

SHIFT Sermon Series: WEEK SEVEN
By Rev. Malcolm Smith

This is a journey of unexpected twists, and this week holds the final and most unexpected twist. Have you experienced any unexpected twists? There are times when we can look back and see that at those critical moments in life, our priorities have totally changed. We

I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me. (Gen 33:10)

may still have a lot of work to do but we're not the same person we were before. But we don't change our hearts. We do our work and the Lord changes our hearts.

BOWING DOWN/SUBMISSION

In the promise made to Esau, in Isaac's blessing, it was said that he should some day have the dominion and break his brother's yoke from off his neck. (Gen. 27: 40) We may regard it as at least a part fulfillment of the promise when Jacob made Esau large presents and called Esau "lord" and himself "servant."

"Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." (Gen 33:11)

This is like bottoming out. We've tried as hard as we could—we held on till morning even—and still Esau is coming. All that's left is total submission.

And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how" (Mark 4:26-27).

REUNITING WITH ESAU / SHIFT OF HEART / LETTING LOVE LEAD

A friend of mine reminded me of this recently: we might spend a day doing really well as a parent. We might be not yelling at our kids, and very intentionally expressing love for them. But if we think that that good behavior is coming from us, then we'll think that it should earn us some happiness. But if we recognize that all goodness comes from the Lord alone, then we can continue loving our children, no matter how they treat us in return."

The goal is not just to know the truth or even to just obey the rules correctly. The goal is to want to live that way. So that when the situation is really hard, we believe it strongly enough that we'll stick up for it because it's who we are. We can't get there without being tested over and over.

Once a person has been supplied with the truths of faith he is then gradually led by the Lord to will the truth, and from willing it to putting it into practice. This truth is called the good of truth, for that good is truth present in will and action and is called the good of truth because truth which has been a matter of doctrine now becomes a matter of life. When at length the person takes delight in willing good and so putting it into practice, it

is no longer called the good of truth, but simply good. For now he is regenerate, and it is no longer truth leading him to will and do what is good, but good moving him to will and put truth into practice. And the truth now practiced by him is also so to speak good, since that truth derives its essential being from that in which it originates - in good.

At first Jacob represented those times in our lives when we are 'faking it till we make it.' But by the end of this story Jacob represents 'making it,' when we actually feel loving towards people, rather than simply acting loving." It's beyond just living the truth because we think we should and even beyond living it because we want to. It's an intuitive instinctive living of the truth for the sake of good.

Esau can be the Lord or the Lord through the angels with us. Either way, the important thing is the joy they experience about us making progress in our lives and them being able to unite with us in a new way.

Fred Schnarr explains that "the happiness and joy expressed by Esau in running to meet and embrace his brother Jacob is a moving picture of how the angels, present with us through remains, rejoice and delight when their presence is received by us in the goods that we have formed through truth.

INSISTING ON GIVING THE GIFT

In the previous week we were talking about how eventually temptation can get severe enough that we become willing to give things up if it will make the temptation go away. That's Jacob sending gifts to Esau. That's a sort of reluctant, doing it because it seems necessary motivation. In this week we're looking at times when we really do want to give things up. Jacob insists that Esau take his gift. "I had to give up being right and having my say every time but now I'm experiencing much more connection with other people and hearing lots of interesting things from them. It was totally worth it."

Solomon Keal said it this way: "It's as if we start by saying, 'OK Lord, here's my life. As you can see, I'm trying hard, but it's not working.' And then we believe we hear the Lord saying, "I have enough my brother; keep what you have for yourself" (Gen 33:9). Almost as if we think He is saying that He has enough life, or enough people who love Him, and He doesn't need us. Then something inside of us is taken aback, and we react with "But Lord, wait! What's wrong with my life? Please show me how it can be better! Please! I really want to learn how to love You better. I really do want to stop hurting the people I love. You're the only One that can help me!" And then the Lord says, "Now that's the attitude I was hoping for. I will gladly accept that attitude.""

SEEING THE FACE OF GOD

"I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me" (33:10). For by Esau is represented the Lord as to Divine good natural; and Divine

good immediately acknowledges the truths that it conjoins with itself. It's when the truth in us really sees that good accepts it and loves it and longs for it.

Wrestling it didn't seem like God was pleased with him, even though he saw the face of God. Then in Esau's face sees God and he was pleased with him.

Will is pleased with changed understanding. And understanding has this blessing to give to will.

“Well done good and faithful servant.”

“This is my beloved son...”

NOT ABLE TO GO FAST

We keep on working, not going hugely fast but eventually getting there.

A person who is being regenerated passes through different phases, akin to those which follow birth - phases akin to infancy, childhood, adolescence or youth, and adult years. Indeed a person who is being regenerated is born anew. During the phase when he is an infant the truths he knows do indeed possess life, though not as yet spiritual life. At this stage they are merely general truths which lack particular and specific ones, yet to which good is being joined. That joining of truths to good is therefore purely exterior, not interior. A more interior joining together of them is effected step by step as he advances into the phases that follow infancy. It is the state belonging to this type of infancy that is meant by the reference to the children being tender and by what is said immediately after that - 'and the flocks and herds with me are suckling, and if the men overdrive them for one day, all the flocks will die'.

Often, even when we think we've arrived, there's still more work to do. We've united with Esau but we still can't go at his pace. Each stages is as “an egg” for the next one. What is this campaign an egg for in your life?

BOUNDARIES

Jacob is making gradual progress into the Holy Land, to Canaan. Interestingly Esau doesn't live in Canaan and comes to meet him outside of Canaan. But once they've met, then Jacob can go into Canaan. But he goes to Succoth first, which is outside the land of Canaan. And then to Salem/Schechem and finally to Bethel. The whole story has had these gradual progressions.

THE STORY CONTINUES

We'd love to say that it all works out perfectly from now on but that's not how the story goes. So if you're life continues to have difficulty in it, that's par for the course. Of course, the story is not all happy after this. There's the episode with Dinah. And

Rachel dies. And Reuben sleeps with Bilhah. And then Joseph is taken away. Rachel's death actually represents a good end of state of hereditary evil.

APPLICATIONS

Think about unexpected twists in your life.

How do we bow down to Esau with our Jacob truth? It's confusing because, earlier, we were talking about how Jacob has to lead for a long time and we need to do that rather than let love lead. Maybe the trick is to be looking for times when the truth seems to be leading us to step out of the boat and be willing to go there rather than just stay in the safe boat. That's very different than just going with a gut feeling.

Our job seems to be to work on applying the truth as best we can and trying to look towards good. And that will make it so that the Lord can perform the miracle of Jacob into Israel—Jacob leading to Esau leading.

Act precedes so develop good habits. Therefore when truths are translated into action they are introduced step by step into their beginning and into their end, that is to say, into charity towards the neighbor and love to the Lord, and as a consequence truth becomes the good which is called the good of truth. Once truth becomes such it is able to be joined to the internal man, a conjunction which becomes step by step more interior as truths that are more interior are implanted within that good. Action comes first, then the desire for it in the person's will follows. For when a person is led by his understanding to carry out any action, he is at length led by his will to do it, till at last he has taken it on as an action performed habitually. When this point is reached it is introduced into the rational or internal man; and once it has been introduced, truth is no longer that which motivates him when he does a good action but good. For now he begins to feel within it something of what is blessed and so to speak of heaven.

Take some time to look back over your life, and over the whole program with this quote in mind:

When a person in faith and life is governed by interior truths he is within the Lord's kingdom and experiences the state of serenity, at which time his vision of exterior truths is like that of a person looking down from a tall hill onto a boisterous sea.
(Secrets of Heaven 4394)

Further Readings:

Secrets of Heaven 4341[2], 4347[2], 4358, 4337[2], 4353[3], 4593, 4377, 4378[2]