

The Hairy Heist
Genesis 27, September 15th 2024

In the midnight hours of St. Patrick's Day, 1990, a fire alarm went off in the Gardner Museum of Boston. But when the security guard went to investigate, he found no fire & no smoke. Believing the security system to be defective, he shut it down. A few minutes later, the guard heard a buzz at the door. He looked at the monitor and saw 2 police officers who said they were responding to the alarm, so the guard buzzed them in and they began patrolling the building. But moments later, the museum guard was handcuffed in the basement because these two men weren't cops, but crooks in disguise! Their uniforms, hats, badges, belts, even their mustaches were fake! After the thieves had their run of the museum, they disappeared into the night with 500mil in stolen art. The empty frames still hang on the wall as a memorial to the greatest unsolved art heist in history.

At its heart, Gen27 is the story of a great heist. It's all here: conspiracy, deception, a disguise, even fake hair! But unlike the Gardner Art Heist, we know the identity of the crooks and we know that what they stole is infinitely more valuable than some paintings.

Back in Gen25 the Lord opened the womb of Isaac's wife, Rebekah, & she conceived twins! It said that some women glow when they're pregnant... Rebekah wasn't one of them. She wasn't glowing, she was groaning because God had determined to make her twins within enemies; God chose Jacob the younger over Esau the older, to dawn the patriarchal mantle of Isaac & Abraham. *But how would this countercultural reversal take place?* God superintended the sins of I, R, J, & E to bring his perfect will to bear. First, Jacob stole Esau's birthright which (*Deut25*) was a double portion of the inheritance. Maybe that's why in *27:1*, Esau isn't referred to as the "first-born," but as "the oldest son." Now, Jacob sets his sights on a greater prize, the patriarchal blessing which God had promised to him from the womb. But we see in our passage the ends never justify the means. ***God's people must receive God's blessings God's way.***

Genesis 27 has three basic parts of a good heist: the plan, the crime, the getaway. First... ***the plan.*** As the house lights dim, a single spotlight shines upon a man in a bed. It's Isaac. As we look closer, we see the years of his long life have clouded his eyes and made them dim. Isaac can hear the footfall of his own death drawing near and so, wishing to leave nothing undone and unsaid, he summoned Esau, and sent him away with a list of commands (*v3*).

What was this blessing? It's more than our southern pleasantries (*Bless you! Bless your heart!*). It's more than a prayer request. This blessing is a prophetic promise, a binding benediction. If the *birthright* transferred material inheritance to the firstborn, this *blessing* transferred spiritual inheritance. Blessings were a unique feature of OT, patriarchal Christianity. We'll see in **Gen49** that Jacob blesses each of his sons, but the chief blessing falls to Judah from whom "the scepter shall not depart"- a promise realized in the rise of the Lion of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why would Isaac bless Esau? Surely he knew the Lord's oracle: "the older will serve the younger." He knew that Esau was a wicked & carnal man who sold his birthright for a bowl of soup & took not 1 but 2 pagan wives that made his parent's lives bitter. *Why then would Isaac crown Esau with covenant headship?* Because Isaac's blindness is not merely a physical, but spiritual. Esau was Isaac's favorite. And Esau knew the way to his Father's heart... through his belly: **25:28**-Isaac loved Esau b/c he ate of his game.

So as Esau goes bounding off into the wilderness, locked & loaded, ready to hunt and kill and cook, like Keith Kibler on the first day of deer season, but we see someone else scurry away from the shadows of Isaac's tent. It's Rebekah whose been eaves dropping the whole time. *And where is she going?* To inform *her* favorite son, Jacob. Interesting to note: **V5-6** Esau is "*his son,*" & *Jacob* is "*her son.*"

In 1882, a widow named Mary Surrat opened a boarding house in D.C., where she made some unsavory friends, like John Wilkes Boothe. Together, they hatched a plot to assassinate the POTUS, A.Lincoln. Surrat's boarding house became the conspirators' unofficial headquarters, where she passed messages, stored weapons, & held secret meetings. After Lincoln's death, she was found guilty of conspiring with her murderous co-defendants and sentenced to hang beside them. She was the first woman executed by the U.S. Federal Government.

Mary Surrat would have loved Rebekah. She's more than an informant, she is the chief conspirator. Jacob may have been the muscle, but Rebekah was the brains of the operations. Jacob may have been the triggerman, but Rebekah was driving the car. Though Jacob's name means "cheater," Rebekah turned out to be a crackerjack conartist; a real chess master, playing 8 moves deep. FF to **v14** and we see that she's forged Esau's stew. She's also dressed Jacob in an Esau disguise. Since Esau was a such a furry fellow, she took the fresh goat skins belonging to the meat in the pot and draped them upon Jacob. Since Esau was musky woodsman, she dressed Jacob in Esau's odorous clothes. She's so confident that they'll fool Old' Isaac, she assures Jacob that if it doesn't and they get caught, **v13**: "Let your curse be on me."

How tragic... when a Christian home is a house divided; a trustless den of secrets & shadows; of locked doors, passwords, deleted texts, cleared internet histories, stashed contraband, lies and deception. Our homes will never be free from the shadows of falsehood until they're irradiated with the light of the gospel. *When your spouse confesses sin do you forgive, or do you drag them through the broken glass of a guilt trip? Do you broadcast their failing to others or bludgeon them w/ an endless recital of their record of past wrongs? Sting them with a silent treatment? Or do you extend the very same forgiveness/love/ grace/mercy that you, a sinner, so desperately need and have so freely received in X? Parents, when your children fall and fail, do you shame them and make them feel alone in their filth or do lovingly discipline them, set them on the right course, scoop them into your arms, remind them of your unconditional love & the cross of Jesus Christ & pray with them? Do you promise to never to bring it up again?* Our homes will never be free from shadows and secrets until they're irradiated with the light of the gospel.

Next, we see that Isaac and Rebekah's plan is executed to perfection in **their crime** of the century. *Can you see Jacob in your mind's eye, standing in the door of Isaac's tent?* He looked ridiculous: wearing Esau's clothes, like a toddler in daddy's loafers and draping dress shirt. The bloody skins of goats plastered to his neck, arms, and hands. He's holding a forged stew that his mother made. Looking upon his blind, dying father, maybe in his best Esau voice he grumbled **v18**: "My father." Immediately, Isaac is suspicious: "*Who are you, my son?*"

Now, the Lord has kindly blessed us with 5 senses by which we experience the world around us: we can *see, hear, feel, smell, taste*. Since Isaac's eyes are gone, he has 4 senses left by which to investigate. So far, Jacob has failed the hearing test: he doesn't sound like Esau. Next, the touch-test (**21**). Esau must've been a real sasquatch, an absolute teen-wolf, because these goat skins do the trick... so Isaac moved on to the taste test (**24-25**). Rebekah's counterfeit crockpot was close enough to fool the patriarch's palate. Last but not least comes the smell test. Scientists say that smell is the strongest sense tied to memory. We remember how people smell. You husbands could pick out the aroma of your wife's perfume or shampoo from a lineup of 1000 fragrances. You children know the way your dad's car smells. Esau had a smell and Jacob knew it anywhere... even if he couldn't see it on Isaac. (**26-27**). With that, Isaac blessed Jacob.

We have heard the elements of this blessing many times before. This is the same covenantal blessing which God bestowed upon Abe (12,15,17, 22). As God had promised & predestined, Jacob was now the new Patriarch, God's ambassador on the earth; the leader of the church which would be called the house of Jacob; the head of the nation which would bear his name, Israel.

If Jacob's sin was the appointed means by which God's would fulfill his plan, is Jacob still guilty of taking the Lord's name in vain, dishonoring his father, coveting, stealing, & lying? Do righteous ends justify wretched means? May we do evil that good may come? Of course not! "And why not do evil that good may come?-as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just" (Rom3:8). God's ability to bring his good will to bear through sin doesn't minimize the sinfulness of sin, it maximizes the sovereign power of God... and is a source of great comfort for sinners like us, hoping that our sin cannot thwart God's good and holy plan for our lives and eternities. Take heart! His grace is greater than all our sins.

I believe that Jacob & Reb. did what they did, at least in part, because they wanted the blessings which God had promised, but like Abe & Sar who looked to Hagar, they were unwilling to wait on the Lord. You & I face the same temptation. We believe that at God's right hand are pleasures forevermore. But when we are unwilling to wait patiently to receive those pleasures we break out and sinfully seize them. CS Lewis Screwtape: "Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy & normal & satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden." So, we must receive God's blessings God's way. *Wealth?* God has promised to bless honest work, fiscal responsibility, and faithful tithing. *Pleasure?* God has promised to bless our chastity and undefiled marriage beds. *Honor?* God has promised to honor the one who honors Him and to exalt the humble. *Power & influence?* God has promised to bless the meek, and to the one who has been faithful over a little he will entrust more. *Peace? Forgiveness? Purpose?* You will only find these by coming to Christ in faith.

Which brings us at last, to *the getaway*. Jacob got what he came for, so he makes off like the bandit he is. Before long he'd be on the road north to his uncle Laban's to hideout. *Why?* Because no sooner had Jacob boosted the blessing, Esau emerges from the wilderness, with some slain beast over his shoulder, unaware of what's just taken place. After preparing his father's favorite stew, he bounces into the tent, **v31**. But nothing could have prepared him for what his father says next: **v32**. "The blessing is gone, your brother Jacob deceived me & stole it!" When Esau heard these words, **v34** "he cried out with an exceedingly great & bitter cry." Father, have you nothing left for me? "Only a curse my son. Only a curse."

But beloved, there's something else here, something familiar & dear. The motions of this story trace the motions of another... the gospel itself. You are Jacob, standing before the Father to receive the blessings intended for his firstborn, your elder brother, Jesus! But since Jesus has loved you and given himself for you, the all-seeing eyes of you Father have been shut to your sin! He cannot, no, will not look upon your guilt and shame! And as your Father embraces you in the Beloved, he feels in his everlasting arms not: a liar, luster, boaster, gossip, glutton, coveter, idolater... he feels his very own, cherished Christ. And as the Father breathes in the fragrance of your life, he doesn't smell the melting rubber & the burning sulfur of sin, but the pleasing aroma of the righteous robes of Jesus Christ draped upon me. And instead of the cauldron of bubbling sewage that is your weak attempt at goodness, Jesus has put in your sinful hands his very own savory perfection that delights his Father as nothing & no one else can. And then God speaks & not the *condemnation* you deserve but the *commendation* which Christ deserves, "Well done, thou good & faithful servant. Enter into the joy of thy master."

But when he, the first born, our older brother, the eternally begotten & eternally beloved Son of God, came & stood before his Father atop Golgotha, it's as if God said, "*Who are you?*" For in that moment, Jesus was so disfigured (body & soul) by my sin, his own Father could not, no would not recognize him. All that was left for Jesus was a curse "cursed is anyone hanged upon a tree." You will only find the blessing of God in the cursing of Jesus Christ for you on the cross. *Do you believe this?* Then come in faith and receive God's blessings, God's way.