

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

traditional land of the Three Fires Confederacy: the Odawa, Potawatami and Ojibwe.

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Worship This Week March 3, 2024

SCRIPTURE – Genesis 26:12-33

MESSAGE – Imagine you've just moved to a new home or apartment and you are faced with empty rooms. Start with the living room. You start with the heavy items, the furniture. There are a couple of options and you choose to put the sofa here and the table there. You are limited by the location of windows and doors and perhaps there's a fireplace. You work around them. You come up with something that you think works and move on. After a few days or weeks, you realize it doesn't work in practical terms. So you rearrange. You might spend half a day on it until you get it right. And this is just the furniture. There's also the pictures and the lamps and the side tables. Like hanging a picture – one person holds it against the wall and the person with a eye for design says "a little higher" then "a bit to the left – not your other left – a bit more. No, to the right. There." Mark the spot and install the hook. It takes time. For those who appreciate the principles of design and the fact that a room that's not properly arranged is not a peaceful place, they don't mind taking the time to make it right. It takes patience and perseverance. When you get it right, there's a sense of peace. The room makes sense. Some of you will understand what I am saying.

Patience and perseverance is one of the characteristics of Isaac. In the grand story of Genesis, Isaac is sort of like the middle child. Not the first, like Abraham, the father of the nation. Not like Jacob, the father of the Tribes of Israel. He's the in-between generation. Import, for sure. Blessed, absolutely. It's almost as if Isaac is there to continue what his father started, to wander a bit, make some of the same mistakes before settling.

Today's passage is one of those typical Isaac stories. At first reading, you may wonder what the big deal is. This is not one of the great stories of the Old Testament. There's conflict, but it doesn't end up in war. There's dirty tricks, but no lives are lost. There's no dramatic turning point. There's no boy meets girl. The Lord didn't show up with his advance team of angels. No volcano erupting and wiping out an entire city. There's no great test of faith where you're asking to choose between God and your family. No great covenant being announced to go and I will make you into a great nation. No stealing your brother's birthright for a bowl of stew. And certainly no flood that wipes out just about all life on the planet. No, just a few jealous people and a meek response. But don't be too quick to dismiss this as a sidebar – nothing to see here. As with all scripture, there is something beneath the surface. Something powerful. You may have to take some time to see it. In fact, I had to read this passage a dozen times before I finally

got a glimpse at the message. So let's take another look at this story. Rather than read the scripture again, I'm going to paraphrase, reading from The Message translation. Here we go.

"Isaac planted crops in that land and took in a huge harvest. God blessed him. He got richer and richer by the day until he was very wealthy. He accumulated flocks and herds and many, many servants, so much so that the Philistines began to envy him. They got back at him by throwing dirt and debris into all the wells that his father Abraham's servants had dug, clogging up all the wells. Finally, their local king Abimelech told Isaac: "Leave. You've become far too big for us." So Isaac left. Get out of Dodge. He camped in the valley of Gerar and settled down there. Isaac dug again his father's wells that had been clogged up by the Philistines. He gave them the original names his father had given them. One day, as Isaac's servants were digging in the valley, they came on a well of spring water. (Spring water was a big deal because as the name suggests, it never stopped flowing. It was like striking oil.) The local shepherds got in a fight with Isaac's shepherds, claiming, "This water is ours." Get out of our sandbox! So Isaac named the well Esek (Quarrel) because they quarreled over it. They dug another well and there was a difference over that one also, so he named it Sitnah (Accusation). He went on from there and dug yet another well. But there was no fighting over this one so he named it Rehoboth (Wide-Open Spaces), saying, "Now God has given us plenty of space to spread out in the land." From there he went up to Beersheba. That very night God himself appeared to him and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father; don't fear a thing because I'm with you. I'll bless you and make your children flourish because of Abraham my servant." Isaac was pretty happy about this, so he built an altar there and prayed, calling on God by name. He set up camp and his servants started digging another well. Then Abimelech shows up with his chief of staff and top general. Isaac asked, "Why are you here? You hate me; you threw me out of your country. Can't you leave us alone?" To which the king said "It's obvious now that God is on your side. So let's make a deal. We won't bother you if you don't bother us." So they shook hands and celebrated with good food and wine and in the morning, they put it in writing. They became friends. Later that same day, a crew of Isaac's servants struck another source of water. Isaac named the well Sheba (Oath), and that's the name of the city, Beersheba (Oath-Well), to this day.

Happily ever after. Yes, there were a few fights and displacements, but it was PG, a story for the whole family. No lives were lost. There was peace in their time. I can't help but see a bit of Christ in all of this. Specifically the law of non resistance. If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer him the other one too. (Matthew 5:39). If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also (Luke 6:29). Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back (Luke 6:35). And what if you're not welcome. Jesus discovered that a prophet is not accepted in his hometown; people in some places refused his testimony and He could do little healing in their presence because of their lack of faith. If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them. (Luke 9:5)

Isaac didn't draw a line in the sand and assemble an army to right back against those who filled the wells and cut off a precious resource. Having no supply of water was a death sentence for the flocks and the people. It was life and death. He just moved on. And in that, he not only showed restraint, but also great patience. He trusted in God. And when he finally arrived where he was supposed to be, the Lord appeared and said, in a manner of speaking, this is the place. Remain here and you will be blessed once again. In the end, wisdom is proved right by her deeds (Matthew 11:19) as The Lord taught many centuries later.

In today's world, it's not unlike trial and error. How many people graduate from high school with no idea what they want to do in life? Or maybe they do and they find out pretty quickly it's not for them. They go to college but change programs more than once. They work for a year or two and realize this is not for me. Sometimes it takes years for someone to find their true calling. Or maybe they've found their call but they're still looking for the ideal place to practice. In all of that, they grow and mature and learn from experience. Isaac and his family I'm sure gathered a ton of stories in their travels. Hey, remember that time that king kicked us out? He was just jealous. Or maybe he was scared and thought we foreigners would eventually take over. What a joke. Whatever. And then those shepherds who thought they were so smart by cutting off our water supply. Hah. Didn't God always provide for us? Didn't he always protect us? In the end, wisdom is proved right by her deeds. Like hanging a picture, or placing furniture and arranging a room, life is all about trial and error. On a higher level, it's better to turn enemies into friends than to beat them and have them as enemies still. When our ways are pleasing to the Lord, when we are in His will or at least on the right path, God eventually makes our enemies be at peace with us. Wisdom is proved right by her deeds.

NEW PRAYER

1. Jerome Ide moving to the Oaks. Park Street Place residents moving out to new homes.

CONTINUE TO PRAY

Health and healing –

1. Brue Stephens: blood pressure, meds. But thanks that radiation treatment is going smoothly
2. Betty Bradley is in Sarnia Hospital recovering from a broken hip.
3. Ellen Robinson
4. Colin Paterson, radiation therapy for prostate cancer
5. Rev. Mary Templar, brain injury: difficulty reading
6. For all those recovering from surgical procedures.
7. Becky Desjardine, Margaret Follows, Ron Mason, Bette Northcott, Karen Northcott, Tom O'Neill, Cherie Pegg, Sandra Pegg, Julie Shaw, Sandra Whitson
8. Anyone seeking or undergoing treatment for addictions

9. Anyone wrestling with anxiety and depression

Seniors and shut ins – Dianne Richards at Wallaceburg Retirement Residence, Jim Lusk at Oaks Wallaceburg, Lane Douglas and Ross Fuchs at Fairfield Park in Wallaceburg, Aubrey Butler at home.

Elders on session – Mark Labadie 519-359-4842, Cindy Brewer 519-683-4113, Sheila Eves 519-683-4148, Andrew Neely 519-359-8903, Mark Richards 519-809-9175 and Julie Shaw 226-627-1953, Bob Vriesema 519-401-8056.

Board of managers – Wendy Weston (chair), Will Brewer, Linda Malott, Jenn Mason, Von Parking, Mark Richards, Jodie Rich, Bob Vriesema and Mike Wicks.

WHAT'S UP:

A new way to support St. Andrew's – McBrayne's Feed & Supply is offering to donate back 10 per cent of sales made using the St. Andrews account. Some items that apply are peanuts, bird feed, sunflower seed, and grains. Make sure you let them know you would like to use the St. Andrew's account BEFORE ordering to ensure the church gets credit! The first purchase for this program was made yesterday so we are underway!

Free Community Meals – Please share this info with anyone in need:

North Dresden Community Church – first Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m.

Dresden Christian Reformed Church – second Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m.

DATES

March 5 – 7 p.m. Session

March 6 – Noon. Lenten Lunch at North Dresden Baptist Church. Speaker Andrew Zommerman.

March 13 – Noon. Lenten Lunch at North Dresden Baptist Church. Speaker Pastor Rob Elka.

March 20 – Noon. Lenten Lunch at North Dresden Baptist Church. Speaker Pastor Phil Sabine of Charlemont Free Methodist.

March 27 – Noon. Lenten Lunch at North Dresden Baptist Church. Speaker Fr. Chris P from St. Michael's RC Church.

March 29 – Good Friday cross walk and worship at Evangel Pentecostal.