

# Making Space for God

## Opening Prayer

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

*From the Book of Common Prayer-For Advent*

**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- Esau Sells His Birthright- Genesis 25:27-34

Life is hard! We are all born for struggle. Dispositional differences, parental preferences, cultural choices, and prophetic pronouncements fuel the fight between Esau and Jacob. For others of us, poverty, dysfunctional families, or failing health may be the stimulus for the external or internal conflict we face. If the clash doesn't kill us, it has the potential to mold and shape us. But who is wielding the hammer and chisel; blind fate or a compassionate presence? It's hard to tell. But the author of Genesis had an opinion, which is why he wrote the book.



*Jacob's Stewpot, Pastel on Paper, 6x8, Steven Stuckey 1993*

## Questions for Reflection

1. Though they had the same parents and came from the same womb, Esau and Jacob were exact opposites which led to their lifelong struggle. Imagine your opposite living inside your brain. What is your invisible twin like? Describe your own internal struggle.
2. Esau and Jacob's struggle was reinforced by choices their parents made. What cultural influences reward or punish you and your internal twin?
3. Esau was outgoing and impetuous. Jacob was cool and calculating. One preferred manly pursuits of hunting and fishing. The other stayed around the tents watching women cook and became a master chef. On the masculine/feminine continuum where do you place yourself? Is there a gender difference between you and your internal twin?
4. The birthright included both an honor and responsibility. The firstborn received twice the inheritance of other family members. He was first in respect and status. He also was expected to represent the family name and provide for aging parents. What cultural honors and expectations do you possess?
5. This story has a winner and loser but no saints. Why not? Each got what he wanted but at what price?

6. This story is also an example of Jacob trying to work out his own destiny. Rather than receive the promise of God, he bargains for it. When did you last bargain with God? What did you learn?

### *Reading for Reflection*

Our concept of holiness in the West has been, both for good and bad, very much shaped by the Greek ideal of perfection. Hence, holiness has been understood as a question of measuring up to a certain benchmark. In such a view of things, a view with which many of us were raised, sanctity is understood as achieving and maintaining something—namely, moral goodness and integrity... Such a concept is not without merits... but such a concept of perfection also has a nasty underside. Nobody measures up... and we find it hard to forgive ourselves and others for not being God... Hence, despite the positives that are contained in the Greek concept of perfection, we might well profit from incorporating into our lives more of the Hebrew ideal. Perfection here means walking with God, despite imperfection.

*From Prayer, Our Deepest Longing by Ronald Rolheiser*

We live lives of tortured complexity. Inside each of us there is both a saint and a sinner and enough complexity to write our own book on abnormal psychology. Our hearts are a murky caldron of grace and sin, angels and demons. Always, it seems, we are torn in a way that leaves us feeling unsure, guilty, and tense. It is no simple task being a human being.

*From Prayer, Our Deepest Longing by Ronald Rolheiser*

We learn by the bitter experience of temptation that the spiritual life is not a matter of devout feeling or mere desire to be good. It is through temptation that most of us comprehend how serious a matter it is—a very matter of life and death, involving struggles for survival which are fierce and primitive.

*Reginald Somerset Ward 1881-1962*

Temptation is what distracts us, beguiles us or bullies us off the path. Temptation is what makes real life different from the world of our dreams. We dream a world which is wax under the molding of our ambition or of our aspirations; we meet a world which faces us with trials we have not the character to surmount, and with seductions we have not the virtue to resist.

*Austin Farrer*

One of the Desert Fathers, living his ascetic life many centuries ago, said that if one thinks of fornication one can avoid committing it, whereas if one fails to give it sufficient consideration, one inevitably winds up in the wrong bed.

*Susan Howatch in Absolute Truths*

Jesus' resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven.

NT Wright The Resurrection of the Son of God

### *Benediction*

*Eternal God and Father, by whose power we are created and by whose love we are redeemed: guide and strengthen us by your Spirit, that we may give ourselves to your service, and live this day in love to one another and to you; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, Amen*

*From the Australian Prayer Book*