

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY, JUNE 29 2025

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“Bad Apples of the Bible: Jacob, Esau, & Rebecca”

Based on Genesis 25-26

Esau and Jacob.

Twins.

Fraternal twins.

They didn't look the same.

They didn't act the same.

In ancient times, this would have been seen as a sign. For some, a sign of witchcraft. For others, a sign from God.

- Esau was Isaac's favourite.
- Jacob was Rebecca's favourite.
- And so the trouble began.

Esau, the oldest, had destiny on his side from the very beginning.

- The land would be his.
- The money would be his.
- The power would be his.
- The responsibility would be his.

But he didn't want it, the responsibility that is. Esau liked to live in the moment and let tomorrow take care of tomorrow. And so he gave it away for a bowl of soup on a

very hungry day after a long hunt.

Jacob on the other hand, was more of a visionary thinker, seeing the big picture.

Staying close to home under mother's wing, Jacob learned...

- How to run the show,
- How to make allies among enemies,
- And bided his time.

Fast forward a bit and the time had come to pass the torch. Now Esau was ready to step up to the plate.

- He had sowed his wild oats and was ready to settle down and be the patriarch of the family, or so he claimed.
- He was ready to carry on the family name with pride and purpose.
- He could feel the money jingling in his pockets already.

Esau had forgotten about that bowl of soup so many years ago. But Jacob had not. Trickery and lying was next on the agenda. The birthright, the power, privilege, and the responsibility slipped from one brother to the other, while a confused old man was caught in the middle.

Esau was filled with rage and dismissed his father's blessing as nothing compared to what he believed was owed him.

Jacob ran to the desert in fear of his life.

So, we could say that both Esau and Jacob were 'bad apples'; Esau not living up to expectations, and Jacob plotting and scheming behind the scenes. But perhaps we judge too soon. Because behind both men was a woman who was quietly orchestrating these events.

Rebecca.

A poison apple?

Maybe yes, maybe no.

It is easy to point fingers at Rebecca and blame her for the mess in her family. She did, after all, help Jacob trick his father into giving him the birthright designed for Esau. She did help Jacob escape from the wrath of his brother. It is possible that many years of being barren, with no children to show in her marriage could have turned a God-fearing bride into a bitter woman in middle age.

It's easy to find fault with Rebecca.

- She did bad things.

- She hurt people.
- Lives were forever changed because of her actions. (hold on to that one)

But the real question is, did she do these things out of bitterness, or did she do these things to fulfil God's purpose? Stick with me for a moment.

Rebecca's pregnancy was a difficult one, and dangerous for a woman of advanced years at this time in history, During this time, Rebecca received a vision from God.

*Two nations are
in your womb,
and two peoples from within
you will be separated;
one people will be stronger
than the other,
and the older will serve the
younger. (v23)*

And at their birth it was said that Jacob was holding on to the heel of his older brother as he was born. (v26)

- Is it possible that Rebecca saw this a sign of her vision?

- Is it possible that she concluded God was trying to tell her that Jacob was the one chosen by Him?

- Is it possible that her favouritism of Jacob from the beginning was because she believed in his holy destiny?

- Is it possible that she helped Jacob deceive Issac, not out of bitterness and spitefulness, but in a fulfilling of God's plan for the family of

Abraham and of the Chosen People?

And if this was the case, does this make her a 'poison apple' or a 'candy apple'?

Friends, we are reminded that living the Christian Walk is easy, when things are easy, and going well. It is not always so easy to hold the line, continue the journey, walk in faith, and trust, truly trust our God when a curve ball comes our way.

Being prophetic is not always easy.

But prophets are what we are.

And being prophetic can sometimes put us in a position where we have to make difficult decisions that we know are going to upset others, displease others, or confuse others, who do not know what the voice of God is asking you to do.

- Eyebrows may raise.
- Fingers may point.
- Heads may shake.

Rebecca will forever be remembered in biblical history and Sunday School lessons, as the wicked mother who tricked her husband into giving the family inheritance to her favourite son. If that is the case, then she was a 'poison apple' indeed.

But if Rebecca was using her limited abilities as a woman of biblical days to

ensure God's vision was secured for the next generation; if she trusted the voice inside her heart to be the true voice of God, and then acted on it, despite what history has laid on her shoulders, then she is to be commended:

- For her steadfastness,
- For her trust
- For her courage.

Sometimes, we are asked to do difficult things for God. Are we up to the challenge? Poison apple or candy apple? You decide.

Amen.