

Rappahannock Christian Church – 7/24/11

Dr. Kenneth Wilbur

Communion Meditation

Make no mistake, we are the objects of God's blessing. That's very clear, especially as we come to this Table; "This is my body that is broken *for you*." Imagine! "*For YOU!!*" "This is my blood of the New Covenant, which is for the forgiveness of sins." That's *your* sins and *mine*! We are the objects of God's blessings that are showered graciously upon us as the means of our salvation and our joy.

So, is Table this all about get, get, get and take, take, take?!

No, we are off target if we think that way. This table also represents an opportunity for us to say, "No matter what others may do, I am going to imitate Christ. I am going to be active in *His* service." This Table is about blessing, of course. But it is also about serving our Lord. Let me read the words of Matthew to you.

Matthew 26:26-29 – While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

"Deceived!"

This morning's Scripture is from Genesis 29. This is a small portion of a much longer saga, or cycle, of stories that begins with Abraham. This part of the story is about Jacob. A couple of weeks ago we read about how Esau forfeited his birthright. In this passage, Jacob has fled because he tricked his father into giving him the blessing, designating him as Isaac's heir. Esau is pretty angry with him, too. He is now far away at the house of his mother's brother, Laban, in the area of Haran.

Genesis 29:14b-30 – After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, Laban said to him, "Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be."

Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel."

Laban said, "It's better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me." So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to make love to her."

So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. ²³ But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob made love to her. And Laban gave his servant Zilpah to his daughter as her attendant.

When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?”

Laban replied, “It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. Finish this daughter’s bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.”

And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. Laban gave his servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her attendant. Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.

People are strange. It still surprises me that the people who criticize the most and the loudest are often the ones least likely to accept criticism graciously. I think that is just SO odd! Why are they surprised when what they have done comes back to them? Don’t they know the Golden Rule?

This story about Jacob has meaning for us on two levels. On one hand, it is the personal story of Jacob and how he interacted with different people; but we must also see that his story is a small segment within God’s great plan of salvation.

First we’ll take a look at Jacob’s story.

Jacob has left his mother’s tent and entered adulthood. You will remember his rivalry with Esau, his twin brother. Jacob knows that the birthright that will be passed down will come with a special blessing. He wants it. He dresses up in Esau’s clothing and even puts skins on his arms to make them seem hairy like Esau’s, then he goes in and tricks his blind father into thinking he is Esau and giving him the blessing.

Now Jacob is out on his own, and as we go through this story there are certain things that he “gets.” They are his “wages” you might say.

Jacob falls madly in love with Laban’s younger daughter Rachel. In time, Laban says to him, “Jacob, I know you’re a relative and you’re staying with us and all, but it’s not right that you work as you are doing and I give you no wages. Let’s talk about what would be a fair wage for you.” Well, Jacob knows exactly what he wants, and he tells Laban that he’ll work 7 years for the right to marry Rachel. Laban agrees.

Jacob gladly works the 7 years, and the Bible says that he was so in love that it seemed like just a few days for him.

At the end of the 7 years Laban sends Rachel's older sister, Leah, to Jacob’s marriage bed instead. We have to assume that because of the heavy veils that it was the custom for

women to wear in the Ancient Middle East, and because of the thick darkness, Jacob could not see his new wife. When he awoke in the morning, to his horror, there was Leah!

Naturally, he confronts Laban. "Why have you done this to me?" Laban responds, "You should know better. We just don't marry off our younger daughters before their older sisters around here. Calm down. Just spend the bridal week with Leah and I'll give you Rachel too. But you must promise to work 7 more years for me." And Jacob does it. So here in this story, Jacob spends 14 of the best years of his life working for Laban!

One can't help wondering if Laban's trickery may be retribution visited upon Jacob for the deception of his father and Esau. He had taken something from them that they would not have willingly given up. In this moment of anguish does he realize this? Do the pieces come together in his mind? Does he now know how Esau and Isaac felt? Is this what we hear in Jacob's ironic cry to Laban, "Why have you deceived me?!"

It's like the old saying, "What goes around, comes around." Be careful. Be kind and honest. If you are not, then when you are vulnerable how can you expect folks to give you the support that you need?

It's Golden Rule, isn't it? "Do unto others what you would have them do to you." This is a good lesson for us to hear.

But the story is part of a much, much bigger one. It goes all the way back to Adam and Eve.

After sin has entered the scene and brought hardship and death to the human family God says that one day one of Adam's descendants will do battle with the serpent. The serpent will bruise his heel (that is, he will harm Him, but not fatally), but He (our Champion) will crush the serpent's head. God is saying, "I'm going to fix what is broken in this world. I'm going to send a Champion who will do away with sin once and for all."

This story of Jacob is a part of that Plan! As God's salvation unfolds and moves forward, God promises to give father Abraham many descendants, to make them into a great nation. He also tells him that through those decedents, "All nations on earth will be blessed."

How does that work?

Well, Jacob is the one who has twelve sons, the men who father the twelve tribes of Israel. Out of Israel comes Moses, who receives God's Law. The people of Israel settle in Palestine, the land God swore to give to Abraham's descendants. Later, David becomes King. God promises David that one of his decedents will establish an eternal kingdom and reign over it forever. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of all this in glowing terms when he says that God will make a new covenant with his people.

All this doesn't really start to be fulfilled in earnest until a Son of David is born in Bethlehem. And when Jesus offers himself on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for sin. And then He is raised from the dead, signaling His victory - crushing the head of the serpent! Christ Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, having established God's eternal kingdom and ruling over it.

Does Jacob foresee all of this? No! He can't possibly. It's not his place to know all that God will do.

Do we know how God will fulfill all of his promises? No! It's not our place to know about tomorrow, either. Our task is to trust God and be faithful and true. To live by the Golden Rule. To trust God to work out His plan and to fulfill His promises.

Benediction

To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. – 1 Timothy 1:17