Sunday, July 19, 2026

Speaker: Pastor John Vanderwindt
Scripture: Genesis 25
Sermon Title: Chosen for inheritance
Transcribed by: Liza Perry

It was a great week of basketball. And Friday's verse was ***Psalm 100:5***, *"[5] For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."*

And we are in ***Genesis 25*** today. We will actually read about three generations in which God has worked. He first called Abraham, and he told Abraham that he was going to have a son, and his son Isaac would be the seed of the promise.

And then Isaac gets married to Rebekah, and we will see in today's story that they have two children. And God says that Jacob will be the seed of the promise, and we have that faithfulness continuing through all generations.

And so today we're going to read from ***Genesis 25***.

In ***Genesis 1:-11***, for those of you who are thinking, *"What would be a great biblical name for some of my children?"* There is a list here for you to choose from. I don't know if you want to choose them. And children who are in church, maybe you want to ask your parents — and maybe some of us older people who don't know as well—maybe you want to ask your parents, *"Why did you give me the name that you gave me?*" That'd be a good thing to ask later on.

Because we are all given a name. And the beautiful thing is that God knows our name and He knows who we are.

And so today we're going to read ***Genesis 25:1-34*** it says,

The Death of Abraham

[1] Abraham had taken another wife, whose name was Keturah. (this is after Sarah died) [2] She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. [3] Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan; the descendants of Dedan were the Ashurites, the Letushites and the Leummites. [4] The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanok, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah. [5] Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac.

6 But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the east.

7 Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. 8 Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people. 9 His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, 10 the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah. 11 After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi.

Ishmael's Sons

12 This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Sarah's slave, Hagar the Egyptian, bore to Abraham.

13 These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, 14 Mishma, Dumah, Massa, 15 Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. 16 These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers according to their settlements and camps. 17 Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people. 18 His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the eastern border of Egypt, as you go toward Ashur. And they lived in hostility toward all the tribes related to them.

Jacob and Esau

19 This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac, 20 and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean. 21 Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. 22 The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

23 The LORD said to her, "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." 24 When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. 25 The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. 26 After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

27 The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. 28 Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob. 29 Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. 30 He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.)

[31] Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." [32] "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" [33] But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. [34] Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.

This is the Word of the Lord. Let's pray.

Dear Lord, we come to You this morning. And Lord, we thank You that You are the God of generations. We thank You Lord, that Your love endures forever. We thank You Lord, that we have been called to be Your children and that we have been adopted through the precious blood of Jesus. Lord, as we hear from Your Word today, will you open our ears and open our hearts that we may hear from You and that Your words may be spoken. In Jesus' name. Amen.

We begin ***Genesis 25*** with the last few years of Abraham.

Sarah has died. And Abraham, it says here that he died at one hundred and seventy five. That means it was a hundred years before that God brought him to the land of Canaan and said, *"This will be yours."* And after Sarah dies, he has a wife whose name is Keturah. Keturah has six sons with him. And he talks about his sons.

But notice what it says there in ***Genesis 25:5-6***, " *[5] Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. [6] But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the east."*

Abraham understood that God had promised the inheritance through his son Isaac. And Abraham did what he could to prepare so that Isaac would have the best conditions without any other problems. And so Abraham took care of his inheritance before he died.

Can you imagine the discussion among Isaac, Ishmael and the six sons of Ketur? Plus maybe he had daughters as well. Could you imagine if Abraham had not taken care of this beforehand? How would Isaac be able to tell them, *"By the way, I am the chosen one."* That, I'm sure, would not go over well. And Abraham knowing that, took care of this before he died.

I wonder if there's wisdom in that for us as well… to prepare before we die.

But then it goes on to say in ***Genesis 25:7*** that Abraham lived 175 years. And then it says in ***Genesis 25:8***, "*[8] Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years… "*

He died full of years. Now we might say, *"Well, obviously he's full of years. He is 175. So, yeah, that's a long time."* But that's not what this is saying. What this is saying is that he died full of the goodness of God, full in the peace of God, that his life was full. And that is how he died.

And that is an answer to a promise which God gave him in ***Genesis 15:15***, where it says,*"[15] You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age."*

Abraham understood that he was in the hands of God. So when it came time for him to die, he was at peace with it. He knew his life was full and that he was with the Lord.

Because the next phrase there says in ***Genesis 25:17***, "... *and he was gathered to his people."*

Now, we know that Abraham was born in Ur, which is where he sent his sons. But he was buried near Hebron. None of his people were there except Sarah. And so when it says that he was gathered with his people, it is a foreshadow of the people of the kingdom of God that he has gathered. With all of those who are in God's family, in God's calling to be part of his family.

Because Abraham was promised that he would be the father of many nations. And through Jesus, these many nations can come to God. And so Abraham is gathered with his fellow believers.

R. Kent Hughes puts it this way: *"... the living fellowship of the redeemed."* Abraham is gathered with the living fellowship of the redeemed, which is what we can say as well. For our loved ones who are in the Lord, we can say that they too are gathered with the living fellowship of the redeemed.

In ***Psalm 116:15***, it says, *"15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants."* Not that they die on earth, but that they are now in the presence of our God.

And so Abraham, in this space, being full in the peace of God, is now buried in the tomb of Machpelah. He's buried with his wife in the only piece of land that they knew that he owned.

God had promised that he would have the land of Canaan or his descendants would have the land of Canaan, and here he is in a place which is now owned by his family and will continue to be owned by his family from generation to generation. And he can rest at peace there.

And in fact, within the same tomb, we will see later on that Isaac and Rebekah are buried there, and that after that, Jacob and Leah are buried there as well.

Abraham knew when he died that he was justified by faith alone, that salvation comes in God alone, and that through him, his faith is acted out in works of obedience. That's just a natural response that when we have faith in God, we will respond with works of obedience.

And thus ends the life of Abraham.

But the descendants of Abraham continue on. And Moses takes time in this piece to do a short piece to talk about Ishmael, because Ishmael and Isaac are at the funeral together. And it talks about Ishmael and his sons. And there they are listed.

You can see then from ***Genesis 25:12***, it goes on and says the account of Ishmael, son of Hagar. And then it lists his sons down through the next number of verses.

You notice that there are 12 of them. And in ***Genesis 17:20*** it says*"20 He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation."*

Moses is following up, showing that God is faithful with his promises to all people and that when he makes a promise to someone else, even if they are not part of the line of Judah or the line that leads to Jesus, God says, *"I keep my promises no matter what."*

And then there is a phrase in ***Genesis 25:17***, *"17 Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people."*

Ishmael is not part of the line of promise that God had said through Isaac. But God knows already now, and he speaks through Moses that Jesus is coming. And the descendants of Ishmael may also know of Jesus and be gathered in that righteous group with the rest of us.

And so here we have Ishmael's family. And then we get to Isaac. Isaac. Isaac is a man of prayer.

And we didn't have much chance to talk about this last week. But if we go back to ***Genesis 24:62-63***, it says, *62 Now Isaac had come from Beer Lahai Roi, for he was living in the Negev. 63 He went out to the field one evening to meditate,[a] and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching."*

Isaac was a man of prayer.

We hear very little of Isaac's life, but Moses does include this piece. Isaac's kind of the forgotten one. We hear a lot about Abraham, we hear a lot about Jacob, but the notes that we hear of Isaac is that he was a man of prayer. Isaac prayed.

And then in ***Genesis 25:21***, we read again, *"21 Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife… "* Isaac prays for his wife because she was barren.

***And in fact, the word there, where it says *"prays for,"* the Hebrew word is *"before"* or *"in front of."* Isaac just didn't pray on his own for his wife. He prayed with his wife. His wife, Rebekah, knew that Isaac was praying for her.

And again I ask the question, *"How much do we pray together within our families? Do our spouses, do our children know that we are praying for them? And do we pray for them with them?"*

Isaac is a man of prayer.

Now, Isaac has some faults, and we'll see them later. But if you remember Isaac, for one thing, remember that Isaac is a man of prayer. He prays before and he prays during all things.

And it's a good thing for us to remember as well, because what prayer does is it shows us that we believe that God will and is able to answer.

In some ways, it's a sign of our faith. If we have strong faith, we are willing to go to God in prayer. But if we are unwilling to go to God in prayer, is it because maybe we don't know that He hears us?

Or maybe we don't think that He can answer us.

Or maybe we think we are not worthy.

And then we need to remember that Christ died for us so that we may come before the throne of God with boldness and that He longs to hear from us.

And Isaac prays for his wife because they were in this season of waiting.

It says later on that Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob and Esau and Jacob were born. That means they had been married for 20 years before their first and only children.

Waiting is hard. Like, we just need to admit that. And some of us do better at waiting than others. And maybe I'll speak to the kids for just a moment. Is there something that you are waiting for or do you ever have it that your parents say to you, *"You just need to wait. We'll get to this later."* Right?

I once saw a comic that said, "When a parent says, *'You need to wait a minute,'* and the kid says, *'Is that a real minute or a wait a minute?'"* Sometimes we just need to acknowledge the fact that waiting is hard. And sometimes waiting is simply a matter of the other pieces of the puzzle are not ready for us yet.

God often makes us wait. We often need to wait for things. And part of that is because God says, *"You need to trust me and depend on me."*

Well, right now we live in an instantaneous society. I mean, if we don't know something, it used to be we'd go to the library or if you happen to have a book of encyclopedias at home, and you'd have to go look it up. Now it's just, *"Hey, Google."* And with AI there's a summary right at the top, so you don't even have to read the article. Just a word about AI. AI is good for some things, but AI is not always accurate. Just keep that in mind.

So waiting is hard, but sometimes God makes us wait on purpose.

James Boice says this: *"God is teaching you to depend on him. He is showing you that he is more interested in what is happening inside you than what is happening around you."*

How is your character being changed? How is your dependence on God being changed?

And so they finally get pregnant, and then the pregnancy is not exactly as Rebekah had thought it would be. She had twin boys in her stomach and they were in her womb and they were already wrestling.

It says there that the babies jostled. In ***Genesis 25:22***, ***22*** *The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?"* And then Rebekah prays. Rebecca has learned from Isaac the value of prayer. And Rebecca prays for the turmoil within her womb.

And God gives her this answer in ***Genesis 25:23***, "***23*** *The LORD said to her, "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."*

Here's an interesting piece. This again goes against the historic aspect of inheritance. With Isaac and Ishmael, we could say, *"Well, that makes sense, because Ishmael wasn't really Abraham and Sarah's. So that's why God chose Isaac."*

But now we have a case in which God simply chooses Jacob to be the seed of the promise. God simply told Rebekah that the younger one—the one who was born after—he is going to be the seed of the promise through which the Messiah will come.

In ***Romans 9:13***, Paul is quoting Malachi, where it says, *"****13*** *Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."*

That's always one of those hard verses, isn't it? *"Jacob, I loved. Esau, I hated. I choose Jacob to be the seed. And Esau—No."*

Richard D. Phillips, in quoting ***John Calvin***, says, *"If we see the cause of this distinction, it will not be found in nature; for the origin of both nations was the same. It will not be found in merit; because the heads of both nations were yet enclosed in their mother's womb when the contention began… [Rather, it] proceeded from the mere grace of God himself."*

I don't know about you, but I don't feel comfortable telling God that he can't choose what he wants to do. And sometimes that's a hard thing to remember.

God chose to extend his grace to Jacob and say that through Jacob would be the seed of the Messiah. And because of Jesus coming from that, we too get to be the seed of Abraham and part of the family of God.

Donald Grey Barnhouse says this: *"The choice was in the heart of God and based entirely on His sovereign authority."*

It brings us to this term called The Doctrine of Election.

I'll be honest with you, some of us don't like The Doctrine of Election. We don't like the aspect that God chooses people. But I think it helps us to understand a couple of different things here.

And ***The Belgic Confession*** says this. In ***Article 16***: "We believe that—all Adam's descendants having thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of Adam—God showed himself to be as he is: merciful and just. God is merciful in withdrawing and saving from this perdition those who, in the eternal and unchangeable divine counsel, have been elected and chosen in Jesus Christ

our Lord by his pure goodness, without any consideration of their works. God is just in leaving the others in their ruin and fall into which they plunged themselves."

Sometimes we have a hard piece with this, and I think why.

Our only response is summed up in what ***Richard D. Phillips*** says: *"Our response is 'a spirit of humble and marveling gratitude to a sovereign God who does as he pleases and deserves all the glory.'"*

God works within us. God invites us into that place to know Him. And we need to respond. It's not that we are robots. And any feeling that you have of a desire to be with God is already God working within you. And so I think we need to also give ourselves a bit of comfort in knowing that if you have a desire to follow God, that is God already working within you.

When I was going through my Masters of Apologetics a number of years ago, I was shocked one day when the Prof. said to us, *"You have to understand, apologetics will not convince anybody. It's the Holy Spirit that needs to do the work."*

But then the next phrase he said was this, *"You also have to understand that lots of people really don't want God, and for you to see God as good for them is totally foreign. They just do not want it. And it is only because of the Holy Spirit working within us, that our sinful minds have become at a place where we see that God is good."*

When I was teaching in California, I had a student who didn't like this. He didn't like the idea that people couldn't choose for themselves. And then one day he said to me, *"If Adam, in his perfect state, chose to go against God, how could I, in my sinful state, ever choose to go for God without the help of God?"*

And so we understand that God works within our hearts.

But the other side of this is often this piece of like, *"Well, I don't like the idea that God says to other people, 'I don't choose you.'"*

Well, let me put it this way. And children, you might get this one. You have a sibling. And the sibling kicks you. And you're in pain. And so you go to your parent. Your parent can respond two ways. They could say to the sibling who kicked you, *"There is a consequence for you kicking your sibling."* Or they could say, *"Oh, that's fine. It doesn't matter. He can do what he wants."* How are you going to respond if your parent says, *"It's fine, he can do what he wants."*

Your parent is merciful, but is not just.

When we go to court and the murderer stands before the judge and is declared guilty because evidence is clear, we expect justice. And it's not because the judge is cruel. It's because the person is guilty. And we are that same way.

Charles Spurgeon put it this way: *"You are quite right when you say the reason why God loves a man, if because God does do so; there is no reason in the man. But do not give the same answer as to why God hates a man. If God deals with any man severely, it is because that man deserves all he gets."*

And in fact, if we take that the other way, this goes back to us saying, *"We simply need to respond in a spirit of humble and marveling gratitude because we deserve,* just like the other *man."*

Charles Spurgeon goes on to say, *"Justice is that which damns a man; it is mercy, it is free grace, that saves; sovereignty holds the scale of love; it is justice that holds the other scale."*

And so here we are. And some of us might think, *"Well, if God has to work in people, why do we even do missions? Why do we pray for other people?"* Because God invites us into that place in which we get to be part of His sovereign work.

Imagine the gift it is for some of you who have been able to tell somebody or to give a gift to somebody and to see the expression of joy on their face when they receive it? God is saying, *"I'm allowing you to be part of this. I'm going to use you to share the gift of my Son so that you can experience the joy of others learning as well."*

And so we continue to pray. And when we pray for people, we pray that the Spirit of God may work within them, that they too may see that Jesus is Lord.

Let's go back to these two brothers for a minute. Esau and Jacob. You've got these sibling rivalries. Some of us have households with that and some of us do not. But I want you to notice something about what it says. And this is where Isaac slipped up.

It says in ***Genesis 25:27***, the boys grew up and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Sometimes our sibling rivalries are fueled by our own actions when we begin to show favoritism for one over the other. But there's another important piece in there.

Do you notice what it says about Isaac? It says, ***28*** *Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau… "*

It was more about produce than person. Sometimes we can get caught up in loving what the person does instead of who the person is. And God loves us for who we are, not for what we do.

And then we go to the selling of the birthright. In this story, we often talk about Jacob as being so conniving and like, *"It's Jacob that's the bad one in this story."* But I'll ask, *"Is it?"*

Jacob is actually getting what he was already promised. But let's look at Esau. Esau is rejecting God's covenant. Yeah, this may not have been the right way for Jacob to get it. He would have gotten it some way along the line.

But Esau sees such little value in what he's been given by God. And as I was thinking about that this week, one of the things I kept asking myself is, *“What I have been given by God—do I see value in that?”*

Do I spend as much time reading scripture as I do scrolling on my phone? Do I spend as much time in prayer for other people as I talk about other people? Do I spend as much time pursuing things for the kingdom of God as I do for pursuing things of my own interests?

Because in some ways, I'm kind of like Esau. I'm kind of selling out on what God has asked me to do.

So as the Praise team comes back up, I'll leave you with these two questions.

The first question is,

How is my prayer life? Is my prayer life alone? Or is my prayer life in front and with my family? And if I am single, is my prayer life with other people? Do I have other people in my life who I can join together and pray along with me? Because it's important that we pray together.

The second question is,

Where have I sold my birthright? In what areas of my life have I sold out on God? When God says, *"I am giving you this.”* And we just think it's not that important.

Genesis 25:34 ends with the words, “ ***34****… So Esau despised his birthright.”.*

Let us never despise that which comes from God.

But I want to end with a piece from ***Romans 8:28-39*** which is a beautiful message by Paul about living and where we are, knowing that God is there with us.

28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* ***29*** *For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.* ***30*** *And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*

31 *What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* ***32*** *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?* ***33*** *Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.*

[34] Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. [35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? [36] As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

[37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, [39] neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And we too can be full of years.

Let's pray.

Dear Lord, we thank You that in Your grace, You have called us to be Your own. Lord, help us to live in that humble response and just more. But Lord, also help us to keep praying for Your Spirit to work among those who are not following You. Lord, we know that it is Your Spirit who changes the hearts of people. And Lord, we thank You that You hold on to us. In Jesus' name. Amen.