

Start of a Struggle

Scripture Reading — Genesis 25:19-26

The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, “Why is this happening to me?” — Genesis 25:22

As a parent of four children, I see my share of sibling rivalry. Thankfully, my children’s struggles so far have been minor misunderstandings between kids who mostly love each other. But, as a pastor, I know that family conflict is a source of stress and deep pain for many people.

The Bible portrays Jacob and Esau’s rivalry as starting even before birth. Jacob was born “grasping Esau’s heel.” His very name describes his tendency to nip at the heels of his brother.

But as we will see, Jacob’s relationship with Esau reflects his struggle with God as well. Though he might think his biggest struggle is with his brother, Jacob will eventually learn how much he “grasps at the heels” of whatever he thinks will bring him some advantage. Jacob spends a lot of time chasing God’s favor rather than simply receiving God’s mercy and blessing.

We have much to learn from Jacob. Even when family relationships are healthy, we find ourselves jostled by the struggles of life. We tend to “grasp at the heels” of whatever we believe will fulfill us.

For this reason we need to ask Rebekah’s question: “Why is this happening . . . ?” And we need to listen for God’s invitation to see him at work, changing our hearts to receive his gift of mercy in Christ.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, when we are frustrated by the conflicts of life, help us to watch for your work in our hearts. Heal our relationships with others—and especially with you. Amen.

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