

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, June 13, 2010 – 11:00 AM
Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor

The Blessing – Genesis 27:31-34

Introduction: Several years ago, Elaine and I attended a marriage retreat at Ridgecrest, NC where the keynote speaker was one of America's leading authors and counselors on family relationships, Dr. Gary Smalley.

Dr. Smalley has authored 40 books which have sold over 6 million copies, including "The Key to Your Child's Heart," and "Joy that Lasts." In 1986, Dr. Smalley teamed up with Dr. John Trent, who is also an outstanding marriage and family counselor, and President of his own ministry called "Encouraging Words," to co-author several books and lead marriage and family seminars all across the United States. You may have read or heard of some of their books, "Love is a Decision," "The Two Sides of Love," and "The Language of Love." But perhaps their best-known book came out in 1986 entitled "The Blessing." It has since been revised in a newer book entitled, "The Gift of the Blessing." The subject matter sprang from both authors' own personal experiences, and this passage we're going to look at this morning, Genesis 27 where Esau's unfulfilled cry of, *"Bless me--me too my Father"* struck a nerve which they had seen often in many of their clients. This morning, I want to share with you some thoughts from that book because there are many people out there, perhaps even some here today, who have longed for a blessing but have never receive it.

Let me explain what I mean. In this book, Dr. Smalley writes about a young man named Brian who longed to receive a blessing from his father. The blessing he desired was to just hear his father say *"Son, I Love You. I am proud of you,"* but it never came.

Brian's father was a career Marine officer, and his one desire for his son was that he would follow in his footsteps. As Brian was growing up, his father took every opportunity to instill in his son the discipline and backbone he would need to become a military officer. Brian's father was a great disciplinarian, and he demanded respect from his son, but using tender words of love and pats on the back, and gentle encouragement were things that were forbidden in Brian's household.

After graduating from high school, Brian enlisted in the Marine Corps. It was the happiest day of his father's life. But it wasn't long before Brian developed attitude problems. Eventually Brian got involved in a fight with his drill instructor which resulted in him being dishonorably discharged from the service.

This was the deathblow to Brian's relationship with his father. He was no longer welcome in his father's home and for years there was no contact between them.

During those years, Brian struggled with feelings of inferiority and lacked self-confidence. Even though he was above average intelligence, he worked at various jobs far below his abilities. Three times he had been engaged only to break the engagement just weeks before the wedding. Somehow he just didn't believe that another person could really love him. He was suffering because he was deprived of his father's blessing of love and approval.

After several years of no contact with his father, one day he got a call that his father was dying from a heart attack. He caught a flight, and during that flight, he kept praying that his father would hang on long enough for him to finally talk with his father and perhaps reconcile their relationship.

But when he arrived, it was too late. His father had already slipped into a coma. The words that Brian longed to hear for the first time – words of love and acceptance – could never be heard. Four hours after Brian arrived at the hospital; his father died having never regained consciousness.

For an hour after his death, Brian kept trying over and over to get his dad to wake up, but he never did. Brian was devastated because he had not only just suffered the incredible sense of the physical loss of his father, but also the emotional loss of losing his father's blessing forever.

Brian's story is a common one. In fact, every son and daughter is like Brian. They long for the family blessing. In fact, we all are made to long for any kind of blessing. We want our parents, our spouses, our children, our friends, our co-workers, our fellow classmates or teachers to bless us...to tell us that we mean something to them.

In the Old Testament we find a story that is much like Brian's. The great patriarch Isaac married Rebekah who eventually gave birth to twin boys, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the first born, and therefore was in line to receive the family blessing and birthright from his father. Esau longed for the day when his father would call him to his side and receive that blessing. But when that day of blessing came, Isaac told Esau that first, he wanted him to go and hunt his favorite game and then cook it and then he was to bring the tasty meal to him.

Well, unbeknownst to Isaac, Rebekah had overheard the conversation. As soon as Esau left, Rebekah told Jacob what his father was going to do. She told him to go bring her two young goats, and she would make his father's favorite dinner from them. Then he was to take it to his father, and his father would then bless him instead.

But Jacob knew that he wasn't hairy like his brother was, and so he was afraid of being found out. His mother told him not to worry about that, she would disguise him so that his father wouldn't know the difference. You see, by this time, Isaac was old and his eyesight wasn't what it used to be.

So, Jacob did what his mother said and brought her the two goats. Rebekah prepared the meal, then she took some of Esau's clothes and had Jacob put them on. She took the skins from the goats and put them on Jacob's arms and the back of his neck so that he would appear to be hairy like his brother.

Wearing the disguise his mother had made, Jacob took the hot meal in to his father. His father couldn't believe Esau had gotten back so soon and he questioned his son. He also began to question the sound of his voice and then he touched him to see if it was really Esau. When he felt the fur on Jacob's neck and arms, he said, *"You sure do sound like Jacob, but you feel like Esau."*

He was about to give his blessing when he asked again, *"Are you really my son Esau?"* *"Yes, I am,"* Jacob lied.

So Isaac ate the meal he thought Esau had brought him. When he was finished, Isaac gave Jacob his blessing. But he thought it was Esau.

In our text, **Genesis 27:31-34 (NIV)**, let's read about what happened when Esau returned from the hunt: *"My father, sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing. His father Isaac asked him, 'Who are you?' 'I am your son,' he answered, 'your firstborn, Esau.' Isaac trembled violently and said, 'Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him and indeed he will be blessed!' When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, 'Bless me--me too, my father!'"*

For a father in biblical times, once a blessing was spoken, it could not be taken back. In response to his pitiful cries, Esau did receive a blessing of sorts from his father, but it was not the blessing of the first-born he had longed to hear.

The cry that Esau delivered is the same cry that can be heard, though often silently, from many people today who have never received the blessing from their parents, or from anyone else. But even if you have not received the blessing or even if you have not been giving it to others, it is not too late to start.

This morning, I want to share with you 3 elements of a blessing. There are more, but I want to focus on these three because if we'll apply them, it will change your life and the lives of others. First, blessings can come in the form of:

1. A Meaningful Touch.

This was an essential element in bestowing the blessing. When Isaac blessed his son, he said, *"Come near now and kiss me, my son."* Every time a blessing was given in Scripture there was hugging, or kissing, or the laying on of hands – some form of human touch. This was important because when we give an appropriate meaningful touch, we are communicating warmth, personal acceptance, and affirmation.

Most of you have heard the story of the little 4 year old girl who was scared late one night during a thunderstorm. After one booming clap of thunder, she jumped out of her bed, ran down to her parent's room and crawled up between them in the bed. *"I'm scared"* she said. *"I don't like the thunder!"*

"Don't worry, Honey," her dad said, trying to calm her fears. *"The Lord will protect you."* The little girl snuggled closer to her daddy and said, *"I know that, Daddy, but right now I need someone with skin on!"* God knows we need the comfort and security that comes from meaningful touch.

We talked last week about Jesus doing what His Father did. Well, have you ever noticed how often Jesus touched people... from little children to grown men. In **Mark 10:16 (NIV)**, it says that Jesus “...took the children in His arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.”

In other places, we read how Jesus reached out to a man who had leprosy and cured him, and how he touched blinded eyes and made them to see again. These were people who were considered outcasts and unclean. Undoubtedly, many of these people had not felt the human touch for years because of their condition. They were literally starved for affection.

No doubt there are many in our world who feel the same way. They’ve been pushed aside, talked about, treated unfairly, and left out of many things most people would consider “*normal life*” for years, and they are starving for affection. One personal touch...whether it’s a hug, a hand on the shoulder, or a handshake...can make a big difference in someone’s life.

Other elements of a blessing that can have a tremendous impact on someone are:

2. Words of Encouragement.

Vs. 27 says that Isaac “...blessed him and said...” **Genesis 27:27 (NIV)**. He actually pronounced the blessing. It was not assumed. It was not implied. It was not communicated in any other way but by mouth. The spoken word was important.

Do you remember the line, “*Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me*”? That is a lie. Words do hurt. They can hurt a person deeply, destroy a friendship, and rip apart a home or a marriage. Words have the incredible power to build people up or tear people down.

The Bible says, “*The tongue has the power of life and death...*” **Proverbs 18:21 (NIV)**. That is why our words carry so much weight. They can give life or take it away.

God created our tongues to bless people, not tear them down. When we praise, or encourage, or lift people up with positive affirmation...we are blessing them.

So not only are we to provide a meaningful touch, but we are to shower people with encouraging words!

In the OT, Abraham spoke a blessing to Isaac. Isaac spoke it to his son Jacob. Jacob spoke it to each of his twelve sons and to two of his grandchildren. Esau was so excited when he was called in to receive his blessing because, after years of waiting, he would finally hear the blessing. In the Scriptures, a blessing is not a blessing unless it is spoken.

Have you blessed someone lately with kind words? Have you told your spouse how much you love them and how much you appreciate and adore them? Have you told your kids or grandkids how proud you are of them? Have you thanked your co-workers for the job they are doing? Kind and encouraging words can make a huge difference in someone’s life.

I remember when I was in the ninth grade, we went out for P.E. one day and the teacher said we were going to play football. The teacher said that we were going to be choosing up teams. He had a couple of the varsity guys as the team captains, and they were the ones doing the picking. Well, of course I wanted to play, but in our class were all these other football players who had been playing almost all their lives, so I knew I was going to be one of the last ones picked.

The first guy to do the picking was the varsity quarterback. His name was Rick Camp. Some of you might remember him because he later went on to have a pretty decent baseball career pitching for the Atlanta Braves.

To my surprise, he called out my name first! That had NEVER happened before – especially playing football, because I was a little skinny runt! Anyway, when I went up to stand beside him, he leaned over and said, “*I picked you because I’ve been watching you, and you’re fast. I need a fast guy on my team.*”

Boy, you could have filled my head with the Atlantic Ocean and sailed in a cruise ship! He didn’t say much to me that day, but he might as well have put a crown on my head because I felt like I was the king of the world!

Now, I’d like to say that his actions that day motivated me to football greatness, but I’d be lying. In fact, I only played one year of JV football. But it did go a long way to help me overcome my insecurities and doubts and shyness. His words and actions that day were a real blessing to me, and I will never forget it.

So, let’s go and be a blessing to others. We might never know how much a kind word or an unselfish action might really make a difference in someone’s life, but they will.

Finally, we need to see that Blessings can also come through:

3. Active Commitments.

As important as the meaningful touch and words of encouragement are in the blessing, the real glue that holds them together is an active commitment. An active commitment means that we are willing to see the blessing come to pass.

A couple of chapters prior to our text, we find where God made an active commitment to Isaac when he *“appeared to him and said, ‘I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham.’”* **Genesis 26:24 (NIV).**

Then here in chapter 27 we see Isaac passing this commitment down to his son in the blessing. *“May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness...”* **Genesis 27:28 (NIV).**

I believe this is the principle James wants us to understand in his letter. He said in Chapter 2: *“Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?”* **James 2:15-16 (NIV)**

James is saying that words don't mean a whole lot if they are not backed up by action. A blessing is not complete if it is not accompanied with a commitment to see it through.

Using my previous example, Rick Camp not only blessed me with encouraging words that day, he demonstrated his words through his actions. He threw the ball to me often. He took time to show me some of the plays they ran on the varsity team. It wasn't a whole lot of time, but He committed his time and effort to help me try to look good. Now, I'm sure he didn't want to look bad either for picking me first, but you see what I mean. Commitment is necessary for a blessing, and that will take time and effort and energy to see it become a reality in people's lives.

Proverbs 31 describes a woman who blesses her family in many ways. She is industrious and loving, has a positive outlook on the future, and is committed to her husband and children.

Now, was she born this way? No. Each of these qualities came at a price. This wife and mother was often up at the crack of dawn working hard to bless her family with her actions and words. Was it really worth the effort for her? Listen to what her family had to say about her and her decision to make a genuine commitment to them: *“Her children arise and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: Many women do noble things, But you surpass them all”* **Proverbs 31:28-29 (NIV).**

It takes effort to be blessing to someone. It takes time and sometimes a sacrifice to meaningfully touch and hug our children when they come home from school or before they go to bed. It takes courage to offer people positive words of encouragement. It takes time and effort to help people achieve their blessing.

But one day, perhaps years later, that blessing will return. Your children and grandchildren will rise up and bless you. What's more, your joy at seeing another person's life bloom and grow because of your blessing.

Conclusion: God wants us to bless others. He even says through the words of the Apostle Paul that we are to, *“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”* **Romans 12:14 (NIV).** That is definitely not an easy thing to do because as we've seen, we have a hard enough time blessing those we love.

But perhaps this helps explain why so many people don't ever receive a blessing from their loved ones. They are never touched in a meaningful and positive way because they're somehow perceived as failures, or they've not met certain expectations, and the blessing has been withheld.

But to those who have longed to be blessed by someone, but have never received it, or never will, I want you to know that you can still experience the awesome feeling and confirmation of the blessing. How? God gives it to you.

It is as if God Himself is reaching out to you and placing His mighty hand on your shoulder. Right now, even as you sit here downtrodden and discouraged and dejected because you've never been told those positive words of encouragement, God is speaking these words of encouragement and favor upon you right now. He's actively committing Himself to you as He says,

“The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.” **Numbers 6:24-26 (NIV).**