

Genesis 25:29-34 Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. <sup>30</sup> And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) <sup>31</sup> Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." <sup>32</sup> Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" <sup>33</sup> Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. <sup>34</sup> Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

## Announcements:

1. Prayer Team, TODAY, See Lis Carr
2. Love thy Body, February 20, 7-9. See me. →
3. If: Gathering 2 day event, See Krista Copeland

Membership  
book

## Genesis 25:29-34 | Birthright

Today's text is about value, and the proper or improper valuing of something that can't be seen. We are dwelling in the realm of the invisible, value and promises. Worth and trust. The seen and the unseen. We'll start with the story, and then we'll look at its interpretation in scripture. And finally we'll compare another exchange of value in scripture.

### 1. Sold Birthright

Genesis 25:29-34 Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. <sup>30</sup> And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.)

Last week we covered the clear differences between Jacob and Esau in their birth story. And we see that in this story, they were living out their differing characteristics. Jacob is an indoor guy and he is making a stew, Esau is an outdoor guy coming in from the field. Esau runs in exhausted and the translation is gentle on him here, because his request for the stew is kind of gross. "Let me gulp some of that red stuff, that red stuff, I'm exhausted!" This becomes the reason he is called Edom, which means red.

← Genesis 25:31 Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now."

We've been told that Jacob is cool and we see it demonstrated here. Cool, collected, sees an opportunity and is more than willing to exploit it. But what is it that Jacob is asking for? What is the birthright? Remember Esau was the firstborn son. The firstborn has the birthright from their father. It is a double share of the estate as compared to the other children, (Deut 21:17). But remember the family we are talking about. This is no negotiation over a simple inheritance, this is the family of promise.

but, Family of Promise.

Value  
what will  
exchange.

differences

Gulp

Exchange

Jacob, quiet.  
What is a  
Birthright?

Firstborn  
double share.

Isaac, Jacob and Esau's father, is the firstborn son of Abraham. Abraham had been given the promise of the Lord that through him all the families of the world will be blessed. This is a promise of land and offspring. It is a tracing of land allocated to a lineage which necessarily ties to the firstborn son. The physical and the spiritual promise are intrinsically linked in this family. Therefore the birthright is not merely a looking back on what Isaac or Abraham has accumulated that the son might share in. But a looking forward in faith to what is not evident at the moment, but exists only in the assurance of the promise of God.

Esau is the older brother. He has the promise. So here is our question, of what value is the promise of God? Is it of real value in the world? Or is it just a psychological accident, it just tricks your brain into believing it, and therefore finds its value as a sort of false but useful projection? Look at the calculation Esau makes.

Genesis 25:32-33 Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" <sup>33</sup> Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob.

It is a pragmatic argument based entirely upon what he can see and feel right now. So what does this mean about the value of the birthright. Esau sees that the birthright only has value in so far as it serves his immediate felt needs. When it falls outside of that parameter, then the promises of God become transferable even subservient to whatever does meet this tangible felt need.

Suddenly, the promises of God become worth a few bites of that red stuff. Swear to me now. The abandonment of the promises of God are as urgent as our holding to them.

Genesis 25:34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

The speedy recovery after the meal seems to shed light on the thinness of Esau's claim to be on the verge of death. But consider Esau's reasoning. The very nature of the promise of God is one which will not be seen in this life. So you must choose. Value exists in so far as it relates to me, my needs, desires, and fulfillment. Or there is real value in the world which surpasses even myself. The writer of Genesis offers a spare and cutting judgement. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

## 2. Judgement on Esau

Hebrews 12:16 that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

In the letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament the writer gives us this list of faithful servants of God throughout scripture. And then standing at the end of the list is Esau as the

Sexual immorality

~~Present~~  
~~Future~~

disconnecting  
from hope.  
hope & family

Esau's promise (is)  
Family  
Re-creation  
promise.

Foundational Ethic

God serves me: God

Double Exchange

immediate satisfaction

= God.  
1st commandment  
& slavery

gods impart  
identity.

desires = identity!

What about  
Jacob?

Take advantage of  
someone in need?

quintessential example of the one who denies the promise of God, because of today's example. And look what it is paired with, sexual immorality. Now why this pairing?

Sexual immorality is at least a sacrificing of the future for the present. And in this same way in the same shape of Esau's sin he looks at something that his body craves now and renders valueless that which might have come from his restraint. Sexual immorality is a way of disconnecting the act of sex from its context of marriage and therefore its generative capability of creating a family. And what is the act of making a family other than an act of hope in the future. Imagine having sex with no hope for the future! Of course we don't have to imagine this happens all the time.

Now consider, the promise to Esau is the promise of a family. This is the birthright, this is the promise. In a sense it is a redemptive version of the very promise of God to Adam and Eve, be fruitful and multiply. But rather than this being a continuation of the creation event in its glory, it is paired with something even more glorious, the redemption of the world found in Christ. It is a re-creation promise. Esau weighs the promise against that which he can experience here and now. The promise comes up lacking.

So much of our ethic is formed by this idea that God is valuable or worth serving in so far as he serves me here and now. But be careful, because each exchange is a double movement. You are not just lowering the value of God, which of course is absurd, but you are raising the value of your temporal satisfaction to the position of God. That means it is God to you, and you are its subject. Why is the first commandment first, because its breaking is the pattern of all other breaking. And by the way it is a pattern of enslavement.

Don't you realize what gods do? They impart identity. God makes man and woman in his image, in the image of God we stand. Look at that imparted identity, so unthinkably high we don't define it we merely wonder at the terms. And of course all gods do this. Don't you see the inevitable pattern this creates? When your desires are your gods, then your desires become your identity!

But what if the desire was truly life or death? Doesn't it seem like Jacob took advantage of someone in need? I think this is why the writer of Genesis clarifies it for us by making sure we recognize that the fault here lies with Esau. He makes the exchange. Don't let false compassion cause you to wrongly exchange the glory of God.

### 3. Right Value

Mark 14:3 And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head.

Jesus was eating dinner with his disciples and some Pharisees. Mary, Lazarus' sister, took a pound of expensive ointment and poured it over Jesus. It should be noted that ointment like this was likely the families greatest possession. Equivalent to about a years salary in its worth. What is your annual salary? She breaks the jar and pours it out on Jesus, all of it, in an act of worship.

*Annual Salary*

*Exchange.*

*Money, Giving to church.  
not less than that.*

Do you see the exchange of value. I will give to Jesus my most valuable my most costly thing because of the promise that he embodies, because of who he is, because he is worthy of the most costly form of worship that I can stand to muster. Don't you see, we are talking about money, we are talking about tithing, about whether or not you give to your church. Not just that, but certainly not less than that.

*I want to say  
this to Jacob.*

*Neglecting someone's need.*

*more palatable guise  
of compassion to  
poor.*

*Same logic!*

*Lordship at the  
limit!*

*Compassion/right worship*

*Only true compassion  
is nested in right  
worship.*

*Christ is absolute  
ultimate value.*

*Not legal required  
Almsgiving*

*Anointed for  
burial*

*Christ's  
Exchange*

Mark 14:4-5 There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? <sup>5</sup>For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her.

This is the same type of argument that could have been used against Jacob. Do you hear the logic? It is the same type of logic that Esau used to justify selling his birthright to Jacob, but it is hidden in something more palatable than a meal for himself, it is hidden in a guise of compassion for the poor. But in both instances the same trade off is being made. My absolute need, or even the absolute need of others is more valuable than the honoring of Christ. Do you see the demand of the lordship of Christ even at the absolute limit?

Mark 14:6-7 But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. <sup>7</sup>For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me.

Jesus is able to see through the thin manipulative guise which seeks to pit compassion against worship. And he shows us here, that the only true compassion is that which is nested in worship. The only life that makes any sense is one which is utterly and completely committed to the honoring and the worship of Christ. He is the drive, the purpose, the reason, the hope of the promise, the only one who can offer eternal life. The only way any other value finds its orientation in our lives is in pointing to his glory.

Why is Jesus' worthy of the most costly anointing of our lives, even beyond any other good thing? Because his anointing was an anointing for the burial towards which he was headed. His burial was an exchange of his own. He exchanged the glory he was due, to take on the death that we deserved, so that in his death he might give us life. Now our lives are a living sacrifice of worship to him. So that a life that worships him, gives to the poor, but not to manipulate Christ's love, nor to swindle away something for ourselves, but only as an act of worship for the free grace he so lavishly anointed us with. Let us not make the exchange of Esau, but let us worship because of the exchange of Christ.

*He died to keep his promise  
Exchanged his life for ours.*

*Heart of the exchange*

/ Question

Communio

5

‘Devotion to Jesus and gratitude for his sacrifice will lead in fact to a service of the poor (which will always be needed) in a manner quite different from a legally required almsgiving. It will be in fact part of the fragrance of the gospel which is destined to fill the whole world.  
L, Newbigin