

Isn't it great to read the good news? The news, that instead of following through with his vow to kill his brother, that Esau instead chose true reconciliation. We've been following Jacob's journey for weeks now. We know everything he has done and everything that was done to him. We skipped only 2 parts, Jacob's dream of the ladder & his wrestling with God. We've watched him move from Mamre to Haran and back. With his journeys we've not just seen him physical mature but certainly emotionally. Imagine for a minute how Jacob, fresh from cheated Esau's blessing from Isaac would have reacted when Laban tricked him into marrying Leah? I think it's safe to say that Jacob has grown up.

We skipped over his wrestling with God but need to make a note, like his Grandfather, Jacob received a new name and is now to be called Israel. Throughout my study of Genesis, many scholars point out that what Jacob goes through parallels what happens to the Israelites down the road from the escape from Egypt through the destruction of the temple. We'll make note of those when these stories come up.

When Jacob meets Esau, he is no longer the same man he was when last he saw his brother. The name change is symbolic of the growth we have seen throughout his journeys. And what good news it is to see that change was not just possible but indeed foundational to the reconciliation with his brother. I wonder what we need to change in ourselves to provide for reconciliation with others?

None of us are perfect and that is okay. But being enough (just as we are) does not negate our need to grow. When Josh & I first married and we began making plans for what our future looked like we discussed where in the world we wanted to call home. We knew that we would not stay in Atlanta. We discussed and chose to move to England for a year. And what a year that was – both professionally and personally. But we knew as much

as we loved it, it would not be home for us. We looked at Texas, California, Idaho as places to begin and made pros and cons for each location. We discussed the nature of earthquakes & hurricanes – having lived through them both. Josh's selling point was that you always had warning for a storm to plan & prepare. My selling point was that everything was retrofitted for earthquakes. Well, you know where we ended up. My first storm was Hurricane Humberto which gave us no warning. It went from depression to Cat 1 faster than any other storm. This caused anxiety in me that manifested in obsessively watching the weather updates and creating our storm box. It was overwhelming. I remember in 2008 watching TS Edouard and getting my first taste. I couldn't stop checking and rechecking...my anxiety level was high. Since that first hurricane season, Gustav, Ike, Bill, Harvey, Imelda, Laura and now Beta I've learned a new way.

I still watch the weather but a peace as settled in me. It's not just that I know what to do and have supplies. It's greater than that. I am not alone. We are not alone. And while I would like to not know this story so deeply in my bones, even my weariness is not what it once was. We know the tropical weather won't go away. This is not simply resignation but growth, much like what we see in Jacob.

In this time when our nation cannot seem to agree on anything, I am reminded that we need each other. We cannot just have Republicans or Democrats. We need healthy conversation partners to see the places in which we need to grow. But arguing for the sake of argument will not bring anything healthy. Jacob & Esau are reconciled and living together in peace. There is no longer competition, as seen as they together, buried their father. We can categorically reject the idea that God causes the fighting between Esau & Jacob but we can see that God used it. In his own experience he was prepared for dealing with his Uncle Laban. Through his 20 years of work, he was prepared for reconciliation.

And lest we think that Jacob's journey did not have any further grief, we learn that Rachel dies in childbirth & his firstborn, Reuben sleeps with Bilhah (Rachel's maid and mother of Dan & Nephtali). Reconciliation and growth are not the end of any journey. We always have work to do. The calling God has for us, as disciples of Jesus Christ require that we are continually growing and searching for our places of reconciliation. Growth is hard but important work. But we don't have to do it alone. We are gifted to do this work with each other. Thanks be to God.

I am reminded that four years ago when I began as your pastor, I was gifted a plant, a plant I was sure that I would kill. And you remember that I was not only able to keep it alive during Hurricane Harvey and the aftermath, I brought it again in the spring to show you that it was not just alive but that it was growing. And I've had it and kept it and even brought it home in this time. I'm going to move for just a minute so that you can see over my shoulder.



That is a plant that is not only growing, it is thriving. So I invite you to find those places in your life, those places where you had resigned yourself to never being able to do it, to try again. To try it in a community of faith that loves you, that walks with you as

you learn new ways. We ask all of this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, in the name of the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit. Amen.