

A TALE OF TWO BROTHERS

Genesis 25:19-34 p.26

STORY: THE TWINS

The twins were miracle babies. Stan and Elspeth had been wanting children for many years, so when the two boys were eventually born the news spread far and wide and everyone was happy for them. As they grew up they became a familiar sight as they made their way to and from the rambling old house on South Street.

You would think that being twins they would have a lot in common, but it was amazing how different they were to each other.

Ian was a feisty lad, always the first to get involved in any mischief. He was usually late home with mud on his clothes after playing in the woods. Duncan was much more studious and preferred to spend his time learning something from a book. He was a quieter boy, a deep thinker and he enjoyed staying at home.

Stan and Elspeth, each had their own favourite son.

Stan, who had been a builder all of his life, naturally favoured the high-spirited and impetuous Ian. He thought of him as a chip off the old block.

Elspeth had come from a large family. She would have loved the opportunity to go to University but never got the chance. She had left school at 16 and worked in a florist's shop to help augment the family income. When she and Stan inherited the house she saw it as an opportunity for them to better themselves. Duncan was like her with his love of books. Elspeth was determined that he would make something of himself and she went out to work part time in the local supermarket to earn the money to pay for him to have piano lessons.

As the boys grew up into men the differences between them became greater.

Stan encouraged Ian to leave school as soon as he could and to get work with a local construction company. Ian was soon earning a lot of money because he was willing to go anywhere in the country and even overseas whenever his boss needed a job done fast. He got a house of his own and came back from time to time to see his parents. Stan revelled in Ian's tales of jobs done in a hurry, risks taken and huge amounts of money being paid to those prepared to risk their lives. Ian spent his money as fast as he made it. He loved parties and splashing out to impress his friends. He paid no attention to his mother who told him that he would not always be as young and fit as he was now and needed to save some of his money, even get qualifications to fall back on.

Duncan, on the other hand, went to University and then came to live back at home. He got a job as a teacher in the local Academy.

As time went on Ian and Duncan grew further apart. Their lifestyle was so different and so were their values. Ian thought Duncan was a mummy's boy and Duncan thought Ian was coarse. He especially resented the way his father made such a fuss of Ian on the rare occasions when he came to visit.

Ian was the elder by about 3 minutes and he made the most of that, using it as a lever to have his own way in any dispute between them.

Then one day Duncan saw a way to get the better of Ian.

Ian was in trouble, well that was nothing new. This time though it looked as if he might lose his driving licence and that would mean a very different lifestyle for the go-anywhere roustabout. Ian had been caught speeding just once too often and the points on his licence were adding up to a disqualification. He needed a good solicitor and asked for Duncan's help. He thought Duncan might be able to recommend one – someone he knew from university perhaps?

At first Duncan felt indignant and had no desire to help Ian but then he saw something in it for himself. Ian had always been interested in cars and had been given an old Morris 1000 by his grandfather while he was still at school.

This was meant to be a car for Ian to tinker with but it had just lain in the garage gathering dust. Ian had quickly moved on to motorbikes and when he passed his test he bought an old sports car with his first month's wages. Morris 1000's were just not cool.

Time had passed and Duncan knew a bit about old cars, as indeed he knew a bit about anything of value. He knew the Morris was in good condition and would make an excellent investment for the future. He suggested that if Ian would give him the car he could put him in touch with a friend of his who might consider representing him in court. Not realising the value of the car and only looking as far ahead as the court case, Ian readily agreed.

Duncan was over the moon. He had at last he had got one over on his brother. He could just imagine the car restored to its former glory. What a trophy it would be, marking his superiority over his brother.

GENESIS 25:19-34 ESAU AND JACOB

Isaac and Rebekah's family were what we call a dysfunctional family
Favouritism, jealousy, envy, greed, deceit, anger, hatred – not the ingredients of a happy family

FAVOURITISM

One of the main problems was favouritism.

Isaac preferred Esau, Rebekah preferred Jacob (v.28)

The problem had passed down through the generations

Isaac's parents were Abraham and Sarah.

Abraham favoured his younger son Isaac, the son of his wife Sarah

He had an elder son called Ishmael, the son of his concubine Hagar.

But Sarah was jealous and insecure and wanted to get rid of Ishmael and Hagar so she persuaded Abraham to send them away

The problem continued into the next generation also – Jacob's family

Jacob had 2 wives, 2 concubines and 12 sons

He favoured Joseph, who was one of his younger sons because he was the son of his favourite wife Rachael and that led to all sorts of family problems

GREED

Esau was probably an extrovert. We can imagine him as an outgoing party lover. He lived for excitement, he lived for the present and gave no thought to the future. His motto was “eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.” We know from what we read further on that he was popular with the girls and didn’t care about his parents.

Maybe that was why he sold his inheritance as first-born son so easily.

The first-born son got a double share of the inheritance. He also had the responsibility of looking after his parents in their old age.

So when he sold Jacob the first-born inheritance for a bowl of lentils he was showing that he was not bothered about the future, either his inheritance or his responsibilities. Perhaps he was glad to pass on the obligation of care for his elderly parents to Jacob.

Jacob was also greedy.

He wanted the double inheritance – the money and possessions.

But more than that he wanted the power and prestige that went with being the first-born son.

APPLICATION

In the stories of the bible we read about ordinary people.

They were not always good. They were not always an example to follow.

Sometimes the way they behaved resulted in destructive relationships, dysfunctional families.

It is amazing that God did not give up on them.

He helped them learn through their mistakes and the various experiences they went through.

Dysfunctional behaviour can pass down through generations.

Favouritism, jealousy, envy, greed, deceit, anger, hatred. Add to that Dishonesty, alcohol and drug abuse, bullying, emotional blackmail.

We may feel trapped in patterns of behaviour passed down from our parents

We don’t need to be stuck in the mould. Jesus came to set the prisoners free.

EPHESIANS 3:14-20 p.243

POWER(3x)

Dunamis = power, strength ability. Exousia = power, authority, dominance

POWER = dunamis = DYNAMITE (also dynamo, dynamic)

ILLN Films – Wild West – Dynamite used to blow up the prison walls and set the prisoners free.

God offers us forgiveness for past mistakes, for the things which have spoiled our lives and the lives of other people.

We don't need to be trapped in the past.

He offers us the power to change – not just trying to do better, but to change from the inside – our attitudes & values – enable us to change our behaviour.

This power comes from God's Spirit who is able to live within us.

We can know the power of **GOD'S LOVE** in our hearts – the power to overcome those things which spoil relationships - favouritism, jealousy, envy, greed, deceit, anger, hatred.

Jesus said that when we come to know God as our Father then we are born again of the Spirit (John 3:3).

Ep 3:14-21 Paul says that when we know God as our Father, we come to know his love in our hearts, we inherit his nature, his character grows in our lives, and as we grow spiritually we become more and more filled with the very nature of God.

Just like the people in the bible we will never be perfect.

God never gives up on us. He is at work in our lives for good.

Ep 3:20

The Lord is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for or even imagine by means of his power working in us, to him be the glory throughout all generations for ever and ever. Amen