

## 99-08-22b

Let's resume our study in Genesis chapter 27. One of the reasons that we want to back up and look at this in a larger sense is the fact that our attention is drawn to it so strongly by the parallels to the end of chapter 25. If you think about it, in both cases, you have Esau going out and hunting.

In both cases, you have someone who thinks they're about to die. In both cases, you have the idea of savory food being an incentive. You have deception involved in both cases, especially if you see the substitution at the end of chapter 25 of the lentil soup for the meaty red broth that Esau thought he was going to get.

And in each case, you have Jacob ending up with something he would not otherwise have had, but he gets it through taking advantage of someone's weakness. Their weakness that is exploited. There is a weakness that is brought to the fore.

This weakness has sort of lain unnoticed until the point that it is exploited and the blessing or the birthright is diverted. But it is because of a weakness, an unremitted weakness, that these shifts in ownership of the birthright and of the blessing take place. And because there are so many powerful connections between the first episode and the second, and the conscious separation of those with the content of chapter 26 where we saw the sojourning of Isaac, the disputes with those around on the outside, the Philistines and the intermarriage with the Hittites and so forth.

But now we're back to the intramural. This is within the household, within the encampment of Isaac. And we move from a rather wide-angle camera shot here to a close-up of what's taking place in the tent of Isaac.

You can tell from our reading of chapter 27 of Genesis that this blessing is a big deal. Esau is manifestly not a man of faith. He has not pursued an understanding of his heritage or his calling or the covenant promises of God the way that Jacob has.

Those things don't seem to be in view when he is out hunting on the mountainsides and so forth. He doesn't seem to care too much about his birthright. And you remember when we covered the end of chapter 25 that we saw that there is a distinction between the birthright and the blessing.

The birthright, that is the inheritance of the possessions, the double portion that goes to the elder son. Basically, we have the most expensive bowl of lentil soup ever consumed when Esau pays the double portion of his inheritance for it. You have to wonder, well, was this when Isaac was in his forlorn days when the famine was coming on and they had spent their goods? We don't have a time reference to know at what stage the birthright episode took place.

But the fact that Esau comes in and is famished and so forth, you get the idea that maybe at that time Isaac wasn't very prosperous. Maybe he had been trying to subsist off of what he had to get through the famine and maybe a double portion of what Isaac had at that point didn't amount to much. And Esau didn't have the foresight or didn't have the belief that this was going to amount to much.

He says, well, fine, what's a double portion of 25 sheep? I really don't care at this point. But for whatever reason, that birthright, that is the ownership of the double portion. And you will notice that once that transaction is made, that never comes up for dispute.

In chapter 27, you don't see Esau saying to his father, but where's my part of the material goods? Esau, in whatever way, shape, or form, he has reconciled himself to the loss of the birthright, to the double portion of material things. That is a contract with his brother and should Isaac die, the double portion would go to Jacob. That's because of that contract that they made.

He never disputes that. He, in fact, quotes that later on in this chapter, doesn't he? He says, first you stole my birthright, now you're stealing my blessing. And he distinguishes the two because they are, in fact, distinct.

But Esau isn't nearly as angry and upset about being big-dealed out of his birthright as he is out of the blessing. Why? Even Esau, who isn't much on spiritual things, recognizes the value of the blessing. And he understands that its value far outweighs that of the birthright.

As great as that birthright has become through Isaac's prosperity, it's nothing compared to the blessing. And whether it is superstition on Esau's part or whatever else, he and Jacob and Rebekah and Isaac all understand how important this blessing is. Just from observation in Genesis, you can tell that this blessing from the father to the eldest son or to the sons, this is a one-time experience.

It is something that is given and can't be called back. It is irrevocable once it is given. It reminds us of what the Bible says about the gifts and the calling of God.

It's irrevocable. Isaac can't call back this blessing once he pronounces it on Jacob, even though it was obtained under pretense. It can't be called back.

What's done is done. You think, well, here's an old guy in a tent, he eats a meal, lays his hand on his son and says some words, and something big has happened. What is going on here? It's helpful for us to remember where we are in terms of the way people function.

What are the three great titles that the Lord Jesus Christ holds? Prophet, Priest, and King. There is rulership, there is mediatorship, and there is communication of the word of God. A custodian of spiritual things, the mediation of a relationship with God itself, and

rulership and authority are under those three headings.

Well, when you think back to the patriarchal days, we have those three functions. Those same three functions, you have the rulership or authority, you have being the mediator or the one who talks with God, negotiates with God, prays to God on behalf of others, the priestly function, and you have the prophetic function, the oracles of God, having God come and reveal His word and His will and His promises to an individual. Isaac, at this point, is that man.

Under the patriarchal system, in this particular age, the pre-Mosaic Law age, and we could go off on a tangent and cover dispensations and so forth, we may sketch that out at some future point, but you can tell by observation the way things work here. The father, the patriarch of the family, he is the family priest. He officiates, he is the one that offers sacrifices, he is the one that names wells and establishes places to live and gives them their names.

Just as Abraham did, so Isaac is doing. He is the family priest. Abraham is gone now, so Isaac is the one in that regard.

He is the family authority. You can see the flouting of that authority by Esau when he goes and marries these Hittite women. He is also the prophet, and it's the prophet function that we want to focus on in this context, because at the point of giving this blessing, in this line of patriarchs, something supernatural takes place.

It doesn't explicitly say so in the Scripture, but if you observe this blessing passage, the one where Jacob grants a blessing to his sons and to his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh, you go later into the career of Moses, and on his deathbed he blesses the sons of Israel. They, in a sense, are his children. In his offices of rulership and prophetic, and of course the priesthood has already gone to his brother Aaron, but Moses is also himself a Levite.

But at the point that these words are pronounced, and we have them recorded in Scripture, we get the sense, and we have the understanding, that God the Holy Spirit comes upon the father at that point and gives him a prophetic insight into what the future of this son is going to be. It's a prophecy. And remember what Peter says, no prophecy is of any human derivation, nor is it of any human interpretation.

God the Holy Spirit carries men along. He moves them to speak and to write these words. So when you find Isaac pronouncing these words on both Jacob and Esau, later we'll see Jacob himself and we'll see Moses and others later on, make these pronouncements.

This is a prophetic function under the supernatural ministry of God the Holy Spirit. That's why it's a one-time thing. That's why it has such great significance.

And it's interesting that apparently the father will choose the time and the place. He gets the idea. I think my days are drawing to a close.

You'll see David even doing this when you get down there to the end of his life, and he speaks some words to Solomon. But the father picks the day and the time, but it seems that God the Holy Spirit comes upon them and gives them this word. So this is sort of a combination of the priestly and the prophetic ministry here because this is a transfer.

This, in a later sense, will be graphically demonstrated with the prophets. You have Elisha receiving the mantle and the double portion of Elijah's spirit. There is a transfer of responsibility.

There is a handing off of the torch of responsibility for fulfilling the covenant with God. So that's what's going on here. That's why this is so important.

Now, when you look at the later parallels, we would go forward, except I know we're going to get there, Lord willing, within my lifetime and yours, to the later chapters of Genesis where we will see Jacob giving his blessing and Moses and so on. One of the interesting things is that this is not a thing done in secret. This is a public ceremony.

There are witnesses there. The other sons are there. The father speaks to all the twelve sons, Jacob will, when he gives the blessing.

He says, Judah, you are this, that, and the other. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, all the way down. And he makes the statement that is going to be the guiding description of that tribe and the descendants of that individual for years to come.

Well, all of that brings us to a very fascinating observation here in chapter 27. It came to pass when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, he called Esau, his older son, and said, My son. And he answered him, Here am I. Who does Isaac call? He calls Esau.

He doesn't call Jacob. He doesn't call Rebekah. He doesn't call any of the other functionaries of the household.

This is going to be a little private ceremony just between Esau and Isaac. Why is that? This is not the normal mode for blessing. He says, Behold, I am old.

I don't know the day of my death. Kind of reminds you of Esau. Can't you see I am about to die? Now, therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow.

There is a little text problem in verse 3 there. I'm not sure it says quiver. Some of the best scholarship indicates that this is a rare.

It needs to be repointed. What he is basically saying here is please take your weapons and bring your bow, especially your bow. The idea is out of your weapons the bow is the

main thing.

I want you to go shoot something for me. Get me some of that fleet-footed game that takes a bow to kill. Don't go trap a rabbit or something.

Go shoot something big with an arrow. The word quiver here, this would basically be a hypoxilogomena. If you leave the Masoretic text pointing, there is no other place in Scripture where this word would be a rare construction of a word that means to hang or suspend.

Their idea is this is something that hangs or suspends. It must be a quiver. This isn't the word.

When you go down to Jonathan and some of the others, this is not the word. But you can repoint this and it is from Halak, which means to walk. This is Talik, and it means you go walk.

You go take something. You go walk out there with your bow is the idea. Take your weapons, walk out there with your bow, go forth with your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me.

And make me savory food such as I love. Shades of Esau sniffing the stew. Give me some of the red stuff.

This red stuff so that my soul may bless you before I die. Rebecca was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau. You get the idea that she overhears this.

This puts us in mind of Sarah listening through the tent flap. She overhears this. So Esau goes to the field to hunt game and to bring it in.

Well, here is the problem. We know that there is a difficulty here with Isaac and his relationship with Esau. Esau is his favorite son.

He loves the game that he brings in from the field. And this is his Achilles heel. This is his weakness.

This is the weakness that is going to be exploited and divert him from what he intends to do. We see a weakness in Isaac's leadership of the family because Esau, his eldest son, goes out and takes these two wives from the daughters of the Hittites. Isaac doesn't make any arrangements for Esau to be married like his father Abraham did when Isaac himself was 40 years old.

There is no initiative on his part to send a servant back to the clan, the land of the fathers. And he just kind of gives Esau his head and lets him do what he wants to do. And it's a bitterness of soul, but he didn't do anything to stop it.

So he's got a weakness here. And you get the idea that he sort of knows it. He wants to go ahead and bless Esau.

And he's going to do it privately. He's going to do it secretly, as it were. Nobody's going to find it remarkable that Esau goes out to hunt.

He does that all the time. But he says, you bring it back, we're going to have a little meal, and I'm going to give you my blessing because I don't know how much more time I've got. When Rebecca hears this, she realizes that Isaac is about to do something he should not do.

Esau has disqualified himself from receiving the blessing. This blessing, this is not the double portion of material goods. This is the spiritual heritage of the household that is going to be passed down.

Now, Isaac knows better than this. He knows what kind of heart Esau has, but he is blind to it. He has blinded his own eyes to the disqualification of Esau.

All you have to do is read verse 34 of the previous chapter. When Esau intermarries with the women of the land, that's taboo. That's forbidden.

Abraham understood it when he married. Abraham and Isaac understood it when Isaac married. But Isaac refuses to consider that as an issue when it comes time to pass the blessing to Esau because Esau is his favorite.

His love for his son and his love for the game that his son brings in. Even in this blessing episode, he's thinking, Before I die, I want one more really great meal prepared from the hand of Esau. I want him to go out there and kill a big hind on the hillside or something and roast that thing the way he knows how to do it and savor it with savory herbs and bring it in.

I can't see much anymore. I'm not hearing too well. But by golly, I'm going to have another one of those great fine meals before I check out.

So he says, I know. I'll just give Esau the blessing and he'll make me one of these meals. And you think, what a weird warped perspective.

In a way, Isaac is thinking little of the blessing to be using as an excuse to get this meal. But that's what you see all through. What does he mention the most of here? Does there have to be a meal for the blessing? There's no mention of the meal with Jacob.

There's no mention of the meal with Moses or with David. Isaac makes the meal an issue here. He says, well, I'm about to bless you, so this is an occasion.

So make me a feast. Because that's what he loves. It's part and parcel of his relationship with Esau.

We were told back in chapter 25, that's why he loved him. Because of the game that he brings in. So, this meal and this whole savory meat business, it's as though birds of a feather flock together.

Esau and Isaac both have this sensual side of their nature. Make me savory foods such as I love. And bring it to me that I may eat.

So that my soul may bless you before I die. The idea is, the better a meal you make me, the better the blessing is going to be that I give you. Now this is wrong.

Isaac is about to do something wrong. He is deceiving the rest of the family because he's not including them. Jacob ought to be there to get his part of the blessing.

All of the sons get a blessing. Look at Jacob. He's going to bless all 12 of his sons and his two grandsons to boot.

This should not be done in secret. It should not be done by subterfuge. But he doesn't announce this.

He doesn't tell Rebecca. He doesn't tell Jacob. This is a big, big deal.

This is the forward movement of the plan of God in the family, in the clan. And Isaac is doing this thing under a basket, so to speak. So this is wrong.

And it's going to come back to bite him. Because he's trying to put something over on the rest of the family. Isaac is.

And he's not thinking well. He's not leading the family well at this point. Esau is already married to these two Hittite women at this point.

But Rebecca hears this. And Rebecca knows that this is wrong. And so in verse 6, when Rebecca speaks to Jacob saying, Indeed, I heard your father speak to Esau, your brother, saying, Bring me game and make savory food for me, so that I may eat it.

Notice she repeats the part about the food. There's no normal food thing going on with the blessing. The blessing is a spiritual thing, not a material thing.

And Isaac has got them confused. Isaac is bringing this meal and the taste of this savory meat into something that is a spiritual transaction. And that's wrong.

Bring me game, make savory food for me, so that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the Lord before my death. Now Rebecca adds the thing about the presence of the Lord. Isaac didn't say anything about the presence of the Lord, did he? He said that my soul may bless you before I die.

But Rebecca realizes that this is the blessing. She sees the spiritual side of it. In the

presence of the Lord, she says.

And this is one of those loose quotes. We use quotation marks and say this is verbatim what someone said. The Bible hardly ever does that.

Even in the Greek, all the time when you find a quote, the Lord answered and said that. And you have ha-ti. And it may be a direct quote or it may be a summary quote.

And that's why sometimes you have variations amongst the gospel writers, because it's the gist of what was said. And what Rebecca is saying here is, I heard your father speak to Esau saying, Bring me game and make savory food for me, so that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the Lord before my death. And Rebecca has thrown in this presence of the Lord because she knows exactly what the significance of this is, even though Isaac seems to have forgotten it.

So she has a plan. And she says, look, he is about to do this wrong thing. So this is what we're going to do.

You go to the flock. Bring the kids. I will make savory food for them for your father, such as he loves.

She knows Isaac well enough to know that she can take goat meat, which is domesticated. Of course, goat is not a lamb or a steak. It's not from an ox or anything.

Have you ever had goat meat? I've had a little bit of goat meat when I was in Lebanon, and it has more of a gamey taste. Even mutton, it's not like chicken or beef or something we're used to eating. It's got a little bit more of that wild taste to it.

Well, goat is worse, in my opinion, than sheep. But she says, you get me a couple of these goats, and I'll savor that up. I'll season it and so forth.

And he'll think it's a wild animal. This is a domestic animal. She's going to flavor it and make it taste like a wild animal, such as he loves.

If he could get by with seasoned goat meat, why is Esau knocking himself out, traipsing over the hill and dale trying to shoot something? They could just grab a goat. So she's going to fool him with the taste of the food. Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and he may bless you before his death.

You can say, well, Jacob is Rebecca's favorite son and so forth, but Rebecca is a woman of faith. She knows and she remembers the word of God that came to her. Remember what he said to her when the twins were still struggling in her womb and she went to God? Verse 23 of chapter 25, Two nations are in your womb.

Two peoples shall be separated from your body. She knows that this blessing is going to influence the destiny of nations. One people shall be stronger than the other, and the

older shall serve the younger.

So Rebecca has taken this as her marching orders. The older is supposed to serve the younger. If Isaac pulls this off and blesses Esau in secret, that blessing is going to involve the rulership of the family, and the rulership will fall on Esau, and God said the elder shall serve the younger.

So she knows that this is not God's will for Esau to receive the blessing, and so does Isaac. This word that came to Rebecca is not a secret. Isaac and Rebecca both know that Esau is not the one to inherit the blessing, but Isaac has sort of spaced this whole thing.

All he's thinking about is, I'm about to die. I want one more good meal. My favorite son.

Send him out there. This will be a good thing. You get the idea that he is as blind on the inside at this point as he is on the outside.

So that's the setup for this whole thing. Jacob reminds her. He says, Look, I'm smooth skinned.

My brother is hairy. She says, Don't worry about it. He's not going to find out and curse you.

I'll let your curse be on me. I'll take care of that. You just go do as I say.

And you recall the way that she makes Jacob the hairy one. It is the skins of these goats. And like Dan was pointing out during the break, Esau must have really been a hairy man.

If you can feel a goat skin with the hair on it. And think about this also. It didn't really dawn on me until I was preparing for this this morning.

But when I think of a skin, I think of a skin. You get these skin rugs, bare skin rug or whatever. Or you get these hides.

But this is a freshly killed. These haven't had time to be tanned. They were just slaughtered an hour or two ago.

What's that skin going to be like? It's going to be moist. It's fresh off the goat. It's still warm.

And this is what she slaps around Jacob. He's got almost a living goat skin on him. It's not a nice dry little piece of leather.

It's flexible. If you've ever seen a skin, if you've ever skinned out an animal, you know what the inside of that skin is like. This is what Jacob's got all over his arms and his neck.

You think about that. This is an experience for him. It's not like a little coonskin cap or something he's putting on.

He's got these live, slimy skins on him that are just fresh off of a dead goat. But the point here is there is a blindness that is spoken of in the physical realm of Isaac. And it's reflected on the inside.

He is blind and has blinded himself at this point. He's done such a great job in following in his father's footsteps. He even made some mistakes early on that he recovered from.

God has prostrated him and God has made him great. But now that he's old, he has, and I think this is a possibility, you can kind of lose your perspective. You get caught up in your infirmities.

You say, boy, I wish it was like the good old days. And something has happened. Because Isaac is not the man of faith.

He's not the man of vision that he was in his younger days. And he's about to do something wrong. He's about to do something that is against the Word of God.

God said, the elder shall serve the younger. Isaac knows that and he's flying in the face of that verse. Because he has blinded himself to the disqualification of his son.

Now, as I said, we want to step back and think about this. Again, in terms of Israel. The nation of Israel that is going to come from Jacob.

Jacob is the beneficiary here, isn't he? He winds up with a birthright that was not his to begin with. He winds up with a blessing that was not his to begin with. Because the eldest son frittered it away.

The eldest son, by his decisions, who once possessed it, gave it away. This is what Israel has done with their place in God's plan, isn't it? God says, Israel is my firstborn. Out of Egypt I have called my son.

All through the Old Testament, God talks about Israel as his firstborn. Now, in the previous large illustration, we saw Israel as the wife of God. Which is another picture that God uses in the Old Testament.

But here, we're looking in terms of, not so much of relationship and intimacy. We're looking in terms of heritage. And receiving the blessings and fulfilling the purposes of the Father.

And so now, the image has shifted. And now we see Israel as the son. Israel is my firstborn, God says.

Well, what did the firstborn do? Turn with me to Luke chapter 23 and verse 34. You know, just from the placement in Luke, toward the end of the book. This is the final stages of the earthly life of Christ.

He is on the cross. Between the two thieves. Luke 23, 33.

And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified him. And the criminals. One on the right hand and the other on the left.

Then Jesus said, what? Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. They do not know what they are doing. This is a very powerful statement.

They are not looking at Christ and saying, well, here's the Son of God. Here's the fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises. I'm going to kick this aside.

They don't know what they're doing. They don't recognize who Jesus Christ is. It's going to be said later on, that if they had known what they were doing, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

But they don't know what they're doing. Why? Turn with me to Isaiah chapter 6 and verse 9. Isaiah chapter 6 and verse 9. This passage, Isaiah 6, 9 and following, is quoted verbatim in all four Gospels, and in Acts, and in Romans. Why? Because this is the reason that the firstborn Son of God did not inherit the blessing and did not inherit the birthright.

Keep on hearing, but do not understand. Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes.

Otherwise they may see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and return and be healed. Initially you look at this and it says, well, God is blinding them. God is deafening them.

God is making their hearts hard, lest they turn and be forgiven. And it's like God doesn't want them to turn and doesn't want them to be forgiven. But just continue the context here.

And it's unfortunate because people with a Calvinist point of view are behind the translation of Isaiah chapter 6. And when given interpretive choices, this is the way they choose to phrase it. But even in this translation you can tell what's going on. Look at 11.

Then I said, this is Isaiah speaking, Lord, how long? And he says, until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitants, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate, the Lord has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. Once they have received discipline, that's how long. But yet a tenth will be in it.

There's going to be a remnant. And it will return and be for consuming as a terebinth tree or as an oak, whose stump remains when it is cut down. So the holy seed shall be its stump.

There is still going to be hope for the nation. There's going to be that tenth part. There's going to be the 7,000 that don't bow the knee to Baal.

There's going to be the remnant in Israel to preserve them alive. Why? Because ultimately God will bless. God will fulfill all of his promises.

But only after he has purged out the leaven, after he has inflicted on them the consequences of their self-imposed blindness, their deafness that they have chosen, their hardness of heart that they have chosen. You can go to any of the great Hebrew scholars that have interpreted Isaiah 6, and even those who are in a Calvinist sovereignty of God sort of tradition will acknowledge that when you get to verses 9 and 10, this is talking about bringing out something that is already there. That when God says, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? Isaiah says, Here am I, send me.

God says, Go. And when you deliver the message, this is going to make the heart of this people dull. This is going to make their ears heavy.

This is going to shut their eyes. It is the bringing of the message that outs the negative volition, that outs them for the apathetic, indifferent, rebellious, stiff-necked people that they are. They can keep up a pretense and they can go along until a certain point, but when Isaiah brings them the message, when God says, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? Isaiah says, Here I am, send me.

And he goes and brings the word of the Lord. People who appear to be moral and religious and dedicated to God and so forth, this is going to make them what they really are. It is going to bring out the shallowness and the superficiality.

And it is going to demonstrate their blindness and their deafness and their hardness of heart. But this passage is quoted and interestingly in the Greek, it is translated in that light. If you look over at Matthew chapter 13 and verse 11.

Now where we are going with this, when you think about Isaac, and of course the nation of Israel is incipient in Isaac. Whose fault is it that Isaac gets deceived here? That he mistakes one son for another and the blessing goes where it was supposed to go all along, in spite of Isaac's aberrant desire to make it go elsewhere. Isaac has blinded himself, hasn't he? There was no need for him to be deceived.

There was no need for him to be blind to which son he was blessing. If he had heeded the word of the Lord, Jacob later on is going to cross his hands when he blesses the sons of Joseph. And Joseph says, no wait a minute.

It irritated Joseph and he tries to pick his father's hands up because Jacob is seemingly dim of sight. And Jacob takes his hands away and crosses them and puts his right hand on the younger son's head. He knows exactly what he is doing.

Because Jacob learns this lesson. Jacob knows what it means for the elder to serve the younger. And he may be a little dim of sight.

It's a different word than the one used for Isaac. But Jacob apparently has some eyesight problems. But he has no problem discerning where the blessing of God is going to go between Ephraim and Manasseh.

Well, when you look at Matthew chapter 13 and verse 11, if I can get there. The disciples came to Jesus and said to him, Why do you speak to them in parables? He answered and said to them, Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. But to them it has not been given.

For whoever has, to him more will be given. Now at first you think, well now see God is just picking certain people. And he says, well I'm going to, see these 11 disciples here.

I'm going to give them the ability to understand the mysteries. But these Pharisees and people, I'm not going to give it to them. I'm just going to pick some and give them insight.

Others I'm not. It's my sovereign, inscrutable, unknowable will. But Jesus goes on in verse 12 to say what the basis is on which God chooses to give insight.

To him who has, more will be given. And he will have abundance. But whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away.

So what is it that they have that qualifies them to receive more? Did they not lay down their occupations? Lay down their details of life? Time with their families and everything else to follow the Christ? Did they not respond when John the Baptist identified him and said, Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Did Peter not drop his very prosperous fishing business when he saw the net come up on the other side of the boat and say, Lord I'm a sinful man, get away from me. And Jesus said, Come follow me, I'll make you fishers of men.

And Peter follows. Jesus went up to the mountaintop and called his disciples and they came to him. He made them climb the mountain and they came.

Because Jesus said, My sheep know my voice. They hear my voice and they respond to it. And these are people who responded to the identification of Jesus Christ, who responded to the teaching of Jesus Christ.

They stuck with him through thick and thin. It's a dangerous thing to be associated with him at some points. But they stay with him.

Peter says, Lord if we leave, to whom will we go? You have the words of life. That's having. That's what it means to have.

When God the Holy Spirit comes and confronts someone with the truth of the reality of God, of sin, righteousness and judgment, you say, Lord help me. Lord save me. Give me what I need.

I am insufficient of myself. I need you. That's having.

And to him who has, more will be given. To those who are self-sufficient, who don't have a need for the Lord, who are rich and full and think they have everything, they don't have. And even what they do have, even these things that are taking the place of genuine relationship with God, even those things are going to be taken away.

That's what Jesus is saying in verse 12. Whoever has, to him more will be given. The reason it has been given to you, to know the mysteries of the kingdom, is you're asking, you're seeking, you're knocking.

You've followed me these however many years. Therefore, verse 13 of Matthew 13, I speak to them in parables. You know, 13 is considered to be an unlucky number.

Well, if you want to remember why Israel is quote, unquote, unlucky in the things of God, just think about Matthew 13, 13. Therefore, I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see. They don't even have the initial attitude of wanting to know.

They're out here to see a thrill. They want to see a reed blowing in the wind. They want to see a miracle.

They want me to feed them with bread. They want me to be a king to throw off the Roman yoke. But seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says, and he goes back and quotes Isaiah 6, 9, and 10. Look at verse 16. But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and blessed are your ears, for they hear.

For assuredly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desire to see what you see and did not see it, desire to hear what you hear and did not hear it. It's been given to them, because the time is right, because they have an asking, seeking, knocking attitude of heart. But Israel as a nation does not.

And because of that they are blind. It's their own fault that they're blind. And God says, I'm going to demonstrate.

I'm going to create an occasion. You know, a blind man... I was walking with Patty and the girls in the basement, not the basement, but the ground floor of our building that has restaurants and shops and things there. And we were going to go over and get some food and eat lunch together.

And there was a blind man that came behind us, and he was tapping with a stick. Well, I saw him out of the corner of my eyes coming up behind, but the girls did not see him. And Elizabeth and Rebecca in particular, you know how little kids are, they tend to be kind of unpredictable in how they move and where they go and so forth.

And I had to quickly corral them and move them forward to get them out of the way of this blind man. And I've seen this gentleman before. He frequents that area, and he knows it really well.

He knows where the big potted plants are. He knows where the tables and chairs are. He knows where the walkways and the elevators and things are.

But if somebody stops in front of him because they're dawdling or looking at the sky, like little kids tend to do, he could bump right into them and have an accident. A blind person can get along fine with what they know as long as you don't change the landscape, as long as you don't put something out there in their way. They learn the layout of their furniture and their home, and they move around.

They don't even tap with a stick. They measure the steps and so on. Why is Jesus Christ a stumbling stone to Israel? Do you and I stumble over stones? We're all sighted.

When we see a stone in the path, when we see an obstacle, we just step around it. Why do you stumble over a stumbling stone? It's because you can't see it. The reason Jesus Christ was a stumbling stone and a rock of offense to Israel is they had blinded themselves and couldn't see him.

Jesus says, Father, they don't know what they're doing. They don't recognize who I am. That's why they're crucifying me.

And this blindness, and Paul goes to great lengths to describe it in Romans 9-10 and so forth. He says, Blindness and hardening has happened in part to Israel so that God's grace can be demonstrated to the vessels of mercy. It's so sad that Romans has been interpreted as salvation and sovereignty and vessels of wrath fitted for destruction and unbelievers going to the lake of fire. It's not.

It's Israel. It's the hardening of Israel who are God's people, who are believers, but have been set aside in the plan and purpose of God. They have become vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.

Just as any of us can be if we deny the very Lord that bought us. Peter and Paul both talk about men in the latter days who are false teachers. They're believers, but they deceive themselves and lead others astray.

Blind ourselves. We can blind ourselves and lose the blessing. We can become a vessel of wrath.

Look what God says in Isaiah 6. How long is this blindness going to go on? Until they have drunk the full cup of God's wrath. Their cities are devastated. Their land is destroyed.

They are driven out of it. There's uninhabited wild places in the place that God promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and said it will be a land flowing with milk and honey to Moses and the children of Israel. Instead, it's a desolate waste place and they're driven out of it.

And the jackals dwell there. Why? Because they've blinded themselves. They haven't heeded the word of the Lord.

They blind themselves and they seek the wrong things. They choose the wrong things. They do ridiculously silly things.

They complain that God's going to let them die in the shadow of the pillar of cloud, in the light of the pillar of fire. This blindness is what is going to be the weakness that allows Jacob to receive the blessing that God said he would get. And if you think about, you can go to many other passages.

We don't have time to turn there, but I'll give you that Matthew 13, 11 and following. This is also mentioned in Mark 4.12, the blindness of Israel. It's mentioned in Luke 8.10. It's mentioned in John 12.38. It's mentioned in Acts 28.26. It's mentioned in Romans 11.8. It's mentioned in Ezekiel 12.2. Jeremiah 5.21. Over and over again, God says, if you blind yourself, you're going to miss out.

I can put the true things, the real things, the best things right under your nose. Who's in the camp every day with Isaac? It's Jacob living out and expressing the truth of what God predicted before they were ever born, that he would be the one to carry the torch of the covenant promises and be the line of blessing through Abraham and Isaac for all nations. And Isaac is playing with fire here to pronounce the blessing on Esau.

This is a global effect if he does this wrong. And that's what he's about to do. Well, this is the groundwork and this is the danger of blinding ourselves and not being willing to stand in the light of God's word and be convicted.

Let it shine into the dark and ugly places in our soul and reveal the truth. Because if we blind ourselves, if we don't continue to ask and seek and knock, we can make huge mistakes. God will still fulfill his plan, but he has to work around us instead of through us.

Others will accomplish God's purpose. Others will reflect God's glory because we have blinded ourselves and can't see it when it's right in front of our face. And as believers, we can, in effect, crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame because we're blind.

And we have to pray to the Lord God that he gives us, through the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to understand these things. This is where we're going to have to stop this morning. We'll resume our study and see the outworking of all of this in chapter 27 next time.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. We thank you, Father, for the opportunity that we have in your plan, the great potential that is ours because of our standing in the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will show us if we are blinding ourselves, if our deceitful heart is leading us astray, if we have failed to heed and failed to apply the things that we have learned from your word.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will convict us, shine that light afresh, provide a window into our souls so that we can rightly divide the word of truth, so that we can follow every good path, so that we can live in a way that pleases you and fulfills your purpose for us. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.