The sermon

Intro

In the Bible, messy people wind up under God's blessing.

In Genesis, Abraham lies and Sarah mistreats Hagar. Together, they opt for polygamy rather than trusting God's promise off offspring. In Exodus, God chooses a murderer, Moses, to lead the Jews out of Egypt. In 1 and 2 Samuel, King David engages in sexual immorality with another man's wife and plots to ensure her husband dies in battle to cover up his immorality.

In the New Testament, we find Jesus appointing the tax collecting thief Matthew to be an apostle as well as Paul, a man who hunted down Christians to be imprisoned and sanctioned their execution.

And today, we have a husband and wife working against one another to ensure their favored child gets the blessing of Abraham.

How do we process these things?

Good thing I'm not like them? God's not a good judge of character? God doesn't care about morality?

Is there another way?

Body

Passage Focus

We'll walk through the passage step by step. Then we'll try to connect this episode to our lives.

READ 27:1-4

Point 1: Isaac's intent (27:1-4)

Isaac is old so he can't see and he's afraid he'll die before he pronounces a blessing on Esau (27:1-4). Isaac has one requirement: he wants a tasty meal made with meat from wild animals (27:3-4). When Esau comes back with the meal, the blessing is his.

Recall **Genesis 25:28**.

Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Isaac favors Esau because of the meat. Rebekah favors Jacob.

Isaac is determined that Esau gets the blessing of Abraham. The fact that only Esau is told could indicate Isaac's trying to do this in secret.

Recall that Abraham intended for his blessing to be passed on to Ishmael, but God said that the covenant and its promises would be passed on to Isaac (Gen 17:18-21; 21:12). Does God care which son gets the blessing? Does God have a say in who gets the blessing?

READ 27:5-13

Point 2: Rebekah's plot (27:5-13)

Providentially Rebekah overhears the conversation (27:5). Rebekah shares the conversation with Jacob and says, ***"obey my voice as I command you"*** (27:6-8). The plan: I'll cook what Isaac loves, Jacob can bring it to Isaac, and Jacob will get the blessing (27:9-10). Jacob has reservations: Isaac will feel my smooth skin, he'll detect I'm not Esau, and I'll wind up being cursed (27:11-12). Rebekah says don't worry about it, just obey me, if there's a curse I'll take it (27:13).

Recall God's prior words to Rebekah (**Gen 25:23**):

And the LORD said to her, "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."

From Esau would arise Edom. From Jacob would arise Israel. The two nations would perpetually be at odds with Israel emerging on top.

Rebekah isn't afraid of a curse. Is this because she knows God's blessing rests on Jacob? Because she knows she's working with the divine plan, not against it? Even if her methodology isn't upright, is Rebekah's determination an act of faith?

Is Rebekah a mix of faith and favoritism? Does her love for Esau and her disgust with Esau's Hittite wives (Gen 26:34-35; 27:46) color her decision-making?

Perhaps Rebekah shared God's message with Isaac? Is Isaac resisting God's will?

READ 27:14-29

Point 3: Blessing obtained (27:14-29)

Preparation

Jacob gets the two goats, obeying Rebekah (27:9, 14). Rebekah cooks the tasty meal, clothes Jacob with Esau's clothes, puts goat skins on Jacob's smooth hands and neck, and hands Jacob the meal (27:15-17).

Deceit

Jacob approaches Isaac and requests the blessing (27:18-19). First lie: ***"I am Esau your firstborn"*** (27:19).

Isaac has reservations: how did you accomplish this so quickly (27:20)? Second lie and blasphemy: ***"Because the LORD your God granted me success"*** (27:20). Jacob used God's name falsely. God didn't help Jacob hunt.

Isaac had reservations because the voice was Jacob's, but the feel test indicated Esau (27:21-22). The feel test won out and Isaac blessed Jacob (27:23). Third lie: ***"Are you really my son Esau…I am"*** (27:24).

Jacob kisses Isaac (27:26-27). Some detect Esau's betrayal with a kiss foreshadows Judas betraying Jesus with a kiss (Matt 26:47-50).

Blessing

Then comes the blessing.

May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. – 27:28

Blessing from heaven. Blessing on earth. Agricultural success. Material prosperity. A fruitful land that's watered and productive. This is personal prosperity from God.

Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!" – 27:29

There's debate over whether these are personal promises for Jacob or national promises for Israel, or a combination of both. At the very least, Jacob receives the promises given to Abraham that were passed on to Isaac: blessing = material prosperity and protection, the cursing of enemies, the blessing of allies.

On the other hand, 27:29 seems to fulfill Genesis 25:23 I read earlier. Nations would serve and bow down to Israel the nation = Israel will rise above other nations. Particularly, Esau's descendants (= Edom) would find themselves under Israel's subjection.

The promises to Abraham were both individual (e.g., blessing) and national (e.g., kings and nations). The promises to Abraham were both earthly (e.g., Israel would take the land after a lengthy stay in Egypt) and eternal (e.g., everlasting possession of the land).

The promises given to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 live on in Jacob!

Prophetic blessing

Isaac's blessing is prophetic speech. What Isaac said will come to pass without fail. These weren't mere human words. These were divine promises. The Holy Spirit moved on Isaac to speak these words. These words were divine promise given through Isaac.

READ 27:30-40

Point 4: Blessing denied (27:30-40)

Blessing is pronounced, Jacob departs, and shortly thereafter Esau arrives (27:30). The timing is just perfect = divine providence?

Esau obeyed Isaac and comes anticipating the blessing, but Isaac says, ***"Who are you"*** (27:31-32)? When Esau reveals his identity Isaac shakes violently = intense trembling (27:32). But it's too late. The blessing was given and it's a done deal: ***"Yes, and he shall be blessed"*** (27:33).

Esau weeps greatly (= intense weeping) and begs for a blessing, but Isaac says your blessing was taken (27:34-35). The blessing can't be taken back.

Isaac concludes Jacob has taken the blessing (27:35). Must have remembered the voice was Jacob's (27:22). Jacob's name betrays the man Jacob: he's a deceiver and a cheat (27:35-36). ESV has a footnote "*Jacob* means *He takes by the heel*, or *He cheats*."

Esau asks, ***"Have you not reserved a blessing for me"*** (27:36)? The answer is no. It's too late. Jacob has already been blessed (27:37). Esau asks if there's more than one blessing (27:38). The answer is no. Likewise, Isaac alone received Abraham's blessing.

Prophetic antiblessing/curse?

"Behold, away from the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be, and away from the dew of heaven on high. [40] By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; but when you grow restless you shall break his yoke from your neck." – 27:39-40

Esau won't enjoy the agricultural success Jacob will enjoy. Instead, Esau will live by the sword = at war frequently. Esau will survive by hunting and raiding others in war.

Edom will initially serve Israel. There will come a time when Edom breaks free from Israel's domination.

Again, Isaac's words are divinely inspired. What Isaac said will come to pass without fail.

Why is the blessing irrevocable?

Because of God's prior choice. The right son was blessed. The blessing was ultimately from God, not Isaac. God isn't taking the blessing back.

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**

Before the twins were born God determined the blessing would go to Jacob, not Esau. Blessing owed to God's choice rather than anything to be found in Jacob or Esau. Before they were born and *"not because of works"* underscores God's choice alone determined who got the blessing.

It's possible Isaac knew Jacob was supposed to be blessed. Did Rebekah tell Isaac that God told her Esau would serve Jacob? Did Abraham and Sarah share with Isaac how God chose Isaac for the blessing? Was Isaac aware that God chooses who gets the blessing?

God's will has occurred. Isaac knew it. There was no going back. The power to bless rested in God, not Isaac. God wasn't reversing this turn of events. Isaac knows he's bound.

By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. – **Hebrews 11:20**

This is interesting. *"By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob"* when he thought it was Esau. Isaac believed in a personal and sovereign God who gives promises and carries out those promises. Isaac believed the promises given to Abraham would come to pass. Even if he believed those promise would be carried out in the wrong son.

Having understood he was duped by Jacob, Isaac then pronounced the future of Esau by faith. Isaac was resigned to a dismal future for Esau.

READ 27:41-46

Point 5: Esau's wrath (27:41-46)

Esau's hatred for Jacob results in a plan to murder Jacob after Isaac dies (27:41). Respect for his father delays the murder?

Providentially, Rebekah hears Esau's words and tells Jacob (27:42). Esau spoke to himself = "in his heart" = silently. Somehow Rebekah had access to Esau's private thoughts. Perhaps Esau repeated these things out loud?

Jacob needs to obey Rebekah again (27:43). This time by departing Canaan for Haran to live with Laban, Rebekah's brother (27:43-44). Rebekah envisions Esau forgetting about the blessing and getting over his anger and calling for Jacob in a short while (27:44-45). Rebekah's afraid of losing both sons = Jacob will be murdered and Esau will get the death penalty.

There's another motivation: Rebekah doesn't want Jacob marrying Hittite women like Esau did (27:46). Rebekah hates her life because of her daughters-in-law, Esau's wives (27:46). Life isn't worth living because those women are in my life Rebekah thinks.

Point 6: God confers blessing on sinful, flawed, undeserving people

Why is this episode in the Bible? To show how God's plan comes to pass. To show how Jacob inherits the Abrahamic blessing. To show that divine blessing is all grace.

What help can we draw from this episode?

Esau gets what he deserved. He despised his birthright, treated it casually (Gen 25:34). Esau forfeited the blessing. The Hebrews author connects lost birthright with lost blessing (Heb 12:15-17).

Jacob gets what he doesn't deserve because Jacob was chosen beforehand by God for blessing. Nothing Jacob would do, good or bad, factored into God's decision. Simply God's choice. Remarkably the lying, blasphemous, deceiving Jacob winds up uniquely blessed by God.

Jacob is a picture of you and me. Are you amazed that this is the guy who is blessed wherever he goes and God opposes all who oppose him? You should be! This doesn't make sense. But it does make sense when we understand that God's blessing, God's salvation, is all grace and zero human merit.

Sometimes people trip over hell. How could God punish good people forever and ever? Sometimes people trip over God's forgiveness. How could God forgive a person like that? Why does that guy get into heaven? Why would God bless a blasphemous deceiver who lies to his father's face (i.e., Jacob?)

Why? Because salvation is all grace. Zero human merit. Christian, are you amazed that God forgives and blesses one such as you? If you knew the depth of sin within you'd say I'm not worthy.

The other day Matt Mahar was wearing a Charles Spurgeon shirt that said, "If any man thinks ill of you do not be angry with him for you are worse than he thinks you to be." If people knew our heart, they'd know we're even worse than they think. Not saying this to excuse sin. Rather, to help us see that we're corrupt and unworthy. And blessed in spite of ourselves.

Practical question: do I view myself like the undeserving Jacob?

A right understanding of ourselves crushes pride and provokes humility. Jacob can't say, "I earned the blessing."

It's not that God doesn't care about morality. The flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, and hell prove God cares about sin. What God does is he takes messy people and makes them new!

Point 7: God's intent always overrides human intent

We have Isaac's intent: Esau will be blessed. We have Rebekah's intent: the blessing must go to Jacob. We have God's intent: the Abrahamic blessing will go to Jacob. Whose intent wins out? Yes, God's.

Isaac intends what's contrary to God's will. Rebekah providentially overhears the conversation. Rebekah serves God's will by orchestrating the deception. Rebekah and Jacob sin. They're responsible for their sin. Yet their sin serves God's will.

In the end, Isaac's will is thwarted and God's intent wins out. God's intent always overrides man's intent (Job 42:2; Eph 1:11). Sometimes in unique ways.

Sometimes we stumble over the question of fairness. Why Jacob not Esau? Sometimes we stumble over the question of suffering. Why is this person's circumstance worse than another's? In John 21, Jesus tells Peter he's going to die by crucifixion (John 21:18-19). Peter says, what about John (John 21:20-21)? Jesus answers, *"If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!"* (John 21:22). What's Jesus' answer to the question of fairness? What is that to you? Follow me. In other words, don't worry about equal outcomes, worry about obedience.

Outcomes are ultimately subject to God's will. Our part is to trust and obey.

Practical question: am I comforted by the fact that God's intent overrides man's intent?

Conclusion

The scribes and Pharisees and the Sanhedrin intended to kill the influence of a man they believed to be deceiving blasphemer by putting him to death. In doing so, they brought about God's plan to bless all the peoples of the world through Abraham.

I'm talking about Jesus Christ, the snake crusher, the seed of the woman, the Savior of the world.

On the cross, Jesus gave his life as a ransom for many such that whoever believes will come under God's blessing: forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

On the cross God treated Jesus as if he lived our sinful life. If we trust in Jesus, God will treat us as if we lived Jesus' sinless life.

God's blessing is all grace. Zero human merit. Through faith in Jesus, and Jesus alone, imperfect, flawed, corrupt, broken people find themselves the recipients of God's blessing. People like Jacob. People like you and me.

If you know you're outside God's blessing:

1. Tell God you're sorry and confess your sins to him.
2. Thank God for sending Jesus to the cross.
3. Ask God for his forgiveness.
4. Ask God for help to follow Jesus.
5. Then keep trusting that God forgives everyone who comes to him through his Son Jesus.