

Greetings members and friends of First Congregational Church of Shelburne,

This week's Worship Resource is attached and can also be found on our web page, shelburnechurch.org. There will be a YouTube video posted by Saturday evening. This service tells the cautionary tale of Esau and his younger brother Jacob from the Book of Genesis. Of the many levels of reflection this story offers, we will focus on making choices.

Next Sunday, July 19, I will be on vacation.

Look for our next worship video for Sunday July 26.

Please remember we include prayer requests every week.

Any requests may be sent to me at pastor01089@gmail.com.

God be with you as we unite in praise, in ministry and in worship even from a distance.

Pastor Rob

Welcome to Sunday Worship

July 12, 2020

Good Morning to our members and friends at home,

This week's Worship Resource focuses on the story of Esau and his younger brother Jacob. This is a cautionary tale on many levels. We will consider the issue of choice and how we make decisions in the short and long term. The Sunday morning video for this resource may be found by Saturday evening at shelburnechurch.org.

Prayer Requests: We are accepting requests for prayer (healing, comfort, thanksgiving and others). Please send your requests to the Pastor at pastor01089@gmail.com. Requests will then be sent out through our email list to the congregation for our common prayer life during the week. PLEASE remember that all prayer requests received become public knowledge. If you are uncertain if your request for another might be confidential, do not send it.

And now let us be in worship

Morning Prayer & Lord's Prayer Reformed Church of Zurich, 1525

Merciful and everlasting God, we humbly confess that we are poor sinners. We are prone to evil. And we daily, in many ways, transgress thy commandments. But, O Lord, we repent and are sorry from our hearts and pray that thy grace may bring help to our distress and misery. Be pleased, therefore, to have mercy upon us, through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray saying...*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Prayers of the People

Our prayers this morning will center around all those who are in need this day, especially those who suffer because of poor choices not of their own making. You may wish to add your own prayers for healing, prayers of thanksgiving, prayers for comfort and others during our time of meditation.

God of Grace and God of Glory, on your people pour your power. Each and every day, when we awake, we give thanks for every blessing in our lives, the small blessings we enjoy, the loving word spoken to us, the simple card in the mail, the beauty of a single wild flower and the wave of a friend from across the street, and the large blessings, those who love and care for us, being able to do something that we may lose the ability to do, walking, hearing, hiking, swimming, reading a book, being rescued in our time of trial, being healed in our time of brokenness, being forgiven in our time of sinfulness. For these blessings and many more, we are most grateful. God of Grace and God of Glory, on your people pour your power. There are so many who struggle with few joys in their lives. Even the most basic of blessings, food, clean water, breathable air are denied them in this your creation. We lift up those in our community and our nation that live in poverty of body, mind and spirit. Those who never have enough to eat, or a safe place to rest, those who watch their children grow within an environment of scarcity, abuse, and violence. Loving God, we know that if you shed tears for anyone, it is for them that your heart breaks. Did you not create this world to sustain all life? How is that so many do not share in its abundance? For all those in need, every one of them our neighbor, we offer our prayers.....(silent prayer and meditation time.)

God of Grace and God of Glory, in our time of anxiety and uncertainty, in our time of seeking justice for all and working for the coming of your realm that welcomes all people, pour your power. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Genesis 25:19-34

The nation of Israel traces its ancestry to Abraham and Sarah who left their hometown of Ur and traveled to the promised land of Canaan. Sarah, who was considered barren, gave birth to her first son, Isaac, in her nineties. It was Isaac who was brought by his father to the mountain to be sacrificed, but at the last moment God's own hand spared the boy. When Isaac became a man, he married Rebekah. Like Sarah, Rebekah was considered barren, unable to have children, and like Sarah, Rebekah had to handle not only a difficult pregnancy, but difficult family dynamics following the birth of her sons. This is the beginning of that family's story.

These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?" So, she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her,

*"Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples born of you shall be divided;
the one shall be stronger than the other,*

the elder shall serve the younger.”

When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so, they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau’s heel; so, he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. Esau said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!” Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?” Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So, he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus, Esau despised his birthright.

After the reading, you may reflect on this passage and share your thoughts.

There is a set of notes concerning this text for your reflection.

Benediction:

Lord, make us instruments of the Peace;
Where there is hatred, let us bring love,
Where there is injury, pardon,
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, your light,
And where there is sadness, Joy, Amen.

Notes on the text

One of my favorite movie scenes comes from Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade. It is that moment when Indiana and his enemy have at last found the Holy Grail. They are in a small cave with an ancient knight from the crusades surrounded by dozens and dozens of chalices. The catch is this, if you pick the Holy Grail, the cup Christ used at the last supper, and drink from it, you will live. If you pick any other cup and drink from it, you will die a rather grizzly special effects death. So, Indiana’s nemesis looks at all the cups and picks one up. He fills it with water and drinks. He dies a hideous death. When it is over, the ancient knight, turns to Indiana and simply says, “*he chose poorly.*” When we look at the story of Jacob and Esau, we may scratch our heads and wonder why the Lord’s chosen, Jacob, cheats his brother out of his birthright. It doesn’t seem very fair, nor just, nor sporting. We have this picture in our minds of the elder brother Esau being endowed much the same as a Neanderthal, a real knuckle dragger, all muscle, with little in the way of refined intelligence. It doesn’t seem cricket for Jacob to take advantage of him. And yet, the choice was before Esau; a bite to eat, or an intangible birthright. Esau thinks with his stomach, and digs into the buffet table, handing over the rites of inheritance and clan rule to his younger brother. Like the ancient knight said, “*he chose poorly.*” It is somewhat tempting to delve into Isaac’s slightly dysfunctional family dynamics, but for today, I would rather focus our attention on the issue of choice. No matter how we wish to demonize Jacob, or explain away Esau’s decision, the choice was before Esau. I suggest the dynamics of the choice are the same dynamics we work with today. The choice before Esau was between a short-term benefit or a long-term benefit. Do I satisfy my immediate need, I’m hungry, while sacrificing a long-term benefit, my inheritance? Sound familiar? It should. I am sure you can bring to mind countless examples of given that choice, the short-term benefit was chosen with unintended consequences. In the city of Springfield there has been a monumental rebuilding of the sewer system. When that system was first built it was able to handle the city’s needs. As Springfield grew, more lines were added while

the ability to handle an increase was not addressed. Eventually, what that meant was in overflow situations, like days of rain, the system would dump wastewater and sewerage alike into the Connecticut river because the two systems were connected. The long-term effects of this short-sighted design and lack of upgrades was the serious pollution of the Connecticut River. The cost of rebuilding the system to be environmentally safe is in excess of 200 million dollars. Choices are ever before us, on the personal level, the state and national level and on the global level. I will leave it to you to reflect on how our love of the short-term decision, especially those involving use of resources and finances, has impacted your life, your family, the lives of others, especially those who live with few resources and no support, and God's greater creation. I imagine we would rather hear the words, "*you chose wisely.*"