

Making Space for God

Invocation: O Lord, my God, grant us your peace; already, indeed, you have made us rich in all things! Give us that peace of being at rest, that Sabbath peace, the peace that knows no end.
Amen

Augustine of Hippo (Algeria 354-430)

Looking to the Past- Take some times to settle yourself. Invite the Lord to guide and direct your thoughts for the day. Think back over where you have been this last month. Review your journal. What burdens, emotions, and concerns do you carry? What are you thankful for? When have you experienced the Lord's presence? Journal your thoughts and offer these to the Lord.

Scripture Reading- *The Botched Blessing- Genesis 27:1-42*

The time had come. Old Isaac, son of the patriarch Abraham and heir of God's blessing, saw death's door approaching. What should have been a gracious act that would have empowered the next generation turned into an episode from Hell's Kitchen. Isaac allowed his love for the taste of wild game to almost destroy his family and nullify the Abraham blessing to future generations. He played favorites with his children. He turned a blind eye to his elder son's character flaws. He disregarded the prophetic word that the younger son was to be the recipient of the blessing. Esau, who had traded his birthright for a bowl of stew in Genesis 25, broke his oath to Jacob, colluded with his father's food fetish, and tried to buy back a blessing that was not his to own. Rebecca, who loved Jacob,

defended her son by deftly deceiving her blind husband with food and goat fur. Then there was Jacob. Though he initially protested the rouse, in the end he played down to his name and preformed his part to perfection. And where was God amidst the smorgasbord of scheming by the family of four that only a Savior could love? He was quietly working out his purposes, creating a people for himself, who would one day sit down at the Banquet of the Lamb.



*Isaac Blessing Jacob by Gioachino Assereto 1640,
found at Wikiart.org*

Questions for Reflection

1. "Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home but Rebekah loved Jacob." (Genesis 25:28) When have you sensed that you are loved by someone because of something you do or provide for them? When is the "because" love appropriate and when does it leave you feeling used rather than appreciated for who are? Imagine Esau's plight.
2. In playing favorites with his sons, Isaac might be blindly fulfilling some internal need of his own. What might that be?

3. In verses 5-17 Rebekah plotted an elaborate deception of Isaac. What cultural and relational expectations might have prevented her from confronting him directly?
4. In verses 18-27 Jacob deceptively plays the role of Esau as his mother instructed. Deception—pretending to be someone you are not in order to get something you want—is a major theme in this story. When do you find yourself pretending to be someone other than your true self? How do fear, powerlessness, and longing collude with deception in your life?
5. Blessing is a wish for life to the fullest. We all hope for a rich, satisfying life and Genesis states that our creator longs to give that to us. What have you or your family done to hedge your bets?
6. Despite the skullduggery of the four family members in this passage, God was still at work. Notice where the text seems to indicate that. Where do you see God’s activity in your life today despite what you have done or failed to do?

Reading for Reflection

“Perhaps the strangest thing about this illusion of control is not that it happens but that it seems to confer many of the psychological benefits of genuine control. In fact, the one group of people who seem generally immune to this illusion are the clinically depressed, who tend to estimate accurately the degree to which they can control events in most situation.”

Daniel Gilbert in Stumbling on Happiness

“Above all, don't lie to yourself. The man who lies to himself and listens to his own lie comes to a point that he cannot distinguish the truth within him, or around him, and so loses all respect for himself and for others. And having no respect he ceases to love.”

Fyodor Dostoyevsky in The Brothers Karamazov

Question: What is something you can give or receive but never take? Answer: A Blessing

God’s will is not found in our doing whatever we want, acting on whim. God does not baptize our silly frivolous choices (though he does still love us). We believe God’s will is found in doing what we want at the very best and deepest level of who we understand ourselves to be. This is quite different. The director’s role is to help us to be honest and to search until that deepest self is discovered.

Dyckman and Carroll in Inviting the Mystic, supporting the Prophet page 34

The secular world around us is saying in a loud voice, “We can take care of ourselves. We do not need God, the church, or a priest. We are in control. And if we are not, then we have to work harder to get in control. The problem is not lack of faith, but of competence. If you are sick, you need a competent doctor; if you are poor, you need competent politicians; if there is a technical problem, you need competent engineers; if there are wars, you need competent negotiators. God, the church, and the ministers have been used for centuries to fill the gaps of incompetence, but today the gaps are being filled in other ways, and we no longer need spiritual answers to practical questions.”

Henri Nouwen in In the Name of Jesus, page 33

Benediction

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world

(Jesus in John 16:33)