

Oct 2, 2022 Message: Genesis 25: 19-28 Sermon: Jacob & Esau: Awkward to Awesome

I want to thank everyone for their support and patience as I was out sick these past two weeks. And I will admit I had hoped that with the time off I could get some work done, but it had been a while since I was truly sick, because the days ended up being sleep, rest, nap, sleep, and so on and so forth. In between all that rest, I would read or watch movies. And I noticed that the genre of my books and movies seem to all have a common theme, the main character was awkward at the beginning of the story, but with time, such awkwardness became valuable, even awesome, if you will.

I realized how much I liked those stories because to be honest those are the stories we see in life. We see stories on the news of ordinary, common, people put into awkward situations, and following through that are awe-inspired. Like did you hear about the former debt collectors who now have raised and paid off \$6.7 billion of medical debt for millions of Americans? Imagine, the same guys that came to your house to collect your debts, were now coming to share they paid your debt? Or how about the Amazon delivery guy who saw a house on fire, realized the family was still inside, and so rushed in to get them out. But when he got to them, they did not speak English, so he had to convince them to go out the back, took them to the front of the house to see it was engulfed in flames. At that point they began to cry and thanked the man for saving their family of 6, including a baby. The awkward moment of the Amazon delivery guy coming into your house became an awesome life saving moment. You can read more about these types of situations at the goodnewsnetwork.org website.¹

We can also see stories of awkwardness to awesomeness in the Bible. Be it Moses who has a speech impediment leading the Israelites to freedom, or Esther becoming a queen and eventually saves her people, or a simple faith questioning fisherman named Peter, who becomes the Rock of Christ's Church, there are stories we can learn from with this idea of awkwardness to awesomeness. And one of the my favorites of such stories is Esau and Jacob, twins born to Isaac and Rebekah. And the awkwardness that is between these brothers start in the womb, and continue on in their years growing up, course it didn't help the fact that each child was favored by a parent. Talk about awkward. Imagine what family dinners must have been like.

But this would not only affect their relationship, it would affect their inheritance. Because if we continue to read their story we learn about how the birthright was discussed. The birthright, in ancient times, was a very important and sacred thing. It belonged to the firstborn. The family name and titles were to pass along to the eldest son. He would also receive a chief portion of the inheritance. But it was more than just a title to the physical assets of a family. It was also a spiritual position, and in the case of the people of God, God would lead through patriarchs with the birthright. Remember how God had made a promise with Abraham, who was the grandfather to Esau and Jacob, that through Abraham's descendant God would make a nation and the Messiah would come through the holder of the birthright to bless the nations of the earth.

Esau was the firstborn, and the birthright was his. But, one day we read this in chapter 25, beginning at verse 29 *when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry.*³⁰ *Esau said to Jacob, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew!"*³¹ *"All right," Jacob replied, "but trade me your rights as the firstborn son."*³² *"Look, I'm dying of starvation!" said Esau. "What good is my birthright to me now?"*³³ *But Jacob said, "First you must swear that your birthright is mine." So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob.*³⁴ *Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the meal, then got up and left.*

Esau sold his birthright for stew, obviously not understanding it's importance at that time.

However, the birthright had to have been given by the patriarch. And so one day Isaac was going to do so, but at this point Rebekah steps in and helps Jacob receive the blessing, tricking Isaac to think he was blessing Esau, when he was blessing Jacob with the birthright. This of course upsets Esau and in Genesis 27 we

¹ <https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/category/news/>.

read, *41 Now Esau hated 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 approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.'*

*42 But the words of her elder son Esau were told to Rebekah; so she sent and called her younger son Jacob and said to him, 'Your brother Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you. 43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran, 44 and stay with him for a while, until your brother's fury turns away—*That's what Jacob does, he leaves the land, gets married, and continues to get into some trouble, elsewhere. Meanwhile Esau, marries, two Canaanite women, and a daughter of Ishmael, Esau's step uncle. Esau establishes the land of Edom, as their leader.

Thirty years go by and God tells Jacob in *Genesis 31:3 'Return to the land of your ancestors and to your kindred, and I will be with you.'* Now, Jacob is nervous about this because, Esau was going to kill him. His life is in danger, and yet God told him to go. What would you do? You see, this is the good part of *these awkward stories we will hear from the Bible, because they make us face challenges in our own lives.* Would you be willing to go to some place or some situation, knowing it is dangerous? *Would you go if God told you "I will be with you?"*. That's a difficult question to consider, isn't it?

But from such stories we begin to see that God does call upon us to go into awkward situations and face them, deal with them, push through them, especially if we know, trust, and believe God is with us. What happens with Jacob and Esau? In *Genesis 33* we read that upon reuniting, they agree to meet and verse 33 states, *33 Now Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming, and four hundred men with him.* At this point, Jacob is scared, fearful they are coming for his life. So Jacob divides his family up and prepares to offer them and himself in service to Esau. The text continues, *4 But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. 5 When Esau looked up and saw the women and children, he said, 'Who are these with you?' Jacob said, 'The children whom God has graciously given your servant.'* *8 Esau said, 'What do you mean by all this company that I met?' Jacob answered, 'To find favour with my lord.'* *9 But Esau said, 'I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.'* *10 Jacob said, 'No, please; if I find favour with you, then accept my present from my hand; for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God—since you have received me with such favour.*

I love that line, *to see your face is like seeing the face of God—since you have received me with such favour.* Esau received Jacob with grace. And such an act was for Jacob to see the face of God. Isn't that awesome?

Awkward, difficult, hard, that is the story of Jacob and Esau. That is our story too, when faced with difficulties that we may bring on ourselves, or get tricked into. That is our story when we have differences and disagreements with those around us. Yet when we allow the peace and grace of God to surpass all that, when we allow God to guard our hearts, our minds, and bless our lives, that awkwardness can become awesome, inspiring, and amazing.

Today is World communion, and you and I are summoned by God in Jesus Christ to this amazing table of grace. To lay aside any and all awkwardness to experience the awesomeness of seeing the face of God in each other. Therefore, I invite you to join me in this prayer of confession:

Prayer of Confession : God of mercy, your love has never been far from us. Even when we turn our backs on people in need, when we seek our own comfort and neglect opportunities to help others, when we, by our thoughts and actions, betray you, you always are with us. Forgive us for all those acts of cowardice and self-centeredness that have drawn us away from you. Heal our spirits and rebuild our lives. You have placed us in a global community in which illness, oppression, greed, fear and anger abound. You ask us to proclaim your words of hope and love, of healing mercy for all your people. Place us again on the path of peace for all your children. For we ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Words of Assurance Hear the good news, friends! While we wandered in fear, God was with us, offering us hope and courage. God is with you this day, this very minute, lifting you from despair to hope, from awkward to awesome. This is the good news! God is always with us. AMEN.