

## SERMON TRANSCRIPT FOR SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT – REMINISCERE

MARCH 13, 2022

Greetings from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. All right. So the two stories of the Gospel and the Old Testament, they seem to be really pretty divergent. One of them being one of the patriarchs, I mean, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It seems like this man is in the core, in the center of what it means to be a child of God. And then you've got this Canaanite woman off on the fringes. I mean Canaanites were the thorn in the flesh of Israel for most of their existence. They were the people that were living in the land before the Israelites got there in the Exodus. So we have two people that are on opposite extremes of their relationship with God. And yet, they both are struggling because first off, let's look at Jacob. Now if we remember Jacob's early life, we remember first off that the name itself is something odd.

Jacob means the deceiver, the lying one. Now why in the world would you name any child the lying one is beyond me. However, God in His wisdom inspired Isaac to call them Jacob and Esau. But Jacob is the deceiver, and we see it throughout his entire life. Esau gets hungry and is famished and Jacob, rather than being kind and loving and giving his brother something to eat, he says, "I'll give you something to eat, if you give me your birthright," takes advantage of Esau. And then later on with the help of his mom, he deceives his brother and his father and receives the blessing. And then he runs away out of fear that Esau is going to kill him. Not a bad thought. I mean, he was pretty wise in thinking he should run, because he had just stolen everything through lying and cheating. So this is afterwards, he's coming back.

He's coming back because he's beginning to learn his lesson that he needs to be dependent upon God and that God has called him to something greater. God has blessed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He's already told them, all three of them, before they did anything that he would bless them, that their descendants would be as numerous as the stars in heaven, and every nation would be blessed through them. And yet here's Jacob, the deceiver running away from his family because he wasn't living up to his promises and to his heritage. But now he's coming back and he's a little uncertain of his reception with Esau. He doesn't quite know how Esau is going to respond. So he sends his family off on the other side and he is off by himself. Just in case something happens, his family's going to be safe. So he is off by himself.

And maybe he's in a contemplative state. He's thinking about his past, he's reminiscing about what he could have done and what he should have done differently. In the process, he ends up wrestling with somebody. Now this isn't just a random stranger that happens to come up and say, and pick a fight with Jacob, "I'm going to beat you up." Now this is not what's going on. God shows up. This is what we say in our theological classes as the pre-incarnate Christ. So the incarnate Christ is the Son of God becoming flesh, being born as an infant on Christmas. Jesus Christ in other words. So the pre-incarnate Christ, that is the Son of God that existed before He became flesh. It's the same person, but this is before He was connected to the flesh of man. So He appears in the Bible on various times in the Old Testament, the Son of God does.

And this is one of those times where He shows up and He wrestles with Jacob. Now it seems at first reading that He wrestled with him until break of day. And when the man saw that He could not prevail against Jacob, He touches his hip socket. So what do we say, Jacob was an equal to the Son of God and wrestled him to a

stalemate? That seems a little hard and a stretch of the imagination. God is the creator of the universe. He spoke everything into existence. Surely, we're not saying that man can be equal with God, and you'd be right. No, we're not saying that. But when you think of the image of Jacob wrestling with this man, with the Son of God, rather than thinking of two grown men wrestling together, think of it as a father wrestling with his six-year-old boy. I mean, in essence, that's what's going on.

They're wrestling and the father's wrestling with him and the kid thinks he's doing well because he has got a hold of the father's leg and he is holding on tight and he is not going to let go and the dad can't get rid of him, shake him off. And this is the image that you should get when you think about Jacob wrestling with this man. It's not that Jacob could prevail. It's just that he wasn't letting go. He was holding on with desperation onto this man that he was wrestling with because what's going on? He's hoping that he's reconciled with God and with his brother, but he wants to be reassured like all of us. We want to be assured is God really with us. I mean, if you have any idea of being a wayward child, Jacob is the wayward child.

I mean, he literally ran away from his family and now he's coming back and he wants to be reassured that God is still with him, that he is still blessed by God, and that no matter what comes next, God will protect him and guard him and be with him. And so he's holding on to the leg, "I'm not going to let go no matter what." Even when the Son of God touches his hip and he limps, he perseveres and he holds fast to the promise, holds fast to the hope that is this man that he's wrestling with. Again, you hear the man pushing him away, first touching his hip and then saying, "Look, it's daybreak. Let me go. I need to leave. Enough is enough." And Jacob's like, "No, no. I'm not going to let You go until You bless me. I want to know. I want to be reassured."

And so He says, "Fine, what's your name? I'm going to change it to Israel." The anointed one, the blessed one, the one who wrestled with God, who has seen God face to face and has been delivered. Now Jacob still pushes it a little bit like any kid. "So what is your name? I'm pretty sure this is God, but just kind of making sure. Am I in control or not?" And then God is saying, "Really? You need to ask me who I am?" And Jacob's going, "Oh, yeah. Okay." So then he recognizes that he's wrestled with, and he's seen God face to face and yet has lived. And so he puts his hope, his hope is in clinging, literally, clinging to God, because that's the only way that he can be confident that he is at peace and that things will turn out okay.

And then you have the woman in the New Testament, this Canaanite woman who's crying out, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!" Now notice she doesn't cry out Jesus Christ or Jesus or anything like this. She says literally the Son of David. By that she is recognizing that this is the man who is from God, who is for Israel. She already recognizes that this is at least, at very least, a prophet of God and that God is the God of Israel. So, she's making a confession that she recognizes it's not the Canaanite gods that this man is serving, but He's serving the God most high, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the God of David. So she's already making a confession of faith, already recognizing that she is not part of this family. She's outside of it, but she cries out nonetheless.

She's got no hope whatsoever, so she pins everything on Jesus, on the son of David. And so she just cries out and cries out and cries out. First the disciples try and push her away. "Come on, please. You're bothering Him. Get away. Go away." That doesn't work. So then they go to Jesus, "Jesus, can You kick her out? Put her away." And so He actually turns to her and He says something pretty harsh, or at least it sounds like it at first. He says,

"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." You might think at that point the Canaanite woman would go, "Well, I'm not of the house of Israel so I guess this isn't for me." But she doesn't. She perseveres because she knows her hope is found in no one else, but the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the God of David. And so she cries out all the more. She just goes and kneels before Him and says, "Lord, help me."

She's got nothing to offer. She doesn't know what's going on, but she's desperate. She needs help. And so she's clinging to the only source that she has. And Jesus, like the father, tests her just a little bit, pushes her and pushes her just a little bit. Not that He doesn't want to help, but He wants us and her and the disciples to understand it's not by her own effort that she is blessed, but it's by her faith, it's by her understanding and her trust that this man can do what He says He's going to do because He is the son of God. So He says, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." And what's her answer? Does she argue with Him? Does she complain that she's being mistreated? No, she says, "Yes, Lord, I'm a dog. I deserve absolutely nothing. But even a dog gets to eat the crumbs off the table." And Jesus says, "O woman, great is your faith."

Everything visible said there's no hope. Everything that she saw and everything that she heard gave her no hope that God was going to do anything, that Jesus was going to do anything. And yet, she still kneels before Him and puts her trust in Him because He's everything because she understands that she has peace with God. She may not understand it fully, but we do. Listening to this story, listening to Jacob, listening to this Canaanite woman, we realize we are outside of the family of God, except by His Grace. And even when we are a part of the family of God, we're oftentimes His wayward child. We run away. And our only hope is to come back and cling to the promises of God where He says we have been justified by faith and no matter what comes He will save.

And even the testing, even the taking out of the hip socket and the pushing with Jesus's words, we hear Jesus' testing, maybe a little bit of sorrow and suffering that both of these people experienced, but the pushing and the testing, it did not drive them away, but it brought them closer. And Paul in Romans kind of reminds us how that works because he says that we can rejoice in the Grace that God has given to us, that we've been gained access by faith to the grace, which allows us to stand even in the midst of suffering. Now I don't know about you, but I have a few people that I've seen go through tremendous suffering in their life. It seems like everything that could go wrong, goes wrong in their life. Or maybe you know someone that is going through a debilitating disease or facing their death, or maybe someone who their life is in complete upheaval, lost their job, lost their homes, whatever is going on.

And yet they stand firm in the faith and they trust in God, no matter what. And their faith is stronger as a result of their suffering. Why? Because even our sufferings in our Christian life produces the work of God, because in suffering, it produces endurance. As we suffer and we make it through the suffering, we recognize each and every day as a gift of God and then that the only way we made it through this day was by God's Grace. We've got nothing left so we rely upon the Grace of God to get through tomorrow, because today spent us and then we got nothing left. And yet tomorrow comes and we walk in faith. And then the next day comes and we realize that God is going to be faithful day after day after day. And we are then enabled to endure because of the faith and because of the power of God, not because of our own abilities, but because of God. It produces endurance, which produces character.

Those people that their walk in faith, you just know are the tremendous examples that we hope to live up to because their character demonstrates their trust in God and their character produces hope. And that's not a hope that puts us to shame. It's not, "Oh, I hope I win the lottery and then everything's going to be okay." No, it's, "I hope in the promise and the sure and certain love of God that He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased me with His gifts, and that I, now as His child, can cling like Jacob clung to the Son of God and know that He will bless us come what may." And let's face it, every week I think, "Well, we're going to get some good news." And then something worse happens and something worse happens. And we begin to lose hope as a people, but God is still in control and His Word is still accomplishing what He desires and it will work in our lives and it will work in the lives of the people that we come in contact with.

They are suffering as well, but they don't know the endurance that comes from knowing Christ. We do. And that is what we are called through our sufferings. It gives us purpose and meaning. We are now able to stand firm in the Grace of God because we know that's the only way that we stand. And that's our only hope. But what hope that is! Because think about this, the crumb that the Canaanite woman received was enough to defeat the devil himself, or a demon at least. If a small little crumb, which He describes, is able to defeat a demon, what is the full bread of life going to do for us? What blessing, what trial, what tribulation can we not face? If God is with us, who can be against us? The answer is no one. No one can stand against the Word of God. Now they can stand against me easily, but they cannot stand against the Word.

What does Martin Luther say in the Mighty Fortress? One little Word can fell Him. Jesus Christ, our hope and our confidence. We have peace with God. He has defeated all of our enemies and that hope will not disappoint, but bring us to everlasting life in Christ, Jesus, our Lord. May His Grace, His mercy, His peace, and His hope be and abide with you always now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.