



Sermon Study Guide
February 3, 2019
Part 5: The Prodigal Brother Returns
Genesis 33

Last week we took a closer look at Jacob's literal struggle with God, and today we'll see how Jacob made things right with Esau. The twin brothers had been estranged for twenty years, ever since Jacob pulled a truly egregious stunt before disappearing under the cover of night. It appears that it was Jacob's wrestling match with God that set him on the path of true reconciliation with his brother.

Think about the strained or fractured relationships in your life right now. Have you ever considered the possibility that making things right with them might begin with you first making things right with God? What do you think are the practical connections between the health of your relationship to God and the health of your relationships to others?

Genesis 33:1-3 Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants. 2 He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. 3 He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. 4 But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.

What does the order of Jacob's three groups say about his heart? What do you think it means that, even after wrestling with God, Jacob still made some of the same mistakes in his relationships?

What's the meaning of Jacob bowing seven times? And what is special about Esau's reaction?

Genesis 33:5-11 5 Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. "Who are these with you?" he asked. Jacob answered, "They are the children God has graciously given your servant." 6 Then the female servants and their children approached and bowed down. 7 Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down. 8 Esau asked, "What's the meaning of all these flocks and herds I met?" "To find favor in your eyes, my lord," he said. 9 But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself." 10 "No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably. 11 Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.

Why do you think Jacob insisted that Esau accept the gifts? What role does *restitution* play in restoring relationships that have been broken by sin?

Look again at verse ten. Thinking back to Jacob's encounter with God in Genesis 32, what's the significance in Jacob telling Esau, "For to see your face is like seeing the face of God..."? How did Esau's treatment of Jacob mirror God's grace?



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Luke 15:11-32 Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

“Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ ‘The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

What connections do you see between the story of Jacob and Esau and Jesus’ *Prodigal Son* parable? What do these stories teach us about healing broken relationships?

Think of one relationship could stand to benefit from what you’ve learned from these stories. What are some real steps you can begin to take toward reconciliation?