

**Be Careful! Don't miss God's plan for your life.**

**November 26, 2017**

**Sermon by Pastor Diana J. Perkins**

**Missed opportunities! I was sitting in the kitchen of an elderly man who was reminiscing about his life. He had many chances to earn income over the years but this day he had his mind on the missed opportunities that he had not thought important enough at the time to take advantage of. He had inherited land that was worth a lot because of the resources that was on it that could be sold; he passed it on to another as it had no value to him. Someone else is making a living off of that gift. He had several opportunities to contribute to a retirement fund and thought it was of no importance to him so passed on that also. He didn't realize he would live so long and now he struggles on a small Social Security allotment. I listened and it has gone over my mind many times that our days are numbered and each day brings opportunities to every one of us. What do you do with your time? How are you investing your life in preparation for eternity?**

**Throughout the Bible there are stories that warn us of the danger of being short sighted. To look back and regret, grieve and say "If only I had" is as useless as shutting the gate after the horses have discovered it and taken a trot down the road. We must be careful of our choices and decisions and take responsibility for our lives lest when we stand before our creator, we will stand in shame and regret that we were not good and faithful servants. 2017 is quickly coming to a close and we all have exchanged another year of our lives for something. What have you accomplished in the past year? We all have certain things that are important to living; money, food, shelter, relationships, leisure and pleasure, In Ecclesiastes chapter 3, these words are written: There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven.**

**There is a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search a and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on man. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men, yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. You will notice in this chapter that a time to worship God is not there. You must make time to build a relationship with your creator. God doesn't force anyone to serve him. We must desire to follow Jesus and make him a priority in our lives if we are to spend eternity with him.**

**There are people who live just today. In Genesis 25 there is a story of Esau who was this kind of person. People who trade time that should be spent with God for fleeting pleasures will one day realize what price they will pay for that decision. If you spend your**

life seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, you will discover what a wise investment you have chosen for Jesus will give you eternal life and bless your life here on earth as well. See Matthew 6:19. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The difference between school and life is that in school you are taught lessons and then given a test; in life you get tested and if you are wise, you learn the lesson by them.

We don't have to learn all of life's lessons the hard way by experience. God's word gives us examples to show us the consequences of our decisions so we can choose wisely the path we will take.

In Genesis 25, there is an important lesson to be learned from the story of Esau and Jacob. The Bible doesn't say that a discussion ever took place concerning the birthright that Esau had due to the fact that he was the first born son. Jacob desired the birthright and I believe that he had mentioned it to Esau in past times but Esau had not given it over to Jacob though he didn't place high value on it for himself. Esau had not cherished the birthright and if Jacob had been given the indication that it was not for sale for any price, he perhaps would have hesitated to trade a bowl of soup for it. He would have known that Esau would have laughed him to scorn for even the suggestion. Esau had the motto of "whatever makes me happy at the time that is what I am going to do." The day Esau came in to camp from hunting, he smelled the soup from a distance and his stomach growled. "Wow, would I ever give anything to have a bowl of that soup!" he thought.

"I feel like I am starving." In school the teacher doesn't come into a room and tell you that the test that you are about to take could affect you for the rest of your life. However, life decisions made on feelings, desires, current thinking, and emotions can affect you for years to come and also into eternity. Esau asked Jacob for a bowl of soup. Jacob told him, "Sell me the birthright and I will feed you." Esau reasoned, "If I die what good is the birthright going to do me." So the deal was made and Esau's hunger was satisfied and it was a while before the regret set in for the decision that he had made in a trying time.

The deal of satisfying the flesh in exchange for your soul is always a bad deal.

The lessons we can learn from this story are many. First, you can lose great blessings if you don't appreciate them. Esau was born in a situation that brought great blessings. His grandfather, Abraham, was called a friend by God. He was the son of Isaac and Rebekah, in whom God had made great promises. No doubt he had heard the stories concerning his special family and the greatness that God had promised to bestow upon Abraham and his descendants. Yet though he had great spiritual privileges he threw them away because he didn't value them nor appreciate them. Though God had told his mother, Rebekah, that the older son would serve the younger, he made the choice to sell his birthright for a bowl of soup. Some may think that Esau had a reason for his father favored him and his mother favored Isaac. Showing favoritism is a sure way to breed bitterness and hatred

among those who suffer the effects of this type of parenting, but Esau was still responsible for his own actions. In chapter 27, Esau hated Jacob and planned on killing him after the death of his father. Rebekah's fondness towards Isaac caused conflict between her and Isaac and led her to deceive him on his death bed.

Our choices will influence our children. As Isaac and Rebekah showed favoritism between their two sons, Jacob showed favoritism for his younger son, Joseph which caused his brothers to hate him also. Children who don't experience Christian character in their parents, repentance, brokenness, the Fruit of the Spirit worked out in our daily lives, are apt not to be eager to follow the Lord either.

Laying blame for our shortcomings, our sins, our rebellion on our parents or on God is not being honest with ourselves. The Bible says in James that God cannot be tempted with sin and he doesn't tempt anyone with sin. James 1:13. We sin when we are drawn away and enticed by our own evil desires. Then after the desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin and sin when it is finished brings forth death. Every person is an individual and we should not compare ourselves to others. Jacob was a domestic person; he liked staying around the tent, cooking and tending to his sheep. Esau, on the other hand loved hunting and physical activity. Jacob used his head to outsmart others. Esau was impulsive and he lived for the here and now. Jacob was more goal-oriented and he was one who thought of how he was going to fare down the road of life.

Each one that has heard the gospel has a responsibility to learn what God has to say to us in his word and apply it to our lives. We are privileged to live in a country where we have the freedom to worship God in our communities and attend church. We can surround us with mature Christians who can help us to mature in Christ. If we don't appreciate our pastors, leaders, and fellow Christians and are slack in attending church we can forfeit these spiritual blessings if we neglect to appreciate them.

Small choices have drastic consequences. Addictions start out with small doses of things that are sinful. Choosing the wrong type of people to form friendships with, accepting offers of illegal drugs or alcohol are decisions that may lead people down the wrong path. Sexual experimentation, flirtation, gambling, or any other type of sinful pleasure can have long term consequences. Esau's disregard for spiritual matters led him to be ignorant of God's perspective on life. He didn't concern himself with spiritual blessings. They had no importance to him. His idea of self-gratification caused him to think that the birthright was not anything that he needed because he might die before ever even inheriting it. "What good is a birthright if I starve to death?" This was his mindset. People often try to fulfill their needs outside of God's moral and spiritual standards. In Matthew 6:31-33 it tells us to "seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you." Philippians 4:19 tells us that "God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory."

The frightening truth about Esau was the long lasting consequence that he had to bear for his rash decision. In Hebrews 12:17, this verse tells us that afterward Esau repented and

sought to obtain his inheritance of the blessing, but he was rejected and found no place of repentance though he sought it with tears. He regretted giving up the wonderful, priceless inheritance that God had given to his brother Isaac because Esau despised his birthright. He had spent too many years living for the present and not preparing for the future that he was rejected by God and his portion was given to another.

It is easy to mistake something as “essential” which in reality is not.

Esau thought he needed food. He would not have starved if he had to wait a bit longer to eat. He traded an essential need, a relationship with God, for something that was not an immediate necessary. In Job 23:12, Job said this: “I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.” Esau didn’t share that conviction; he wanted to satisfy his flesh even if it meant giving up things of value that would be a blessing to him in the future.

Jerry Falwell was asked the question, “What do you want to be remembered for after you die?” He has some impressive credentials in the religious realm yet this is his answer to that question. “I want to be remembered as a godly husband, father and pastor and in that order.” These things are essential; if you lack these, the rest will be useless. If people can’t describe you as a Christian woman or man of God and your family suffers from sinful, selfish acts that are self-seeking on your part, whatever you accomplish by the world’s standards will perish when your works are tested by fire. See 1 Corinthians 3:12. In these verses you will find that all of our works are going to be tried in the fire. We must build our lives on the Lord Jesus Christ. “If any man builds on this foundation gold, silver costly stones, wood, hay and stubble, the works will be exposed when it is placed in fire. The fire will determine what material it is made from and if what he has built survives, he will receive a reward. If all of his works burns, he will be saved but will suffer loss. The wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. Be very careful what you determine to be valuable in this life.

It is easy to grab for the right things for the wrong reasons and in the wrong way. Jacob was right in desiring the birthright for the personal advantages that it would bring to him but he was wrong to take it in the way he did. Jacob took advantage of his brother’s impulsive personality and hungry condition. God would have fulfilled his promise to Jacob in his own good time. God dealt with Jacob by allowing his father-in-law to pull the same schemes on him that he had done to his brother. He had to learn to trust in God to give him the desires of his heart. We must be careful in our motives. We need to allow God to use us in ways that will bring glory and honor to him, not to ourselves. God doesn’t want us to use evil methods to bring about good. Our actions, our motives, our purposes are all scrutinized by Jesus Christ. The calling he has placed on our lives must be fulfilled in a way that brings honor, glory and praise to the Lord Jesus Christ, not self!