



1. Sunday Summary: This morning we continued our sermon series that we're calling *Lessons from the Desert*, based on the lives of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In today's sermon we looked at the life of Jacob and explored what his story teaches us about blessing.

- a) In this story we learn what blessing is. Blessing is: 1) an accurate discerning of who a person is and what God has called them to be 2) an empowering with carefully shaped and chosen words and actions that will help the person to become that person. Blessing is powerful. This is how Isaac's words work in Jacob's life. Blessing works in our lives in the very same way. For that matter so does cursing. Therefore we ought to be very careful with our words and how we use them.
- b) This story also teaches us that we all desperately need blessing. Jacob recognized, what all of us need to recognize: we can't bless ourselves. Blessing can only come from outside of ourselves. We also find out from the story that it needs to come from those we value, just as Jacob valued the blessing of his father, but didn't care much about anyone else's. Like Jacob we want to know that the people we most value in life, see us as important, special people. (Don't kid yourself... you might not need it from everyone, but you need it from someone).
- c) This story also helps us to see that we often try to procure blessing for ourselves the wrong way. Like Jacob, we often feel like we need to be someone other than ourselves if we're truly going to get the blessing we want. So we dress up. We pretend to be someone we're not. We pretend to be someone more worthy of blessing than we are. We hide our real selves. Even though we might be blessed by doing this, we find out, just like Jacob did, that it's not truly satisfying.
- d) Finally, this story reveals to us that God brings his scandalous intervening blessing and grace into the lives of people who don't seek it, don't deserve it, continually resist it, and don't even appreciate it after they've been saved by it. Such is the case with Jacob, and such is the case with us. Realizing this, and realizing the blessing in our lives, and that it just keeps coming to us again, and again, is the only thing that will truly make us a channel of blessing to those around us.

2. Connecting Questions: (Interactive, life sharing, thought & feeling type stuff)

- When you hear the word blessing, what comes to mind for you? How would you define blessing? What did you think about the definition of blessing that emerged from the story and sermon today?

- Have you ever been truly blessed? What was that like for you? What off-handed comments of important people in your life have been blessings? What about curses? How have blessings and/or curses continued to operate in your life?

- Talk about your family. Was there a person in your family that had the informal blessing of your parents? Or do one of your kids have your informal blessing? What has that done in the life of your family?

- What blessings have you received from the Lord in spite of the fact that you don't deserve them, you often resist them, and likely don't appreciate them? How do/have those blessings shape you?

3. Truth Questions: (What does the Bible say?)

- Think together about some other passages that deal with the topic of blessing. Can you think of any? What might they add to the conversation?

- Read Romans 12:14 together. Do you think Paul has in mind the same definition of blessing we heard about today? Is it possible to discern who a person that is persecuting you is, and what God has called that person to be? How could you empower a person like that toward the life God has called them to? Could Paul be using the word differently?

- Read Numbers 6:22-27. How, according to this passage, does Moses bless the people with God's blessing? How is that different, and how is it the same from the blessing we heard about this morning? What's unique about the way God blesses us?

4. Formation Questions: (Taking it further, How does the Truth change the way I live?)

- What concrete steps can you make to sink the gospel truth that we dealt with today deeper into your life throughout this week? What will you do about the message you heard today?

- What will you do to lean into the blessing of God this week? How will you impress God's blessing in Jesus on your heart?

- How will you use today's learning to help you to truly bless others? Who will you bless this week?

5. Resources for Further Study:

1. Alter, Robert. *Genesis: Translation and Commentary*. (WW Norton & Co.: New York, NY, 1997).