The sermon

Intro

There's things we value. There's things we don't value.

If something matters to us, we don't want to part with it. We cling to it. We keep it for decades.

Things like pictures. Whether a deceased relative or our child's baby pictures. We've saved some old children's clothes. There's some shirts I find hilarious that my three boys wore that I want framed. This week I had a man drop off clothing at the exchange from his deceased wife. It took him months to bring the clothes in.

Sometimes it's a family heirloom. A ring. A quilt. A cast-iron clock.

Sometimes we cling to a favorite toy or a stuffed animal or an unfinished hobby project. My wife has an unfinished dollhouse from her childhood that remains unfinished, but it's survived about seven moves. It remains unfinished. But she's not letting go of it.

If we value something, we keep it. We don't part with it casually.

We give up things that we don't value. Like the stuff that you find at a yard sale: tools, books, CD's, DVD's (and VHS tapes), clothing, dishes, glasses, picture frames, vases. Board games, puzzles, and toys that haven't been used in years.

We're willing to sell stuff at yard sales for little money because the stuff doesn't matter much to us.

Some things we value and struggle to let go of. Some things we discard casually.

This morning we'll encounter Esau discarding his birthright as if it was a VHS tape.

Body

Passage Focus

Three points. We'll work through the passage step by step.

READ 25:1-18

Point 1: Promises kept (25:1-18)

Inheritance distributed

Abraham took another wife named Keturah (25:1). Abraham had children and grandchildren with her. **Big picture?**

Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. – 25:5

Before he died.

But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country. – 25:6

Isaac is uniquely the recipient of Abraham's blessing. This wasn't Abraham's choice. It was God's choice, God's plan.

And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" [19] God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. [20] As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him

greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. [21] But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year." – **Genesis 17:18-21**

Abraham wanted Ishmael to be the recipient of God's blessing. God had other ideas. The covenant promises would continue through Isaac, not Ishmael. The promised offspring would come through Isaac, not Ishmael. Jesus would come through Isaac, not Ishmael.

In sending away Ishmael, in sending away the sons of Keturah, in giving all he had to Isaac, Abraham was submitting to God's will.

Other children received gifts, but the servants, the animals, the soldiers, all these went to Isaac.

"concubines" = more than one concubine. At least Keturah and Hagar. Concubine = a secondary wife that didn't possess the same rights as the primary wife. Because of her lower status, her children didn't expect to receive the father's inheritance.

Big picture? Abraham obeyed God. God was keeping his promise.

"Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. [5] No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. [6] I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. – **Genesis 17:4-6**

The nations plural, = more than Israel, would come from the sons of Keturah who settled east of the promised land, including Arabia.

Abraham's death

Abraham died at the age of 175 (25:7). If Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 (Gen 21:5), then Isaac was 75 when Abraham died.

Abraham was buried where Sarah was, in the promised land, in the former property of Ephron (24:9-10). Ishmael was present, indicating some sort of ongoing contact between Abraham, Isaac, and Ishmael. They knew where to find him.

After the death of Abraham, God blessed Isaac his son. – 25:11

The blessing promised to Abraham lived on in Isaac.

Ishmael's legacy

Ishmael's descendants are noted. **Big idea?** God kept his promise to Abraham. From Ishmael came 12 princes and a great nation (17:20). Ishmael's descendants settled on the border of Egypt, particularly in Arabia.

Application

God keeps his promises. God has the unique ability to ensure that a powerful nation arises from a young boy (i.e., Ishmael). Yes, we serve a big God!

And God is free to direct blessing where he chooses. God said the blessing, the inheritance, the covenant, the offspring, they'll all go to and through Isaac. Abraham submitted to God's will. It's easier to submit to God's will when we believe he keeps his promises. When we believe his promises are good for us. When we believe we're under God's blessing.

Practical question: am I submitting to God's will or bucking against it?

We find God's revealed will in the written words of Scripture.

READ 25:19-28

Point 2: Destinies decided (25:19-28)

Isaac married Rebekah when he was 40 (25:20). Isaac was about 37 when Sarah died (Gen 17:17; 23:1), so he married Rebekah about 2-3 years after Sarah died.

Rebekah, like Sarah, was barren (25:21) = couldn't have any children. So he prayed. God answered his prayer: Rebekah conceived (25:21). Rebekah was barren for 20 years (25:26). We're not told when Isaac prayed.

In the womb

"The children struggled together within her" (25:22) = twins and some sort of unnatural inner disturbance within the womb that made Rebekah ask, ***"If it is thus, why is this happening to me"*** (25:22)? The picture is two boys in the womb wrestling with each other for dominance.

Rebekah turned to the LORD for help: ***"she went in to inquire of the LORD"*** (25:22). God was pleased to tell her what was happening.

"Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger." – 25:23

From Esau would arise the nation Edom. From Jacob would arise the nation Israel. The two nations would habitually be at odds with one another. The older (Edom) would serve the younger (Israel). The wrestling in the womb foreshadowed the long-standing rivalry between Israel and Edom.

Birth

Esau is red and hairy. Pointing to Edom (Edom is similar to the Hebrew word for red) and the red food we'll get to in a bit. Jacob is a heel-grabber. The name Jacob is similar to the words for heel and deceive, foreshadowing Jacob's attempt to overtake Esau and the deceit we'll see in chapter 27.

Isaac was 60 when the twins were born (25:26), meaning Abraham lived 15 years after the twins were born.

Differences

Esau and Jacob are different men. Esau an outdoorsman, a hunter. Jacob's quiet and domesticated. The parents have favorites. Isaac favors Esau. Rebekah favors Jacob. Isaac likes Esau because Esau brings him meat to eat.

Paul's take on Genesis 25:22

Brandon read from Romans 9:1-13. There Paul applies the principle, *"The older will serve the younger"* (Rom 9:12), to his grief over the lost state of the vast majority of the Jewish people in his day (Rom 9:1-3). It appears God's word has failed because the Jewish people are separated from Christ and under God's wrath. But Paul argues that being an Israelite doesn't make a person a child of Abraham, citing the examples of Isaac, Jacob, and Esau (Rom 9:6-13). Isaac was a child of promise, counted as Abraham's offspring (Rom 9:7-9), others were not.

As for Esau and Jacob, Paul argued:

And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, [11] though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad- in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls- [12] she was told, "The older will serve the younger." [13] As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." – **Romans 9:10-13**

In Genesis 25, Esau and Jacob represented the nations Edom and Israel. Before Esau and Jacob were even born, not because of their works, God determined Israel would surpass Edom. Jacob/Israel was loved = chosen for blessing; Esau/Edom was hated = rejected from blessing (Mal 1:2-3). Why? ***"God's purpose of election."*** Or "God's purpose according to his choice" (NASB). The fate of the nations that would arise from them was fixed by the prior plan of God. God's plan was according to God's choice. God's choice was the deciding factor in the future outcome. This isn't God looking into the future and seeing what would be. It's God deciding what would be! This is what Paul's saying, right? God's purpose came before their actions right? God's purpose decided the outcome, not their actions, right?

In Romans 9, Paul's talking about the salvation of individuals. Paul's concern was unsaved Israelites! Paul's talking about the twins themselves, not nations. Jacob was chosen for blessing. Esau was not. Why? *"God's purpose of election…not because of works but because of him who calls"* (Rom 9:11). Like Isaac, Jacob illustrates a child of promise, Abraham's spiritual offspring, someone in Christ. Esau illustrates a child outside the promise, someone who isn't Abraham's spiritual offspring, someone outside of Christ.

Big picture? The fate of these future nations was decided beforehand by God's choice and God's choice alone. Paul applies the same principle to individual salvation. We're saved according to God's prior election and calling, not because of works or physical descent. Ultimately, not even because of our will according to **Romans 9:16**: *"So then it* [salvation] *depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy."*

These future nations rested in the plan/decision of God. God has a plan. God successfully achieves his plan. There's a lot involved in God determining the future status of two nations. God has the unique ability to carry out his plans. Successfully!

Sometimes people are troubled by God's rule (e.g., evil and suffering in the world; it isn't fair for God to control outcomes). Three things I know. First, the goodness of God is revealed in the plan of God to save sinners through Jesus' death. Second, the goodness of God is revealed in his plan to establish a new heavens and new earth. Third, God is free to do what God wants to do because everything belongs to God!

Practical question: God's prior choice determined the future of these nations. Does that bring you comfort? Or does it trouble you?

READ 25:29-34

Point 3: Birthright despised (25:29-34)

Jacob's cooking when Esau comes in from the field exhausted (25:29). Jacob's stew is red. This is ironic because "*Edom* sounds like the Hebrew for *red*" (ESV footnote).

Jacob seizes on the opportunity: ***"Sell me your birthright now"*** (25:31). The ultimate opportunist!

Esau responds, ***"I am about die; of what use is a birthright to me"*** (25:32)? My hunger is more valuable than my birthright! Jacob demands an oath (25:33). Esau sells the birthright for a meal.

Esau ***"ate and drank and rose and went his way"*** = birthright gone like nothing even happened (25:34). ***"Thus Esau despised his birthright"*** = Esau didn't value his birthright. Worthless, common, no loss. Shortsighted. Temporary pleasure over long-term blessing.

Birthright

What's a birthright? The inheritance that goes to the oldest son, the firstborn. The exact amount isn't specified.

In the law of Moses, the birthright was a double portion of the inheritance (Deut 21:15-17). If there's four kids, three get an equal portion and the 4th gets twice as much as the rest. In the case of Esau, it might mean the entire inheritance. Isaac got all that Abraham had (25:5).

It appears birthright and blessing are linked (Heb 12:16-17). Esau forfeited the blessing of God for a vegetarian stew! Lentils are dry, edible plant seeds. God's blessing is worth less than a vegetarian stew! Esau treated God's blessing with contempt. Worthless, useless, common. Nothing worth having. Zero value.

For us, it would be like saying God isn't worth a beer. I'd rather preserve my drunkenness than repent of my sin and be admitted into the kingdom of God. Beer's worth more than the kingdom of God. Or God isn't worth a boat. I'd rather have Sundays on the lake than in church. Once I was doing door to door evangelism and a young man was very honest. I don't want to believe because I won't be able to spend my Sundays on the lake. I'll have to be in church. He counted the cost of becoming a Christian. He said, it's not worth it. My boat's more important than Jesus. Yes, people treat God as nothing worth having, no loss. Sometimes Jesus isn't worth a boat!

Sometimes people value incorrectly. And thins of great value are despised. And they lose out on blessing. Sometimes Jesus isn't worth the water he created in the eyes of men!

Hebrews' take

The author of Hebrews comments on Esau's decision.

See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; [16] that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. [17] For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. – **Hebrews 12:15-17**

Esau represents someone who failed *"to obtain the grace of God."* Meaning he came short of salvation, short of saving faith, short of repentance. He didn't know God. He didn't value God. He remained outside of God's blessing.

God determined beforehand the blessing would go to Jacob. Who, by the way, did nothing to deserve it! On the other hand, Esau was responsible for his sin. He despised the blessing of God, choosing a vegetarian stew over God's blessing. Esau was responsible for casual view of God's blessing.

Practical question: do I treat God's salvation and blessing as common? Is Jesus more important to me than a boat?

Conclusion

Esau forever remains a picture of falling short of God's grace.

What do I mean by the grace of God?

Grace means unmerited favor, unmerited kindness. Something we don't earn. Don't deserve. The gospel, the good news of rescue from the power and penalty of sin, the good news of a coming kingdom ruled by Jesus, is described as *"the gospel of the grace of God"* (Acts 20:24).

In this sense, the grace of God is the blessing that comes to sinners through the merits of Jesus' perfect obedience and death on the cross. Jesus' righteousness is credited to underserving people. Jesus' death takes away sin. Sin meaning doing life our own way, not God's way. Breaking God's commands.

Why do I need the grace of God?

We need God's grace because we come into this world as sinners with a sinful nature. Because of our sinful nature, we inevitably sin and place ourselves under God's judgment.

We need our sins forgiven to obtain eternal life: unending existence in a world under Jesus' rule, a world without sin, death, decay, and suffering. How can we be sure of this coming kingdom? Jesus rose from the dead!

How do I obtain the grace of God?

Faith and repentance. Turn from your sins by trusting in Jesus' death and resurrection.

Concede right standing with God comes only through Jesus. Thank God for sending Jesus to the cross. Confess your sins to God. Ask God for forgiveness. Trust that God forgives those who trust in his Son Jesus.

Tell us if you believe.