

# Jacobs Labour

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Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[ 0 : 00 ] Now as we turn to this 29th chapter in Genesis, we left the previous chapter with Jacob having run from his brother Esau under the pretext of being sent away to find a wife out of Laban's household, out from Rebecca's family, his mother's family in Paranaram.

And he sets on his way and we had last time his encounter with the Lord and with the vision of what he's now referred to as Jacob's Ladder, with the angels ascending and descending upon the ladder that he sees, which as we mentioned, the Lord Jesus at the end of John chapter 1 applies to himself and saying to Nathanael and to the others, you'll see heaven opened and the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

And from this point on then Jacob devotes himself exclusively to the Lord, to Jehovah, and takes him as his own God. And we read at the beginning of chapter 29, then Jacob went on his journey. And we just think of that, well, okay, he picked up and he carried on. But no, the original, the Hebrew, the census, lifted up his feet, picked up his pace. It's almost like what we read in Hebrews 12.

You know, wherefore, seeing we are also are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us.

[ 1 : 27 ] Let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Or as some versions have it, run with endurance the race that is set before us. The sense here is of picking up his feet, picking up his pace.

There's almost like a spring in his step now. Now that he has the Lord for his God, and now that he himself has become devoted to the Lord.

And this additional strength, this additional, no doubt, inner joy that he has, we don't really have that conveyed in our English translation. But in the original, as we say, the sense of he picked up his feet and he went on his way.

And no doubt there would be ample time on this journey for him to build his relationship with the Lord in the solitude and the isolation of much of his journey. Because what the sacred narrative passes over in less than a breath, you know, Jacob went on his journey and came into the land of the people of the East.

You know, there's a journey of just about 400 miles just passed over in less than a breath there. And no mention made of the actual details of the journey, most of it through desert.

[ 2 : 37 ] And yet he is sustained through it. We have had lots of time with the Lord to build his, to grow in his relationship with the Lord, having time alone with the Lord because of this new commitment that he had made to him.

And that stands him in good stead, as we will see in the ensuing chapters. And it also works something of a change in Jacob. We think, well, okay, what's the change in Jacob?

If you think about it, in the preceding chapters, you have Jacob as a chancer, a twister, a deceiver, a supplanter, cheating his brother twice out of his birthright and out of his blessing, deceiving his blind old father.

Now on the run from his brother under the pretext of getting a wife. Yes, okay, that's true, partly, but it's really to save his own skin. And yet in the succeeding chapters, what we find is Jacob dealing straight and true.

Even with a fellow twister like Laban, we find a changed man who, yes, others may deceive around him. In his later life, his own sons deceive those who enter in good faith into a contract with them.

[ 3 : 47 ] But he himself deals straight. He himself is changed in his relations with others. He is a changed man because the Lord is now at the centre and soul of his life.

So Jacob went on his journey and he came into the land of the people of the East. Now in verses, we could say, take the next section of verses 2 to 14. It's really a narrative of encountering Rachel and meeting the herdmen and the flocks and herds here in Haran, as is described here.

We have just a little sort of detail there of the watering of the flocks. And what you see there is the desire to conserve the precious commodity of water in that largely desert land.

Why don't they just sort of open and close the well every time the flock gathers? Here comes a sheep. Okay, open the well, water it and so on. Every time the well would be exposed to the blistering heat of the sun, there'd be some evaporation.

There'd be some danger of wind blowing sand into it. There'd be some danger of contamination of the water with whatever might enter it. There's always risk every time you open it.

[ 4 : 55 ] You know, it's like if you leave your fridge door open for long enough, then everything in it is going to sort of warm up and no longer be kept as fresh. So if you keep the well's mouth open for too long, the water's going to get defiled and stuff will blow into it.

And the heat of the sun will mean that it's no longer as fresh and cool and deep as it was. So they conserve it. They gather all the flocks together. Then they water all the herds, which you would have to do twice a day in that time.

And it wouldn't just be an easy job. You know, we turn on the tap and water comes out. We think, James, I'll have to wait here for 30 seconds, but we fill the can. Oh, what a pain in the neck. Turn it off and then plug it in and so on.

They'd have to lower down their bucket and then haul it back up again and fill the trough. You come back and there's somebody else taking your place and they're filling their bucket and emptying it in the trough. It goes on and on and on.

It's hard work watering the flocks. So what it says at verse 10, you know, it came to pass when Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban, his mother's brother, that Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the wells where he did it himself.

[ 6 : 00 ] He did it some strength. And watered the flock of Laban, his mother's brother. It's not just a case. Oh, that's all right. I'll turn on the tap. There you go. I'll start the hose up. There you go. No bother. No, this is hard work.

We see the same kind of servant spirit here as his mother showed, Rebecca showed, when Abraham's servant came to seek her out as a wife for Isaac nearly 100 years earlier.

So it's the same kind of servitude, same kind of spirit of serving humbly, which is there as Jacob waters Rachel's flock. We don't read at this point that he is smitten by her.

He just recognises, this is Laban's daughter, this is Laban's flock. Let me do this service. He has got the servant heart here, another evidence, perhaps, of a changed life and a changed heart.

He is serving humbly in this initial contact, rather than, it's only later on we read that he was in love with Rachel. I don't think this initial contact indicates somebody trying to impress the girl that he fancies.

[ 7 : 05 ] Here we have rather this initial point of contact. He's showing a servant heart. And this is hard work. Drawing up the water, watering the flock and so on.

Rachel would have been extremely grateful that somebody was doing it instead of her having to do it. Young girl having to do it on her own with all the other shepherds about. He is saving her a lot of hassle.

He is showing this servant humility, just as his mother did so long before. Now there's another smaller point which perhaps may be lost in many cases as we read this story.

And that is the background of almost certain poverty as these two branches of the family encounter each other here. Jacob had nothing when he came to Laban.

Now I know that the Bible often describes people in terms of as though they are alone. And then you find out they've actually got servants with them or whatever. You know, after the contest with the prophets on Mount Carmel, then Elijah goes up to the top and he sticks his head down between his knees.

[ 8 : 09 ] And we think he's completely alone. And then it says, and he said to his servant, go and look and see if there's any cloud. See, he's got a servant with him there. He's not completely alone. But Jacob has nothing when he runs from his brother, when he comes to Laban.

We read chapter 32 at verse 10, as we mentioned last week, you know, For with my staff I passed over this jorn. I had my staff. Yes, he had some provisions, no doubt, with him.

But nothing else. He had no camels. He had no servants. He had no jewels to give us presents or anything like that. It is with his staff that he passed over this jorn. He has nothing.

He's like a wayfaring man, a traveler. The only thing that he can give is his labor. The only thing he has is the work that he can do. And this he puts at the disposal of Rachel and the flock here.

It is a servant heart. But also, he's got nothing else to give. Now remember when Paul writes to Corinthians, He's got nothing else to give. He's got nothing else to give. He's got nothing else to give. It is accepted according to what a man hath, but not according to that he hath not.

[ 9 : 14 ] So he gives what he can. But at the same time, the contrast with chapter 24 could not be greater. Think of when Abraham's servant comes to seek out Laban, asking for Rebekah's hand.

Or what proves to be Rebekah. He comes with ten camels laden with goods and provisions and gold and jewels and expensive presents for the family.

And when they agree to him, Rebekah, out come the bracelets and out come the gold adornments. You can almost just imagine Laban's eyes popping out of his head at the time when the servant is lading more and more of these goodies onto the family.

And possibly, when Rachel comes to running and says, Jacob's here. You know, part of the family. He says, great. You know, more good stuff coming this way.

And then he comes to Jacob. And you can just imagine the sort of disappointment looking at him. Where's the rest of the camel? You know, where's all the gold? Where's all the stuff? And there's nothing. There's just Jacob on his own.

[ 10 : 18 ] And the worst for a long 400 mile journey. And she runs and gets Laban. And he says, surely that worked my bone and my flesh. In other words, well, you're family. So we'll have to look after you.

And he tells him everything. She ran and told her father when Laban had the tithing of Jacob. He ran to read him and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things.

You can just imagine Laban's heart sinking more and more as he gives him all the details. So he's come with nothing. He's on the run. His family's already kind of bitterly at odds. Oh dear. Not like before at all.

But some sources, some commentators suggest that the Eastern tradition was that when somebody turned up at a family's house or a tent or whatever, you know, they were to be entertained three days without question.

Three days you'd be entertained. You'd be given shelter, food, without question. On the fourth day, they were required to tell their errand or their business. And if they stayed any longer than a month, then they had to work.

[ 11 : 24 ] And this may be one reason why it says after Jacob would be there in the space of a month, Laban says, okay, what am I going to pay you? In fact, the implication is that Jacob, as soon as he was there, got down to work right away.

Because once he stayed with Laban, he had nothing but his labor. He couldn't expect to be entertained as an honored guest because he had come with nothing. He was a burden on the family parts, but he could work.

And the Lord had blessed him, obviously, with a certain ability with flocks and herds and so on. But also Laban's family themselves are not rich.

You think, well, how can you say that? Well, one reason for saying it is, again, we compare Scripture with Scripture. Now, we go, for example, and we look at later on chapters.

We see that Laban himself doesn't have a huge amount when Jacob comes to it in chapter 30. He said, verse 29 says, In other words, all the years Jacob served with Laban, the Lord blessed Laban's flocks and herds.

[ 12 : 47 ] And Jacob, yes, he was getting his wages. He was getting provided for, but he had nothing to call his own. Laban was getting richer and richer. But, as Jacob says, you know, you didn't have much when I came.

Now look at what you've got. And I looked after your flocks and your herds, and the Lord has blessed him. And he gives credit to the Lord there, you know. This is the new change Jacob. The Lord is given the credit, you know.

The Lord hath blessed thee since my coming. But, notice what it says, Laban didn't have much before. Now, we don't know whether this is just because he wasn't a good businessman.

Whether he had squandered all the riches that Abraham's servant had brought before. Now you might think, oh, come on, that was ages ago. Of course he would have spent it before then. You didn't tend to spend the family gold and silver and jewels and what have you.

But you could perhaps have used it as collateral for investment. You could perhaps have used it to borrow and to invest and to increase your flocks and herds. The implication is either Laban wasn't that good as a businessman.

[13:50] You know, he's the one who says to Jacob, okay, what will your wages be? Instead of saying, well, this is what I'm going to pay you if that's fair. But he's sort of asking him, you know, what do you want?

And almost in terms of how little can I get away with paying you. Perhaps the other implication is that Laban, clearly he's a bit of a twister himself, a bit of a chancer.

And maybe if he is known to be a deceiver, people are not that keen to do business with him, perhaps. But the other thing is, which would indicate a certain poverty in the family, is you've got to ask yourself, given that in those days marriages weren't transactions.

They weren't the sort of romantic stars in their eyes kind of thing that we might associate with modern romantic love. They were transactions. Somebody would marry their son off to somebody else's daughter in order to unite the interests of the two families, in order to secure the financial strength of one or land for the other or whatever it might be.

They were transactions. That meant that it wouldn't really matter too much, especially in the days and times when people tended to multiply wives or concubines if they could afford it.

[15:05] It wouldn't really matter too much whether the daughter concerned was a stunner or whether she was pretty plain. You know, the main thing would be the union, the contract, the transaction.

And here we have two of Laban's daughters, an older one and a younger one who clearly is beautiful. Nobody's come near Laban saying, look, we want to get that transaction with you.

We want to enter into a business arrangement with you. You bring your daughter, my son will marry them and we'll have this union. We'll get this transaction going. Nobody has done that with Laban. Nobody is seeking out his daughters to marry them. And one implication of that is he's got nothing to break to the table. He's not the kind of financial investment people want to make.

They don't want his daughters, no matter how stunningly beautiful at least one of them might be, this is bad business. We don't get involved with Laban. And so he says, verse 19, it's better that I give her to thee than I should give her to another man to abide with me.

[16:09] He's thinking perhaps it is, okay, well, I'd rather have gold. I'd rather have jewels like the servant brought all those years ago. But, you know, he knows the value of hard work.

And it's that labor is a valuable commodity. And Jacob brings that at least. But nobody has married Laban's daughters yet. And seven years down the line, Rhea still is not married off.

Rachel, okay, the knowledge that she's betrothed to Jacob might have warned off other suitors. But, you know, why is the family not already engaged in marital unions with other families?

Why hasn't this happened? And the biggest single reason in that time and culture would be poverty. Or comparative poverty compared with other families round the world.

Jacob brings nothing but his hard work, his labor, to the table. But he's in love with Rachel. And so Laban says to him, okay, what will your wages be?

[17:11] He says, Laban had two daughters. The name of the other was Leah. The name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender-eyed. But Rachel was beautiful and well-paid. But we lose a certain amount in translation.

Some translations say that, oh, yeah, bad eyesight. You know, she was weak-eyed. Perhaps a kinder, maybe more accurate translation might be that just as the authorised version puts tender-eyed.

Some commentators take this to mean soft blue eyes, which in the Semitic culture was reckoned as a defect. You know, if you're in a sort of Nordic Scandinavian culture, then, you know, everybody would want blonde hair, blue eyes, and so on.

But in that culture, blue eyes, pale blue eyes would be considered a defect. You know, like having a squint or something like that. You know, people want dark eyes. They wanted the Semitic beauty. They wanted the likes of Rachel, but they didn't want Leah. We don't know exactly what may or may not have been wrong with her. She may have been a perfectly, you know, acceptable

appearance of young woman, but compared to her beautiful younger sister, anybody perhaps wouldn't look so great.

[ 18 : 21 ] Leah was tender-eyed. We don't know whether that actually means short-sighted, bad eyesight, whether she had weak eyes, or whether it means she had soft blue eyes, which wasn't considered socially acceptable in that time and in that culture.

She was tender-eyed, but Rachel was beautiful and well-flavored. Jacob loved Rachel and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel, thy younger daughter.

He served seven years, and here's this inexplicable, perhaps, verse 12 here. They sing but a few days unto him for the love that he had to her. Now, if a young man is in love, then seven years is not going to seem like a few days, no matter how you cut it.

But the only way of understanding this verse is he considered it a bargain. He considered that seven years of his life to obtain the love of his life was well worth it.

That's the only way we can understand it. If you are piling for somebody that you're in love with, then even a few weeks will seem, you know, like an eternity. But seven years, he considered it but a few days for the love he had to her.

[ 19 : 32 ] He considered that well worth the price. And so he served his seven years. And Jacob said to Laban, give me my wife. My days are fulfilled.

Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast. It came to pass in the evening. He took Leah, his daughter, brought her to him, and he went in unto her. Now, we, of course, think, well, how in the world could he not recognize her?

He must have been well drunk. He must have been partying so hard he just couldn't physically see who was in front of her, even in the dark or whatever. No. In that culture and time, a bridal couple would be heavily decked out in ornamental costume and clothing.

And the bride in particular would have a big, heavy veil, weighted with jewels or beads or whatever. It would cover her entire face, probably entire head.

And she would be brought to her husband, stand beside him. They'd go through the marriage ceremony. Then they'd go off to their tent or whatever. And, of course, this is nighttime. And even if you've got candles or lamps in the tent, you know, nobody is seeing too much of anybody until the morning.

[ 20 : 34 ] Now, some commentators, again, with almost astonishing unkindness, have said, Oh, Leah, she must have known what was going in.

She's practically an adulteress here. She's complicit in her father's plotting and so on. That is not only unkind. It's also a suggestion, extremely ignorant of the culture and the time.

When you look ahead to chapter 31, where Jacob is about to run from Laban and he speaks to his wives and he explains to them what he's doing and how the Lord has promised to be with him.

And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not counted of him strangers? For he hath sold us and hath quite devoured also our money.

For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours and our children's. Now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do. Now, when people were married in olden times, to a lesser extent now, but also especially then, the bridegroom was said to marry.

[ 21 : 48 ] The bridegroom was given in marriage. Now, you remember how when Jesus says, you know, right up to the last minute, when the flood came in Noah's day and when Lot came out of Sodom and Gomorrah, they bought, they sold, they married, they were given in marriage.

That's a reference to the bridegroom to the bridegroom to the bridegroom. They married, they were given in marriage. So a bridegroom was given in marriage. But it's almost like they say, we weren't given in marriage, we were sold. He sold us for the years that you worked.

It wasn't even for riches or jewels or whatever. And whatever we would have had as a dowry or as a bridegroom, he spent it. Our father has treated us just like chattles.

And now if you, husband Jacob, have gained so much of his wealth, that's fine. That's due to us.

That's due to our children. That's our inheritance that now we might enter into.

If you want to run, you run. We'll come with you. Because we have nothing here. And our father has not treated us well. Now, clearly this would imply that neither of the daughters were especially enamored of the arrangement that Laban had made.

[ 22 : 56 ] We don't read that Rachel was especially in love with Jacob. We certainly don't read that Leah was in love with Jacob. She wanted him to love her. But neither of them would have had any choice in the arrangement in that time and culture.

They certainly were not that chuffed with it. And it is completely unreasonable to suggest, oh, Leah was evil just like her dad. You know, she entered into this as well. She would not have been expected to speak during the marriage ceremony.

She would not have been allowed to give away her position before. And you can just imagine. Everybody's human. You can imagine in the morning when she wakes up and your husband, all rosy from sleep, turns to her.

And you think, oh, this is going to be the happiest morning of your life. And the sort of horror with which she would recoil from it. She wouldn't know why. She wouldn't know that this was coming. And what he was going to feel like in the morning.

But it wouldn't make it any easier. And he goes storming out the tent. And Laban would have been up early that morning probably thinking, I wonder how long it's going to be before he comes. Let's see how long it'll go up before he comes.

[ 24 : 02 ] Raging in here. I've got to be ready with my answer. Because he would know what was coming too. And sure enough, that's what happened. How is that going to make Leah feel?

She is already rejected before she starts. She hasn't got a chance. Now, there are different names here. Rachel means you, as in the female sheep here.

The sense of a gentle lamb. Leah, again, some translators tap into an Arabic word, which is a different term, imply that her name means wild cow.

But that's a sort of Arabic term rather than Hebrew. They're going on. And if you think of it realistically, who in the world when their baby daughter is born is going to call her a wild cow? Nobody's going to do that.

Far more likely is that the name Leah is very similar to a Hebrew root, which means slow or hesitating, possibly impatient.

[ 25 : 02 ] It has a sense of weariness. Weary. Hardship. And it might have been that, you know, it was a long, difficult birth for her mother, for all that we know.

Certainly, the name Leah is very similar in root to these terms that mean hesitating, slow, weariness, weary, hardship.

That's the name, the time which is probably most likely associated with the name Leah. And this poor girl, who probably suffers low self-esteem in the light of her beautiful younger sister, here she is, ditched into this situation where her husband wakes up the next morning.

First morning, and the first thing he does is thinks, ah, I've married the wrong person. And how is that going to make her feel? She's going to be miserable with it. She's going to be living with that misery for most of her life.

But here we have the situation then. He goes off to Laban, and Laban says, oh, well, it's not to be done in this country. You know, to give the younger before the elder. Now, this is not something that has been sprung on Jacob.

[ 26 : 09 ] You know, he's been serving within seven years. It's not like he turned up one day and the next day the marriage took place. He's been working with the herdmen. He's been working with the flocks and the herds.

In all this time, everybody knew he was betrothed to Rachel. And yet, all this time, nobody said a word. And nobody mentioned, by the way, do you realize you can't actually marry her until her older sister's been married off?

Some commentators doubt that there ever was such a custom in that land. Even if there was, even if there had been, why doesn't Laban mention it to Jacob first? It's not for Leah's honor.

It is almost certainly because he sees a way of being able to get another seven years of solid work out of this guy who clearly is capable and works well with the flocks and the herds.

Another seven years at no cost to himself. Offload two daughters without having to have a dowry, without having to have a bride price. The implication is even that he rolls the wedding two into one.

[ 27 : 12 ] Fulfill the marriage week with Leah, because the festivities would go on for seven days. And at the end of it, we'll throw in Rachel as well. And so you can have her as well as your wife and then serve another seven years for her.

Which means, effectively, Rachel doesn't really even get a wedding to herself. So, you know, you can see the sort of man that is being dealt with here now. But it has been pointed out, of course, that this is Jacob being paid back in his own coin for what he has done. Yes, he may be a changed man. Yes, the Lord may have changed his heart. But his old sins come back, yes, to bite him. And there is a certain sense of poetic justice here. Because just as he deceived his blind old father, so now he is deceived in the dark by his father-in-law. And he doesn't deserve it. But neither did Isaac deserve it either. But God overrules all these things. He allows and enables Jacob here to engage in that which, you know, for the sake of honor, what is he to do? [ 28 : 17 ] He can't then say, oh, well, I mustn't marry more than one wife because now I've got Leah. Sorry, can't help Rachel. The Lord later on would codify into law.

Leviticus 18, verse 18. Neither shall thou take a wife to her sister to vex her to uncover her nakedness beside the other in her lifetime. Just as Abraham's union with Sarah would have been ruled out in the same chapter.

The nakedness of thy sister, verse 9 of Leviticus 18. The daughter of thy father or daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home or born abroad. Even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover. And in Genesis 20, verse 12, Abraham had said Sarah was not the daughter of his mother, but she was the daughter of his father. She was his sister. His half-sister at least. But of course, this law had not been codified.

Romans 5 tells us at verse 13, for until the law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. So Jacob is put in this situation of ending up as a bigamist.

[ 29 : 22 ] A polygamist which he doesn't intend to do. But where, in the circumstances, it becomes perhaps the lesser of two evils. This is not what he wants to do.

But this is Laban's doing, not Jacob's. It's not Leah's. It's not Rachel's. As 1 Samuel tells us, chapter 24, verse 13. Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

David, at the time, was speaking about the temptation to kill Saul. But the wickedness which would have proceeded from him if he'd done it would have been only his own. Laban's wickedness is his own, but Laban ends up being paid back in his own coin as well.

Here we have the labour that Jacob expends and the reward that he gets. He has been paid back for his deception of his father, even though he is himself now a changed man.

Jacob did so and fulfilled her week, verse 28. And he gave him Rachel, his daughter, and her wife also. And Laban gave to Rachel, his daughter, Bilhah, his handmaid to be her maid. And he went in also unto Rachel.

[ 30 : 31 ] And he loved also Rachel more than Leah. And served with him yet seven other years. And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb. Now this word hated is called all sorts of confirmation to people in translating the Bible and expounding it.

In the same way as later on it says in the prophets, I think it's Malachi and Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. Oh, how can the Lord hate anyone? That's terrible when he's a God of love.

This is the sense in which the word is transmitted. It doesn't mean I loathe and detest them. You know, how in the world can Jacob bring himself to produce six sons and a daughter of somebody that he cannot stand his sight of?

No. Now context here, verse 31. Look at verse 30, which precedes it. When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb. What do we understand by hated?

Look at the previous verse. He loved also Rachel more than Leah. Now Leah hadn't done anything to them. He could see that she was a victim just like he was a victim.

[ 31 : 37 ] He didn't hate her. He loved her, yes, but he probably loved her as a sister or a sister-in-law. That's how he wanted her to be. Not really as a wife.

He loved Rachel more. Lovely, yes, but he loved Rachel more. And when the Lord saw that, he opened her womb. But Rachel was bad.

Now everyone would know in that culture and time, beauty and favour, as you know, Proverbs tells us with regard to, you know, the virtuous woman.

As Proverbs 31 says in verse 30, In other words, beauty doesn't last.

No matter how gorgeous or handsome somebody may be, whether a man or a woman or whatever the case looks, don't tend to last. And after a few years of hardship and toil and struggle and maybe child dating or whatever, it's time to go.

[ 32 : 34 ] So what is it that lasts? In that culture and time, Leah would have been racking up the value as an investment, if I can use that term for Jacob.

All the shepherds and the men round about in Haran and in Laban's town and culture would think, Jacob's got a good deal with that one there.

Look at all the sons she's producing for her. Look at what an investment she was. The other one, maybe a stunning beauty. But you know, she's obviously just empty. There's nothing there. He's not getting any good out of that one.

And Leah's stock would have been going up and up and up and up. And Rachel, for all her beauty, would have been feeling more and more and more small and helpless and rejected.

And this was the reality in those days. The Lord was blessing, repaying, remembering Leah for the situation she had been put in.

[ 33 : 34 ] And we also see something here is that Leah appears to be giving glory to the Lord in this situation. That where, as you know, where the Lord is described in capitals, it's covering over the divine name, which the Jews did not write or name upon their lips for fear of taking it lightly or in vain.

And they took the third commandment so seriously, I shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, that they didn't even take it in reverence where they could avoid it. And they would cover over the term, the divine name in the scripture with the term that means Master Adonai, the Lord in capitals.

And the reason it's in capitals is to show that that's not what actually would be in the original, but rather it's the title of the Lord that they put there. Now this identifies for us that it is in fact the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Lord Jehovah, who is mentioned there, the I am that I am.

It's not just God in general or some supreme being or some kind of divine wisdom. It is the Lord, the particular God of Abraham, the God of Shem, the God of the covenant line.

And that is the one with whom, with whom rather, Jacob has entered into covenant at Bethel. The God who is to be his God, the Lord, will be my God.

[ 34 : 59 ] And clearly, Leah, if she wasn't already aware of this, has taken the Lord as her God. Leah conceived and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben, which means, you know, Reuben, it's a Hebrew.

Look, behold, a son. Ben is there, the Hebrew for a son. Later on, of course, Jacob calls Benjamin, Ben-Yammon, son of my right hand.

But his mother, Rachel, called him Ben-Oni, son of my sorrow. But so, Ben is a son. It's like Reuben, behold, look, a son. The Lord hath looked upon my affliction.

That's why it's look, a son. Every name is significant. The Lord hath looked upon my affliction. Now, therefore, my husband will love me.

There's a certain pathos, isn't there? She wants Jacob to love her rather than beautiful Rachel. She's the one who's produced a son that her sister couldn't do.

[ 36 : 00 ] But, of course, it doesn't work that way. She conceived again. And Ben-Oni said, because the Lord hath heard that I was hated. He hath therefore given me this son, or she's called his name, Simeon, which means he heard.

Now, this is the root, the sim or shem of it, is like in Samuel, which, remember, Anna, his mother, had prayed. And when she was given the son, Samuel said, Samuel heard of God.

And Simeon here, it's the same root. It means he heard. The Lord hath heard that I was hated. And she conceived again and Bera said, now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have borne him three sons.

Therefore, it was his name called Levi, which means joined. So every name means something. She conceived again. And Bera's son said, now will I praise the Lord.

And the verb in Hebrew that means praise, it's like aluda. And where the name for the Lord, Jehovah, of course, is in there. It's like Yehuda.

[ 37 : 06 ] So this is anglicizing to Judah. So it's now will I praise the Lord. And the name Judah means praise. And there's the sense of the praise of Jehovah, Yehuda.

They're in with it. And so she is giving the Lord glory throughout. And with every son she is given, the Lord gets more and more glorified in her eyes.

But her husband doesn't love her any more than he did before. But the implication at least is that he is dividing his attention between his two wives.

He's not ignoring Leah and devoting all his time to Rachel. But as he gives them his time and his attention, the Lord is blessing the one and so far not blessing the other.

And we see in all of this a certain sense of the perfect even-handedness of the Lord. Leah is not given the looks of her sister, but she is blessed with the sons.

[ 38 : 09 ] And as the years go by, there's no question who would be considered the more valuable wife to Jacob and everybody around her. But the Lord had blessed with beauty, just like Sarah and Rebecca before had been blessed with beauty.

And the Lord had repaid, in a sense, Jacob for his deception of his father. Even though he is now what we might call converted and changed his old sins, come back and haunt him.

But the Lord overrules this deception and begins to build the foundation of a nation. The foundation of a people for himself.

Multiplying the seed of Abraham with what would become the twelve patriarchs. What would become the nation of Israel. Now, of course, Jacob is not behaving ideally and having to.

Why, as Jesus himself says, you know, from the beginning, the Lord designed people, you know, that for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, shall cleave to his wife. Now, without willing to be indelicate, we are designed anatomically in such a way that a husband and wife can only cleave physically to one another, one upon one.

[ 39 : 25 ] Nobody is designed to be able to fit anatomically with more than one person at the time. And God did not design that there should be polygamy or bigamy.

He designed there to be one man for one wife and vice versa. And this is what Jesus says. For this corpse shall a man leave his father, shall cleave to his wife. They twain shall be one flesh, wherefore they are no more twain but one.

What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. Meanwhile, Jacob is laboring away and the Lord is blessing his labor.

In Hebrews 6, of course, we read that verse 10 says, God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love. He had labored for Rachel. He ended up getting Leah.

He labored another seven years for Rachel. And in the meantime, God is adding to him, giving to him his sons who will become the foundation of a people.

[ 40 : 25 ] And God's plans weigh beyond Jacob. You see, this is what the Lord intends and invites us into. To become part of his great plan.

His great plan for salvation. His great plan for deliverance. We think, oh, how are we part of that? Jacob wouldn't be able to see how he was part of that. At the moment, he's just an impoverished traveler.

He's just living off the charity of relatives. But God has plans. And God unfolds those plans. So that even though he is deceived. And even though Jacob is tricked, as he himself had been the trickster in the past.

God uses this to build up himself. The seedbed of a people. These sons who will become the patriarchs of the nation of Israel.

And he will go on adding to him in the chapters that follow. God knows all that he is doing. Our part in it is tiny. We are like a soldier in the ranks in a battlefield.

[ 41 : 27 ] There's somebody on that side. There's somebody on that side. You just see the back of the guy's head in front of us. And there we are to stand with our little musket or whatever. And all the cannon exploding around us. And the officer says advance.

So we advance. And somebody else says retreat. So we retreat. And we don't know what's happening in the bigger, wider battlefield. We don't know how far away the enemy is. We only know that when we get there, they're going to try and kill us.

We're going to try and overcome them. And so we're just a tiny part in God's plan and scheme of salvation. Just as Jacob was. But having committed himself to the Lord.

And having been reassured by God at Bethel that he would watch over him and provide for him. He goes on with that spring in his step. We do not read that God appeared to him again when he was deceived by a ladder.

He said, it's okay. Don't worry. We don't read that he saw this vision of Jacob's ladder every other year or every couple of weeks. These Damascus Road equivalent experiences are not sort of to keep us topped up every few days of our journey.

[ 42 : 33 ] They may be once in a lifetime experiences. They may be a one-off in which we are called upon to remember and to learn. The Israelites did not keep crisscrossing the Red Sea forever.

But having done it once, they were told to remember how God had brought them out of Egypt. How he had parted the Red Sea. It may be many years since your conversion if you're a converted person.

But remember that God changed your life at that time. Remember that he has never left you or forsaken you. And if you are not yet his, remember that God never lies.

And that this same offer that he makes to every sinner, which has been accepted by some gathered here with us tonight, which has yet to be accepted or received by others, is the same offer from the same God and the same promise that he will never leave them nor forsake them.

Others may trick you. They may deceive you. They may treat you badly. We don't find Jacob paying back in kind. We find him just getting down and getting on with the work. We find him receiving the blessings of his home and family as he has labored for his wives.

[ 43 : 44 ] We find even his poverty being used of the Lord to show that it is God alone who brings blessing. It is God alone who increases his number.

It is the Lord, the Lord, the Lord. That is what poor Leah has upon her lips as God blesses her with son after son.

It is what Jacob acknowledges to be the God of his salvation to whom he will be committed. It is what Laban consistently ignores, as do all who seek to build their treasure houses on this earth. They will have their reward. But that is all that they will have. Now this same God who invites and calls us to be part of the big picture, part of the big plan, part of the great victory he desires to bring about.

He wants us to be part of it. And he invites us to follow it. We can say no. Or we can say no, that's not for me. I'd rather be with Laban. I'd rather build my little pile of treasure here.

[ 44 : 50 ] I'd rather have what I have. That's great. But one day it will be taken from you. And one day you'll be taken from it. One day you will be parted from it. And it will be of no use to you then.

It is only the Lord who will build us an inheritance not only here but hereafter. Not only for time but for eternity. Not only with blessing here and now but of redemption and glory with heaven forever and ever.

This is the God to whom Jacob committed himself and his family. This is the same living God who through the Lord Jesus Christ invites us to follow him.

Because that's all it amounts to. That simple two word invitation. When Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee he saw Peter and Andrew and James and John washing their nets and cleaning out their boats.

And he just said these two words, follow me. And they left everything and followed him. And this is what the Lord calls us to do. When the Lord encountered Jacob on the road at Bethel.

[ 45 : 50 ] What did Jacob have? He had nothing. And for a while he still had nothing afterwards. But the Lord began to add to him. You and I may think, well what have I got in my life?

Well I have nothing. I don't have much. If that's the case, let me ask you this one question. The Lord is inviting you to follow him. And to enter into this covenant relationship with him.

Or to renew it. Or to build it. If you've got nothing. Then you have nothing to lose. What do you stand to lose?

What stands between you now and the Lord and committing to him as Jacob did and his family did after him? That is a question that only you can answer.

What do you want to do with victory after him? I don't do it... Because it always deserves to be a responsibility. I'll have a move in here. I feel like you are involved. I'm in. Ery from God. Even the time of He's spending some flight of life. The time of He's spending some space after an acontece log in in thisód.

[ 46 : 48 ] But I think he's staying because he's already done. So this thing is? He'll be getting ready for him to receive him for any sports.

So, or this thing is new in this kind of situation. I didn't feel Second■■■ARY Friday has left everything. And he wants us to restore him and forgive him.