

WHO ARE YOU? I REALLY WANT TO KNOW.

GENESIS 27:1-45 MAY 18, 2022

Rebecca D'Antonio of Orlando found true love online. 'Matthew' told her he was a widower, raising a 5 year old son. Rebecca said, "We just had a lot in common. We liked to try new foods. It was like there was definitely a connection." During their year-long relationship, Matthew would never agree to video calls or meetings in person. But, when he asked, Rebecca agreed to start sending him money. In the end, she sent him over \$100,000, leading her to financial ruin, empty bank accounts, eviction, and a near-suicidal state. When she told Matthew she was considering taking her own life his response was, "Well you have to do what you have to do."¹ Rebecca was one of 1,700 people who reported being catfished in Florida in 2021. The average loss was \$40,000. By the way, data shows Californians are the *most* likely to fall victim to catfishing scams.²

In our text tonight Rebekah isn't the victim, she's one of the perpetrators of a catfish scheme that cons Isaac into giving Jacob the birthright blessing instead of Esau.

Genesis 27:1-4 - When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could not see, he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he answered, "Here I am." ²He said, "Look, I am old and do not know the day of my death. ³So now take your hunting gear, your quiver and bow, and go out in the field to hunt some game for me. ⁴Then make me a delicious meal that I love and bring it to me to eat, so that I can bless you before I die."

There are aspects of this story that I hadn't considered before. Like, how old are Isaac and Esau? I think of them as being strapping, young men, about to set out on their own. But, when we do the math from the end of Jacob's life, we figure out that he and his brother are probably *in their 70's!*³ Jacob was 91 when he had Joseph. Joseph was a baby or a little boy when Jacob leaves Laban. He was with Laban 20 years. So, Jacob is at least 70 years old here, and Isaac is probably around 130.

It looks like Isaac was bedridden at the time. He was getting on in years and he was blind. Your version may say his eyes were "dim," or "too bleary to see."⁴ He had no clarity to his vision. No light for sight. That provides a great devotional thought. What did Paul say? Right now we see "*dimly*." Another version says, "Now we see a blurred image in a mirror."⁵ We look forward to eternity where we will see the Lord and all truth clearly, face to face. But, in the here and now, we need to have the eyes of our heart enlightened by the Holy Spirit and the Word. We can't navigate well without it.

Isaac can't see, but he's going to try to do his own navigating anyway. He decided that he was not going to follow God's directions. God had said, very plainly, "Esau will serve Jacob." But, Isaac does his best to evade that plan. He's tries to sneak this blessing ceremony under the wire and in private.

¹ <https://www.wesh.com/article/florida-catfishing-scheme/39994633>

² <https://www.newsweek.com/californians-are-most-likely-people-us-fall-catfishing-scams-1626719>

³ <https://hermeneutics.stackexchange.com/questions/66185/how-old-was-jacob-when-he-first-saw-rachel>

⁴ Robert Alter *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation With Commentary*

⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:12 (see ESV, GWT)

But there's a flaw in Isaac's plan: It's his selfishness. "Me first," he says to Esau. "Go get me a delicious meal so that I can bless you." That provides an opening for someone else to maneuver. Isaac laying on his bed is a far cry away from the devoted young man who laid himself down voluntarily on the altar of Moriah. But he's stopped caring about the word and will of God. When we follow our own vision - when our human hearts are steering the ship of our lives - we invariably sail into the shoals of selfishness.⁶ And, when selfishness is in charge, we don't like the plans of God. We may even resent them and try to find an end run around them. It would be much better for us to admit that we do not have adequate vision and instead trust the Lord to guide us.

Genesis 27:5-10 - ⁵ Now Rebekah was listening to what Isaac said to his son Esau. So while Esau went to the field to hunt some game to bring in, ⁶ Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Listen! I heard your father talking with your brother Esau. He said, ⁷ 'Bring me game and make a delicious meal for me to eat so that I can bless you in the Lord's presence before I die.' ⁸ Now, my son, listen to me and do what I tell you. ⁹ Go to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, and I will make them into a delicious meal for your father—the kind he loves. ¹⁰ Then take it to your father to eat so that he may bless you before he dies."

Moses shows the bitter rivalry in this family. Esau is called *Isaac's* son, Jacob is called *Rebekah's* son.⁷ She had a plan not only to get her favorite across the finish line, in accordance with what God had prophesied. But, even though her goal aligned with God's, her *methods* absolutely did not. God is not pleased when we use sinful practices to accomplish good goals. But she thinks she has all the answers. In this chapter, she keeps saying to Jacob, "Listen to me!"

A few passages back we were told that Isaac had such a taste for wild game.⁸ But his tastes were *not* as discerning as he thought. He could be tricked with simple goat meat. Rebekah knew what spices to put on the plate to convince Isaac he was eating something exotic - something special.

We are not as sophisticated as we think. Our earthly palates can be easily tricked. This is why we welcome the Lord to transform even the desires of our hearts - so that our lives can be sated with peace and truth and Godliness rather than be a mark for the cons of sin which don't satisfy.⁹

Genesis 27:11-13 - ¹¹ Jacob answered Rebekah his mother, "Look, my brother Esau is a hairy man, but I am a man with smooth skin. ¹² Suppose my father touches me. Then I will be revealed to him as a deceiver and bring a curse rather than a blessing on myself." ¹³ His mother said to him, "Your curse be on me, my son. Just obey me and go get them for me."

Jacob isn't worried about doing what's wrong, he's worried about getting caught.¹⁰ He acknowledges that there is a *Divine* element to what they were stealing. This wasn't just about maybe wrecking a relationship between father and son or brother and brother (those were already

⁶ *A shoal is a sandbank or sand bar in the bed of a body of water, especially one that is exposed above the surface of the water at low tide.*

⁷ Bruce Waltke *Genesis: A Commentary*

⁸ Genesis 25:28

⁹ Isaiah 55:1-5

¹⁰ See Alter, *Bible Knowledge Commentary*

ruined). This was about God's providential work through the life of a specific lineage, leading ultimately to the Savior. Jacob has some grasp of God's Personal involvement in this saga, yet he is willing to be a part of the heist anyway, risking wrath from his earthly *and* heavenly Fathers.

Genesis 27:14-17 - ¹⁴ **So he went and got the goats and brought them to his mother, and his mother made the delicious food his father loved.** ¹⁵ **Then Rebekah took the best clothes of her older son Esau, which were in the house, and had her younger son Jacob wear them.** ¹⁶ **She put the skins of the young goats on his hands and the smooth part of his neck.** ¹⁷ **Then she handed the delicious food and the bread she had made to her son Jacob.**

Rebekah raided Esau's closet. This is, perhaps, the first recorded case of identity theft.

Here's something else I had never considered before: The skins of these goats had not been dried or cured. Maybe they hadn't even been fleshed - time was of the essence. No, I think the skins Jacob put on were still warm and oozing with the gore of slaughter.

We've seen Bible characters clothed with skins before in this Book. In the Garden, the Lord God tenderly covered the sin of Adam and Eve. Here, the skins become not a *covering* but a *costume*. Rather than a propitiation, they are a prop to help Jacob in his theft.

In Isaiah and Zechariah we learn that, from heaven's perspective, you and I are clothed in *filthy rags*. Even the best person is wearing garments of death, like Jacob. All your self-righteousness, all your accomplishments, all your promises and intentions are *these* goat skins - slimy with the gore of sin. We need a Savior who will take away our filthy rags and give us a clean robe of righteousness, and that's just what Christ has done.¹¹

Genesis 27:18-20 - ¹⁸ **When he came to his father, he said, "My father." And he answered, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?"** ¹⁹ **Jacob replied to his father, "I am Esau, your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may bless me."** ²⁰ **But Isaac said to his son, "How did you ever find it so quickly, my son?" He replied, "Because the Lord your God made it happen for me."**

After perjury and fraud we can add 'blasphemy' to Jacob's charges.¹² He says it was an act of God. Is *nothing* sacred? Jacob stole his brother's identity, conspired against his dad and lied to him. Now he even invokes God in his ploy. Let's pause to see again how *gracious* God is to this family and to all of us. They're insulting God, provoking Him. But God's faithfulness and love toward them continues. You and I are no better. We were dead in trespasses but He has given us life. We were hostile toward Him, at war with Him, but He offers peace. We cannot overestimate God's grace.

Genesis 27:21-27 - ²¹ **Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come closer so I can touch you, my son. Are you really my son Esau or not?"** ²² **So Jacob came closer to his father Isaac. When he**

¹¹ Isaiah 61:10

¹² See *Waltke, CSB Study Bible Notes*

touched him, he said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau."²³ He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him.²⁴ Again he asked, "Are you really my son Esau?" And he replied, "I am."²⁵ Then he said, "Bring it closer to me, and let me eat some of my son's game so that I can bless you." Jacob brought it closer to him, and he ate; he brought him wine, and he drank.²⁶ Then his father Isaac said to him, "Please come closer and kiss me, my son."²⁷ So he came closer and kissed him. When Isaac smelled his clothes, he blessed him and said: Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed.

Two questions: Just how hairy was Esau and how bad did this guy smell?

Isaac's radar was blipping like crazy. He suspected a trick, but fell for it anyway. He could've easily escaped this con if he would've simply called a servant in to verify who was standing before him. But Isaac was trying to accomplish his own will, despite knowing what God had decreed. And so he relies only on himself - his smell, his touch, his cross-examination - and so he is deceived.

Genesis 27:28-29 - ²⁸ **May God give to you—from the dew of the sky and from the richness of the land—an abundance of grain and new wine.** ²⁹ **May peoples serve you and nations bow in worship to you. Be master over your relatives; may your mother's sons bow in worship to you. Those who curse you will be cursed, and those who bless you will be blessed.**

This is amazing, because, on the one hand, Isaac is absolutely *defying* God. He thinks he's talking to *Esau* and he says, 'Be master over your relatives.' That is the *antithesis* of what God commanded. At the same time, we have an incredible demonstration of God's grace and providence. When God decrees something, it cannot be undone. He uses the astounding power of His providence to accomplish His will. At the same time, look at God's grace. Though Isaac was trying his hardest to do the opposite of what God wanted, God still used this man to be a blessing.¹³ And, in the future, God would continue to identify Himself as "the God of Abraham" and "the God of Isaac." In this moment, Isaac deserved no such affiliation or friendship with God. But God's grace is abundant. Now we do not want to receive that grace in vain. We don't want to fall short of it. We want to walk in grace, participate in providence, and trust that the Lord's way is the only way that leads to hope and glory and fulfillment of all good things.

Genesis 27:30-32 - ³⁰ **As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob and Jacob had left the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau arrived from his hunting.** ³¹ **He had also made some delicious food and brought it to his father. He said to his father, "Let my father get up and eat some of his son's game, so that you may bless me."** ³² **But his father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am Esau your firstborn son."**

Esau identifies himself as the firstborn, but he is *not* the firstborn - not legally. He had willingly sold that right to his brother. He signed on the dotted line, preferring soup to sanctification.

¹³ John Calvin *Genesis*

Edward VIII abdicated the throne of Britain in 1936. He made his choice. But he could no longer go around saying, "I'm King Edward." No you're not! He had walked away from that position.

Esau had no right to the blessing - not spiritually, not prophetically, not legally. But he and his father were trying to bypass all of that behind closed tent-flaps. But what *they* meant for self, *God* worked for Sovereignty.

Esau says, "Here's my delicious food!" He assumed that would be enough to buy a good fortune, along with having been his dad's favorite. Esau had cut God out of the equation of his life. Instead, he relied on his ability to please his dad with his skills and talents. But, in the end, life is more than skill or charm or ability. Beauty fades. Popularity wanes. Skills dull. Abilities slack. We want to live lives defined by the presence and strength of God who give our lives *eternal* significance.

Genesis 27:33-36 - ³³ **Isaac began to tremble uncontrollably. "Who was it then," he said, "who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it all before you came in, and I blessed him. Indeed, he will be blessed!"** ³⁴ **When Esau heard his father's words, he cried out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me too, my father!"** ³⁵ **But he replied, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing."** ³⁶ **So he said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me twice now. He took my birthright, and look, now he has taken my blessing." Then he asked, "Haven't you saved a blessing for me?"**

Hebrew scholars tell us that Esau is screaming excessively.¹⁴ He had assumed that he'd just be handed the blessing, despite his refusal to go God's way, despite his selling it to Jacob years ago. Isaac is also disturbed - he's shaking in his sandals as he recognizes that he has been found out by God and God has overruled his sinful plan to give to Esau what God appointed for Jacob.

Genesis 27:37-40 - ³⁷ **But Isaac answered Esau, "Look, I have made him a master over you, have given him all of his relatives as his servants, and have sustained him with grain and new wine. What then can I do for you, my son?"** ³⁸ **Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!"** **And Esau wept loudly.** ³⁹ **His father Isaac answered him, Look, your dwelling place will be away from the richness of the land, away from the dew of the sky above.** ⁴⁰ **You will live by your sword, and you will serve your brother. But when you rebel, you will break his yoke from your neck.**

Esau isn't looking for any great spiritual future or place in God's plan. He wants a *material* blessing. And now that he realizes it's gone, everything crumbles. What a sad, spoiled, shameful man.

Isaac has been rebuked by God. To his credit, he *immediately* falls in line with what the Lord has done. He says, "What can I do?" He doesn't try to go against God any more than he already has. He now takes up the prophetic Word of God and agrees with it and submits to it.

¹⁴ See Alter, *NET Study Bible Notes*

Genesis 27:41-45 - ⁴¹ Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. And Esau determined in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob." ⁴² When the words of her older son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she summoned her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Listen, your brother Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you. ⁴³ So now, my son, listen to me. Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran, ⁴⁴ and stay with him for a few days until your brother's anger subsides—⁴⁵ until your brother's rage turns away from you and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send for you and bring you back from there. Why should I lose you both in one day?"

"Stay with him a few days." Their little swindle would cost a lot more than that. Jacob would be gone for 20 years. It's doubtful he ever saw his mom again.

What *should* the family of faith have done in this strange situation? We get a great redo at the end of Jacob's life, where he, too, has been told by God to bless Joseph's younger boy over the older. And it's no big thing. He crosses his hands and does it. When Joseph protests, Jacob says, "I know what I'm doing. This is God's will." And it's done! Simple faith, simple trust, simple obedience.

There is an important question asked twice in this passage: "*Who are you?*" Isaac asks it of each of his sons. *Who are you?* That's a good question for all of us.

If Isaac answered that question honestly, he would've said, "I'm the one who doesn't like God's plan and am going to try to avoid it. I can do it all myself."

Rebekah would've said, "I'm the one who *believes*, but isn't willing to wait for God or trust Him to accomplish His will. I have all the answers and the end justifies whatever means I may use."

Jacob would've had to say, "I'm the one who is scamming my dad, cheating my brother, blaspheming against God so that I can get ahead in life. I'll do what I gotta do to get what I want."

Esau should've said, "I'm the one who doesn't care about anything except my own comfort, my own wealth, my own here and now. I don't think about God or spiritual things."

Who are you? One thing this story reveals is just how much we need God's directions, God's decisions, God's designations in our lives. We don't know what we need to know to make it on our own. Look at how everyone thought Isaac was about to keel over. They all assumed he was at death's door, *including Isaac*. But he went on to live another *fifty years!* We need God to direct us and to speak to us and to show us which way to go. He will, if we're willing to listen and surrender. All of these people wanted to go their *own* way toward their *own* destinations. Not of one them were seeking the Lord in their decision making. And look at the wreckage. Look at the cost.

Be a believer who can answer the "who are you" question this way: I am a child of God, in the service of God, following the word of God, walking the way of God, with full confidence in God.