

I remind you that in that day and time, having children was considered as a sign of God's blessing.

So you can imagine how devastating it was for Rachel that she couldn't have children.... because she was barren.

But Leah ... she had no trouble getting pregnant.

And so jealousy grew in Rachel as she watched her sister Leah give birth to one son after another... until finally, one day, like a volcano...



...her emotional distress and agony of soul exploded onto her husband.

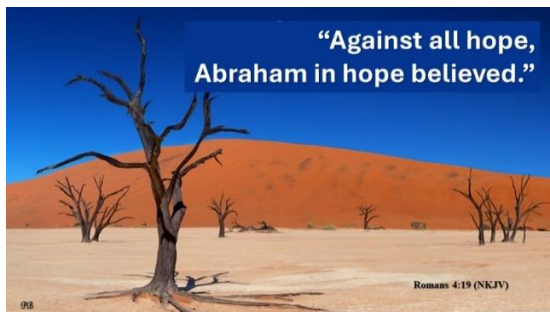
She cried out to Jacob, saying, 30:1...



Sarah and Rebekah had experienced a similar agony of soul... for these two women had also been barren. Sarah had had to wait on God for 25 years before she became pregnant. Rebekah had waited 20 years.

But the Scriptures reveal that God used those years of waiting to teach them to hope in the LORD.

Like Abraham...



... against all hope, Sarah in hope believed... as did Rebekah. In Rachel's circumstances, God was active in her time of waiting to reorient her heart that it might treasure Him.



For Rachel it was a painful process.

Our passage informs us Rachel resisted having to wait... and like Sarah, she took matters into her own hands, and gave her maidservant to Jacob as a wife in order that Bilhah might serve as a surrogate mother.

We've all been there.

I don't mean surrogacy.

But when required by God to wait... haven't we too taken short cuts of our own making?

The Bible reveals... that for God there is a right way and a right time. The LORD is never in a hurry as we often are.

Rachel's use of surrogacy was not the only shortcut she attempted.



The mandrake plant, found by Leah's son Reuben... is a perennial herb with a large root and purple flowers.

It was also called the love apple and was believed to help women become pregnant.

Leah, who had stopped having children of her own after her fourth son was born, wanted to become pregnant again.

That's why her son Reuben had gone in search of mandrakes for her.

When Rachel became aware that Reuben had found mandrakes, she wanted some of them to eat, because she too, wanted to bear her own children.

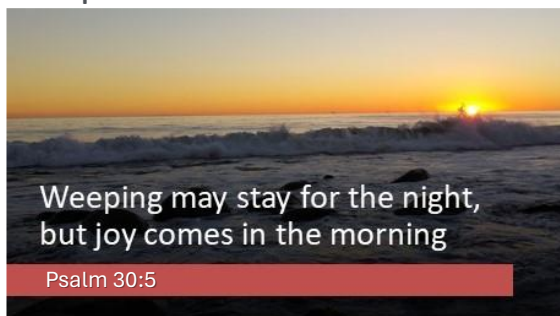
Having Bilhah serve as a surrogate for her wasn't enough.

Although both Leah and Rachel ate the mandrakes, it was only Leah who became pregnant, not once, not twice, but three times. And Rachel... she remained on the sidelines... forced to continue to watch and wait.

God would not be rushed regarding his will for her. That said... neither had the LORD forgotten about Rachel. Look at v.22.

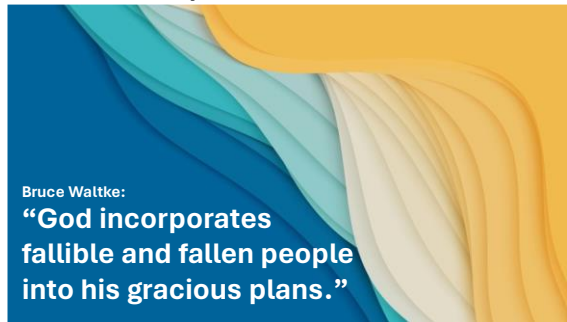


These four words could not have been any more precious. The psalmist wrote:



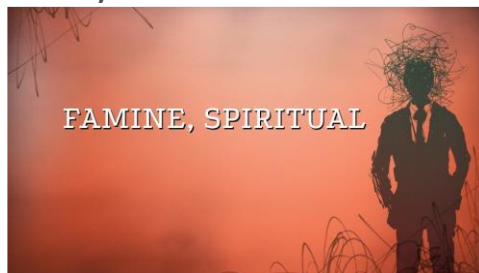
In Rachel's case... it had been more than a night. It had been years. But in God's right time, joy came to the heart of Rachel. Joseph was conceived in her... because the years of waiting had accomplished in Rachel what God had purposed.

In her story told here in Genesis 30, Bruce Waltke reminds us...



God, whose grace is greater ... than our sin – patiently worked in the lives of the two sisters and their husband.

In Rachel's case the son she gave birth to... became the rescuer of his family in a time of famine.



Joseph foreshadowed what God' Rescuer would do in a far greater way... he would save humanity from spiritual famine.

In Joseph's early years Rachel was used by God to shape his character... as God had shaped hers.

Because his task was so great, from ages 17-30 God required Joseph to spend long years, first as a slave and then as a falsely accused prisoner.

This was how the character of Joseph was made ready to be second in command in Egypt.



It was the crucible of hardship that made Joseph impervious to the seductive allure of Egypt's power, wealth and idolatry.

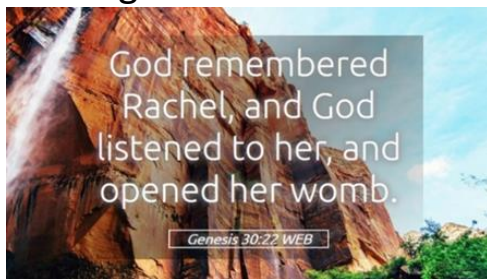
You and I in the moment may not know... why God makes us wait and why he allows certain circumstances to come into our lives... particularly when there is pain involved... and the waiting is long.

Like Rachel... we may chafe... we may question and complain; we may attempt various schemes of our own making... to get things moving.

But waiting on God is not passive.

As she waited, Rachel prayed.

Look again at v.22.



Sorrow, hostility, and competition had been Rachel's companions... for many years... and these things had diminished her so that, in the words of Bruce Waltke, she lived a half-life.

This is what sin does.

It never brings fullness of life.

It always diminishes a person.

The Bible speaks good news to all who are living "half-lives."



We all are prone to think that if God grants us such and such, then our hearts will be content, and our lives will brim with significance and purpose.

But the greater blessing... that God made known to Rachel... through his transforming work of her character... was His friendship and fellowship. Her son, Joseph, was a gift.

But the LORD... He was her greatest treasure.

The last night of his life, as he prayed to his Father in the presence of his disciples, he made known an astounding truth.

John 17:3
Now this is eternal life...

Remember Jesus said he had come to give life to the full, life that never ends, life that endures, life that is eternal.

What is that life?

Jesus announced what it was in his prayer.

John 17:3
Now this is eternal life:
that they may know you,
the only true God,
and Jesus Christ,
whom you have sent.

Life to the full is a life that knows the triune God... a life that experiences fellowship with God by grace through faith in Jesus.

Jesus had spoken of this in the parable of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price.

Sin which has invaded our human nature... separates us from God. After Adam and Eve ate the fruit and hid, God called out to them:



Adam and Eve hid because they feared the One who had lovingly created them and invited them into fellowship with himself.

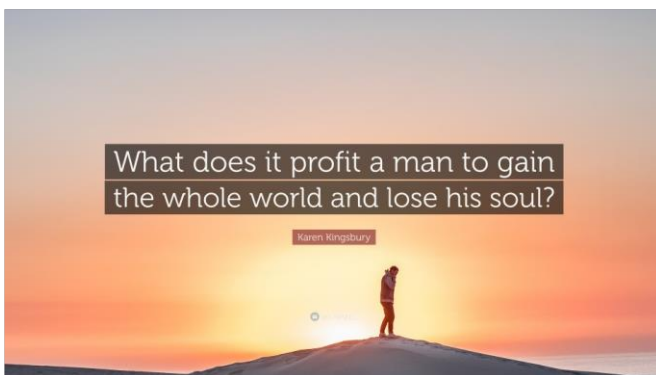
In his pursuit of humanity since that long ago day, God continues to call, out to the heart of a person, “Where are you?”

God does so, in order to awaken in those, he pursues... the awareness of how lost they are, and how empty their soul is... if their life is not rooted in Him.

God and God alone... is the lover of our soul.

The triune God ... he is our true home.

Jesus asked:



There is absolutely nothing that can fill the human soul with life... except the One who created us.

And there is nothing, absolutely nothing of greater value... than to live in fellowship with the triune God

God lovingly and patiently pursued after Rachel.

That too is the story of many of us who are here.

God graciously worked in Rachel's life... displacing from her heart the substitutes she had hoped in... until finally she came to cherish the LORD alone.

That too is the story of many of us who are here.

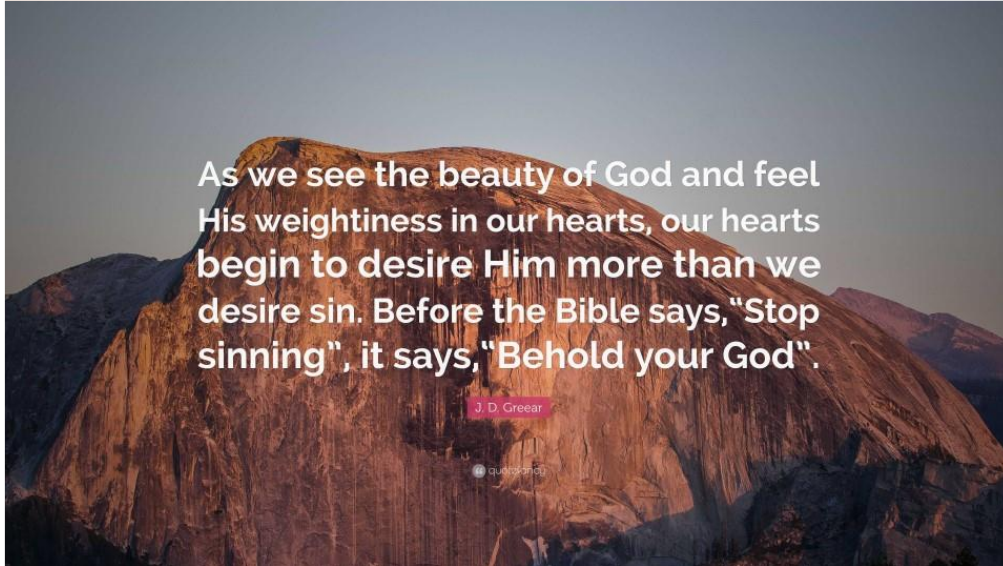
The LORD who remembered Rachel, knew her heart explicitly. And he did answer her prayer for a child... opening her womb... because finally she was ready... ready on God's behalf... to be Joseph's mom.

Finding her significance and her joy in the LORD meant she didn't have to look to her boy to fill that void within her. Because that would have been an impossible burden to place on Joseph.

The LORD himself became Rachel's Treasure. She who had lived a half-life for many years, now lived life to the full because she now knew the LORD and walked with Him.

This is why the LORD teaches and trains us as he did with Rachel... ..that we might perceive his irresistible beauty and treasure Him above all other things.

JD Grear wrote:



The God whom we behold in the creation, in the scriptures and in the person of Jesus Christ... is the God of every grace.... who loved us first... with a love that can never be diminished.

Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, whose blood that cleanses us from all sin makes possible our fellowship with one another.

This is who... and why the LORD works in us to transform our characters.