

Sometimes the decisions made by parents regarding their children are challenging to explain to their child... because the child may lack maturity or life experience.

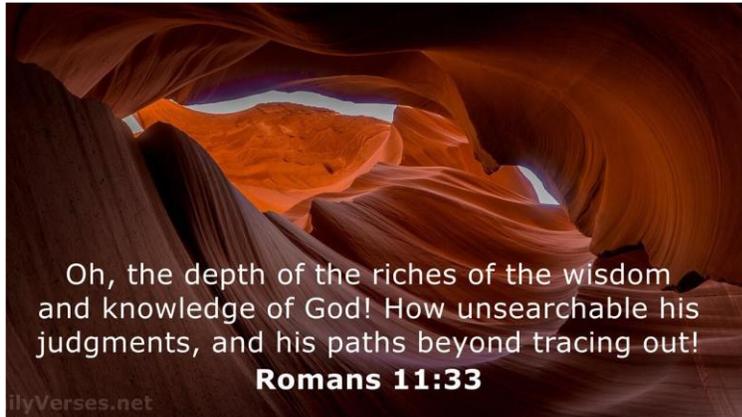
In today's passage, we encounter God doing something that stretches his people's ability to comprehend.

And like a child... we ask God why.

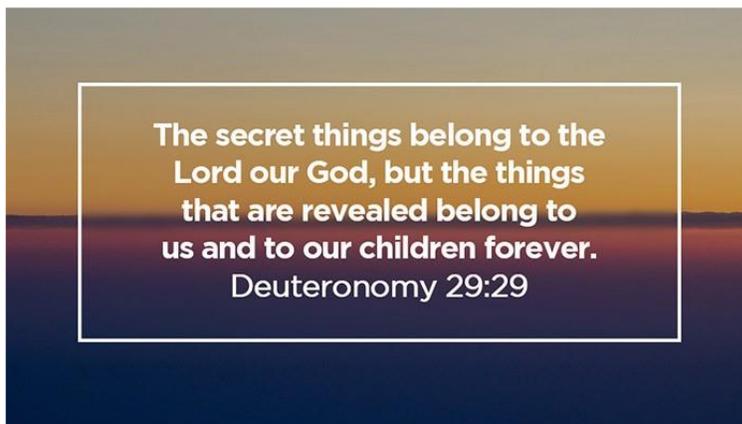
We voice to him our frustration... that what he did or didn't do... or permitted to happen.... doesn't make sense.

But think about it... why would any of us think that God needs our approval to do what he does? that he needs to explain himself to us? that if we can't grasp his explanation... then He is suspect of not being... and you fill in the blank.

The passage from Romans 11 that we read in our call to worship helps to rightly orient our minds to the wonder of God's person.



This is what God revealed to Moses and the people of Israel.



It should not surprise us that God knows more than we do... and does things that to us seem incomprehensible.

This is what was impressed upon Job when God appeared to him and spoke with him.

Remember our call to worship? the questions which God posed to Job?

Job did not know the mind of the LORD.

And neither do we.

But this we do know ... the LORD is good and all that he does is good.

One of the practices that fosters spiritual maturity is to meditate upon the LORD; to ponder him and his ways.

And when we still don't understand, for there will be times when we won't... we trust our God for what we don't know... we rest our hearts and minds in his sovereignty and wisdom and power and love.



Our passage for today is found in the book of Genesis, chapter 25. We begin to read... at verse 21.

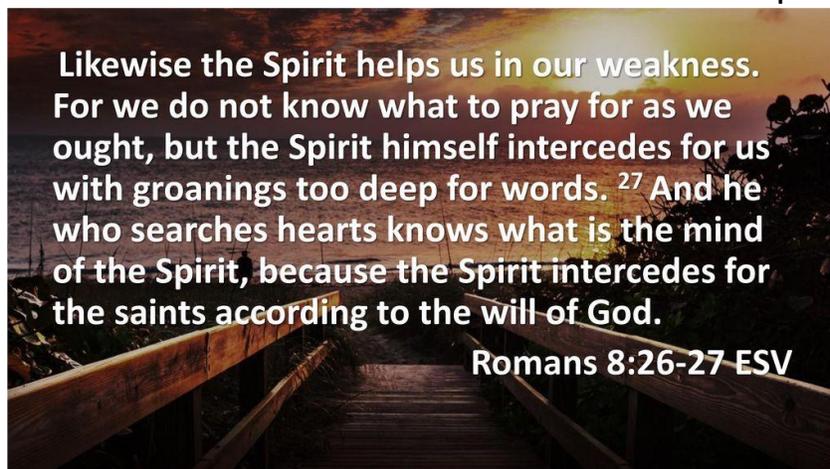


Why do the people of God pray?

Because God hears... and because God responds.

That said... there will be times when God's answer to a request... is no, or his answer looks differently than what we had asked him for.

What we remember in such times... is Who... prays with us and for us.

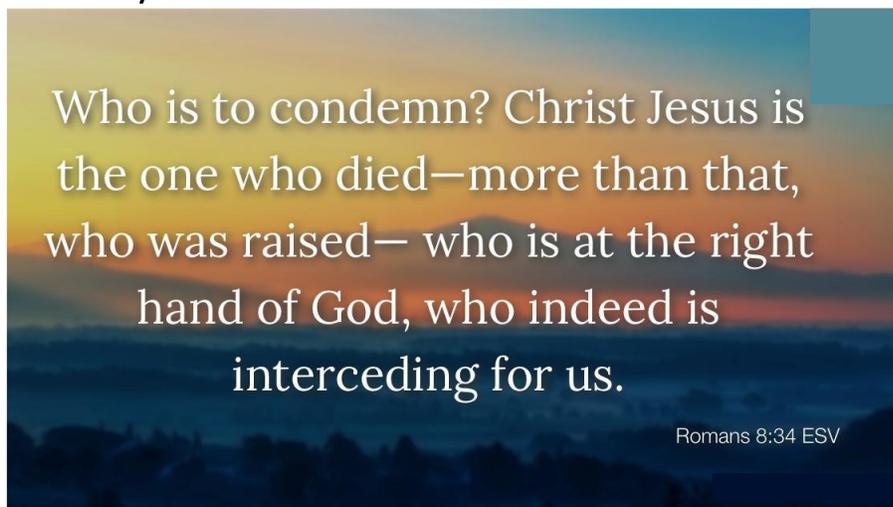


Do you remember what Jesus taught his disciples to pray?
“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

We are not always certain, are we – what is the will of the Father.
But the One who prays for us, the Holy Spirit, does.
Even if... and even when... we get our prayers wrong, the Holy Spirit
always gets it right.

Is that not incredible?

The very next verse in Romans 8 tells us... that Jesus also prays for us.



In John 10 Jesus used the analogy of a shepherd and his sheep to
describe how he cares for his followers.
As our good Shepherd Jesus knows exactly what we need and when.

In John 17, we read Jesus’ prayer to the Father.
He asks for his followers that their faith would not fail.
He prays that we would be protected from the evil one.
He asks that the truth of God’s word would set us apart.
He prays that we might be one with him and the Father and that his
church might be one... with one another and with the triune God.

The Father hears the prayers of his people... and the prayers of the Spirit and his Son Jesus Christ who prays for them and with them. And the Father... who hears... answers our prayers.

Rebekah was barren.

But God heard the prayer of Isaac, and she became pregnant.



Having conceived, Rebekah experienced a “challenging pregnancy.” At first, she didn’t know she was carrying twins. All she knew was... that...

“jostling”

... was happening within her womb.

What Rebekah experienced was not the usual flutters and kicks. Something unusual was going on.

The Hebrew word translated “jostling” is...

“jostling”

“rasas”

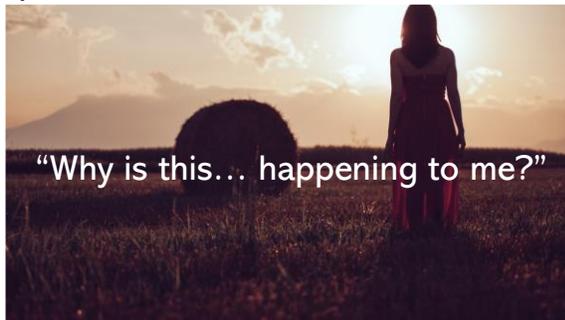
...which literally means ...

“jostling”

“rasas”

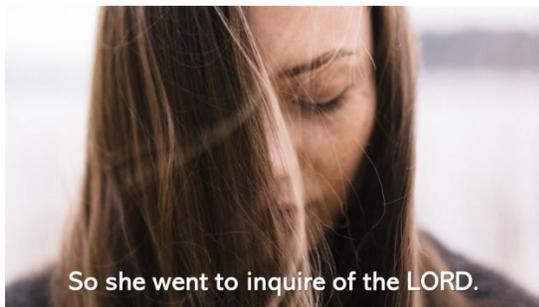
“to crack in pieces;
to go to war.”

There was a violent struggle going on in Rebekah's womb.
The twins within her... were fighting each other.
In fact, things got so unsettling for Rebekah that she voiced this question:



Have there not been times when we too have asked something similar?
“What is happening to me?”

What did Rebekah do with her question?

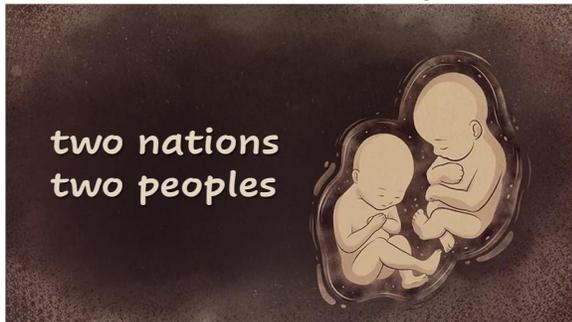


What does it mean to inquire... of the LORD?
Rebekah set aside her normal activities... in order to give herself time...
to speak with the LORD.
Then... she waited... attentively... for the LORD's answer.

In this instance... she didn't have to wait long.
The text reads as if God's answer was almost immediate.



The LORD revealed to Rebekah that she was carrying twins.
But within her were not just two babies...



...but two nations, two peoples.

What the LORD revealed to Rebekah was something unimagined in that particular time and culture; something that gloriously made known God's sovereign activity in human history.

The LORD would bless the nations as he had promised Abraham.
But he would do so... not through the firstborn grandson of Abraham... as would have been expected, but through the younger grandson.

As he did this, what was God endeavoring to impress upon the world of humanity?

That salvation is of the LORD.
And the manner by which God chooses to save... makes known his wisdom and magnifies the greatness of his grace and mercy.

God chose Isaac and not Ishmael.



The LORD did so... not because the descendants of Jacob would be more numerous (see Deuteronomy 7:7) or be wiser... or more influential ... or stronger (see 1 Corinthians 1:26).

God's choosing was because of his love.



This word from the LORD to Rebekah... was enough. God's answer to her question – “why is this happening to me” ...sustained Rebekah through her pregnancy.



The name Esau means “hairy.” Because Esau's skin and his hair was red, he was also called Edom, which means ‘red,’ and his descendants were known as the Edomites.

We don't have time to dig into this, this morning. But in the time leading up to the exile and afterwards, many of the prophets had a message from God for the Edomites.

Also, King Herod who gave the order to kill all the infant boys under the age of two in the region of Bethlehem... was an Edomite.



The name Jacob means “he grasps the heel.”
His name was given to him to retain the memory of this unusual act – grasping the heel of his brother as he was being born.

But as the infant grew, from a baby to a child to a boy to a teen to a man, it was seen in Jacob’s nature that he was a schemer and a deceiver and the figurative meaning of his name became prominent.

Look at what Esau said in 27:36.

Genesis 27:36
Esau said [to his father],
“Isn’t he rightly named Jacob?
He has deceived me these two times:
He took my birthright,
and now he has taken my blessing!”

When God told Rebekah that her older son would serve her younger son, it was not the will of God that Jacob obtain the birthright and the blessing of Esau... through deception and scheming.

But we will never know what God would have done... how he would have worked... to bless Jacob... because Jacob got in the way.

It makes you wonder, doesn't it, how many times have we missed how God's grace and blessing would have intervened in her lives? how the story of our life might have been different if we had waited for God?

And yet, even Jacob's meddling, scheming and conniving, and ours as well, could not derail God's will from being done.

Is not the triune God incredible?

God turned what Jacob had intended for evil – the defrauding of his brother – and sovereignly brought about the choice, which He had made and declared to Rebekah, that the Rescuer would come through the family line of Jacob.



Exodus 14:13 – Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD...

Psalms 3:8 – Salvation belongs to the LORD...

Psalms 27:3 – The LORD is my light and my salvation...

Isaiah 12:2 – God is my salvation...

Acts 4:12 – Salvation is found in no one else...

In the choice made by the LORD regarding Esau and Jacob, and there would be many more such choices made through the centuries that followed, the Scripture impresses upon us, repeatedly... that God doesn't rescue good people.

He saves sinners.

This is why, Jacob, a deceiver and a manipulator, was shown great mercy.

But is that not our story as well?

Who here has not been shown great mercy?

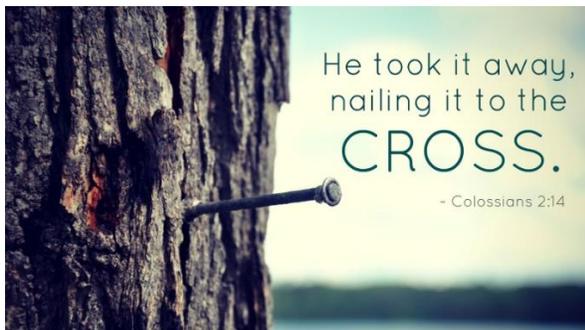
The LORD has not treated us as our sins deserve.

Rather he took them away as far as the east is from the west.

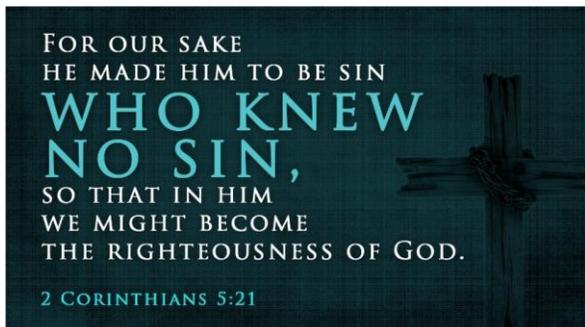


God the Father cancelled, as Colossians 2:13 says, all that was against us... all that stood opposed to us.

How did he do this?



He nailed our sin to the cross of Jesus.



The Father made Jesus to be sin.

Jesus died in our place.

Through the cross the triune God disarmed the Accuser... and triumphed over him.

This was when and this is how...



Is this not news that our culture desperately needs to hear? We live in a cancel culture where if someone makes a mistake or commits an offense, that's it... they're written off and shunned.

Without question - there must be accountability. People must be responsible for their words and actions. But the human condition is this – we all fall short... because we all are sinners.

This is why God sent His Rescuer. Jesus came into the world because God loved humanity. Jesus was miraculously conceived and born in a manger in Bethlehem because the triune God was not willing to write us off, nor to leave us to be forever ruined by our sin.

When a person believes in and receives Jesus into their life...

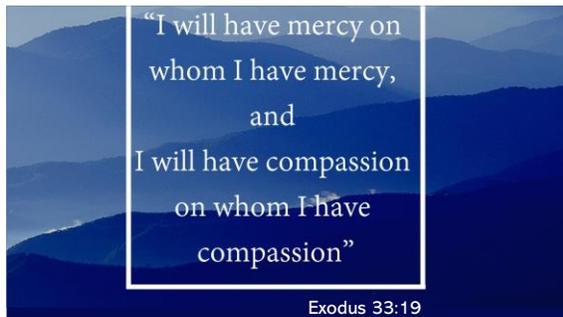


...the grace of God makes them to be a new creation.

By the grace of God, sinners... become saints.
By the grace of God, those who are spiritually lost... are found.
By the grace of God, the broken and ruined... are restored.
By the grace of God, those who are banished... are brought home.

Moses had an encounter with God where the LORD revealed his glory by causing all his goodness to pass in front of him.

As he did so, the LORD said this to Moses, Exodus 33:19:



God sovereignly chooses... upon whom he will show mercy.
No one is deserving.
God’s mercy from start to finish... is a gracious gift.

That pull some of you have felt on your heart, not just this morning, but for some time now.... that is the Father drawing you to himself... because he chooses you... and he chooses you because he loves you.

And as he tugs on your heart, he also reveals to your mind the beauty of his Savior.

What you hadn’t seen before, now is clear....Jesus is the Savior of the world.

The Bible says... whosoever will... may come.

My question of you this morning... is will you open your life to the God who created you and who sent his Son into the world to rescue you?

Will you change your mind and believe in Jesus and receive him into your life to be the One in charge?



Jesus is knocking at the door of your life.

Will you open that door and welcome him to come in?

How do you do that?

By speaking to him – to the God who hears and who sees... you.

He chooses you.

Will you this morning choose him?

If your answer is yes, then speak to him in the quiet of your heart.

You can say something like this.

I am a sinner who can't save myself.
Please forgive me, I have been so wrong about You
and who You made me to be.

I see now that You do love me.
I believe Jesus gave His life in exchange for mine;
that He died for my sins, in my place.

I welcome You into my life to make me a new person.
I recognize only You can fill my inner emptiness.
Thank You for hearing my prayer.

If you prayed to receive Jesus, will you tell someone that you did?

Please speak with a friend, or with me.

We want to make sure you have a Bible, and to help you know where to begin to read it on a daily basis.

We also want to help you connect to other followers of Jesus. That's because being a follower of Jesus is not a lone-ranger experience. Our faith is lived in community with others who also follow Jesus.

To those who already follow Jesus, this passage also speaks great encouragement to us.

We have been reminded that God hears, and God answers our prayers. The Scripture encourages us that even if we get it wrong, the Spirit prays for us in agreement with the will of the Father.

Our LORD Jesus always speaks to the Father on our behalf... and his passion for us is the transformation of our character. To that end he asks for grace that is always sufficient for our need.

The Scripture also reminds us God always finishes what he starts. Without question, and we will unpack the details in the studies to follow... Jacob was a deceiver and a manipulator.

But God had chosen to rescue him and to work in his life and through his family to bless the nations through the Rescuer who would come into the world and who would be counted as a descendant of Jacob.

There came a day, or better said, a night, when Jacob had an encounter with God that was so profound, so life-changing that even his name was changed in order to reflect what God had brought about in his heart and mind.

Jacob the deceiver became Israel... and the descendants who came after him were known as the Israelites.

This is who God is.

He is committed to finishing in his people what He by the Spirit has begun.

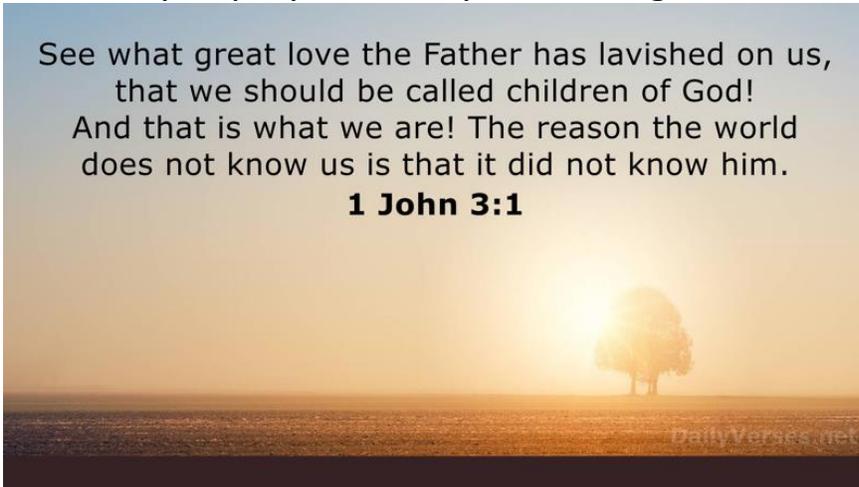
So take your questions to the LORD.

Inquire of him and wait until he answers you.

The One you pray to loves you with a great love.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God!
And that is what we are! The reason the world
does not know us is that it did not know him.

1 John 3:1



In the book of Revelation, to each of the seven churches, Jesus closed his message to them by saying,

“The one who has an ear, let them hear what the Spirit says.”