

A SON REJECTED

WRESTLING WITH GOD: THE JACOB NARRATIVE

By Scott Grant

Train leaves the station

Rick Blaine and Ilsa Lund have it all worked out. In the few days since meeting each other in Paris during World War II, they've fallen desperately in love. With the Germans approaching the city, Ilsa promises to meet Rick at the train station the next day and leave with him. Rick arrives at the station in a downpour but can't find Ilsa. Finally, his sidekick Sam arrives with a note from Ilsa. She won't be going with him and can't ever see him again.

A stunned Rick reluctantly climbs aboard, crumples up the note and disdainfully tosses it aside. Later, he himself would describe the scene as featuring "a guy standing on a station platform in the rain with a comical look on his face because his insides had been kicked out." As the train leaves the station, it carries Rick off into 10 years of bitterness, cynicism and isolation.

Thus unfolds the classic rejection scene in the movie *Casablanca*, starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman as the star-crossed lovers. (1) Genesis 27 also depicts a classic rejection scene. Esau and his father Isaac have it all worked out. Isaac promises to give Esau the family blessing, but when Esau comes for the blessing, his father rejects him. Esau has his insides kicked out.

It's a universal story, isn't it? Who among us hasn't been rejected? Who among us hasn't felt that our insides have been kicked out? Rejection carried Bogey off into bitterness. Where will it carry Esau? Where will it carry us? Most importantly, where will God's word carry us?

In Genesis 27, the narrator built suspense through verse 29 as Jacob sought to convince his father that he was Esau and steal the patriarchal blessing. As the tension mounted, we wondered whether Jacob could pull it off, and whether he could pull it off before Esau returned from the hunt. As the first half of the chapter comes to a close, Jacob succeeds. The narrator picks up the story in verse 30.

Heartbreak of rejection

Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. Then he also made savory food, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me." Isaac his father said to him, "Who are you?" And he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate of all of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed." When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" And he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing." Then he said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" But Isaac replied to Esau, "Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?" Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father." So Esau lifted his voice and wept.

Then Isaac his father answered and said to him,

"Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling,

And away from the dew of heaven from above.

By your sword you shall live,

And your brother you shall serve;

But it shall come about when you become restless,

That you will break his yoke from your neck.”

So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” (Genesis 27:30-41)

Now we learn that Jacob pulled off his caper in the nick of time. For the second time in the Jacob narrative, Esau, the skilled hunter and the man of the field, “came in” from the field (Genesis 25:29). In Genesis 25, he evidently was unsuccessful. Unable to kill any game, Esau was famished, and Jacob was able to take advantage of his condition and purchase the birthright for the price of a meal.

This time, Esau is successful, and he expects his success to be rewarded with a blessing from his father. Once again, his brother has outwitted him. Once again, his skills fail him. In fact, his skills are used against him. His skills make Isaac, who has a taste for game, easy prey for Jacob. Also, the absence required to hunt game and prepare a dish has given Jacob the opening he needs.

In Genesis 25:27-34, Esau sold his birthright for a meal. Now, he brings a meal to his father expecting to receive the blessing. The blessing, like the birthright, passes from him. The birthright and the blessing are each worth significantly more than a meal.

This is an emotionally charged scene as it dawns on Isaac and Esau that their dreams have been snatched away from them at the last moment. Isaac trembles “violently.” Esau cries out with an “exceedingly great and bitter cry,” and he lifts up his voice and weeps.

Esau identifies himself to his father as “your firstborn,” although he had sold the birthright that comes with being the firstborn. Isaac, although he had suspected that the one he blessed was Jacob, denies responsibility for his actions by asking whom it was that he had blessed. Now that Esau stands before him, Isaac knows that Jacob was the one he blessed, but he feigns ignorance. Similarly, many of us deny responsibility for pouring our lives into the wrong things. We feel that someone or something else is responsible.

Isaac adds that the one he blessed ate *all* of the dish prepared for him, implying that all of the blessing was spent on Jacob and that none of it is left for Esau. In other deathbed blessing scenes, the father summons all his sons and blesses each of them. But Isaac intended only to bless Esau, and Esau gladly complied. Thus, their plan backfired, and like a vow, a blessing is irrevocable. Recognizing this, Isaac says that the one he blessed “shall be blessed.” Isaac finally acknowledges that it was Jacob who he blessed, saying that Jacob came “deceitfully.” And later on it will be Jacob who will complain about Laban deceiving him (Genesis 29:25).

Jacob, who came out of the womb grasping the heel of his brother, was given a name that related to the word “heel” (*aqeb*). Now Esau sees a related connection. The verb translated “supplanted” (*aqab*) also relates to the word “heel” and would be more literally translated “attacked at the heel.”

There is also a play on words between “birthright” (*bekorati*) and “blessing” (*birkati*). The linguistic connection between these two words mirrors their theological connection. Isaac and Esau thought the birthright and the blessing could be neatly separated, but in this family both the birthright and the blessing are connected to the Lord. Having sold his birthright for a plate of food, Esau has shown no interest in being connected to the Lord. So when the blessing passes from him, the narrator would have us believe that justice is served, albeit in a strange way.

Pathetically, Esau begs his father for a blessing three times, hoping that Isaac has “reserved” a blessing for him. But all of the blessing was given to Jacob. The blessing granted dominion, fruitfulness and protection to Jacob. Yet Esau asks, “Do you have only one blessing, my father?” Isaac has only one blessing pertaining to dominion, fruitfulness and protection, and he’s already given it. So what’s left for Esau is something of a non-blessing. Instead of fruitfulness, protection and dominion, Esau is condemned to barrenness, warfare and servitude.

The word translated “away from” (*min*) in verse 39 is the same word that is translated “of” when Isaac blesses Jacob: “Now may God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth” (Genesis 27:28). The context of verse 39 indicates that the word should be translated “away from” in this case, but the use of the same word in each “blessing” is a poignant reminder of Esau’s loss: “Behold, away from the fertility [literally, “fatness”] of the

earth shall be your dwelling, and away from the dew of heaven from above.” The fact that the order of “dew” and “fatness” are reversed in Esau’s blessing emphasizes that a reversal has taken place: Esau is left with nothing.

Whereas Jacob and his descendants, the Israelites, would live in Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey, Esau and his descendants would be wanderers, dwelling away from the fertility of the earth. The Edomites, Esau’s descendants, would live in the barren wilderness to the south and east of Canaan. Whereas Jacob and his descendants would be protected by God (anyone who curses Jacob will be cursed), and Esau must live by the sword. The Edomites would become addicted to warfare, particularly with the Israelites (Numbers 20:18, 1 Samuel 14:47, 1 Kings 11:14-16, 2 Kings 14:7-10, Psalm 60:10-11). Edom would also live in subjection to Israel, although there would come a time when it would break Israel’s yoke from its neck, a likely portend of Edom’s revolt in 2 Kings 8:20-22.

Sadly, some of us, like Isaac, spend “all” of our lives on the wrong things and end up with nothing left to give. This is particularly tragic when as parents other interests suck our emotional energy away from our children until we realize, years later, that we feel incapable of offering the best part of ourselves to them and that they are reluctant to receive it.

This reversal of blessings sticks in Esau’s craw. He plots to kill the one who stole what he thinks is rightly his. One wonders why he isn’t also angry with Isaac for allowing himself to be deceived.

The story of Esau and Jacob echoes that of two other brothers, Cain and Abel. Like Cain, whose offering to the Lord was rejected, Esau wants to kill his brother. Cain also was denied fruitfulness and condemned to wander: “When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth” (Genesis 4:12). What was said to Cain could well be said to Esau: “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it” (Genesis 4:6-7).

Fallout of rejection

Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, “Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you by planning to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban! Stay with him a few days, until your brother’s fury subsides, until your brother’s anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?” Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?” So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother. May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham. Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau. Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take to himself a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he charged him, saying, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,” and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram. So Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan displeased his father Isaac; and Esau went to Ishmael, and married, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebaioth. (Genesis 27:42-28:9)

Esau had “said to himself” that he would kill Jacob, but he must not have been able to keep his anger to himself, because his mother heard of his plan. Earlier, when she heard that Isaac planned to bless Esau, she acted on behalf of Jacob, her favorite son. And now when she hears of Esau’s plan to kill Jacob, she again springs into action on his behalf.

As she did in verse 13 when she urged Jacob to pretend he was Esau, Rebekah implores Jacob to “obey my voice.” This time, she commands Jacob to flee to Haran. Jacob’s grandfather, Abraham, obeyed the voice of the Lord and left Haran for Canaan (Genesis 11:32-12:1). Now Rebekah, reversing the command of the Lord, urges Jacob to

leave the Promised Land and return to Haran. She sends him to her brother Laban. She thinks it will be for “a few days,” until Esau’s anger subsides, but Laban will hold Jacob captive for 20 years. Unless Jacob leaves, Rebekah envisions Esau killing Jacob and Esau’s being executed, or perhaps exiled, for his crime. As it turns out, she loses both her sons anyway. Jacob will live in another land for 20 years. And it appears that she had long ago alienated herself from Esau by favoring Jacob.

Rebekah’s plan to send Jacob away includes even more deception. The reason for sending Jacob away is her fear of reprisal from Esau. But she knows that won’t fly with Isaac, who favors Esau, so she offers up a more acceptable reason. She presents the possibility of Jacob’s marrying a daughter of Heth, a Hitite woman. The Hitites were a subgroup of Canaanites, and Esau’s marriage to two Hitite women brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 26:34-35). Rebekah dramatically overstates the case, saying that she is “tired of living” because of the Hitite women. In words reminiscent of those she used to describe her significantly more desperate plight when the twins struggled together in her womb, Rebekah says that if Jacob marries a Hitite, “what good will my life be to me?” (Genesis 25:22) Therefore, Rebekah strikes a chord with Isaac, who then charges Jacob to go to the region of Padan-aram, to the city of Haran, and marry one of Laban’s daughters. Rebekah lets him think it’s his idea, but the scenario she painted led him to adopt the plan she had in mind all along. Unlike the Canaanite women, the Aramean women were more likely to give up their gods and embrace the faith of their husbands.

Many of us, like Rebekah, overstate our case in order to get what we want from others. It’s a subtle but sure form of lying. Some of us, also, have become quite good at manipulating those who are close to us into doing what we want them to do and leading them at the same time to think that it was their idea. Often, our plans backfire. In a marriage, such overstatements and manipulations keep two people from dealing honestly and vulnerably with each other.

Isaac then publicly affirms the blessing he issued to Jacob earlier and adds to it by connecting it more tightly to the Abrahamic covenant. Just as he blessed Abraham, God will bless Jacob with a multitude of descendants and the Promised Land both for him and his descendants. A new element--that of community--emerges in that Jacob will become “a company of peoples.” This promise would be fulfilled as the nation of Israel, the community of God, proceeded from Jacob and his 12 sons. Jacob, though, will have to head for the hills.

The spiritually dense Esau only now realizes that the Canaanite women displeased his father. His mother’s displeasure isn’t mentioned; neither is God’s. Esau evidently cares only what his father thinks. So, seeking to please his father, he marries a relative, a daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s older son. The “unchosen” older sons, Ishmael and Esau, are now united. Their descendants would later join forces against Israel (Psalm 83:6).

Genesis 28:8-9 forms a frame with Genesis 26:34-35 around the story of the stolen blessing. Esau’s disdain for the wishes of his parents and his grandfather Abraham, as demonstrated in Genesis 26:34-35, and his spiritual density, as demonstrated Genesis 28:8-9, show him to be utterly unfit to inherit the Lord’s covenant with Abraham. In selling the birthright and losing the blessing, he got what he had coming to him, and he didn’t get what he never really wanted in the first place.

Understanding rejection

Unlike Jacob, Esau has what it takes to win his father’s blessing. He’s a skilled hunter. No matter how skilled we are, one day our skills will fail us. As in the case of Esau, they may even be used against us. We expect our skills to be rewarded. We “come in” from the field, and we prepare the tasty dish and offer it up, hoping that our parents or our world will reward us. One day, you’re going to be outskilled or outwitted, and someone else is going to get rewarded. Jacob isn’t a skilled hunter, but he’s smart enough to imitate one, and he gets the blessing Isaac intended for Esau. So then it goes to someone less skilled, perhaps less qualified.

We expect to be blessed. We expect to be chosen. We expect to be honored. Perhaps you really are the best hunter. But the best hunter doesn’t always bring home the trophy. Someone else is blessed. Someone else is chosen. Someone else is honored.

Many men and women hope that their success in the “field” will satisfy their craving for approval. Often, they’re looking for their father’s approval. If they succeed in ways that please their father, they think their father--or their

spouse, or their hoped-for spouse or their world--will be pleased with them. The story of Esau tells us that success in the field doesn't always get the blessing of the father or the blessing of the world. Even if you're the favored one, as was Esau, it seems that you're never favored enough. Even if you're successful, it seems that you're never successful enough. Often, it seems that one little mistake can cost you everything. So you can't afford to let up for even a moment. Because of this, so-called "successful" people are often the most tormented.

When we realize that everything that we've worked for has either been taken away or denied, we may, like Esau, let loose with a bitter cry--or at least a silent scream. We think and hope and pray, sometimes desperately, that we will be worth something to important people in our lives. Rejection makes us feel worthless. It is some of the worst pain we humans can feel.

Stage actress Caroline Nesbitt describes what she felt from rejection as "a debilitating self-loathing and creeping nerve paralysis that made looking in the mirror every morning seem like an act of courage." She has been turned down for literally thousands of parts for which she has auditioned. Rejection, she says, "is not merely a stumbling block. It is an omnipresent and devouring predator, the only haven from which is recognition." (2)

We certainly don't want to feel the pain of rejection for very long, so we begin to blame others for not recognizing our worth. We go back and forth in our hearts, alternating between blaming ourselves for being worthless and blaming others for not recognizing our worth. Our hearts become the setting of an emotional tennis match. Often times, when we have lost what we have worked for, there's a culprit. There's a thief. There's a deceiver. There is someone who either has denied us what we wanted or has taken it from us. In such cases, the desire for revenge often rises within us.

We don't realize that we've set ourselves up for this. Like Esau, we may want the Lord's gifts more than the Lord himself. We expect God to reward us when we've spent most of our lives wanting little to do with him and being very intent on pursuing our own ends. Often, things go fine anyway. When they don't, we cry foul. But when the gifts of God are taken away, no injustice is done. When you ask Kevin Coughlin, one of our interns, how he's doing, his usual response is, "Far better than I deserve." All of us are doing far better than we deserve. When you look at it from that perspective--when something has been taken away from you--you recognize that you didn't deserve it in the first place.

Like Esau, we think we can split our lives in two. We think we can throw away the birthright and still get the blessing. We think we can tell God to get lost in one area of our lives and still get his blessings in another. We think we can worship on Sunday, do whatever we want the rest of the week and get whatever we want. But, when what God gives is taken away, violent emotions such as anger, resentment and jealousy erupt from our hearts. After the echo of your bitter cry dies out, after you're through begging God for his blessings, after you get what seems more like a non-blessing, ask yourself some questions: Why are you angry? Why has your countenance fallen? These questions will lead you to explore the depths of your anger. You'll probably find, at the bottom of it all, that you're angry not only with people because they have rejected you but at God for allowing them to reject you.

We well-put-together church folks didn't know all that ugly stuff was in there. Although we make nice about how Jesus has saved us from our sins, in reality we think he's saved us from a few peccadilloes and that, all things considered, God should be pretty happy that he has us on his side--until, of course, what happened to Esau happens to us. Then we feel what only God saw before, because we had hidden it away in the darkness of our hearts. And we know, or we have the opportunity to know, that if we have been saved from our sins, we have been forgiven for the same kind of anger, resentment and jealousy that drove 19 men to hijack four planes and steer them toward the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and the White House.

If you find anger, resentment and jealousy welling up in your heart, remember this: "Sin is crouching at your door, and its desire is for you, but you must master it" (Genesis 4:7). How? By acknowledging your responsibility in what brought about such emotions. You probably set yourself up for this. You wanted God's blessings more than God. If something is denied you or taken away from you, you didn't deserve it in the first place. Lamentations 3:39-40: "Why should any living mortal, or any man, offer complaint in view of his sins? Let us examine and probe our ways, and let us return to the Lord."

Rejection locates our distance from God and calls us home. If he has forgiven us for the volcano of anger,

resentment and jealousy that is in our hearts, we can be assured of his acceptance. Recognize that God, who claims to be sovereign over this world, including all those who have damaged you, has a plan, in the middle of the pain, to bring you closer to him. Seek the Lord in the place of pain. Meet with him there. Work through the anger and seek to use the absence of the gift to go deeper with the Giver, and seek to replace God's gifts with God himself. He may reveal himself to you in a new way.

He wants to show us that he will in no way cast us out (John 6:37). Psalm 27:10: "For my father and mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me up." If recognition is the only safe haven from rejection, the Father is the only safe haven. He is the only one who will never reject us. He blesses us; he chooses us; he honors us. Those who are in Christ will be "glorified"--recognized and honored by God (Romans 8:30). Therefore, rejection from our world pushes us toward the Father.

Paul says that if we want to know Jesus, we must know "the fellowship of his sufferings" (Philippians 3:10). Jesus suffered rejection of the worst kind. When he was arrested, all his disciples "left him and fled" (Matthew 26:56). His people handed him over to the Romans to be crucified, and then they mocked him. "He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face; he was despised, and we did not esteem him" (Isaiah 53:3). His experience was like that of David: "But I am a worm, and not a man, a reproach of men, and despised by the people" (Psalm 22:6).

Even Jesus didn't understand why the Father let this happen to him, for he cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). In the end, the only Son of God and the firstborn of all creation felt rejected by his Father.

The experience of being rejected connects us with Jesus. We know what he feels like, and he knows what we feel like. Rejection, then, is a holy doorway into the presence of Jesus. And let us not forget that the world's rejection of Jesus enabled him to save the world and create a worldwide family. The Father crushed him and put him to grief, but he saw his descendants--the family of God (Isaiah 53:11). Who knows what will come of the world's rejection of us?

The alternative to the way of the Lord is the way of Esau. When we follow in his path, we give free reign to our anger. We forget about the Lord and buck up our efforts to please those we see as authority figures. Often, as in the case of Esau, this leads to unholy alliances with the world that further distance us from the Lord.

A different story

Esau cries out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry and begs his father for a blessing, but his father has none to give, because he's already given all of it away. The New Testament speaks of a different kind of Father. In Romans 8:15 we read that God gives us his own Spirit, who adopts us into his family, by which we cry out "Abba, Father." The cry is not a bitter one; it's a cry for intimacy. And God hears it.

The apostle Paul writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Notice how different our heavenly Father is from Isaac. We don't have to hunt game to get the Father's blessing; we're already blessed. Not only that, we are blessed with every spiritual blessing. The Father has also given spiritual gifts to "each" of us (1 Corinthians 12:7, Ephesians 4:7). We are all favored sons and daughters, so we need not compete for our Father's affections. None of us is left out.

This is best illustrated in the parable of the prodigal son, in which Jesus retells the Isaac-Jacob-Esau story. In the second half of the parable, Jesus reworks the themes in the second half of Genesis 27. In each story, an older son comes to his father after his father has blessed his younger brother. Notice the similarities and differences:

"Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you

and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.’ (Luke 15:25-32)

In Genesis 27:9 the younger son serves up a meal that includes two kids. In Luke 15:29 the older son complains that his father has never given him a young goat (a kid).

In Genesis 27:18-29 the father and the younger son had a meeting that the older son didn't know about, and in Luke 15:20-24 the father and the younger son also had such a meeting.

In Genesis 27:30-45, the mother, who acted on behalf of the younger son, is absent for the older son, and in Luke 15:28 the father, acting like a mother, brings shame on himself in that culture by coming out and pleading with his older son.

In Genesis 27:30 the son comes in from hunting in the “field” (Genesis 27:3). In Luke 15:25 the son also comes in from the “field.”

In Genesis 27:31 the son expects his father to reward him for his service: the preparation of savory food. Likewise, in Luke 15:29 the son expects his father to reward him for his many years of service.

In Genesis 27:31 the son invites his father to partake of the savory food that he has prepared. In Luke 15:28 the father invites his son to join the party and partake of the fattened calf.

In Genesis 27:35 the father says to his son: “Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing.” In Luke 15:27 a servant says to the son: “Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.”

In Genesis 27:35, the father, in shameless favoritism of one son, is deceived. Yet in Luke 15:11-32, the father, in lavish love for both sons, knows exactly what he's doing.

In Genesis 27:36 the younger son received from his father what the older son thought was rightly his: the blessing, and in Luke 15:29 the younger son received from his father what the older son thought was rightly his: the fattened calf.

In Genesis 27:36 the son complains to his father about a younger brother who has been blessed by their father with the patriarchal blessing. Likewise, in Luke 15:30 the son complains to his father about a younger brother who has been blessed by their father with the fattened calf.

In Genesis 27:36, 38 the son cries out to his father, “Have you reserved a blessing for me?” “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.” In Luke 15:29 the son complains that his father has never even given him a young goat.

In Genesis 27:36, 38 the son asks for a blessing from his father, but in Luke 15:31 the son is already blessed by his father more than he could possibly know.

In Genesis 27:37 the father tells the son that he has made the younger son his master. In Luke 15:29 the son tells the father that he thinks of him as his master.

In Genesis 27:37, a derelict father, who has nothing left to give, says to his son, “Now as for you, then, what can I do, my son?” But in Luke 15:31 a lovesick father says to his son, “Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.”

Finally, in Genesis 27:41 the son bears a grudge and seeks to kill his younger brother. Likewise, in Luke 15:29-30 the son makes a case that his younger brother is deserving of death (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). The older son thinks of himself as a slave and his father as the master. When the father says “you have always been with me” and “all that is

mine is yours,” he’s telling the boy that he wants a son, and that he’s blessed more than he could possibly know.

Rejection, some of us might say, is the story of our lives. But look at what Jesus does. He rewrites the story! He rewrites your story. Do you feel that you’ve missed out on your parents’ blessing?--the blessing of older men and women in your life? Did someone important on earth bless someone else, but not you? Has the harsh rejection of this world blown open a hole in your heart? Have your insides been kicked out?

Rejection doesn’t have to carry us off into bitterness. It can carry us into the presence of our heavenly Father, who brings shame upon himself by coming out to meet us in the person of his Son. Listen to his voice: “Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.”

NOTES:

(1) *Casablanca*, © 1943 Turner Entertainment Co.

(2) Don Aucoin, *Stage Fright*, San Jose Mercury News (quoting American Theatre magazine), March 8, 1998, Books, P. 8.

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Genesis 27:30-28:9

4th Message

Scott Grant

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