

The Faith of an Heir

Genesis 25

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

If your Dad dies when you are 10 or 11 years old and you are the oldest in your family of four and you know your Mom has to go out and work to keep you - the whole reaction that comes up in you is really overwhelming in a way. You suddenly realize the unpredictability of the world around you and the threatening nature of this world. Here's this little family you belong to, no dad and your mom is trying to get some money in. What rises up in you is a determination that you have to make it. I have to get into this ring and I have to make it. I have to start punching. That's what many of us have done in not such a hideous situation as this.

In a way it isn't bad that we have to get in there and start punching but the tragedy is that many of us have never stopped punching. We haven't been able to stop punching. We have kept on punching. We have kept on believing that nothing will come to us unless we strive for it. Unless we push for it, we won't make it happen; nothing is going to come to us.

Of course that works in this fallen world simply because the fallen world itself responds to that kind of restless, driving, worried anxious activity. So we're rather encouraged to keep on at it. The attitude itself is basically opposed to faith. It has no rest in it, no relaxation. It begets in you a kind of wariness, like a cornered animal that is always on the lookout, that is always waiting for something to fall on it, that believes it will get nothing unless it goes out hunting for it. It creates in the person, certainly a street wisdom but more than that it creates a driving restless, unbelieving, untrusting determination that my only hope is myself and I have to keep in there punching in that ring until the end.

If your dad is a millionaire, you're just in a completely different situation. Especially if he has told you son, or daughter you will have my company when I die and you will have my millions and you'll have my position. Then it's interesting, so that you won't sink into passivity and so that you will have a fulfilled life, you exercise discipline too and you exercise drive, exercise your mind and your willpower but it doesn't have the shrillness to it or the fearfulness to it that the other little guy or girl has.

You know you can make a few mistakes and your dad's money will cover it up. You want to try to make as few as possible but if you make any there's no fear that you're going to fall back down into the gutter from which you have managed to lever yourself like the other guy. You feel your father's millions will take care of the necessities and then some after that. So it's interesting both men or both women exercise their abilities. One exercises it with a kind of shrillness and desperation, worry and anxiety and the other exercises them with a sense of assurance and confidence and relaxation.

In actual fact, of course, the one who is the heir of the millionaire actually exercises his abilities somewhat more effectively than the other guy. I think all of us know how the mind can be paralyzed when you're afraid that you're going to forget something and how when you're too nervous or too psyched up it actually works against your abilities and the use of them. Often it's much more efficient to use your abilities when there's a sense of assurance and relaxation. So there is a great difference between the heir and pauper. There is. The heir exercises his abilities probably as

industrious as the pauper but he exercises them with a great sense of confidence, assurance and relaxation and a feeling that he's going to win anyway. The pauper exercises them with a sense of shrillness, fearfulness and a feeling that if he doesn't make it there's nobody else that's going to lift him.

Now Genesis 25 is concerned with just that issue. In it God is asking you and I, are you living your life in the reality of the position that you have or are you living your life as a pauper? So let's look at Genesis 25:1. Isaac you see was an heir. He was an heir to a rich man. "Abraham took another wife whose name was Keturah. She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan; the sons of Dedan were Asshurites, Lettushites and Leummites. The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah. All these were children of Keturah. Abraham gave all he had to Isaac."

So Isaac inherited Abraham's millions. Now Abraham's possessions are described there in Chapter 24 if you would like to look back at it. Chapter 24, Verse 34: When Abraham's servant went to find a wife you remember for Isaac. "So he said I am Abraham's servant. The Lord has greatly blessed by master and he has become great; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants and camels and asses." That was when Abraham was 137. He had that kind of riches. He had that kind of money to pass on to his son.

Even in his late 70's he was described the same way. Look back at Chapter 13, Verse 2 -- even 60 or 70 years before he was described the same way. "Now Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold." At times Abraham behaved as a rich man. You see in Genesis 13:9, Lot said, "There's a battle between our herdsman, now what shall we do?" Abraham said in verse 9, "Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you will take the right hand then I will go to the left." So at times Abraham behaved like a rich man. Of course all the power of God was onto him according to his faith in that situation. At other times he was full of fear and shrillness and that survival mentality that the little pauper boy had.

You see it in Chapter 12 Verse 10 through 13. "Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. When he was about to enter into Egypt he said to Sarai his wife, 'I know that you are a woman beautiful to behold and when the Egyptians see you they will say, 'This is your wife'; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account.'"

I don't know if you recognize the kind of tone in his voice but I wonder have you any experience of that in your own life. You're coming up and you see the 15 percent interest rates or whatever they may eventually end up to be. Or you see the trouble that's going to come up with regards to the car. Or you see the difficulty that you're going to have further along at the end of this quarter. The old shrillness, the old fear of the pauper comes into your heart and you begin to thrash around trying to find out: "if you say this and I do that, or if I do this. No - this will work" and you start trying to manipulate the situation. The whole faith of a pauper comes out. The whole insult to God your father and of course as true as anything it is unto you according to your faith.

That's exactly what it was, you remember if you'd just look at it. He said he was dead, Verse 12, "and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it will go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account." Verse 14, "When Abram entered Egypt the Egyptians saw that the

woman was very beautiful"; it's almost self fulfilling prophecies. It's God saying it will be unto you according to your faith. Of course God gradually levered Abraham out of his pauper position and gradually built up a great confidence in him that God was his father and would provide him with whatever he needed.

At times he showed that. In Chapter 15, Verse 4 "And behold the word of the Lord came to him, 'This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir.' And he brought him outside and said 'Look toward heaven and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' And then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness." Abram believed God and was the heir himself, a rich man, and entered into the joy of his riches.

Yet as if God wants to emphasize to us our own wayward, fickle selves, you remember it was just indeed before Isaac was given, in Chapter 16:1-4. Just before Isaac was born; "Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar; and Sarah said to Abram, 'Behold now, the lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my maid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram harkened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abram had dwelt 10 years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife."

And yet again Abram sank to the level of a pauper trying to manipulate. So up and down, up and down until really, in Chapter 17, Verse 5 God assured him, "No longer shall your name be Abram but your name shall Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations." That's when Abraham became a rich man. When God said to him I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. Not even when Isaac was born but when God made that assurance to Abraham; "I have made you the father of a multitude of nations." When was that? That was a long time ago. God made Abraham the father of a multitude of nations and his barren wife Sarah the mother of Isaac a long, long time before that because God had foreseen all of this. He took Sarah with her barrenness and he put her into Jesus, his Son, who was the lamb slain from before the foundation of the world [Revelations 13:8] and he made her at that moment capable of bearing Isaac and he gave Isaac to her. You think of Abraham and up and down, up and down. Yes I believe you, no I don't believe you, yes I do and way back here in the lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world, God had given Abraham Isaac. He had given him all the riches that he eventually possessed.

It made me think of old Wigglesworth. [British evangelist, 1859-1947] Smith Wigglesworth, if you remember early on in his life had appendicitis that the doctor assured his wife in those days was going to kill him. Of course if you remember he went out to work as usual and came back healed. I was just thinking of all those incidences that took place, and remember he had gall stones that he had inside him for years upon years before they were healed. It's interesting we can do with Wigglesworth what we do with Abraham. We can look at the very end of his life.

Here's the story. He was 87. Two days later my pastor, Mr. Richardson went to be with the Lord. His funeral service was to be held exactly one week after my visit to Wigglesworth's home. Three of my brothers and I were asked to be pallbearers at the funeral. We sat on a side seat at the front of the church which was filled to capacity. When Mr. Wigglesworth entered all eyes turned to look at this erect figure as he walked down the aisle to sit next to the front row. My father who had come to the vestry to share the pulpit with those taking part in the service was joined there by Mr. Wigglesworth. He watched as this sprout figure left his seat and ascended the steps into the vestry more like a man of 60 than a man of 87. When inside the vestry Wigglesworth kissed my father and

inquired about my sister who was ill. As my father was replying Wigglesworth stumbled forward suddenly, my father put out an arm to steady him, and then gently lowered him to the floor. Mr. Wigglesworth was gone. If you think of it, 87 glorious years and then just stepped into heaven like that. In a sense all that was settled in the lamb that was slain from before the foundation of world. In a way all God's good gifts had already been given to him. In a way all healing had already been done all he had to do was believe it and enter into it.

Loved ones, when has your marriage been settled? When has God assured you that you will have enough money for all your needs? When did God decide how he would use you in this life? When did God start preparing a deliverance for a disaster that is going to come to you in 10 years time? When did God plan your death bed so that you will be able to bear it? Centuries ago, the Father has it arranged. Have you any doubt of it? I'll just point to Ephesians Chapter 2, Verse 10. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." The Father has it all arranged.

There isn't a road that you will walk down this week that God hasn't already walked down. There isn't a difficulty or disaster that you aren't going to hit next year that God has not already met and dealt with in his son Jesus, the lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. There isn't a need for money that God hasn't already set aside and provided for you. He is desperately anxious for you to start living as an heir and not as a pauper. Living as an heir of a Father who has said there is no trial come upon you above what you are able to bear and with the trial I will also make a way of deliverance. An heir of the Father who has said listen I'll work everything in your life according to the council of my will.

In fact in your life all things will work together for good. The Father is looking to see in you, not the shrillness and the worry and the constant up and down belief of a pauper, but the quiet assured confidence of an heir of the richest person in the whole world. You know the instant when you worry, you know that instant. That's the pauper nature coming out -- that instant when the flat tire occurs on the freeway. Instead of rising up, a joy and a delight and a peace and a confidence and thanksgiving to the Father that he has foreseen this and has arranged how you are going to deal with it. Instead there rises up a momentary of worry, irritability, or anxiety. That's what hurts your Father's heart. That's what stabs him right to his heart. That's what says to him I don't really believe you're in charge. I don't believe you're in control. I don't believe you love me.

Loved ones it's that instant that is the nature of a pauper. Don't say to yourselves, I do get caught out at times. You don't get caught out that's you that comes out. It's just that you respond pretty quickly and try and smooth it over with an appearance of religiosity. It's that worry and anxiety that God wants to lift out of you forever so that there will never be a moment in your life when you're anxious, tense or worried; especially those things that you cannot possibly see a way through. I know it because I was an expert at it. I know what we say. We say, "Yes, brother I can see the things that are manageable, everybody can see the things that are manageable. Those you can see ahead to manage yourself. It's the things you cannot possibly understand how God can bring an answer, those are the things he wants to see you trust him and your faith and the faith of an heir. That's where he's looking to see the rising of your heart.

Now Isaac was an heir. Let's go back loved ones to Genesis 25 and you can see a little bit more of the development of God's plan. In Verse 6 "But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country." He wanted Isaac alone to inherit everything. "These are the days of the years Abraham's life, a hundred

and seventy five years. Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, the field which Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with Sarah his wife. After the death of Abraham God blessed Isaac his son and Isaac dwelt at Beer la-hai roi."

When that moment comes in your life and in mine, all these things will be passed and finished with. They will be so unimportant. I don't know if you've been close enough to an older person dying to realize it but when you're dying nothing matters. All the stupid, dumb little things that passed in your life you've forgotten the greater part of them. The only thing that matters is that you know that there's somebody on the other side of the darkness that's going to welcome you.

So, loved ones, really, you're life will pass so fast. You're sitting here, and I sat there when I was 36 I think, and I thought oh no, it just goes on and on. It's funny life has a certain water shed that you get over and you realize that you're over that water shed, it's not opening out anymore it's kind of going even. Really loved ones, it goes so fast. There is no point in giving a thought of worry or anxiety to anything because by hook or crook you're dear Father will get you to this place safely. He will. He will bring you safely to that place where all you have to do is step safely to the other side. He'll bring you safely to that place. You probably won't get there even as a pauper in the world sense. You'll probably have a little put by but the Father will bring you there. You'll come there, no matter what happens. You'll eventually come to that place where he's welcoming you into his arms. It's good in a way to live always in the reality of that and not to live as it will never come. It is really a joyous time. Then strangely the Bible before it goes onto give Isaac's descendants gives, in fact, Ishmael's. That's often a pattern in the Bible.

Let's look at it and I'll show you where it occurs. In verse 12 "These are the descendants of Ishmael." So God outlines first not the chosen race, but the race that will become the forefathers of the Arab Nation. "These are the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maid bore to Abraham. These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, named in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the first born of Ishmael; and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages and by their encampments, twelve princes according to their tribes. (These are the years of the life of Ishmael, a hundred thirty seven years; he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his kindred.) He was blessed also in this sense. "They dwelt from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria; he settled over against all his people."

Now it's interesting that often in the Bible, God lets the lesser come first. So again he tells us of Ishmael's descendants before he tells of Isaac's descendants. So you remember the first Adam came first before the second Adam. The second Adam was the really important one but the first Adam came first. So it was with Esau and Jacob, as you'll see in a moment. So it was with Cain and Abel. Repeatedly, it's the lesser that comes first. Israel comes before the church. The church is greater than Israel.

So have you noticed that it is in our own lives often God allows you do the thing your own miserable way first and mess it up before he brings in the perfect? It is interesting that it's almost built into our lives that God lets us do the lesser first and then he brings the greater later. I don't know if you have noticed to that often the thing you produce is not nearly as beautiful as the wine as he brings secondly in the wedding feast. Often what he brings without any effort is far more beautiful than what you bring. I don't know how many of you have struggled to get something. Then

you find a couple of years later the Father gives you something far better in an effortless way. It's as he's saying to you, stop being the son of a pauper. Start being an heir. Start trusting. Start relaxing and I'll give you more than you'll ever imagine.

This is what Isaac began to experience. "These are the descendents of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac and Isaac was forty years old when he took to wife Rebekah the daughter of Bethuel, the Aramean of Padam-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean. And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife because she was barren; and the Lord granted his prayer and Rebekah his wife conceived. Children struggled together in her; and she said, 'If it is thus, why do I live?' So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, 'Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples, born of you, shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger.' Again the elder would come first but the younger would be greater. "When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. The first came forth red, all his body like a hairy mantle, so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came forth." But he still was a pauper. "And his hand had taken hold of Esau's heel." Hold on tight and tried to get out with his brother. "So his name was called Jacob. [meaning one who strove] Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them."

It's the same story that was fought out again and again through Abraham's descendants. That old striving desire, that desire to hang onto the other guy's heel and get out as soon as he did. The desire is always trying to grab and the Father is saying to us don't grab, trust me, you can't get anything that isn't my will for you anyway. Anything that you grab that isn't my will is going to turn bad in your hand. So trust me and relax. I have your life planned. Loved ones, do you realize that your life is unique? Your life is uniquely planned and the Father has a unique plan for you -- for your marriages and your jobs. He just wants you to rest in faith and relax. Do you know what spoils his plans? You getting anxious and getting ulcers. It is so dumb. We destroy God's most beautiful plans for us because we are worried and anxious lest he doesn't have a plan for us. So, we worry ourselves out of his plan. We end up in a self fulfilling prophesy that Abraham often got into himself.

So don't strive and don't behave as if you do not have a billionaire Father. Teach yourself at night when you go to bed to look up to your Father and say, "Father thank you for an earthly father but I thank you that you're my real Father and you own all the land in this universe. Father I thank you that I can rest tonight because of that." Do that every night until gradually you begin to rest even in the moment when the boss has rebuked you and has threatened to fire you. You begin to be able to rest in peace that your life is not in the hands of this man but in the hands of your Father.

In Verse 27, it continues. "When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game; but Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was boiling pottage, Esau came in from the field and he was famished. And Esau said to Jacob, 'Let me eat some of that red pottage for I am famished!' (Therefore his name was called Edom.) Jacob said, 'First sell me your birthright.' Esau said, 'I am about to die of what use is a birthright to me.'" He didn't treasure the birthright, he treated it casually. "Jacob said, 'Swear to me first.' So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright."

Jacob wasn't right. He wasn't right in taking advantage of his brother. He was still a striver and

eventually you remember as we'll find next year, maybe in August if we do further studies we'll find that Jacob had to come to the end of his striving. He was a striver and it wasn't right. Yet Esau was more wrong because he gave up his birthright. He gave up his right as an heir.

Loved ones, will you turn to Galatians 3:16, "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, 'And to offsprings, referring to many; [which might refer to all the Jews] but, referring to one, 'And to your offspring,' which is Christ. Then look at Galatians 3:26-4:7, "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you were baptized in Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

"I mean that the heir as long as he is a child is no better than a slave, though he is the owner of all the estate; but he is under the guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. So with us; when we were children, we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe. But when the time had fully come God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption of sons."

"And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying 'Abba Father'. So through God you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son then an heir." Don't sell your birthright, at that moment, when things seem to have gone wrong. Don't! At that moment, stand firm and steady in the faith that you are an heir of God your Father, a co-heir together with Christ of all that God has in the store of his heart and of his universe. It's all yours as you need it. That's what the Father says to us tonight. Live as my heir.

Have you ever thought how dear and kind he is? Have you ever thought how kind his heart is? It's so easy to talk about him as our Father and we tried to get that word and the technicality of it. Have you ever thought how dear and warm and kind he is to you personally and how much he thinks of you and loves you? How he will not let a bad thing happen to you? How it is his delight in those moments when something goes wrong that he can help you with you immediately look up to him and say, "Father, I thank you are here and I know you will help me?"

You know what a dad is like. You know a Father that loves his son. You know when a son gets into some difficulty and needs something, the Father is there right before the son has said it. The face of the son is fragile as we are, if we are tiny and small and we don't have many resources. You know how the dad is protective and is right there and says, "It's okay, son, here it is and there's more where that came from. How it gives delight to the father's heart when the little son doesn't look around to some stranger and say here could you help me? Or doesn't look to some other friend and say could you help me? Or doesn't immediately look away from the father and just try to sort his own way out? How delighted the father is when his son turns around says dad can you help me. That's the faith of an heir. That's what our Father wants to see from you and me in that vital momentary half second when something goes wrong with the car, something goes wrong with the romance or something goes wrong with the job. At that moment, he wants to see not that tremor of fear and that turning of the stomach because it's like a sword into his side, it's like selling your birthright. He wants to see you looking up to him in peace, joy and delight -- even though you haven't a clue how he's going to work it out. Yet you trust him, you don't trust the way the circumstances are looking. That brings delight to his heart.

Loved ones, I pray during these next few months until we get together again maybe in August or in

the fall that you and I will live as heirs in the peace of heirs.

Let's pray.

Dear Father, we sense it's your will for us never to have our stomach turning, never to have a tension headache, never to have anything that even looks like a tension headache. Father, it's your desire that we should turn over in bed at night and go straight to sleep. It's your desire that we should waken with heads that are clear, clear of all worry and simply looking forward to another day in our Father's world.

Lord, we see how wise that is because we realize that tomorrow never does come. That's why you, Lord Jesus, said sufficient on to the day is the eve of the hour. Lord, we thank you that the only responsibility that you have given to us little children is to live 12 and sometimes 16 hours at a time and then we go to sleep. Then we live another 12 or 16 hours. You have assured us that you will always give us what is needed to see us through those few hours.

So Father, we thank you for that. We thank you that we are your heirs together with Christ of all the riches that you have available in heaven and that you will lay them out for us as any father would. Lay them out for us gladly and willingly for our own good. Lord, we thank you for that.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each of us this week. Amen.