

# MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY, JULY 19, 2020

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## **"Family. Future. Fortune. Faith."**

Based on Genesis 29:1-12

**My** oldest daughter has been having bedroom troubles. (now that I have your attention!) She and her hubby decided it was time to upgrade their bed to a king size. They ran into some difficulties with logistics though: big bed in a little room, delayed deliveries, delivering the wrong items, and the straw that broke the camel's back, as they say, the right items finally delivered in pieces, broken somewhere along the way in the back of the truck. My daughter phoned Customer Service to get her money back, and when informed that the best offer was an in-store credit, things really went off the rails. Her temper getting a little flared (I can't imagine where she would get that trait) she stormed into the store to demand answers, all revved up to give them a piece of her mind, (like the song says, by Meatloaf, for those of you whom the 1980's were good music years) and discovered across the counter, my cousin, now the head of the local Customer Service desk. Within minutes, my cousin

had solved the broken bed situation, money had been returned, and the girls were caught up on the comings and goings in their families.

Jacob found himself in a similar situation. He couldn't imagine his good luck: finding distant relatives at a remote well in the middle of the desert. What are the odds? Which is exactly the point. It really wasn't luck at all. And Jacob recognized it.

Family. Future. Fortune. Faith.

Jacob, you may recall had been a very bad boy. After living a lifetime as a spoiled child in a prominent family of the day, he got greedy, stole the family inheritance, and then ran for his life when his brother found out. There was only one escape route, into the barren desert, where the odds of coming out alive were slim. His father had told him of distant relatives living somewhere in the east, if he could make it that far. And now, here he was.

- He had survived the parched sun.
- He had wrestled with a dream.
- He had found water.
- He had seen sheep.

- He knew that where there were sheep, there would be shepherds.
- He found people, and they were his people.
- He wasn't alone anymore.

*Family taken care of.*

Much to Jacob's surprise, there was a woman among the shepherds, most unusual for the day. Her name was Rachel. And we don't want to get ahead of ourselves, here, because their love story is for next week's lesson. But I do think that Harlequin Romance aside, Jacob found a kindred spirit in Rachel. Both were second children in their families, beloved and spoiled, and allowed to bend the rules of what was considered proper in the day. Jacob recognized that the wings of chance had fluttered yet again in his direction.

Rachel and her father Laban were family.

There was an obligation for them to welcome him into their home.

- He would be safe in their tents.
- He would have food and company.
- He could get his feet back on the ground.

- He could consider his possibilities.
- He would have time to see if Rachel might be part of the picture.

*Future taken care of.*

Of course, family honour only extends so far. Being welcomed in for dinner is not the same thing as becoming part of the family. Jacob knew he would have to show his worth and prove his value, not just for a possible chance with Rachel, but along with the expectations of any 'man of the family.'

- He would not be able to hide behind his mother's skirts anymore.
- He would not be able to duck around his responsibilities like a spoiled child.
- He would have to step up to the plate.

This was all rather new for Jacob. But there had been a lot of new things for Jacob to discover about himself recently. And he did not disappoint. Turns out that Jacob had an eye for sheep. Or perhaps, better stated, breeding sheep. Long before scientists would teach us about genetic mutations and gene squares in Grade 10 Science, Jacob knew how to raise the fattest sheep, or bring home the thickest wool. It was a valued skill in a day when your sheep were your investment portfolio, and a measure of your success.

*Fortune was now well in hand.*

Which leaves us with faith. Before Jacob discovered he liked sheep. Before he found extended family and a safe place to sleep at night, Jacob had had a dream, to which the only explanation he could find, was the YHWH had somehow been quietly with him, supporting him, and waiting for him to wake up, make some changes in his life, and begin to live the destiny YHWH had intended for him. Jacob had promised then and there:

*"If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, (Gen. 28:20-21)*

Jacob made a promise to pull his life back together again, to fix his mistakes, and to be the kind of person and servant that YHWH wanted him to be. This would be no easy task for a man used to lounging around, having his needs met by servants, and his mistakes covered by his mother's pampering.

- This was a little about coming of age, a little about reconciliation, and a whole lot about faith.
- This was a man, awakening to the thin thread of YHWH weaving His way through the everyday actions and decisions

of life, and gently nudging fate and coincidence and good luck in Jacob's direction.

And in case you missed it: it wasn't good luck, but good faith.

An eternal promise from Jacob's day, which is foundational for each of us today, in our day. Our God says to us: "Be faithful to me, in all times and in all places and in all circumstances. Do not lose sight of Me, and I will not lose sight of you. I will take care of you. I will make you prosperous, although you might be surprised what kind of wealth is valuable to me. I will design a journey through life that is exciting and challenging, and by times you will be tempted to complain, but then you will see Me in the middle of all the confusion. I will give you friendship, and companions along the way to share the journey with, and make your life full and rewarding. All this I will do for you, if you are faithful to Me."

- This promise was true before COVID.
- This promise has kept us steadfast during COVID.
- This promise is the message we will share with the world as we recover from COVID.

Faith: the foundation of our families, our futures, and our fortunes. Amen.