

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the one who opened for us the “Gate of Heaven”, our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, amen.

One of the overarching themes in today’s text is lying. Jacob and Rebecca both lie to Isaac. They lie because God spoke to Rebecca in a dream and told her the older son would serve the younger. God was referring to Jacob’s older, twin brother, Esau. For some mysterious reason that only God knows, God chose Jacob to be the one son through whom many descendent come. Jacob is to be the heir of the promise God made with Isaac’s father, Abraham. This text is also about blindness. Isaac is so blind that he couldn’t even distinguish between his two twin sons. Now Esau and Jacob were quite different. Esau, from the day he was born was covered with red hair. Esau was also a great hunter, but not a very bright fellow. One story about these two brothers has Esau coming home after a long, unproductive day of hunting. He begs Jacob for a bowl of lentil soup. Jacob cons Esau out of his birthright in exchange for the soup. Now in today’s text, we see Jacob aided and abetted by his mother, to steal Isaac’s blessing which he had intended to bestow on Esau.

Let’s talk for a minute or so about lying. Apparently, we all do it with great regularity. I read a survey this week that showed a whopping 89% of those surveyed admitted they lie on a regular basis. Almost 70% said they lie to their spouse sometimes or often. These respondents also admitted to lying to their

children and those who were children admitted to lying to their parents. A large majority also admitted to lying to their other relatives and to their friends. At first, I was shocked by these numbers, but when I think about it, I would say those 11% who said they don't routinely lie, are in fact, lying...

Most lies are intended to deceive or misrepresent the truth. We lie to manipulate our situation in order for things to be more favorable for us. Rebecca lied to her husband Isaac by misrepresenting Jacob as the elder son. You see Isaac and Rebecca both picked favorite sons. Isaac liked the wild game meat that Esau provided for the family. Who doesn't like a good BBQ? On the other hand, Rebecca highly favored the younger son, Jacob because he was the one who stuck around the house and helped out with the chores. Since her favoritism was so blatant, she knew Esau would not be the one who would care for her in her old age. So, she conspired to lie to her husband and present Jacob as his brother in order to receive the blessing meant for the firstborn son. Jacob, of course, was fine with this deception since he would benefit. The firstborn male received a double share of the inheritance and that's what Jacob stole from Esau not once, but twice. Even more than just the extra money, Jacob stole Esau's chance to be the next patriarch of the family.

I said this story is also about blindness. Isaac was blind both physically and spiritually. We know he was physically so blind that he had to feel his son's hands

and the back of his neck to distinguish between Esau and Jacob. It occurred to me that Isaac, Rebecca, and Jacob are all spiritually blind as well. They all knew God had already decided it would be Jacob who would receive the promise of both a land and descendants as numerous as the stars in the heavens. Despite knowing this, they all insisted on their own agenda and lied and deceived in order to get what they wanted. Isaac knew God had ordained Jacob as the heir apparent to the promise, yet he insisted on giving his blessing according to the Hebrew tradition, meaning to Esau, the eldest son. Jacob and Rebecca also knew God had said Jacob would be the chosen one, yet they didn't trust God to work that out in God's own timely manner. They both took matters into their own hands and forced the issue by lying and deceiving Isaac.

All week as I pondered this text, I kept thinking about the words we used to say in the brief order of Confession and Forgiveness: "If we say we have no sin, then we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sin, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sin and cleans us from all unrighteousness. One question that wasn't on the survey about lying was, "do you lie to yourself." I think I know the survey results on lying to yourself. My guess is it's over 90%! Maybe even approaching 100%... Lying is a part of our fallen human nature. We lie to ourselves and others all the time. From little white lies to full blown whoppers, lies are just a part of who we are.

Here's where the story gets really crazy. God knows the heart of every human being. He did create each and every one of us. So, God already knew Jacob was a deceiver and a greedy coveter who from his birth always wanted what his brother had, the blessing and the inheritance that went with being firstborn. Despite all the lying and deceiving, God still chose Jacob to be the next patriarch of the Hebrew people. That is, after all, the way God works. God chooses the ones we would consider unlovable and loves them the most.

Our reading for today says Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. In the scripture we skipped over, Esau became so angry at his brother for cheating him out of the double share of the inheritance and his father's blessing that he chased Jacob out of town and wanted to kill him. So, it's not like Jacob was taking a vacation to Haran, he was fleeing for his life. He had messed up his relationship with his brother so badly that Esau was actively trying to kill Jacob in order to get his birthright back. In the midst of his escape, Jacob stops for the night to rest. Evidently Mike Lindell hadn't in vented his My Pillow travel size yet, because poor Jacob had to rest his head on a large rock. Now, I've eaten at the Hard Rock Café, but Jacob's spending a long night at the Hard Rock Hotel. He had indeed hit rock bottom. Rock bottom is exactly the place where God always shows up. Up until that night, Jacob kept trying to make God's will happen through his own efforts. He couldn't see, let alone experience the abundant blessings of God until

he put down all pretense of being able to make it on his own power and begin to trust God to be faithful to God's promises.

We're all a lot more like Jacob than we'd like to admit. Once I discern what God's will is in a certain situation, I tend to force the issue by pursuing my own version of what I believe to be God's will. I try to keep Mel's will from interfering with God's will, but I admit, I don't always get that right. I've had more than one night sleeping beside Jacob in my own version of the Hardrock Hotel... That's never the place I would prefer to spend the night, but when morning comes, I pray that I might learn from my mistakes, and I thank God I get another opportunity to try again. I know I'll never get it right, but I also know the Good News is that the more I mess up the more God forgives me and gives me another chance. My guess is that each one of us has experienced that grace and mercy filled moment when God said to us get up and try again. Your past is behind you. I love you and I forgive you...

May the God of second chances never give up on you. May we all humble ourselves and seek God's Word instead of our own desires. May the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, continue to bless us in order to be a blessing to others. Amen.