

## “Jacob: The Spare” // Hebrews 11:21 // Hebrews 11: Broken People & Famous Faith #7y

*Before I begin I want to address what is on everyone’s minds this weekend. I know that we are all shocked by last night’s assassination attempt against former President Donald Trump in Pennsylvania. Most of our church hasn’t seen anything like this in our lifetimes and it is right to be horrified.*

*Just a few months ago we devoted a couple of weekend messages to politics, particularly in light of the increasing division in our country. But this should be a real wake-up call for everyone. Not only was Donald Trump attacked, others were hit and one person at the rally was killed. Whatever your politics, this is not the way. This is a time for us to stand united against this kind of violence. We’re going to pray right now for former President Trump and the victims of this horrible crime, for our country, and for this church that we would be a light for the gospel in a broken world.*

### **\*\*PRAYER\*\***

*I just got back from Germany where I was with 60 of our church members touring the key spots of the Reformation and visiting with some of our church planters. It was an amazing trip, but I picked up something there on the last day that completely took my voice. I’m feeling a lot better but my voice, obviously, is still not 100%. So, I’m sorry to have to make you listen to me like this, like hearing a sermon from Dumbledore or Batman... but I’ll be fine. (You say, “Well, you shouldn’t even be up there with your voice like that. A*

*couple of years ago when I did that 23&Me thing, the report said I had an unusually high amount of Neanderthal DNA in my mix, which means I’m not that smart but I’m virtually indestructible. So, I’ll be fine. Do pray for me, though.)*

*About 1000 of us are **headed to student camp this week and later this week I’ll be joining them so I can preach for our high school students and I’ll need my voice 100% by then. And speaking of camp...***

**OK, Hebrews 11:21...**<sup>1</sup> We are looking at a story today that is all about passing the torch from one generation to the next. The level of formality and all the pomp and circumstance that goes into recognizing the official family heir is foreign to us today... unless you are really into the British royal family, like I know a bunch of you are.

Honestly, I’m not entirely sure WHY so many people are obsessed with William & Kate and Harry & Meghan, especially since our national ancestors left England to escape the royal family, but still, raise your hand if you’ve watched *The Crown*. You’ve read the articles, you’ve watched the documentaries, you read Harry’s memoir, *Spare*. You’re tracking with the news of Princess Kate’s illness and all of the conspiracy theories about it. If one of the members of the royal family has a kid, or visits Wimbledon, or hiccups in a weird way, y’all know about it.

Even if you aren’t THAT into the royal family, you probably still know who is in line to be king, right? Right now Charles is the king, who took over for his mother, Elizabeth, when he was a spry 73 years old. And next in line is ... Prince William, the eldest son. For his whole life, William has been training for this role. He’s been a model citizen; he

<sup>1</sup> Works consulted: Michael Kruger, *Hebrews for You* (The Good Book Company); John Owen, *Hebrews* (Crossway Classics); Tim Keller, “[Abraham and the Test of Faith](#)”, October 30, 1994, Redeemer Presbyterian; Redeemer Presbyterian; Tim Keller, “[Real Faith and the Only Son](#),” June 17, 2001, Redeemer Presbyterian; Joby

Martin, “[Mountains Week 1: Abraham and Isaac](#)”, March 10, 2019, The Church of Eleven22; Craig Groeschel, “[Exponential Week 1: Seed of Faith](#)”, March 12, 2018, Life Church; Sidney Griedanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*. Tim Keller, Gen 48:8, [The Meaning of Free Grace](#), And others as noted throughout.

served in the military; he's been dutiful and put together. Why? Because he's not just William. He's William, the next King of England.

Harry, on the other hand? Well, he's always known he won't be king, so he's been the sometimes-loveable wild child. The royal family wishes he would get it in line more, but, I mean, what can you expect? He's not training to be king. He's just Harry.

When you hear today's stories, I want you to imagine what it would be like if Charles, preparing to step down from the throne—maybe, on his death bed with a voice that sounds like mine—invited in William and Harry... only to announce to the world, "*HARRY* will be the next king." THAT is the kind of drama we're dealing with in today's stories, and it has profound gospel implications.

**Remember, the author of Hebrews laid out his thesis statement for this whole chapter** in Hebrews 11:6: without faith, he says, it is impossible to please God, and he defines faith as a 3-fold conviction:

1. God is real
2. He keeps his promises
3. Seeking him is worth the effort

and then he introduces 16 different Old Testament characters to illustrate this. Think of faith as a many-sided diamond, and each of these people reveals to us one beautiful side of that diamond.

Today, we come to v [21] **By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.** Now, if you know anything at all about the Bible, you know that Jacob's life is one of the most amazing, colorful, faith-filled lives in the Bible, and the writer of Hebrews could have picked any 1 of 100 different moments from his life to demonstrate faith. Instead, he chooses something rather mundane: the blessing of Joseph's sons at the end of his life. It's an obscure moment that most people have never even heard of. **Here's the story:**

**Genesis 48**, we're at the end of **Jacob's life** and Joseph, Jacob's son, who is now 2nd in command in Egypt, asks Jacob (his dad), to bless his 2 boys before Jacob dies. "Blessing" in those days, meant more than some kind of general "well-wishing." "Blessing" was the formal bestowal of the family inheritance. You became the head of the family clan and the executor of the estate. By tradition this blessing always went to the oldest son.

Jacob agrees to give the blessing, but as he reaches out his hands to bless his grandsons, at the last second he does something totally unexpected: he crosses them, putting his right hand, the hand of blessing, on the head of the younger son, Ephraim, and his left hand on the head of the older one, Manassah. (In those days, the RIGHT hand was the hand of blessing; Jacob crosses them and puts his hand of blessing on the spare).

**Joseph objects:** he's like "No, dad, you're blessing the wrong one! (*He thinks his dad is just senile*). Manassah is the older one, he's the one who gets the blessing." To which Jacob says, "No, son, this is how God has appointed it to be."

**Here's the question: Why does the author of Hebrews point to this one moment as the moment where Jacob demonstrated that faith that pleases God?** Well, to understand that, you have to understand the story of Jacob.

**That story is told in Gen 27.** You ready? This story is always fun. Jacob and his brother Esau were fraternal twins, but about as opposite as two biological brothers could be.

The author of Genesis presents Esau as an "outdoors-y" kind of guy, a man's man, so to speak—he was athletic, he liked to hunt, and he ate

lots of red meat. His name, Esau, means literally “red and hairy,” which is kind of funny when you consider that he was given this name... *at birth*. Evidently he came out of the womb looking like a chia pet. It would be like naming your newborn baby “Fuzzy.” I imagine that grown up, he looked something like this→ [\(Pic of hairy guy with #3 shaved in his back\)](#)

(And I’m pretty sure Esau would have loved NASCAR races, too)

Jacob, on the other hand, was more of an indoor cat. We know he had soft skin; he liked to cook; he probably used a luffa and he knew not to wear white after Labor Day. He had great hair and was a fabulous dresser. Think of this [kind of guy](#).

Esau was the oldest, by just a few seconds, but that meant he got “the blessing,” and in the case of Esau and Jacob, that actually worked out well, because Esau fully embodied the stereotype of what fathers wanted their sons to be in those days. This was an agrarian, nomadic society, so men wanted sons who were big and manly and good with weaponry. The author makes clear that Esau was his daddy’s favorite. John Calvin in his commentary notes that the narrator of Genesis himself prefers Esau. It’s clear: Esau is the choice. He’s the oldest; he better fit the stereotype of what a leader should be. Esau is the preferred heir; Jacob is the less-qualified SPARE.

#### **But just before their birth, something strange had happened.**

Rebekah, Jacob and Esau’s mom, went to see a prophet because she was having a really rough pregnancy, because that’s what you did in those days if you were having a rough pregnancy--you went to see a prophet. I’m very grateful we’re not in those days anymore, btw. At

any rate, she said to this prophet, “Listen, I don’t know what’s going on in there, but I feel like there’s a couple of ultimate fighters in there--it’s like I’m about to give birth to Conor McGregor and Jon Jones or something.” And the prophet of God said in response, “*That’s because two warring nations are in your womb...*” which is, of course, what every mother of twins wants to hear. And then the prophet of God went on to say (*this is **Gen 25:23***) that in this case, the younger, Jacob, is the one who will prevail and he’s the one to whom God will give the blessing.

So the boys are born, and Jacob, the younger, turns out to be not only less manly than Esau, he also turns out to be somewhat of a dirtbag. The author presents this first to us in the circumstances surrounding their birth. After Esau came out of the womb first, he was followed by this little hand, Jacob’s hand, which grabbed a hold of his heel, as if to say, “*Oh no you don’t! Get back in here. I wanted to be first.*” And so, for that reason, Isaac and Rebekah named this second son, ‘*Ha Yacob*,’ which literally means “the heel grabber.” The first son they called ‘red and hairy’ and the second they called ‘heel grabber.’ But ‘Ha Yacob’ has a second meaning, which is “schemer.” One commentator says, “The Trixter.” “Mr. Sneaky.” (When I played soccer in high school we used to have to run this 3 mile course as part of warm up. The last 2 miles of the course made a big loop through the woods, and one the guys on the team would sometimes duck into the trees when we got into the woods and then join us when we came back out. That would have been Jacob. “Mr. Sneaky.”)

And that name turns out to capture Jacob’s entire approach to life. This all comes to a head when it was time for Isaac, their dad, to officially bestow the blessing on Esau: [Ge27:1](#), “When Isaac was old

and almost blind, he called for Esau, his older son, and said, “My son?” “Yes, Father?” Esau replied. 2 “I am an old man now,” Isaac said, “and I expect every day to be my last.” (And then he tells Esau to go out and hunt him up some wild game and to make a feast out of it, and Isaac will formally bestow the blessing on Esau. So, Esau grabs his crossbow and his hunting knife and he heads out into the woods.)

Verse 5 But Rebekah overheard the conversation. Now, just like Esau had been his daddy’s favorite, Jacob had been Rebekah’s favorite. As you can see, this is a super healthy family dynamic. So she says, “Jacob, 9 “Go out to the flocks and bring me two fine young goats. I’ll prepare your father’s favorite dish from them. 10 Take the food to your father; then he can eat it and bless you instead of Esau before he dies.” (“But mom,” Jacob replies, “He wants to bless Esau, he’s always wanted to bless Esau—not me! And I know he’s almost blind, but he’s not an idiot. He’ll for sure know it’s me. I mean, Esau’s voice is deeper.

Verse 12:(And) What if my father touches me? Mom, think about how rough Esau’s skin is compared to how smooth mine is! Plus, I smell like lavender and he smells like some weird mixture of armpits and onions.”) “He’ll see that I’m trying to trick him, and then he’ll curse me instead of blessing me.”

Vs. 13, Rebekah convinces him he can pull it off... 14 So Jacob followed his mother’s instructions, bringing her the two goats. She took them and cooked a delicious meat dish, just the way Isaac liked it. 15 Then she took Esau’s best clothes, which were there in the house, and dressed Jacob with them. 16 She made him a pair of gloves from the hairy skin of the young goats, and she fastened a strip

of the goat’s skin around his neck. (I’ll be honest, I’m into the man’s man bit as much as the next guy, but if in order to impersonate you, somebody feels the need to cover themselves with a dead goat, that’s a bit much.) But Jacob does it, and vs. 18” Jacob carried the platter of food to his father and said, “My father?” “Yes, my son,” he answered. “Who is it—Esau or Jacob?” 19 Jacob replied, (high) “It’s Esau, (ahemm... [LOWER] IT’S ESAU) your older son. I’ve done as you told me. Here is the wild game, cooked the way you like it. Sit up and eat it so you can give me your blessing.” 20 Isaac asked, “How were you able to find it so quickly, my son?” I mean, you just left to out hunting! (Uh-oh, turns out the old man is not as senile as everyone thinks!) Jacob is quick on his feet, however. It’s “Because the Lord your God put it in my path!” Jacob replied. FIRST SHOT, DAD! It was amazing. 21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come over here. I want to touch you to make sure you really are Esau.” 22 So Jacob went over to his father, and Isaac touched him. “The voice is Jacob’s, but the hands are Esau’s,” Isaac said to himself. 23 But he did not recognize Jacob because Jacob’s hands felt hairy just like Esau’s. So Isaac pronounced his blessing (...) on Jacob.

Now, watch this: 30 As soon as Isaac had blessed Jacob, and almost before Jacob had left his father, Esau returned from his hunting trip. 31 Esau prepared his father’s favorite meat dish and brought it to him. Then he said, “I’m back, Father, and I have the wild game. Sit up and eat it so you can give me your blessing.” 32 But Isaac asked him, “Who are you?” “Why, it’s me, of course!” he replied. “It’s Esau, your older son.” 33 Isaac began to tremble uncontrollably and said, “Then who was it that just served me wild game? I have already eaten it, and I blessed him with an irrevocable blessing before you came.” 34 When Esau understood, he let out a loud and bitter cry. “O my father,

bless me, too!” he begged. 35 But Isaac said, “Your brother was here, and he tricked me. He has carried away your blessing.” 36 Esau said bitterly, “No wonder his name is Jacob (SNEAKY), for he has deceived me... Then Esau broke down and wept.” (He vows to kill Jacob the next time he sees him, which leads to Jacob fleeing for his life. Jacob would never see his mom again, and would return to his home only for the final months of his father’s life.)

**Here’s the thing:** Jacob didn’t need to do all this. You see, what’s ironic about this whole story is that *Jacob had already been given the blessing by word of prophecy*. Had Jacob just believed what God said and trusted him with it, and let God do it his way, he could have saved himself so much heartache.

**But here’s the question: What’s all this got to do with faith and Hebrews 11?** *I mean, if anything, Jacob’s search for blessing sounds like the opposite of faith, right?* Exactly, which is what makes what Jacob does as he is dying so significant: **Hebrews 11:21, By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.**

Let’s go back to this scene at the end of Joseph’s life. As Jacob reaches out his hands to bless Joseph’s sons, and crosses them, and puts his hand of blessing on the head of the younger, Joseph objects. “Dad, what are you doing? You’re blessing the wrong one.” And Jacob responds, “I know, son, but God wants to bless Ephraim, the younger one, and who is older or more worthy in your eyes is not the basis of God’s choice. The basis of his choice is grace, always grace, never merit.” Jacob, who had spent his whole life trying to become worthy of blessing, now acknowledges that God’s favor, his blessing, is a gift

of grace and not the result of our earning. And the author of Hebrews says “*THAT. THAT* is the faith that pleases God.

You see, the real blessing that God wanted to give us was not property rights in the Middle East or the head clansmanship position of a nomadic Mediterranean tribe. The real blessing was his favor, his forgiveness, a place in his family--and that blessing is not given to those who earn it or make themselves worthy of it. God’s inheritance, his blessing, is always only ever given as a gift of grace.

**You see, one day, God the Father would reach out his hands of blessing as two of his sons, so to speak, stood before him**--one of those sons was **Jesus**, the perfect Son of God, fully God and fully man, and the other was us, the fallen sons and daughters of Adam; and just as God’s hands of blessing reached out to us, God the Father crossed his arms, and God laid his right hand of blessing on us and the hand of cursing on Jesus. Jesus deserved the blessing; he was perfect, he’d always obeyed; I deserved the curse. I had sinned time after time after time. But *God made him who knew no sin to become sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in him*. He put the blessing Jesus deserved on us and the curse we deserved on him. And if you believe that, like Jacob did, that you get the blessing only by grace and not through striving, this blessing becomes yours.

So, write this down: the first dimension of faith we see in these verses...

## 1. By faith Jacob... Sought the blessing through grace, not works

You hear all this and you say, “Well, this is a great story, but inheritance laws don’t work like this anymore.” But I would suggest that all of us still seek “blessing” in life.

### Think about it: What is ‘blessing,’ really?

- **‘Blessing’ is validation.** We want someone to tell us we’re ok, that we have value; that we’re important.
- **‘Blessing’ is the promise of security.** The assurance that we will be taken care of; that things are going to turn out ok for us.

Children are born in a posture of crying out for blessing. The 1st place we seek blessing from is our parents. Psychologists agree that the biggest shaping influence on our lives is what our parents think & say about us:

- **Lance Morrow**, writing in *Time* magazine, says, “The damage caused by a father’s absence may be severe and may last a lifetime. It is a shadow; the longing of sons for their fathers is almost physical; something passionate, profound. It is often mysterious to sons what it is they want from their fathers, but I have seen it in other men, and I see it in my sons: their longing for me.” **Sons yearn for blessing from their fathers.**
- And **when we don’t hear it from them, it leaves us with a gaping wound.** Studies show that kids without a strong father figure are **46%** more likely to use drugs, and **52%** more likely to skip school than those with one. **One school study** noted that **98% of its**

**discipline problems** were emotionally-damaged young boys whose common characteristic was father-loss.

- What you hear in that is kids crying out, “Somebody look at me;” “somebody bless me!” That doesn’t excuse what they do, but it should at least make you sympathetic that a lot of their behavior issues come from a place of deep woundedness.

Some of YOU still have wounds from words of blessing you didn’t hear when you were young. Do you remember that little jingle, “*Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me?*” It’s completely untrue. It should go, “*Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can make or break my very soul.*”

**So what do we do when we for ‘blessing’ but don’t get it?** We do what Jacob did: we dress up like someone else to try and get it. Jacob tried to dress up like Esau to get the blessing; we try to dress up ourselves up like whomever we think we need to be in order to obtain that blessing. We try to become whoever we need to be so that our friends or our teachers or our coach or our husband or the social media crowd will “bless” us. But it’s exhausting, and it leads to a broken heart and broken relationships, just like with Jacob.<sup>2</sup>

- Years ago I saw an article about Madonna that appeared in *Vanity Fair* Magazine. And I know you ask, “Why are you reading *Vanity Fair* magazine?” For your sake. (The things I do for you people.) If you’re under the age of 40, Madonna just seems like a weird older lady that occasionally makes her way into the news every now and then, but she was arguably the most popular female pop singer of the 80’s and 90’s. This interview in *Vanity Fair* was done

<sup>2</sup> Though I’m not quoting him here, the flow of this thought, including the words “dress up like someone else,” are influenced strongly by Tim Keller.

when Madonna was early 30's and at the peak of her career. She said, *"My drive in life comes from a fear of being mediocre. That is always pushing me. I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being but then I feel I am still mediocre and uninteresting unless I do something else. Because even though I have become somebody, I still have to prove that I am somebody. My struggle has never ended and I guess it never will."*<sup>3</sup> Look, I'm not exactly a Madonna fan, and I'm definitely not suggesting you go out and start listening to her stuff this afternoon, but that is a very insightful statement. **She yearns for blessing.**

**Jacob came to understand that what he'd always sought by dressing up like someone else God gives as a gift in Christ.**

**My favorite passage on this** is Psalm 139. In this Psalm, David exults in how special he is to God. His words flow with the recognition of blessing! He says, *"You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made"* (I mean, talk about validation! I am *fearfully* and *wonderfully* made--God knit me together so perfectly that it made onlooking angels worship how perfectly I was put together)... *Your eyes saw my unformed substance and in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me."* (Ps 139:13-16) I was special. You have a specific purpose for me.

<sup>3</sup> "The Misfit" by Lynn Hirschberg. Vanity Fair, April 1991. <https://archive.vanityfair.com/article/share/bd86a835-b84c-47a7-bbec-60b9af6ea282f>

**Let me explain something about creation that you may not understand.** God created the world incomplete, imperfectly. Do you remember the word that God used over and over to describe creation? *"God saw it and it was... GOOD."* Commentators point out that good is good, but good is not perfect. Good means the substance is good; perfect means it is finished cannot be improved upon. God put man into an imperfect and incomplete world so we could complete it and perfect it. He made man a gardener: he put Adam into an unplowed field so that man could work the ground and bring from it beautiful flowers and all kinds of plants for food.

In the same way, God creates each of us with certain abilities to develop the earth. Not all of us have the same talent--some of us take the raw materials of rock and sand and create buildings; some take the raw principles of justice and create laws; some take the raw principles of music and create songs. Whatever, he has put part of his image into you for a purpose. You are fearfully and wonderfully made in God's image.

And if you're a Christian, he's also put Christ's image into you, a spiritual gift, for use in his kingdom. You are special; you have purpose, you have value!

Not only that, you're loved! Vs 18: *How precious also are your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I could count them, they would outnumber the sand!* **I used this illustration several**

**weeks ago**, but the number of grains of sand on the seashore is 8 quintillions, by the way--or, 8 with 18 zeros after it. That's the amount of times God has thought about you, individually, and your protection.

- ***Illus: Sometime when you're at the beach, pick up a handful of SAND and let it run through your fingers and think:*** I wonder what God thought about ME in this one? Or with this one and this one and this one? Each of these grains of sand represent a thought about ME. I can't even get my mind around that!

**The point is, this is the blessing you've always been looking for! Do you ache to be special to someone? You are special to God. Do you long to be loved?** He loves you more than you could imagine. ***I mean, MY GOODNESS! God's thoughts about YOU outnumber the sands on the seashore.***

**And how do you get that blessing? By grace.** Not by earning. Earning was Jacob's way in his early life and it ended in disaster. God's blessing only comes by grace. (As I mentioned, I just got back from this tour in Germany through the key Reformation sites. **The Reformation started with one insight:** God's favor, his blessing, his salvation, is given only as a gift. As a young monk Luther tried to earn God's favor through fasting and confession and good works it just about drove him insane. He lived with the perpetual question of "Have I done ENOUGH? Have I prayed enough, fasted enough? Am I good enough?" And he kept trying to put on **whatever clothes of righteousness** would earn him God's favor. **But at last he saw what Jacob saw:** that salvation is given only as a gift of grace received by faith.

- We were doing family devotions one night and I was talking about this concept of grace. Well, during this season our family was also watching *The Voice* together, that show where you have the 3

professional singers who listen to you sing with their chairs turned backwards so they can't see you, and if they like what they hear, they hit this button and their chair spins around and across the bottom it says, "I WANT YOU," which means they see such gifting and potential in you they want to take you on and train you. So, during this devotion about grace, my daughter Allie, who was about 8 at the time, said, *"Dad, it's like God hits the button and spins around his chair and that says, 'I want you,' before we ever start singing."* Pretty good for an 8-year-old, I thought.

- Blessing is given as a gift you receive, not a reward you earn.

Here's what I can tell you: You are loved right now, fully, even though we are all Jacob; though we are the "2nd born;" though we are not the right kind of person; though we lack some of the qualities the world values--maybe you don't think you're pretty enough, thin enough, smart enough, or successful enough. Or maybe you've made lots of mistakes in your life, like Jacob, and spent your life scheming instead of trusting in God's promise. Even to you, God says, "I want you: and my grace is enough."

**By faith Jacob... Sought the blessing through grace, not works**

**Before we close this, I'd like to speak specifically to parents for a moment**, because there is an important practical application we don't want to miss: **Don't create Jacobs in your house.** Don't show favorites based on what you think, or want, your kids to be. If you're not happy with how your life turned out, please don't bring hardship onto their lives by trying to live vicariously through them. The home should resemble God's love in that it comes unconditionally, as a gift.



- **I used to ask my girls at night when I was tucking them into bed,** “Does daddy love you because you’re smart?” And one of them, it was usually Kharis, would say, “No, but we are smart.” I’d then say, “Does Daddy love you because you’re beautiful?” And they’d say ‘No, but you do think we’re beautiful.’ “Does Daddy love you because you’re strong?” “No, but...” Why does Daddy love you? Because we’re your daughters and we belong to you.” The love of the Heavenly Father is supposed to be revealed in, and pictured by the love of earthly fathers.

In their great little book called, literally, *The Blessing*, by Gary Smalley and John Trent, that uses examples like Jacob’s to talk about the key ingredients in any blessing. There are 5, all of which we see in Jacob and Isaac’s story: **(1) Meaningful Touch, (2) Verbal Affirmations, (3) Communication of High Value (4) A Vision of a Special Future, and (5) Genuine, undying commitment.**

**Give those to your kids,** and give it to other people in your life.

- **Meaningful Touch**: A hug, a reassuring hand on the shoulder. My wife sometimes does this for me. When she knows something is bad for me, when I’m getting some criticism or some bad news, if she’s anywhere nearby (and she’s been with me when people have said very unkind things to me), she’ll just reach out and put her hand on me and it means, “I’m here. Who cares what that idiot thinks? I believe in you.”
- **Verbal Affirmations**: We’ve all heard the story of the older couple where the wife complains that he never says “I love you,” and he responds, “Well, 40 years on the day we got married I told her that I loved her, and if that ever changes I’ll tell her; otherwise she

should assume it still stands.” Yeah, but that’s not how people work! We need to hear these things spoken repeatedly.

- **Child psychologists** say there are 3 phrases every kid needs to hear repeatedly: **I love you, I’m proud of you; you are good at...**
- One said the **5 most powerful words** you can speak to someone are, **“You have what it takes.”**
- Words are incredibly powerful, arguably the most powerful things in the world. Think about it: God created all that is in the universe by... WORDS: God spoke, and there was light.
- We are born again by God speaking to us. God declares to us: You are forgiven. You are my child. And those words create a new reality in us.
- **Words have the power to create.** Sticks and stones may break my bones but words, in the power of God, can recreate and restore my soul.
- Third: **Communication of High Value**: That means call out their strengths. Show them, Psalm 139, how God specifically made them in his image to reflect some aspect of his nature on earth. And if they are saved, then call out the specific giftings he has placed in them for his kingdom.
  - Listen, don’t let your relationship with your kids be characterized by criticism. Sure, we all have to correct our kids; that’s our job as parents. But what I want my kids to remember most is how much I believed in them. I want them to one day stand on my grave and say what I will one day say on my dad’s--**nobody ever believed in me like this man did.**
  - Many of you think, “Well, If i don’t criticize them, who will?” Listen, I promise you, they’ll get plenty of criticism. The world will do that to them in abundance. Make sure what they hear

from your words of belief and blessing. I'm not saying don't ever correct them; of course we must. I'm just saying if we have to err, err on the side of criticizing too little and blessing too much. Instead of assuming the strengths and calling out the weaknesses, assume the weaknesses and call out the strengths.

- Fourth: **Vision of a Special Future**: Help them see what God has created them to be and that he has a specific role for them in his kingdom.
- And finally: **Genuine, Undying Commitment**. Show them they are more important to you than your job. More important than your golf game. Show them that by being at some of their games; being home for family dinner. By planning vacations and spring break trips. By being faithful to their mother and father.

**You say, "Well, I don't have kids."** Then show these things to others God puts into your life. We live in a world where people all around us cry out for blessing; people who are attempting to become whatever version of Esau they think they need to be to get it. And they're exhausted. Show them that what they're looking for is in God's love, given by grace, in the gospel.

**And maybe as I say this all you can think about is how you never had a father who told you these things.** Fathers were supposed to be a stand-in, training wheels, to teach us about God. When they fail, it hurts us. But realize they were only ever supposed to be a stand-in. The Heavenly Father is what you need. Don't evaluate your Heavenly Father through the lens of your earthly one. Reverse that: Come to peace with the failures of your earthly father through the lens of your Heavenly one.

~~Before we close, there's one more point I want to bring out of Jacob's life... and it's the last phrase of that verse:~~

~~[21] By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.~~

~~Why did the author point out that Jacob gave his blessing while leaning over his staff? Well, why did he walk with a staff? Because of a wounded hip. Do you remember how Jacob got that wound? One night, in the midst of all Jacob's striving, God sent an angel to wrestle with him, and in the battle the angel touched Jacob's hip socket and knocked it out of socket, and for the rest of his life, Jacob walked with a really painful limp. But that moment, you see, is where Jacob learned to depend on God. It was a point of failure where God showed him he could never be good enough, or capable enough, and he had to learn to lean on God's grace.~~

~~And so here, in Jacob's final moments, he leans on that staff, leaning on his point of weakness and woundedness, and he worships. He says, "Thank you God for these wounds, for in these wounds, you were working good in my life. Through these wounds, I learned to depend on you." It's through our wounds, not through our strengths, that we learn to embrace the blessing of God given by grace.~~

~~So write down, finally,~~

**VAMP**

## 2. By faith Jacob... worshiped through his wounds

Jacob had never heard of the ancient Japanese art of kintsugi, but he would have resonated with the image. You've heard me talk about this... It's an ancient Japanese practice where they take a beautifully painted, sculpted pot and then shatter it into 100 pieces and put it back together with melted gold in the seams, so that the value of that pot having been smashed and put back together is infinitely more than the pot was before it was broken.

Jacob would have said, "I'm that pot. God broke me so he could give me the blessing; so I'd learn that the blessing, what I've always searched for in life, comes through grace in my weakness, not through earning in strength."

Maybe this morning you're wounded. What if God is trying to get you to a place where you depend on him? Because when you're flat on your back, sometimes then, and only then, are you looking the right direction.

- My friend Rachel, who was on this Germany Reformation trip with us, is a young mom of 4 who got diagnosed with leukemia 2.5 years ago. It came out of nowhere. She was told that if left untreated she'd be dead within 2 months, and even with that h treatment there was only a 15% chance she'd see all her kids graduate high school. She told Veronica and me that one of her worries was that her youngest son, who was only about 2 at the time, would not be old enough even to remember her and would know her only through pictures.

- ~~God healed her, but during the darkest time, when she didn't think she'd make it, she wrote this, "In those things that don't seem "good" to me, I remember that I am not the definer of "good." He is. He promises good to me. God could have 1,000 good purposes in allowing this into my family's story. How could I doubt him in this? He does not owe me an explanation; I owe him my trust. My life, like all of ours, has gone through cycles of happiness and sorrow. But in this terrible valley of sorrow, I realize that joy was never found in this world at all. The everlasting joy, the kind my soul and my family's soul needs, is only found in nearness to him. So, I thank him for the cancer. I praise him for creating a chasm only he could fill. Because in that chasm, my soul knows fullness of joy."~~
- Could you say that in a leukemia diagnosis? In a lost job, or a failed business or a foreclosure? *I trust you, God, that you are keeping your promises and one day I'll see even this as part of your good plan in my life.*

God wants to give you blessing, but it comes only by grace through faith, and sometimes he wounds you to teach you that. Maybe that's where you are this morning.

HEADS BOWED:

- ***Where are you striving to be someone else rather than receiving God's blessing*** as a gift of grace in Christ? Where do you need to hear the voice of the Heavenly Father: Does your Father love you

because you're... beautiful, good, successful? He loves you because you belong to him. You are mine, O Jacob! You are mine O Israel! How could I ever give you up, O Ephraim? How could I cast thee off, Israel?

- **Where do you need to look at a wound**--a loss, a failure, some kind of physical pain--**and worship through it**, realizing that even in that God never stopped being good to you--he was just teaching you to depend on him? Even when I can't feel it you're working...All my life you have been faithful...