

REMEMBRANCE SERMON: ENEMIES BECOME FRIENDS

Genesis 32, Ephesians 2:13-18

STORY: THE TWINS (part 4)

This is the concluding part in the tale of the twins. For those of you who may have missed the earlier parts this is the story so far.

The twins were Ian and Duncan. They were very special boys because they were born to parents Stan and Elspeth after many years of trying for a family. Although they were twins they were very different boys; Ian was high spirited while Duncan was quiet and studious. They had fallen out with each other many years ago over the ownership of an antique car and also over who should inherit the family home. According to their father's will it should have been Ian who was his father's favourite, but Duncan was his mother's favourite and she wanted him to inherit the house. So she persuaded Duncan to trick their father, who by then was blind. Duncan altered the will in his own favour with a codicil which he knew his father would not be able to read before signing. Ian discovered the trickery when their father died. He was outraged and had threatened legal action. So Duncan had disappeared off the scene, going to live with an uncle on a farm in the outback of Australia.

Twenty years passed, Duncan married and had a family. He had worked hard on the farm and eventually he was able to buy a farm of his own. He built his own house and Australia now felt like home.

One day he was fixing a fence when, Moira, his wife came out with the phone in her hand. She said it was a solicitor in Scotland. He told Duncan that his mother had died.

Later that evening in the house Duncan and Moira discussed the situation and considered if he should go to the funeral. The flights were not a problem, he was prepared to pay over the odds for a last minute booking, but meeting Ian again, that was going to be much harder. He could just imagine how Ian would react when he appeared again after all these years.

Ian had been so angry when Duncan had left Britain all those years ago and they had never been in touch in all that time. How would he feel if Ian ignored him? Or worse still carried out his threat of legal action? There was a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach at the thought of it.

Next morning was Sunday and Duncan and Moira went as usual to their local church. Duncan thought to himself that if ever the Lord needed to speak to him about anything it was right now.

The message was based on the story of Jacob and Esau; all about the way Jacob had first deceived Esau, his twin older brother, then deceived his father Isaac to gain the rights of the first-born son. Duncan couldn't quite believe his ears when he began to recognise himself in the character of Jacob. It was his own life story.

In the Bible reading the Lord told Jacob to go back home to meet his brother again and Duncan knew that the Lord was speaking to him. The bible reading continued with the Lord's promise to Jacob, "I will be with you," and Duncan felt this was a promise for him also.

Duncan now felt at peace and knew what he had to do.

On the plane back to the UK Duncan did a lot of praying, more than he'd ever prayed in his whole life. Could he really put his faith in a Bible story, I mean, this was real life now. However, he knew he had changed a lot since he left Scotland. He also realised how wrong he had been to try and cheat Ian out of his inheritance. He prayed that Ian also would have changed; that he would be ready to accept his apology and give Duncan a chance to put things right.

And so Duncan found himself in the kitchen of the old house, the house that his mother had lived in until she passed away, which now according to his father's will belonged to him. The solicitor had given him a key and said that he had arranged for Ian to call by to discuss the funeral arrangements.

When Duncan heard the car outside he felt a sudden panic. He couldn't go through with this. How could he face Ian again after all that had happened? But he remembered the promise the Lord had given him, "I will be with you."

There was a firm knock on the door. Somehow Duncan found the strength to go over and open it. Ian stood there. He was different and yet the same - older, more haggard and losing his hair but still with that devil may care attitude in the way he stood, just like he was in the old days. Duncan could see the defiance in his eyes and yet he also saw a vulnerability.

Without waiting to be invited Ian stepped inside and the two men faced each other for the first time in 20 years.

Duncan knew he had to make the first move.

“Ian, I’m sorry for the way I tricked dad into changing his will. I want to put things right. I have a house of my own now in Australia, so I don’t need this one. You can have it.”

Ian didn’t answer at first. Duncan thought he was going to throw his apology back in his face – just what he had dreaded.

Finally Ian responded.

“You know, when I found out about the house and how you had altered the will, I really hated you, I hated you so much. But now, what does it all matter, I don’t need cars or houses, I’ve got plenty of everything.”

Hope began to rise in Duncan’s heart. Perhaps they really could put the past behind and be reconciled?

“I’m sorry Ian, for all the things I did back then. If I could turn the clock back I’d do it all differently. “

“It’s all water under the bridge now. I was pretty mean to you too. I’m sorry about that.”

Duncan was lost for words. This felt like miracle he had prayed for and he knew that the Lord really was with him.

At the funeral they stood together at the door of the Church and they each took a cord at the graveside, Ian the first cord and Duncan the second. It felt good to be standing there together as friends.

That following Sunday was the Remembrance Service in Church.

The sermon was based on Ephesians 2:13-18

“Christ himself has brought us peace ... by his death on the cross Christ destroyed our enmity; by means of the cross he united us into one body and brought us back to God. So Christ came and preached the good news of peace to all.”

It was about Jesus destroying the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, making peace and turning enemies into friends. Ian and Duncan glanced at each other, knowing that’s what Jesus had done for them.

After the service they went to the memorial. Their uncle Frank had died out in the desert in 1943 and his name was there along with the others who had given their lives.

As they stood beside the war memorial for the two minutes silence Duncan was read the inscription: ***“They died so that we could live in peace”***

Just as Jesus died to bring peace to the world, his uncle Frank had died so that they could live in peace. Not just an end to war, but an end to hostility, living together as friends.

Duncan knew that now he had made real peace with his brother.

Ian came to the airport to see Duncan off on his way back to Australia.

Duncan still had some business to sort out.

“About the house,” he said, “You have it; it should have been yours anyway.”

“I don’t need it,” Ian replied, “but if it makes you feel better, let’s split it between us.”

And so it was agreed that they would sell the house and share the proceeds.

There was just one question, one little detail that Duncan wanted to know about before flying back.

“That old Morris 1000 Ian, I suppose it’s still in the shed?”

“In the shed?” Ian replied grinning, “Well not exactly. I’ve been sort of looking after it for you. Actually it’s in my garage at home. You wouldn’t recognise it. I had it restored and I give it a run now and again on a Sunday afternoon, just to keep it ticking over until you came back for it you understand.”

“Nice one” said Duncan, and they both laughed.