, humbled before his brother. And then he sees Esau walking his way. 400, Esau's in the front, probably 400 men behind him. And then all of a sudden Esau, he just, he just breaks into a run. He runs straight at Jacob. And remember Esau's a hunter, right? This is the type of guy Esau is. There's this hunter of a man running straight at him. The brother who wanted to kill him is coming for him. And then Esau, he just wraps his arms around him, wraps his arms around him, not to kill him, but Esau just gives him this massive bear hug, right? I imagine Esau, he just almost tackles his brother like a football player and his excitement. And verse four says Esau embraced him through his arms around his neck and kissed and they wept. And there's this, there's this big family reunion. It's, it's a touching moment. Esau sees the woman and children also in verse five and asks, who are these with you? He hasn't seen, he hasn't seen Jacob in 20 years. And now he wants to meet his new nephews and nieces and the in-laws. Who are all these people? So, so Leah, Rachel, and all the servants and children, they come down, they come over and bow down before Esau.
And aside from the family, they also discussed these gifts that Jacob sent ahead earlier. In verse eight, Esau asks, what do you mean by all this company that I met? What, what, what are all these, what are all these animals and all these things you sent forward? And Jacob answers him, it's, it's to find favor in the sight of my Lord. And notice this, remember the whole time, Jacob is calling Esau, my Lord. He's Esau, my Lord, my Lord Esau. But in verse nine, Esau says, my brother, this is how Esau replies to Jacob, my brother. Esau replies, I have enough, my brother.
[18:19] Keep what you have for yourself. Jacob comes to Esau as your servant, someone who has wronged him, but Esau embraces him as my brother. What an unexpected welcome. This is like, what, what a heartwarming reunion. It's, it's surprising grace. Jacob receives the forgiveness and acceptance that he had hoped for. But Jacob, he still insists for Esau to take that gift. Being welcomed, it, it's, Jacob still has this desire to make things right. He knows he's wronged his brother and he wants to make amends. Look at what Jacob says in verse 11. He says, please accept my blessing that is brought to you.

You notice that word, my blessing. Remember what Jacob took from Esau. That's what started this conflict. It was, it was the blessing. Jacob's wanted to steal and take the blessing. And now the man who took and stole that, he wants to give, he wants to give back. This is, this is a way in which Jacob recognizes, Hey, I was wrong. I tried to take your blessing and now I'm going to, I can't, Jacob can't give back that, that blessing, but he can give a blessing back to Esau out of what God has blessed him. And, and these are valuable gifts. There are more than 550 animals. Jacob is willing to, to part with his wealth, to, to give what he has to make amends because he knows he's done wrong and he needs to make it right. He needs to make amends. And he explains why he says, God has dealt graciously to me. God has given graciously, dealt generously with Jacob and Jacob can give generously to Esau to try to make this right. That's restitution. That's making amends. Even when we're forgiven, there's a responsibility to try as much as possible to make amends, make restitution to repair the harm that we've caused. It's what the tax collector Zacchaeus did when he encountered Jesus.
When, when, when Jesus encountered Zacchaeus, uh, Jesus wanted to eat with Zacchaeus. That was a way of accepting, forgiving Zacchaeus. But Zacchaeus says, behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.
And if I've defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold. Zacchaeus stole people's money and he's saying, Jesus forgave him, but also Zacchaeus knew he had this responsibility to make it right, make restitution, make amends for what was done. I'll restore it fourfold. Right? If you, if you take someone's money and say, I'm sorry, while you, you hold onto that money in your back pocket, like, what are you sorry for? I'm sorry that this is mine now. Is that what you're saying? No, you have,

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you have to give it back to apologize properly. If you spread a lie about someone, don't just go and apologize privately. Maybe you have to go back to the people that you, you've talked to and, and set straight the record. We can't undo the past. We can't take back the mistake. We can't buy forgiveness.
That's not what Jacob is doing for Esau. Jacob can't give back the blessing that he took, but restitution, the desire to make amends takes the wrong that was committed seriously.
[21:36] It's, it's a way of recognizing, Hey, there was this injustice done. There was this offense committed against you. And so how, and it's asking, how can I repair the harm that I've caused?

How can I restore this relationship with you? When we're truly sorry, we care about what our sin, what our, our, our sin, how that hurt the other person, what it costs the other person.
And we'll want to repair the damage that, that we caused as best as we can, even when it costs us. And, and so verse 11 tells us, thus Jacob urged Esau and Esau took it. Esau accepts Jacob's gifts and that, that confirms this peace between them by accepting the gifts. That's a way of Esau dropping his grievances against Jacob. The score is now settled. And, but, but Jacob, again, he hasn't bought his brother's forgiveness. Esau embraced him, hugged him before accepting any of it. And, and yeah, this, this is, this is a, you know, what a touching reunion between brothers, but also let's, let's remember who is extending that forgiveness. How is it that Esau can extend this forgiveness?
Because remember the type of person Esau is as described in the Bible. The Bible almost rarely has anything good to say about Esau. Esau despised his birthright. He hated Jacob and planned to kill him. Hebrews calls Esau sexually immoral and unholy. The Bible rarely has anything good to say about him, maybe except for this, this one moment where Esau forgives Jacob. But yet here, he welcomes his brother with open arms, this brother who wronged him. How, how, where does this grace come from? And now, now let's pay attention to verse 10. Jacob recognizes what happened. He says here, I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God and you have accepted me.
What does that mean? Seeing your face, Esau is like seeing the face of God. Does that mean Esau's super handsome or what? But let's, let's remember what happened at the end of chapter 32. It takes us back to that night before. After wrestling with God, Jacob says, I have seen God face to face and yet my life has been delivered. And he called that place Peniel, which means face of God. And now he looks into Esau's face and he says, seeing your face is like seeing the face of God. He looks into Esau's face and recognizes the mercy, mercy is shown to him again. The brother he's feared has welcomed him.
[24:17] He recognizes God's mercy in the face of Esau. Jacob prayed earlier to God, please deliver me from the hand of Esau for I fear him. Jacob worried that Esau's hands would try to kill him. But now these hands are wrapped around him in a hug. Jacob recognizes that God's, God answered his prayers in the face of his brother. God has delivered him through Esau's gracious welcome. That's why it's important for us to take note of verse 10. Jacob connects the dots between his wrestle with God to this reconciliation with Esau. Jacob being reconciled with God is now reconciled with his brother. Esau's mercy.

We don't know what changed in Esau's heart, but all we know is God made this promise to Jacob. I will bring you back in peace. And now Esau is reconciled to his brother. Our relationship with God changes our relationships with one another. Having received mercy, we can humble ourselves. And if even unholy Esau, as the Bible says, could forgive, then how much more do we, who are forgiven by the blood of Jesus, how much more would we have grace to forgive others? God's grace moves us towards the people that we've hurt and who have hurt us. And so there we have it. We have this reunion. 20 years later, these brothers hug, they cry. It's a heartwarming story and they live happily ever after, right?
That's what happens, right? Nope. There's no fairytale ending here because this isn't a fairytale. This is a true story. It's not, we'd love for it to end like this. The brothers live happily ever after, but Jacob's wrestled with God and he's changed. He's reconciled to his brother in one way, but his old habits haven't disappeared overnight and all our conflicts aren't solved overnight.
Let's read from verse 12. It says this, then Esau said, let us journey on our way and I will go ahead of you. Let's journey on our way. I'll go ahead of you. So Esau invites Jacob to travel with him back to Seir. Esau offers Jacob his company, his protection, also maybe for Jacob to settle and live near him. And it makes sense because, you know, if you're reunited with your long lost brother after 20

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years, there's so much to catch up on. You might want to chat a bit, update each other on what's going on. Who are all these, you know, all the, tell me about your kids, your wives, your servants. But Jacob here, he makes an excuse. He makes an excuse. He says, my Lord knows that the children are frail and that the nursing flocks and herds are cared to me. If they are driven hard for one day, all the flocks will die. In other words, Esau invites Jacob, hey, come with me back to my home.
Jacob says, man, you walk too fast. If I, if I follow you for one day, all my animals are going to die. Right? Well, then just walk slower. But, but hey, it sounds like quite a bit of exaggeration for me. [27:34] He's making an excuse. He's exaggerating to try to, to dodge his way out of this. So Jacob, Jacob has a new name. He's Israel, but he still has quite a bit of that deceiver left in him.

And then he says, let my Lord pass on ahead of his servant. So he says, hey, no, I won't follow behind you. Just, just go ahead. Let my Lord pass on ahead of his servant. I'll follow you slowly. I'll, I'll follow you at my pace. You go ahead. I'll follow you to stay here. And to that, Esau replies, sure. But let, let me leave some of my guys with you. Like, okay, you can stay back, but I'll, I'll just send some of my guys with you to accompany you. And Jacob was like, what? No, no, that's, that's too kind of you. Nope. Um, we're good. Uh, no need for that. You can go on your way now. And, and what do you think happens in verse 16 says this Esau returned that day on his way to Seir, but Jacob journeyed on to Succoth. So Esau goes one way, Jacob goes the other. He just, he just pieces out. He said, he's, he's going to Seir, but he went to Succoth. And the next time we see that these two brothers together in the Bible is, is years later at their father's funeral.
So there's this reunion, there's this reconciliation, but it's far from perfect. Jacob is back to his old ways and he, he just ditches Esau. And some people understand this conversation as this is a way of, of turning down Esau nicely as, as polite diplomacy, as they put it politely. Um, he just wants to turn Esau down nicely, but it's, it's hard for us having, you know, read Esau story, knowing Esau and his journey to it's, it's hard not to hear the old Jacob, Jacob's ways in these words. He's evasive.
He exaggerates, if not outright lies. And so we, we don't have this quite that fairytale ending that we want. Jacob, he received his brothers embrace. These two brothers laugh and cry. They hug together, but Jacob's still reluctant to trust him. He's wrestled with God, but there's still, there's still some of those old ways of protecting himself. So Jacob is back to the land, back to the land of promise now, but still he has further to go. Not only this, but at Bethel, he made a vow to God and he made a vow to God saying, this, this will be your house. And when, when God called him home, God reminded Jacob of that vow saying, Hey, I am the God of, of Bethel. And God will later command Jacob to go to Bethel explicitly. Um, but here Jacob's stops before that Jacob settles at Shechem.
[30:09] He stops early at Bethel. He builds an altar there and his worship is real, but he hasn't followed all the way through to Bethel. Um, but look at verse 20. It says there he erected an altar and called it El Elohe Yisrael. God. And that means God, the God of Israel, El Elohe Yisrael, God, the God of Israel.

So previously we see Jacob called on the Lord as, as, as the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac here for the first time in the Bible, Jacob calls the Lord, his own God. He is the God of Israel. Israel is, is Jacob's new name, right? He is my God, the God of Israel. Jacob worships the God who brought him home finally for the first time in the Bible at his own God. So Jacob's faith is real. He's wrestled with God. He's been transformed. His faith is real. Even if he's still flawed, his trust is real. Even if he's still being transformed. And don't we see that in ourselves also, right? When we turn to Jesus, something fundamentally changes. There is a definite change where you once loved sin. Now, you know, it leads to death and you love God more, but still as sin clings so close, right? There is this change and we learn to, to acknowledge it, ask for forgiveness, but we still fall back into it. We don't become perfect overnight. We still get proud. We still get impatient. We still lust. We confess our sins and still fall into it again. And we see that in our relationships also, don't we? Right? Even relationships between Christians, within the church, there's arguments. You might see parents, your parents who feared God for decades, you love Jesus too, but you still hurt one another.
Husband and wife can both love God and still struggle to listen or to admit that they're wrong or to forgive. We need better reconciliation. If it's up to us, right? If this is the final word, that reconciliation between Jacob and Esau, that is the pattern for all our relationships.

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We need something better than that. Don't we long for more? Jacob and Esau, they've made peace, but he still struggles with fear, falls back to his old ways, as do we.
And that brings us back to verse 10. He says, I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God and you have accepted me. In Esau, Jacob sees a reflection of God's mercy. In Genesis 33, we see this picture. When we look at Esau, Jacob and Esau, it's meant to bring us to the face of God.
[32:55] It's a picture of how God welcomes us home. Jacob approaches this brother that he's wronged, unsure of whether he'll be accepted, but his brother surprisingly runs to embrace him.

Does that remind you of another homecoming? In Luke 15, Jesus tells us about a son who's disrespected his father, who runs away from home and wastes everything. And I think that this story that Jesus tells in a way is alluding to this reconciliation in Genesis 33. It's the parable of the prodigal son. There's a son who disrespects his father, wastes everything, runs away. And eventually this prodigal son, he heads home ashamed thinking, hey, I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. I'm no longer worthy. I'm ashamed. But while he's a long way off, his father runs towards him, same thing, embraces him, kisses him, throws a new robe on him, throws a feast for him. It's, it's this unexpected welcome, the same open arms. Jacob and Esau, the story is, is an imperfect glimpse of the father's mercy towards sinners who come home to him. That's the welcome we need, that we have such a welcome through God's son, Jesus. Everything Jacob and Esau did here, Jesus did better because Jacob stepped forward to face his brother, unsure about what would happen. He was afraid. He was fearful. But Jesus, he went to the cross knowing fully what awaited him. He knew the anguish that awaited him, even to the point of sweating blood. He knew he would be betrayed, rejected, and killed. He didn't fear that. He knew it would happen. And yet he obeyed his father.
Jacob bowed before the brother Esau that he's wronged. But Jesus, he humbled himself to people who wronged him. He humbled himself, took on flesh. Jesus had no sin to confess, no deceit in his mouth.
And yet he humbled himself to be beaten, mocked, and took our sins upon himself. Jacob gave animals to make up for his scheming, to pay for his sins. Jesus gave his life for sins that he never committed.
And through that, the father forgave our trespasses, canceling the record of debt that stood against us, nailing them to the cross. God reconciled us to him, making peace by the blood of his cross.
[35:26] Jesus, he's not dead, but he's alive today. God raised him from the dead. Jesus is alive. And that's the hope that we have in our imperfect reconciliation, in our imperfect faith, when we still sin today, is that Jesus is alive. His spirit lives in us. And he is also coming again one day. When that happens, we will be changed. In 1 John 3, it says, we are God's children now. We are God's children now, even when we struggle with sin. But yet it goes on. When he appears, when Jesus appears, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is. We shall be like him. When he returns, he will finish that good work that he started in us. Don't you long for that? No more pride that keeps us from admitting that we're wrong. No more selfishness that hurts the people we love.

There'll be no more cruel words, no more bitterness, no more broken trust. We will be able to love one another without sin getting in the way. Jacob and Esau's beginning gives us a glimpse of peace.
But through Jesus, we have this better promise that they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the water covers the seas. That's where we're heading. That's the direction we're heading. So let us be pursuing reconciliation now. Let's confess. Let's forgive. Let us make amends with one another because that's what it looks like to live as God's children. Jesus says, blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God. Through Jesus, we've been adopted into God's family. We are children of God and children. They act like their parents. Let us be imitators of God as beloved children. His spirit makes us resemble him. He has shown us mercy. We, because he has shown us mercy, we can show mercy because he has forgiven us. We forgive. And because he's forgiven us, we can humble ourselves and confess our sins to one another.
And so I'd like to invite us to think once again, is there conflict for us right now? Is there conflict?
[37:41] Can you think of someone right now who you have unforgiveness towards? You have wronged. Is there somebody that you're actively trying to avoid? You don't want to talk to them.

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You walk into work and you want to walk on the other side of the hallway. You're going to take the long way to your desk to avoid that person. Is there a family member you don't want to have dinner with? What is keeping you from pursuing peace? And hey, there's many reasons to not pursue reconciliation. You might think, hey, that person, they hurt me too. They need to apologize too. But remember, Esau also threatened to kill Jacob. It was wrong on both sides, but their sin doesn't excuse yours. You can take the lead and confess the mistakes you've made first. You might also think, man, this doesn't pass. It's been so long. Why do we need to bring this up again? Let's just, let's just, let's just not talk about, let's not think about it. Remember here, between Jacob and Esau, 20 years has passed between these brothers. This is something from 20 years ago, but time doesn't fully repair what's done. There is, there was still conflict between them. There was just wrong committed and they had to bring it up. They had to, and they had to talk about it, reconcile, be reconciled to one another before Jacob was on his way to Bethel, on his way to the promised land.

You might think, what if they reject me? You know, what if I take that step? Because I don't know what's going to happen. I might take that step to reach out to them, but what if they reject me and it becomes worse than before again? And that's possible. They might. We can't, can't force someone to forgive you or control their response. You can't rebuild a relationship on your own. But Romans 12, Romans 12 tells us that if possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. There's something we can do as far as it depends on us. Let us live at peace with all. And so what does that look like for us today? Think about it. Is there someone that you think you need to send a message to after service today? Is there someone in this room that you need to go walk over to and apologize to?

[40:04] Or you're hearing all this and you're like, this is impossible. I don't have it in me. I'm still angry. I'm still upset. I'm still hurt. Do we need to ask God for the grace to forgive someone who's wronged you?

Because we can't do it on our own. We need to wrestle with God, struggle with him, be reconciled to God, to be able to extend that to others. We're God's children now. We're flawed still now. But one day, we will be made perfect like Jesus. And on that day, there will be peace once for all. But until then, let us be imitators of God and learn to make peace today. Who is it that we need to be reconciled with?

Is it with God? Do we need to be reconciled with God to confess our sins to him, to call on the name of Jesus and be saved? Or is there someone you can think of that you need to reach out to or forgive in your heart first? Let's pray.

Lord, as we read this, we pray that your word would cut into our hearts.

Yeah, help us to just feel like Jacob felt. At least feel the emotions Jacob should have felt to be remorseful of our sins. Lord, convict us of sin. Help us to see that we are broken.

[41:48] That we need your grace. We need your forgiveness. Lord, search our hearts, know our thoughts, see if there be any grievous thought in us. Lead us in the way everlasting. And Lord, we thank you that we have reconciliation with you through the blood of Jesus, that by single offering, he is perfected for all time. Those who are still being made perfect.

And Lord, we come to you confessing our sins, that we've wronged people. We have pride in us. We have unforgiveness in our hearts. And we pray that your spirit make us grow in all the fruit of the spirit. Convict us of sin and righteousness. Lord, your kingdom is a kingdom of peace.

Lord, your peace will cover. When we see you face to face, when we're worshiping around your throne, there won't be arguments between brothers and sisters. And so, Lord, we know that's your will for us, for us to love one another, to have perfect peace with one another. And we just confess when we can't do that perfectly. When we, our sin brings division to your body.

So just, yeah, we just seek your will. And we seek your face. Yeah. When we look at people we've wronged, when we look at people we need to forgive, we want to be able to see, to say the same thing that Jacob said. That when in your face, I see the face of God, that mercy. Help us to be people who are peacemakers and are children of God.

Pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

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