

PENTECOST 6

Proper 9 - Year A

This Bible study was written by Audrey Sutton of Nashotah House in 2020.

Genesis 24:34-28, 42-49, 58-67

³⁴ So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵ The Lord has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys. ³⁶ And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old, and he has given him all that he has. ³⁷ My master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites in whose land I live, ³⁸ but you shall go to my father's house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son.'

⁴² "I came today to the spring and said, 'O Lord, God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going! ⁴³ I am standing here by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, 'Please give me a little water from your jar to drink,' ⁴⁴ and who will say to me, 'Drink, and I will draw for your camels also'—let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master's son.'

⁴⁵ "Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water jar on her shoulder, and she went down to the spring and drew. I said to her, 'Please let me drink.' ⁴⁶ She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I will also water your camels.' So I drank, and she also watered the camels. ⁴⁷ Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the ring on her nose and the bracelets on her arms. ⁴⁸ Then I bowed my head and worshiped the Lord and blessed the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to obtain the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. ⁴⁹ Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left."

⁵⁸ And they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will." ⁵⁹ So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with

Abraham's servant and his men. ⁶⁰ And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

"May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes."

⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man, and the servant took Rebekah and went his way.

⁶² Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi and was settled in the Negeb. ⁶³ Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field, and, looking up, he saw camels coming. ⁶⁴ And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel ⁶⁵ and said to the servant, "Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. ⁶⁶ And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. ⁶⁷ Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Commentary from Audrey Sutton

Providence is being in the right place at the right time, as designed by God. It is trusting in the well-timed fruition of opportunity and fulfillment of future outcomes as orchestrated by divine intervention. A person receives a phone call at the exact moment – a person meets another at a certain time or place, changing the course of their life – a servant finds the woman intended to participate in the next phase of Israel's narrative – things seem to finally fall perfectly into place.

The story of Laban trusting God to show him the woman destined to be Isaac's wife is a providential meeting of people in a divinely orchestrated situation. Through faithful hearts that were postured towards God, Laban met Rebekah at the well and brought her home to Isaac. The eventual meeting of Rebekah and Isaac mirrors the eternal love story between God and his people. Like Rebekah, we gather tangible water to quench our biological thirst from the well, while God has sent his servant, his very Son, to find us and bring us home – to show us the water from which, if we drink, we will never thirst again. Perhaps providence will connect us to the people God intends and will direct our steps as divinely intended. Perhaps we may be like Rebekah, lowering our veil when we meet the Father, accepting the joy of being loved by him eternally.

Discussion Questions

Do you see places of providence in your own life?
How does it feel to be aware of possible divine intervention?

What would it take to submit to divinely orchestrated providence with the same level of faith as Laban and Rebekah?

Psalm 45:11-18

- 11 "Hear, O daughter; consider and listen closely; *
forget your people and your father's house.
- 12 The king will have pleasure in your beauty; *
he is your master; therefore do him honor.
- 13 The people of Tyre are here with a gift; *
the rich among the people seek your favor."
- 14 All glorious is the princess as she enters; *
her gown is cloth-of-gold.
- 15 In embroidered apparel she is brought to the
king;*
after her the bridesmaids follow in procession.
- 16 With joy and gladness they are brought, *
and enter into the palace of the king.
- 17 "In place of fathers, O king, you shall have sons; *
you shall make them princes over all the earth.
- 18 I will make your name to be remembered
from one generation to another; *
therefore nations will praise you for ever and
ever."

Discussion Questions

Is there a role placed before you that you have been asked to fulfill? How do you feel about it?

However you discern your "beauty" and "gifts", how can you use them to honor God and worship him in joy and gladness?

Commentary from Audrey Sutton

Psalm 45 is a psalm of a royal wedding, where the bride is depicted in her beauty and extravagance with the promise of faithfulness and desire to fulfill the role placed before her. This is a time of joy and expectation of a new future! The expression within this poetic imagery parallels with the church, which is Christ's bride, and the eschatological expectation of fulfillment and a new future. The believer is asked to listen closely and turn towards our Lord, focusing completely on him as our new family. We are to use the favor we have been given and our gifts to honor God, for he delights in us. We can meet God in worship with joy and gladness and attain to someday enter his palace. As children of God, we are heirs that will inherit the earth someday and have been tasked with transmitting the Gospel from generation to generation. May we praise the Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

Romans 7:15-25a

¹⁵ I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ But in fact it is no longer I who do it but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that the good does not dwell within me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do the good lies close at hand, but not the ability. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it but sin that dwells within me.

²¹ So I find it to be a law that, when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, ²³ but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched person that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Discussion Questions

What sin do you find yourself turning back to, time and again? Try and recognize your disdain (as well as the attraction to) this sin.

How could this change if Jesus realigned your perspective? How could his strength help you?

Commentary from Audrey Sutton

A wise professor once said that, for whatever reason, people really love their personal sin, even if they hate it; they love the feeling of comfort and familiarity that can be found in turning back to the vices that they hate again and again. Original sin has predisposed mankind to this kind of compulsive attraction to things that are not good for us and harm us. Why do we like to roll around in what we hate? And even more so, why do we not have the willpower or resolve to resist sin on our own?

Paul recognized this very real difficulty! He knew that nothing good dwelled within him, within his flesh, and although he deeply desired to do right and do good, he could not. He could not, even by the law of God that he loved, because it was not possible to do right or good and avoid sin by himself. It is not possible for us to do on our own, either. We need Christ. It is only with the indwelling of Jesus that our hearts and minds can be realigned to proper focus, allowing us to do right and do good through Christ, and resist the sin we hate.

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

¹⁶ “But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

¹⁷ “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.”

¹⁸ “For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; ¹⁹ the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Commentary from Audrey Sutton

A yoke is a large and heavy piece of agricultural plow equipment, used to harness 2 animals to a cart that they then pull. A yoke can also be used with a heavier piece on the larger, stronger animal, and a lighter portion harnessed to the new or younger animal being trained. The yoke was designed to better distribute the weight of the load and also to give mechanical capability to the work the animal was set to do. Naturally, in great Jesus fashion, the Lord asks his followers to bridle themselves with a bulky and heavy device so they might experience a lighter load and ease their burden. So, what is the yoke of Jesus? It is a place of rest where we will find humility and gentleness and learn his ways. We must first accept the daunting yoke of Jesus’ relationship to experience the easing he speaks of. The yoke of Jesus will provide us with the mechanical capability to do the

work we have been called to – but we first must be attached to him – physically and spiritually. We may just be surprised with how light the yoke actually is, and how much easier we operate when connected with to Christ.

Discussion Questions

What are you yoked to in your life right now? Jesus? The world? A person? Something else?

Have you ever experienced a lighter load by taking more on? How might this be different?