



**Greater Grace:
The Story of Leah**

Genesis 29:31-30:24

**Sooke
Baptist
Church**

**Sunday
October 15
2023
10am**



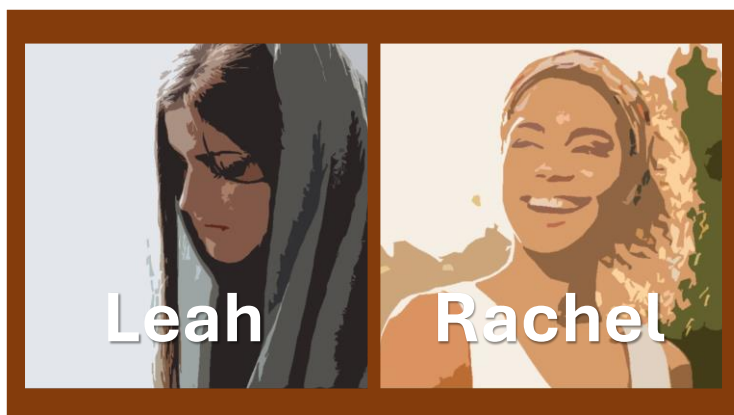
Coffee/Question:
What do you remember most
about your family as a child?

03:00



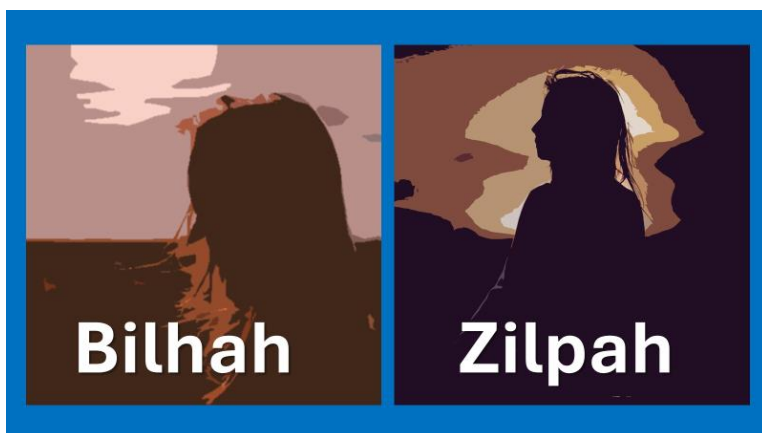
Genesis 29:31-30:24

Jacob's home life was pretty messed up.



There was Leah who longed to be loved by her husband.

There was Rachel who was loved most, but who was jealous of her sister because Leah could get pregnant, and Rachel couldn't; and who at one point... in great exasperation demanded of Jacob – “Give me children or I will die!”



There was Bilhah, a servant of Rachel, who was compelled to marry Jacob in order to be a surrogate mother for Rachel... Bilhan's children were claimed by Rachel as hers.

Then there was Zilpah who was forced by Leah to do the same.

Between these four women eleven boys and one girl were fathered by Jacob.

| | | |
|--------|----------|---|
| Leah | Reuben | The LORD has seen my misery |
| Leah | Simeon | The LORD heard I am not loved |
| Leah | Levi | At last he will become attached to me |
| Leah | Judah | This time I will praise the LORD |
| Bilhah | Dan | God has vindicated me |
| Bilhah | Naphtali | I have had a great struggle and I have won |
| Zilpah | Gad | What good fortune! |
| Zilpah | Asher | How happy I am |
| Leah | Issachar | God has rewarded me |
| Leah | Zebulun | This time my husband will treat me with honor |
| Leah | Dinah | |
| Rachel | Joseph | God has taken away my disgrace |

This was the family that the LORD had chosen to be the ancestors of his Rescuer.

That being so why God didn't airbrush out the messy stuff in this story? The fact that God included their story in the Bible didn't mean that God condoned what they did.

Theirs and all the other stories told in the Bible reveal the human condition – there is no one righteous; no one who does good, not even one; all have become worthless.

God knows that we need to hear this repeatedly, for we are prone to downplay the seriousness of our sin; and prone to shrink God's holiness.

But... "there is no one righteous; no one who does good, not even one" ... doesn't mean humans are incapable of doing good things.

We are.

However, our best always falls short of God's good.

Our best cannot fix what our sin has broken ... which is to live in fellowship with a holy God... who is the source of all life.

All of humanity is in need of rescue, including the family through whom the Rescuer came into the world.

In this story found in Genesis 29 and 30 we see more than a messy family... we also see the great patience and the goodness of God.

Today we will look at what God did in Leah's life.

First wife, but not first choice

Leah was Jacob's first wife, but she was not Jacob's first choice. Leah knew this.

She was painfully aware... that Jacob, 29:30, loved Rachel more. But she knew that her circumstances were known to the LORD. The names she gave to her sons confirm this.

| | |
|--------|---|
| Reuben | The LORD has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now. |
| Simeon | Because the LORD heard I am not loved, he gave me this one too. |
| Levi | Now at last my husband, will become attached to me because I have borne him three sons. |
| Judah | This time I will praise the LORD |

Remember Hagar?

Remember how she ran away?

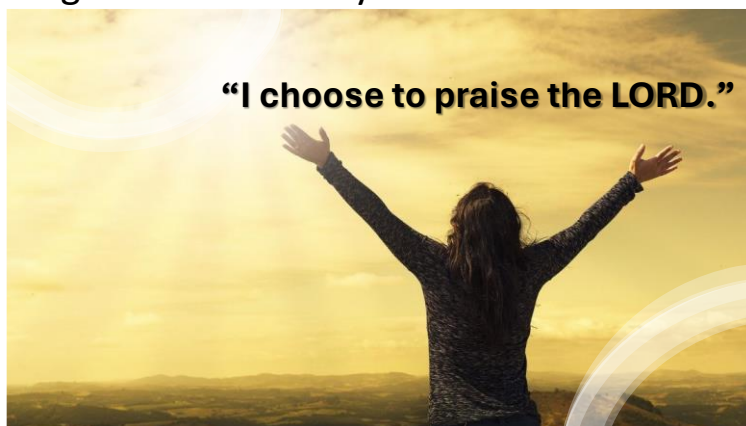
Remember the name Hagar gave to God in light of who God revealed himself to be on the road to Egypt?



Hagar said of the LORD... **“I have now seen the God who sees me.”**

Leah never stopped craving Jacob’s love.

But when her fourth son was born, she chose that her joy would no longer be dictated by her circumstances.



Leah chose to focus her mind and her heart on who the LORD is and what he had done for her.

She chose to praise the LORD and find her solace in him.

When her sixth son was born look at what she said.

Zebulun God has presented me with a precious gift.
This time my husband will treat me with honor, because I have borne him six sons.

With the birth of Zebulun, Leah still hoped that Jacob would cherish and honor her.

But as she chose to praise the LORD the birth of Zebulun impressed upon her ... that in the LORD she had a precious gift.

Psalm 139

O LORD, you know me.

You know when I sit and when I rise.

You perceive my thoughts from afar.

You discern my going out and my lying down.

You are familiar with all my ways.

Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely.

You hem me in behind and before.

You have laid your hand upon me.

The LORD is intimately aware of the lives of his people and all the details that happen to them.

And his hand rests upon them.

This statement brims with significance.

Do you remember Nehemiah?

Repeatedly throughout his book he said this of the LORD:



- God granted Nehemiah favor with King Artaxerxes who gave him permission to return to Jerusalem in order to rebuild the city.
- God granted protection to Nehemiah as he travelled dangerous roads from Susa to Jerusalem.
- God granted Nehemiah both insight and skill to mobilize the people of Jerusalem to rebuild the city wall in 52 days, while dealing with enemies who wanted to violently stop the project.

Psalm 37:24

Psalm 104: 28

John 10:28-29

When God places his hand on the lives of his people, he does so as Psalm 37:24 says in order to keep them from falling, to guard them from shipwrecking their faith.

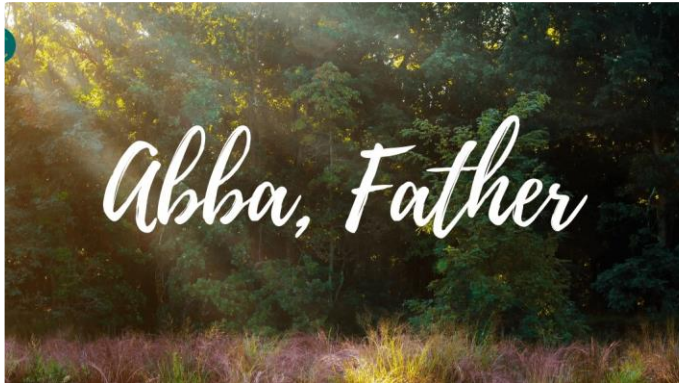
When God places his hand on the lives of his people, he does so as Psalm 104: 28 says in order to satisfy their heart with the good things he provides for them on a daily basis..

When God places his hand on the lives of his people, he does so as Jesus said in John 10:28-29, to guard us from anything or anyone that would try to separate us from our God.

Think about it!

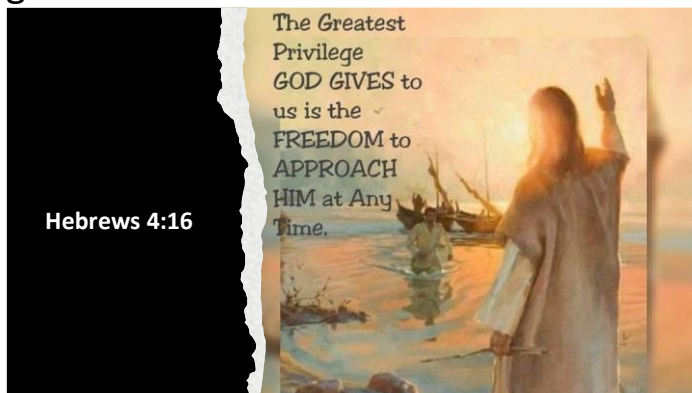
The Judge of all the earth... is our Father!

His love for us has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit...



... that persuades us to call God.... "Abba, Father."

Our Father who has complete access to our lives... who knows everything... who sees everything... who hears everything... graciously gives us access to His.



We can come near to the Father ...with confidence.

In the challenging circumstances of our lives... our Father is at work by the Spirit, to grant us grace that is greater.... in order to lead us, like Leah, to hope in Him and to praise Him.

To praise God is not the response of a person who is delusional, nor something which a sadistic god desires of those who follow him. James, the brother of Jesus, moved by the Spirit wrote:

James 1:2-4

Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds.

How could Leah be expected to find joy as an unloved wife?
How can you and I find joy in the hard things that touch our lives?

James 1:2-4

Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds, because...

Here in James 1 the answer is provided.

James 1:2-4

Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

The goal of God as he works in the lives of his people is to transform their character.

This is what God was doing with Leah... he was transforming her.

Without question it was a painful process.
But it produced in her God's goal – that she might share in his holiness.

The process of our transformation... can tempt us to wonder whether the pain is worth it.

At a time when many were giving up on Jesus, he asked the disciples, "Do you too want to go?"

It was Peter who answered for them all, "To whom would we go? You have the words of life."

It is in the midst of our trials that we learn just how faithful God is.

It is there we experience just how strong his hand is.

It is there we see him turn sorrow into joy and mourning into laughter.

James 1:2-4

Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Ours is an instant culture.

If something is hard, many conclude it is not worth pursuing.

If a door doesn't immediately open, people are prone to think it is a door that won't or can't be opened.

In the reign of God, the transformation of a person's character is a work that requires long periods of time.

Leah persevered for years in a loveless marriage.

But it was there... in that context, she learned to praise God... and to walk by faith with God.

The text doesn't tell us the moment when it changed... but it did. Leah who was deeply loved and cherished by God was eventually loved and cherished by her husband.

Rachel had died when she gave birth to her second son Benjamin. Jacob buried her near Bethlehem, Genesis 35:19-20.



When Jacob himself was about to die and remember at that point in his life, he was living in Egypt... he gave instruction to his sons about where he was to be buried – and it was not in Egypt, nor in Bethlehem.

Genesis 49:29-33

Then [Jacob] gave them these instructions: "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite. There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, **and there I buried Leah.** The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites." When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people.

Jacob told his sons to bury him... with Leah.



Abraham and Sarah
Isaac and Rebekah
Jacob and Leah

They were to bury him where the bones of Abraham and Sarah rested.
They were to bury him where the bones of Isaac and Rebekah rested.
And future generations would speak of this cave... as where the bones of Jacob and Leah rested.

The joy of the LORD had been Leah's strength and as she persevered in her faith in the LORD her character was transformed and her prayers to be loved by her husband were answered.

For today, can you put into the LORD's hands, once again, the circumstances that are causing you grief.
For today, can you ask God for his grace that is greater... and ask him to use... these circumstances... to forge perseverance in your character... as he transforms you into the likeness of Jesus.

Can you do that?
Will you do that?

Remember the LORD.
The One who holds our lives in his hand is faithful and he will finish in us what he has begun.