When It's Time to Go — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 30:25–31:55 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, July 28, 2024 · *The Patriarchs*

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Be in the book of Genesis. We're going to be in chapters 30 and 31 this morning. We're going to start in chapter 30, verse 25. And this is one of those sermons I've never preached a sermon like this in my entire life. It's some 100 plus verses. We're going to be more reading the scripture than we are talking about the scripture. I debated and debated. Is there any way to cut this thing down to make it a little more manageable? But really there is not; it's one unit of thought and if you've been around Broadview, you know our convictions on the Bible are not that it's just some interesting book or that you can pick a verse here and pick a verse there and kind of compile it to make up your own little recipe of biblical help, but that the word of God is inspired by God, that it is uniquely inspired by God, and that when the Bible speaks, God speaks.

And so the job of a preacher is to simply re-present what God has already presented in the scriptures. And so that's what I hope to do this morning through this passage that we're going to read, but it's such a lengthy passage that it's going to take a while to do it. But it's a passage that I think communicates a singular point, and that is how to answer the question whether or not you should stay or you should go. Oh, we already talked about the stairway to heaven, so I thought I might as well get another oldie in there.

Should I stay or should I go? The question is asked by a man named Jacob, and if you've been with us for a minute, Jacob is the son of Isaac, who is the son of Abraham, who is the OG, the founding father of the Christian and the Jewish faith for sure, but the Judeo-Christian worldview, all of it kind of stems back on him. And we've been watching Jacob learn the same lessons of faith that his grandfather learned before him and that his father learned before him. He had had to leave his hometown, his mom and his dad and his brother, because of a disagreement with his brother that got to the point where his brother essentially wanted to kill him, so his mom said, Jacob, you need to go live with my brother Laban and while you're away I want you to try to find a good and godly wife.

And so he goes to Haran to find a good and godly wife and on the first day he gets there he sees this girl named Rachel who is a shepherdess who he immediately fell in love with at first sight. I wouldn't say he's all the way there yet in terms of his being a godly man, but he knew that that was a gift from the Lord and so he says to Laban I'll work for seven years if you'll give me your daughter Rachel in marriage. And Laban says, well, sounds great.

I mean I'd rather give her to you than some other random guy. So he works seven years, but instead of getting Rachel, he gets lazy eyed Leah. And next morning he wakes up, oh no, it's not Rachel, it's Leah. And you tricked me, Laban, and Laban says, no, I didn't trick you, I'm just doing our customs. We always marry the older one first. So if you want the younger one, she's yours after seven days plus seven more years of labor. So he gets Rachel the love of his life seven days later and then commits another seven years of labor to Laban.

And so Jacob has been working now for 14 years. His family has budded and grown. They have eleven or twelve or so kids, on the backs of anger and disappointment and spiritual compromise and jealousy and envy and all sorts of brokenness that they have been struggling with. Rachel is upset because even though she has the love of her husband, she can't have children; she struggles with infertility. It wasn't until she finally, after years of struggle, had one child named Joseph. Leah didn't enjoy her life because the one thing she wanted was the love of her husband, but she couldn't have that no matter how many children that she had, no matter how much she contributed to the family.

Jacob loved her sister more than her. And Jacob was frustrated because he had spent fourteen years working for nothing other than two women who could not get along and made much of his life extremely difficult. He wanted to build wealth for his family that had been growing a great deal and so he wanted to get home so he could start building generational wealth. And that's where we find ourselves today. And all of it answering the question, should I stay or should I go? A question that all of us will one day have to answer.

A question maybe some of you have recently answered, or a question that you answered maybe rightly or wrongly and are reaping the consequences of today. And my conviction after having studied this passage is that what you believe about God is going to fundamentally shape whether or not you answer that question at all, and if you answer it, whether you answer it in the right way. And so we're going to read the passage. I'm going to make a few comments along the way to help frame it underneath that overarching question, and then we'll have a few points of application by the time that we conclude.

So we're going to start in chapter 30, verse 25. It says, after Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, Send me on my way so that I can return to my homeland. Give me my wives and my children that I have worked for, and let me go. You know how hard I have worked for you. It's fourteen, it's probably fifteen, maybe sixteen years. Jacob has had

enough. He's saying, I've got to take care of my own family. I've been busting my rear for you and you're better off for it.

Now Laban, of course, hearing this is going to respond. He feels threatened. He's about to lose his most prized possession, his best worker. And so he says, well, if I found favor with you, then stay, because I've learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you. And then Laban said, name your wages, and I will pay them. The greater the threat, the more generous Laban becomes. He's saying, I know that you probably want to build generational wealth. I know you want to take care of your family. But please don't go back to your homeland.

I'll do anything. I'll pay you whatever you want. Please just stay here. And so Jacob, you know, his main goal was to try to build wealth. He thought the only way he could do that was by leaving, but now he sees a door of opportunity to stay, and so he says, You know how I have served you and how your herds have fared with me, for you had very little before I came, but now your wealth has increased. The Lord has blessed you. So the first principle I want to give you for how to answer the question whether you should stay or should you go is that if in answering that question, staying where you are brings about a material harm to your family or the people that you love it's probably a good indication that you need to go.

In the case of Jacob, he had a family, he had two wives, that wasn't his original plan, but he's got two wives, he's got all sorts of children. And he's working for a man that is essentially bringing harm to those he's entrusted to care for. And Jacob is saying, if I stay here, I can't do my primary obligation, which is to take care of them. And so I'm out of here. And it may be in your case you need to make a move if staying would bring a material harm to your family.

Now I think Laban knows that. He knows that Jacob is serious, and so he essentially puts the ball in Jacob's court and he says, what should I give you? And Jacob said, You don't need to give me anything. If you do this one thing for me, I will continue to shepherd your flock. Let me go through all your sheep today. And remove every sheep that is speckled or spotted, every dark-colored sheep among the lambs, and the spotted speckled among the female goats, and that'll be my wages. And in the future, when you come to check on my wages, my honesty will testify for me.

If I have any female goats that are not speckled or spotted, or any lambs that are not black. Then they will be considered stolen. And Laban says, well, sound good to me. Let it be as you have said. Now the reason Laban is agreeing, and we may not get this because if you raise goats or sheep you may not know all this, but in that culture especially, the best sheep were white sheep and the best goats were black goats and you didn't want speckled, spotted anything on either one because you wanted purebred, you wanted the strongest, you wanted the best.

And that was just kind of the way things were. And so Jacob is essentially saying, I'll make you a deal where you have nothing to lose and I have nothing to gain. If it guarantees my freedom, let's shake on it. And so Jacob agrees to take all of the abnormal, unpleasant animals, and says to Laban, You get all the best stuff, and I'll take all the bad stuff, and Laban agrees. I wouldn't say it's a great plan for Jacob, but it is an open door. It is something that Laban was going to agree to.

And it may be in your life when you're trying to answer the question, should I stay or should I go? One of the indications it may be time for you to go is if God is opening up for you a door of opportunity. Now, not every open door looks great or is super compelling, but it is in fact maybe a sign or an indication this is what you need to do. Jacob saw that door of opportunity and he takes it. I can build wealth for my family, and I can get out from underneath the grip of Laban.

So that day, Laban removed the streaked and the spotted male goats and all the speckled and spotted female goats and every one that had any white on it, and every dark colored one among the lambs, and he placed his sons in charge of them, and he put a three-day's journey between himself and Jacob. Jacob, meanwhile, was shepherding the rest of Laban's flock. So what does Laban do? He says, okay, Jacob, here's your goats. I'm going to put my sons in charge of basically your wealth, and you're going to continue to pastor my flock three days' journey away from here.

So Jacob agrees to it. It's not the best deal, but it's an insurance policy for Laban. Now what's Jacob going to do? He says in verse 37 that he took branches of fresh poplar, almond, and plane wood. He peeled the bark, exposing white strips on the branches, and he set the peeled branches in the troughs in front of the sheep in the water channels where the sheep came to drink, and the sheep bred when they came to drink, and the flocks bred in front of the branches. And they bore streaked, speckled, and spotted young.

And Jacob separated the lambs, and he made the flocks face the streaked sheep, and the completely dark sheep, and Laban's flocks. And then he set his own stock apart, and he didn't put them with Laban's sheep. Then, whenever the stronger of the flock were breeding, Jacob would place the branches in the troughs in full view of the flocks, and they would breed in front of the branches. As for the weaklings of the flocks, he did not put out the branches. And so it turned out that the weak sheep belonged to Laban, and the stronger ones belonged to Jacob.

And the man became very rich, and he had many flocks, female and male slaves, and camels and donkeys. So Jacob eventually essentially becomes an extremely wealthy person. By, I don't know what you'd call this, superstition or folklore custom, that even though I have abnormal sheep I'm going to engage in a breeding program so that the strongest of the flock

actually breed in front of striped sticks and things like that. And that way their babies, when they breed in front of those striped sticks, are going to be super strong and great.

But they're not going to be bred only white and only black, but they're going to be streaked and spotted like my sheep are. Now, why does he think that's going to work? Well, it's obviously not widely practiced today. That would be nonsense, right? You wouldn't, you know, put up a picture with some stripes so maybe my horse will have a zebra, you know. That's not what's going to happen. But that was their impression. In fact, it's called visual impression. Sometimes people call it maternal impression. You would put a visual representation of what you wanted the offspring to look like in front of the animals while they were breeding; the thinking was, well that's what's going to produce that kind of outcome.

We know that's not good science, but Jacob didn't know that wasn't good science. And the Bible is describing what Jacob did. I don't think it's prescribing what you should do. You know, if you're raising sheep or goats, I wouldn't recommend this. The point is not, is that why Jacob was successful? We're going to see later. That's not why Jacob was successful. Jacob was successful because the Lord blessed Jacob's efforts. The Lord had just chosen, because he saw Laban's mistreatment of Jacob, to give him speckled and spotted and streaked sheep, the very best, and speckled and spotted and striped goats.

And that's exactly what the Lord did. And so Jacob became extremely wealthy. It's just a reminder not only that it may be time to go when there's an open door of opportunity, but just because that open door of opportunity doesn't look good or sound good or it's going to make things a little more difficult, it doesn't mean that open door isn't from the Lord. Because the Lord can take even a little bit and He can turn it into much. As an old hymn we used to sing growing up in church, little is much when God is in it.

Little is much. When God is in it, if you call on Jesus' name, there's something that the Lord is able to do because of who he is. Even when all we have is like just two fish and a couple loaves of bread. He can take that and multiply it to keep his promise and to take care of his people. So Jacob, it's time to go because staying is going to harm my family. I've got an open door of opportunity and the Lord is going to bless it if I will simply trust him.

Now Laban, of course, is not going to be very happy about that, and it says in chapter 31, when Jacob heard what Laban's sons were saying, they had been gossiping about Jacob. They say, Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and he's built this wealth from what belonged to our father. And then Jacob saw from Laban's face that his attitude towards him was not the same as before. I was wondering, what would that face have looked like, I wonder? The Lord said to him, go back to the land of your ancestors and your family, and I will be with you.

Underline that phrase. The Lord said to Jacob, It's time for you to go. Now Jacob had Rachel and Leah called in from the field where his flocks were, and he said to them, Listen, I can see from your father's face that his attitude towards me is not the same as before. But the God of my father has been with me. You know, if you're going to talk to your wife about her dad in this way, you better have the receipts to prove it, but this is exactly what Jacob is about to do.

He says, You know that with all my strength I have served your father, and that he has cheated me, and he has changed my wages ten times. But God has not let him harm me. If Laban said the spotted sheep will be your wages, then all the sheep were born spotted. And if Laban said the streaked sheep will be your wages, then all the sheep were born streaked. God has taken away your father's herds, and he has given them to me. When the flocks were breeding, I saw in a dream that the streaked, spotted, and speckled males were mating with the females, and in that dream the angel of God said to me, Jacob, and I said, here I am.

And he said, look up and see. All the males that are mating with the flocks are streaked, spotted, and speckled. Why? Not because of your superstition, but because I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you, and I am the God of Bethel, where you poured oil on the stone and made a solemn vow to me. Get up, leave this land and return to your native land. So when answering the question, should I stay or should I go, not only should you factor in the potential harm to your family and potential open doors of opportunity, however impressive or unimpressive they may be, but when you get a divine directive from the Lord in a dream or a vision or a word spoken on a Sunday morning through the Scripture, when the Lord says go, it's time to go.

And it may create some difficult conversations and you may have to say some things to people that they may not or don't want to hear. But when the Lord gives you a directive, it's time to go. And that's exactly what the Lord does to him. He essentially reminds Jacob. I'm the God that you had that encounter with on the stairway to heaven. I'm the one that promised you not only am I going to get you where you're going and help you find your wife and establish a family, I promised you then and there that I was going to bring you back home.

And so you need to let me make good on my promise, Jacob. You need to leave. It's obvious you can't stay here any longer. So all the things are shaping up. The only potential negative is that his two wives might have not wanted to go. So he raises the question, and then Rachel and Leah answer him, Do we have any portion or inheritance in our father's family? Are we not regarded by him as outsiders? In other words, he doesn't even treat us as daughters anymore. For he has sold us and certainly spent our purchase price, and in fact, all the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children, so do whatever God has said to you.

I wonder what Jacob was thinking when he heard those words. We don't care if God has taken everything away from him and given it to you because he basically sold us to you and he hasn't given us any of the money that was our purchase price. He's been pimping out his own daughters. He's a terrible man. He's a terrible father. And we're ready to leave. Let's go. So he's got a potential harm to his family if he stays. He's got an open door of opportunity. He's got a divine directive. And the cherry on top is verbal affirmation by those that you trust.

And if you have those four things, I think it's probably time for you to make a move. That in fact the Lord may be wanting you to go. But when you go, as you go, you need to remember certain things. And that's what we're going to see happen in the rest of our text. Jacob gets up, he puts his children and his wives on the camels, he took all the livestock and the possessions he had acquired in Paddan-aram, and he drove his herds to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac.

And when Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household idols, and Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean, not telling him that he was fleeing. He fled with all of his possessions, he crossed the Euphrates, and he headed for the hill country of Gilead. So he gets a three-day head start. They're up here in Haran. He waits until Laban is going to shear his sheep and they can slip away without anybody knowing. Remember it was a three days journey to get to where Jacob was going to go. And so he goes from all the way to Haran all the way down here to remote Gilead.

He gets that far in three days he's moving, right? It says that Rachel steals her father's household idols. In fact the same word for steal is used of Jacob as well when it says that he deceived Laban. So Rachel's stealing his idols and Jacob is stealing his heart. Kind of match made in heaven, two peas in a pod. I don't know why. Why does Rachel steal Laban's household idols? It doesn't say. Some can conjecture that Rachel is maybe a secret idol worshiper. I don't buy that because of what we looked at last week.

I think, and I talked to my small group about this last Thursday because we talk about the sermon before I preach it on Thursdays. And there were some of the ladies in the small group who said, well, if my dad essentially sold me to my husband and didn't give me any of the material gain from the purchase price, I'd probably be pretty sour toward my father. And so maybe this is just Rachel kind of sticking it to her dad for being such a poor father. Another word came to my mind, but I better you know I better not say that.

And I buy that. This is just her way of saying, okay, Dad, all you care about is money. You've only ever cared about money, and you worship these idols. Remember, Laban said, I've learned by divination. So he obviously worshipped these idols, and these idols convinced him that it was Jacob who was making him materially prosperous. And so Rachel is

essentially saying, well, if all you care about is money, and all you care about is these gods, then I'm going to take the only thing that you care about away from you and so she does.

And Jacob deceives him and they go. And Laban is hot. And he figures out on the third day that Jacob had fled. He took his relatives with him, he pursued Jacob for seven days, and he overtook him in the hill country of Gilead. Anytime that you are going to do what God's telling you to do in making a move, you need to anticipate one thing for sure, and that is opposition. Now some of this opposition is rightly deserved because Rachel shouldn't have stolen her father's idols, but I don't care if she did or didn't steal the idols, Laban still would have been coming after him hard.

Anytime you make a move, there's going to be a counter move by the enemy to try to resist you doing what God has told you to do, and you can just take it to the bank and get ready for the opposition because it's coming your way. And Laban's opposition, I think, is actually very illustrative for how we should handle the opposition against us when it's time for us to make a move that God wants us to do. It says that God came to Laban, the Aramean, in a dream at night, and he said, Watch yourself!

God warned him. Don't say anything to Jacob, either good or bad. Now all of this language, this language of I'm going to overtake him, in verse 25, it says, when Laban overtook Jacob. Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban and his relatives also pitched their tents in the hill country of Gilead. And then verse twenty six says, Laban said to Jacob, What have you done? You have deceived me and taken my daughters away like prisoners of war. All of that language is military fight language. This is war language.

And so essentially Laban is assuming the worst in Jacob's motives. He's saying, you've taken my daughters against their will. You've taken my grandkids against their will. You are trying to do me material harm, and so I'm going to kill you. Was that Jacob's motives? Of course not. Jacob, if anything, he was a little bit fearful of what might happen if he was honest with Laban. He had rightly he had good reason to think those things. But Laban is totally misreading the motives of Jacob. And that's what all opposition does when you're trying to make a move God wants you to make.

They will assume the worst instead of believe the best. They will misread your motives. But that's not the only thing he does. Then he begins to turn on the waterworks. He starts what we'd call gaslighting Jacob in verse twenty-seven. He says, why did you secretly flee from me, deceive me and not tell me. I would have sent you away with joy and singing with tambourines and lyres. But you didn't even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters. You have acted foolishly. You've got like three emotions all in one sentence there.

This is all fake, it's all phony, it's all a fraud. This is Laban manipulating Jacob's emotions, playing him. Like a fiddle, and that's what opposition usually does. When you're trying to

make a move that God wants you to make, there will be people who will manipulate your emotions. Are you sure this was right? Are you sure you're on the up and up? Are you sure you're listening to the Lord? I mean it doesn't look like it, doesn't sound like it. What about this weakness? What about this flaw? Historical revision and gaslighting, all of these things you've got to be aware the enemy will often use.

I could do you great harm, but last night the God of your father said to me, watch yourself. Don't say anything to Jacob, either good or bad. Now you have gone off because you long for your father's family, but why have you stolen my gods? Okay, there's the cherry on top. Not only does he misread his motives and manipulate his emotions, now he's maligning his character. He's saying you're a thief. My idols are gone and I know that you stole them. Now, if you put yourself in Jacob's shoes, did he steal the idols?

No. Does he know that Rachel stole the idols? No, from Jacob's perspective, he's righteous. He's on the up and up, and he had to have perceived this as an attack on his character, which is essentially what it was. But Jacob takes the high road, he lets the Lord be his defender. He says, well, as for leaving, I wasn't trying to steal your daughters. They actually wanted to go with me. I was afraid. For I thought you would take your daughters from me by force. And when it comes to you assassinating my character, if you find your gods with anyone here, he will not live!

Before our relatives, point out anything that is yours and take it. Of course Jacob didn't know that Rachel had stolen the idols. So here's what Laban does. He goes into Jacob's tent, Leah's tent, the tents of the two concubines, but he found nothing. And then when he left Leah's tent, he went into Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken Laban's household idols and put them in the saddlebag of the camel and sat on them. So Laban searched the whole tent but found nothing. Now I don't know if this is actually true or if Rachel kind of feels the heat, knows if Laban finds those idols, she's toast and it's a mess.

Or if she was actually on her menstrual cycle, but she says to her father, don't be angry, my lord, that I cannot stand up in your presence. Because I'm having my period. Which every dad wants to hear, you know, from their daughter. He probably started fumbling over his words. Oh well anyway, I've got to go. Laban searched but he could not find the household idols. Now when I read that maybe it's just because I'm a man, but it makes me uncomfortable. I feel like I intruded on someone's business. I don't belong, you know, reading this.

I don't know if that's how Laban felt, but I think the intrusion is communicated in that way on purpose to convey that when people are trying to oppose what it is that God is leading you to do in making a move, they're often going to meddle in your business. They're going to put their head where it has no business being, and they're going to meddle in things that are

none of their business. But Jacob at every turn confronts the opposition in a righteous way. Now, when Laban does this, I think he's had enough.

The Hebrew starts to get very choppy and very intense. It says in verse 36 that Jacob became incensed. He brought charges against Laban. What is my crime? What is my sin that you've pursued me? You've searched all my possessions. Have you found anything of yours? Put it here before my relatives and yours. Let them decide between the two of us. Then he just goes off. He says, I've been with you these twenty years. Your ewes and female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams from your flock.

I did not bring you any of the flock torn by wild beasts. I myself wore the loss. You demanded payment from me for what was stolen, by day or by night. There I was. The heat consumed me by day, the frost by night, and sleep fled from my eyes. For twenty years in your household I served you. 14 years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, and you've changed my wages ten times. This was a sore spot for Jacob. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, the fear of Isaac, had not been with me, certainly now you would have sent me off empty-handed.

But God has seen my affliction and God has seen my hard work and he issued his verdict last night. Now this is a masterclass on how to deal with haters who misread your motives and assassinate your character and meddle in your business and manipulate your emotions. He doesn't get into the dirt. He's angry, rightly so, but notice he lets the Lord be his defender. He says, you are not righteous, you are not justified in your rage. If anything, you are guilty, and here is evidence after evidence after evidence of why that's the case.

And it's obvious this is the case because the Lord Himself showed up in your tent last night and told you to cool your jets, check yourself before you wreck yourself. I'm sure the Lord didn't say that. But that's what I think. And if that's true, then God's on my side, He's not on your side. So Jacob lets the Lord be his defender. And when you make a move, anticipate the opposition. But respond to the opposition with letting the Lord be your defender. That's what Jacob does. Now Laban, this guy's so dense, he has no idea.

Laban answered Jacob, Well, the daughters are my daughters. And the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks. Everything you see is mine. Guy doesn't have a clue. But what can I do today for these daughters of mine? For the children they have borne. Come now, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between the two of us. I hope none of you guys have a father-in-law like Laban. This guy is a piece of work. But he's open to peace. And when Jacob sees that he's open to peace, he decides to let peace have a chance.

So Jacob picked up a stone and he set it as a marker. And Jacob said to his relatives, gather stones, and they took stones and made a mound. And they ate there by the mound, and

Laban named the mound Jegar-sahadutha, and Jacob named it Galeed. Two different names, two different peoples. One's in Hebrew, one's in Aramaic. You see a separation of family here. Then Laban said, let this mound be a witness between you and me today. Therefore the place was called Galeed. And also Mizpah, for he said, may the Lord watch between you and me when we are out of each other's sight.

If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take other wives, though no one is with us, understand that God will be a witness between you and me. And then Laban also said to Jacob, Look at this mound and the marker I've set up between you and me, this mound is a witness, and the marker is a witness that I will not pass beyond this mound to you, and you will not pass beyond this mound and this marker to do me harm. And the God of Abraham, and the gods of Nahor, the gods of their father, will judge between us.

And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac, in other words, he swears by Yahweh. And then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and invited his relatives to eat a meal. And so they ate a meal and spent the night on the mountain. So you have all the elements of a traditional covenant here, oaths, commitments, blessings and curses, whether you honor or dishonor the commitments. You've got the covenant sign, you've got a sacrifice to seal the deal, and then you have a meal. Give peace a chance. Laban gets up early in the morning, he kisses his grandchildren and daughters, which he was so concerned to do.

He blessed them, and then Laban left to return home. Crisis is averted, and Jacob is allowed to go on. All right, that's the introduction. Like I said, we're not going to have a lot of time to make application, but I do want to just make a few comments and then we're going to wrap it up. These three principles that I see in this in this chapter, or these chapters, are the same principles that I've noticed as a recurring theme throughout all of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The first and most obvious is the principle that when God makes a promise, he will keep his promise.

God told Abraham, I'm going to bless you. I'm going to bless those that bless you, curse those that curse you, and all your descendants are going to be blessed. And through your descendants, I'm going to bless the nations. God kept his promise to Abraham. He kept his promise to Isaac. And now he is keeping his promise to Jacob. He says to Jacob in Genesis 28, I am going to get you where you're going and I'm going to bring you back safely home. I'm the Lord, and I keep my promises. And it's easy for us to read this in the Old Testament and feel like, well, yeah, he made these promises to Jacob way back in the day about this particular circumstance.

But one of the things we can never forget is that the Abrahamic covenant and the life of Jacob is actually pointing to an even greater covenant and greater Jacob, and that covenant is the new covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ. Who has promised us certain things. He's promised us forgiveness of sins. He's promised us eternal life. He's promised us resurrection

from the dead. He's promised us a new heavens and a new earth. He's promised that he would be with us always, even to the end of the age. I could go on and on and on about the promises that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ and I think the application for us this morning is, even in the valley lows, even when you're making a move and you've got doubts and questions and opposition and hardships, do you depend on, do you rely and trust deeply the promises of God to you in Christ Jesus.

That blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those that are mourning. They're going to be comforted. Blessed are you when people persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice, be glad. That's how they treated the prophets. Do you deeply resonate with those promises in Jesus, believing God keeps his promises. That all of God's promises are yes and amen in the Lord Jesus Christ. God keeps his promises. God protects his people. Did you notice that it's in chapter 30, verses 5 to 7? Jacob's having this conversation with his wives.

No, I think it's chapter 31. I'm sorry. And he says to his wives ten times your dad tried to change my wages. Ten times he tried to steal from me and manipulate me. And every time he did, the Lord turned it around. And when he said it's only the spotted sheep that are going to make you rich, all of a sudden God made it so that all the sheep were spotted. And then when he said it's only the striped sheep that are going to make you rich, then all of a sudden it's like the Lord began to give me all of the striped sheep.

It'd be like a boss coming to you and saying, I'm tired of you making so much money from now on, only commissions. And then you start just, ting, ting, ting, a lot of commissions. And then it's okay, no more commissions, only insurance contracts. And then all of a sudden you start selling all sorts of insurance contracts. And it's like the Lord is obviously blessing you. Every time someone tries to curse you or break you or harm you. It's like the Lord supernaturally superintends and orchestrates circumstances so that what was meant as a curse actually becomes a blessing.

And that's what the Lord always does with his people. It's a seal on their foreheads. Even when the world falls apart, you are mine and I will care for you. I will protect you. It doesn't mean your life will be easy. Doesn't mean you won't go through hardships and challenges. Jacob certainly did. But it does mean that you never have to be afraid. You never have to fear, is God going to keep me, is he going to preserve me? Is he going to come through? Is he going to keep his promise?

No, he keeps his promises. And he protects his people. And the last thing I'll say, and then we'll wrap it up, he does both of those things through what the theologians call providence. It's not a Bible word, and it's a very kind of theological word, but it's a very practical truth. And it's a truth that has been screaming to us off the pages of the book of Genesis over and

over again. This word providence comes from two Latin words. The first one means to see ahead of time or to see beforehand.

And the second one is to provide for. And the idea is that God sees beyond what we can see, right? He sees the end, the beginning to the end, and at every point in between. And because of his goodness and his nature, knowing what he knows, he will act in our time and circumstances to provide for our needs according to his providence. Now, providence doesn't mean everything in life is good. There are things called a hard providence. A hard providence is that God's sovereignly allowing me to go through a very challenging season.

But the point is that even in those challenging seasons, God is orchestrating his plan and he is working all things together for good. And sometimes his providence is an ordinary providence. It's ordinary people doing ordinary things, even sinful things, and yet somehow God is even using that to work out his plan. And sometimes God's providence is a special providence, it's a supernatural providence where he's taking your weird superstition about visual impression and he's blessing it anyway because he's a good God, not because you found a hack to biogenetics. In all of those things, God is working things together according to his providence.

And I just want to say if you really believe that, you would have so much less anxiety in your life. Even when you're walking through extremely painful circumstances, you would be able to rejoice in the Lord. Because he does all things good and that even when life doesn't make sense and even when I could point to this and that failure and how's God going to make any good out of this? You will be surprised to see how he can take even the worst, most grotesque evils and turn them for good.

And if you don't believe me because of Jacob, look beyond Jacob to Jesus. He took a corrupt Roman government and a political establishment of religious leaders who falsely accused Jesus of things he didn't do. They put him through a mock trial that had him tortured and crucified and executed by the Romans And God took the worst day of human history, the most unjust act that had ever been committed, and he used it to bring about salvation. Forgiveness of sin, not only for my sin and for your sin, but for the sins of the whole world.

Anyone who would repent and put their faith in Jesus for salvation. And so if you're here this morning and you've never looked at the circumstances of your life through the lens of how God may be wooing you and drawing you to receive that salvation, it may be this morning that his call is on your heart and it's time for you to come home. And the Christian life doesn't mean that all of a sudden your life is going to get easy and not have any difficulty, but it does mean you will have a God who will keep his promise to forgive you of your sin and to give you eternal life.

And you will have a God who will keep you and sustain you through even the worst moments of life so that you can rejoice and be glad because this is the day that the Lord has made. And I am his and he is mine. And so if you've never made that decision during this time of invitation, I want to give you an opportunity to do that. You can also come and pray for people in our church who are going through a season of hard providence. Maybe you're in a season of difficult providence and you want someone to pray with you.

The altar is open. I'm actually going to ask a couple of people to be available at the back. I know Isabel's here. Isabel if you don't mind standing in the back. And Randy and Les are back there in the corner. If you want to pray with someone, besides coming up here to the front, you want to be a little more discreet, these people will be available to you to pray with you and for you. I'm also here to receive you for any spiritual decisions you might want to make. But as we respond to the Lord, let's allow the scripture to speak what the Holy Spirit wants to say.

And Lord Jesus, we pray that we would have ears to hear what the Holy Spirit is wanting to say, and that we would have courageous faith to step out and do what you're calling us to do. I pray for all of the people here today who are having to make that decision. Should I stay or should I go? I pray that you'd give them wisdom and discernment. I pray that that door of opportunity that you have opened for them that they would be able to see it, not through the eyes of the flesh, but through the eyes of faith, that they will see you are a God who can take fish and a couple of loaves of bread and you can feed 5,000 people.

That you're a God who can enable us to walk on water. You can split the Red Sea. There's nothing that you can't do. And so even though it may be uncomfortable and anxiety-inducing, I pray you would give them courage to make that choice and then the faith to remember that you keep your promise and that you keep your people until the very end of the age. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.