

Unwanted Yet Blessed

Today we are looking at the story of Leah and Rachel.

... two sisters who were the daughters of Laban, and 2 very different people.

... Laban was Jacob's uncle

... although the Bible does not portray Laban in a positive fashion, he appears to have been a loving father.

Leah is supposedly not as pretty as her younger sister Rachel.

After running away from home and coming to his uncle Laban's house when Jacob sees Rachel ...

... he falls in with her and wants to marry her

The Bible tells us that Laban agrees to let Jacob marry his daughter if Jacob will work for him for 7 years.

However, on the night that Jacob and Rachel were to be married,

... Laban, in an act of trickery sent Leah, Rachel's older sister, to marry Jacob.

... since the bride always wore a veil until it wasn't until after the ceremony that Jacob realized what had happened.

Of course upon discovery Jacob was angry ... because he loved Rachel.

... but in the ensuing conversation Laban argued that it wasn't the custom to give the younger daughter in marriage first.

... and so Laban struck another deal with Jacob.

... Jacob could also marry Rachel if he would work for Laban for 7 more years ... to which Jacob agreed.

So, after 14 years Jacob was married to both of Laban's daughters.

Although Leah is pictured as "less beautiful" than Rachel the scriptures reveal that she was a woman of great integrity.

- Although Jacob favors her younger sister Leah has great humility, loyalty and love toward Jacob.
- She is the first woman to give thanks to God for allowing her to safely bear children, and of Jacob's 12 sons, 10 of them come from Leah's union with Jacob.

In contrast to Leah, Rachel is seen as beautiful. **That is her primary trait.**

There is no doubt that Jacob favors Rachel over Leah.

... to the reader Rachel seems to have everything going for her except she initially appears to be unable to get pregnant.

Every day for more than 10 years Rachel heard the sound of her Leah's children outside her tent

... and in a world where a woman's worth was connected to the number of children, she gave birth to

... Rachel felt a loss, she longed to have children.

As we go through this story today I want you to put yourself in **Leah's shoes.**

- She is thought of as ugly in comparison to her sister
- She is overlooked by her husband

- No matter how many children she had, she probably always felt that she was “less than” because of the way she was treated by her husband.

There are three things we can learn today.

1. It is Painful to be Unwanted

Leah has been an unwilling pawn in an awful game of trickery ...

... and now she is in a situation where she loves a husband who does not love her.

For seven years Leah had Jacob to herself but now sister Rachel has joined the family.

After Jacob marries Rachel, he simply begins to ignore Leah.

... there also seems to be the implication that Rachel’s love for Leah is also lacking.

³¹ Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. ³² Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, "Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me." ³³ Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also." So she named him Simeon. (Gen. 29:31-33)

This is not a happy home.

And what I want you to see here is that even though Jacob and Rachel’s love for Leah was poor, ... God’s love for Leah was strong.

God gives Leah children; Rachel has none.

The situation seems to be that if Jacob wants to have sons to carry on his legacy it was going to be with Leah ... and she was giving him children.

.... but in spite of this she remained the unloved wife.

So as Leah has children, she chooses names that reflect where she was spiritually at that moment.

- Her first son she names **Reuben**, which means “behold a son,” because the Lord had seen her loneliness.

The average American in a single year probably meets as many people as the average person did in a lifetime 100 years ago.

And yet we are far lonelier ... notice I didn't say more alone.

There's a big difference between being lonely and being alone ...

- Her second son she named **Simeon**, which means “hearing” because the Lord had heard—BUT WHAT HAD THE LORD HEARD?

The Bible doesn't tell us but we can assume some things:

- Perhaps the harsh words of Rachel toward her.
- Maybe the things said behind Leah's back.
- Most likely the cries of Leah's broken heart

I don't care how strong you are ... one person can only take so much.

Eventually feeling **unloved and unwanted** will sap your spiritual strength and this seems to be the case with Leah because ...

... she names her third child **Levi** which means “joined,”

... there is almost a pathetic cry in the name **Levi**

... Leah longed to be joined to her husband, but it was becoming more and more obvious that this isn't going to happen.

... Unlike the first two births Leah makes no mention of God at all.

The pain of being neglected (unwanted) by those who should love you is the deepest darkest pain you will ever experience.

... in fact, it can become so great that you can come to the place where you feel that God has abandoned you.

Years ago, I was watching a PBS program about the Library of Congress.

*About halfway through Dr. Daniel Boorstin, brought out a **little blue box** from a small closet that once held some of the library's greatest rarities.*

*The label on the box read: **Contents of the President's Pockets on the Night of April 14, 1865.***

That was the fateful night when Abraham Lincoln was assassinated.

There were five things in the box:

**A handkerchief, embroidered "A. Lincoln"*

**A country boy's pen knife*

**An eye glass case repaired with string*

**A purse containing a \$5 bill--Confederate money(!)*

**Some old and worn newspaper clippings*

The news clippings, said Boorstin, "were concerned with the accomplishments of Abraham Lincoln."

One of them actually reports a speech by John Bright which said that Abraham Lincoln was "one of the greatest men of all times."

Today that's common knowledge.

The world now knows that British statesman John Bright was right in his assessment of Lincoln

... but in 1865 millions of people had the opposite opinion of Lincoln.

The President's critics were fierce and many.

His was a lonely agony that reflected the suffering and turmoil of his country ripped to shreds by hatred and a cruel, costly war.

There is something touching and heartbreaking in the picture of this great leader seeking comfort and encouragement under the flickering flame of a candle in the oval office from a few old worn-out news clippings.

But on the other hand, ... I get it.

Even the greatest achievements and successes are empty if you believe you are unloved and unwanted.

What about you?

I believe every one of us know something about feeling unloved and unwanted.

... feeling neglected, overlooked, or taken for granted.

This morning I want to counsel you to never allow the devil use those dark moments of feeling unwanted

... don't allow them to draw you away from the very one who desires you so much He left the glory of heaven to die on a cruel cross so that you might be His forever.

Yes, Leah was forsaken by her sister and husband **but not** by God.

The Lord saw her neglect, He heard the cries of brokenness and he visited her with comfort and blessings.

... and apparently Leah's despair only lasted for a period of time because when the next child was born she named him **Judah**, which means "praised."

What Leah did not receive from her husband and sister she found in God

... for she said I will find my rest and comfort in the Lord—"Now will I praise the Lord!"

2. Envy is a Poison

The counselors of Florence, Italy had asked Leonardo da Vinci to submit sketches for the decorations of the grand hall there.

However, one of the counselors had heard of a young and little-known artist who had also done good work, Michelangelo, and he asked him to submit sketches also.

The sketches of Leonardo were superb and in keeping with his genius ...

... but when the counselors saw the sketches submitted by Michelangelo there was a spontaneous expression of wonder and enthusiasm.

... one of the counselors was overheard to respond, "Well, Leonardo is getting old."

News of this reached Leonardo.

Eventually Leonardo's fame declined, and Michelangelo's grew and eclipsed the old mans.

It is reported that the remaining years of Leonardo's life were clouded with gloom and envy.

Envy/Jealousy ... is a resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another ... accompanied by a strong desire to possess the other's advantage.

And if you allow envy to remain, unchecked in your heart, it will poison your attitude and spirit.

Rachel's envy of Leah caused 3 things to happen.

IT DIVIDES

Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." ² Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" (Gen. 30:1-2)

Rachel is divided from her sister, and then she takes her envy out on her husband and it divides her from him.

Envy poisons your attitude towards those you are a jealous of, while at the same time negatively impacting your other relationships as well.

It wasn't Jacob or Leah's fault that Rachel didn't have children

... and Jacob apparently wasn't infertile.

... Rachel was just so consumed by the fact that her sister was ahead of her in the "having babies" game she lashed out.

- Cain envied Abel's accepted sacrifice and killed him.
- Joseph's brothers envied their father's love for Joseph so much they cast him into a pit and sold him into slavery.
- When Israel chanted, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousand" and Saul was so envious he tried to kill David on multiple occasions.
- The Princes in Babylon were envious of Daniel's prominence they schemed and tricked the king into throwing him into a lion's den.
- The Sadducees and Pharisees envied Jesus and so they killed him.

IT ENCOURAGES DISOBEDIENCE

³ She said, "Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children." ⁴ So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her. ⁵ Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. ⁶ Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son." Therefore, she named him Dan. (Gen. 30:3-6)

This is the same mistake that Abraham and Sarah made with Hagar.

... but in this case the sin is fueled by envy.

Rachel comes demanding Jacob to give her children, Jacob responds by asking her, "Am I God?"

... so, she decides that she will play God and get herself some children even if she can't bear them herself.

And, although this is disobedience to God, a child is born and she is so pleased with the result she does it again ...

Two sons: Dan and Naphtali.

You see, you can become so consumed by envy and jealousy over what someone else has that you don't ...

... that you will be willing to do anything—even destroy your character—even disobey God—even hurt yourself—to get what you desire.

Remember the Dr. Seuss Character named Grinch—He would get so angry when he saw someone having fun that he would bite himself—that's the poison of envy.

It will divide you from your closest relationships and it will press you into disobedience against God.

CAUSES YOU TO HURT OTHERS

This is the most absurd part of the entire narrative.

¹⁴ Now in the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." ¹⁵ But she said to her, "Is it a small matter for you to take my husband? And would you take my son's mandrakes also?" So Rachel said, "Therefore he may lie with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes." ¹⁶ When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, then Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he lay with her that night. (Gen. 30:14-16)

A mandrake plant has dark leaves and a carrot-like root and fruit that smells similar to an apple ... they are also called love apples.

... their roots often resemble a human figure, and the plant is believed by some to excite passion and increase the fertility of women.

Although Rachel technically has 2 sons by Bilhah, she still has no biological children of her own.

... and she was tired of waiting on God to make her fruitful so she thought some “love-apples” would do the trick.

... she says to her sister, “you can have our husband for the night in exchange for the mandrakes.”

And Leah agreed!

In fact, she makes it clear to Jacob—I’ve paid for you, and you are mine tonight.

Let me just say that 21st century did not invent the foolishness of sin—it’s been here since Adam.

But think about what has happened

... Jacob has made it clear that Rachel is the love of his life Rachel knows this ...

... it is obvious that Jacob usually stayed with Rachel.

... and yet Rachel here “pimps out her husband for the night” in order to get the mandrakes.

Can you imagine how that made Jacob feel?

Part of a man’s sense of worth comes from the happiness and appreciation that comes from his wife.

... Rachel is just selling him out.

- Envy divides
- Envy encourages disobedience
- Envy will cause you to hurt those closest to you
- Envy poisons

3. Providence and Pardon is God’s Plan

¹⁷ God gave heed to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. ¹⁸ Then Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my maid to my husband." So she named him Issachar. (Gen. 30:17-18)

All I can say is that Leah got her money’s worth.

For a root and some apply fruit she got a night with Jacob and another son.

I can just see Rachel angry storming around her tent—she can’t believe that Leah is going to have another child.

... what does this make anyway—five?

The more you try **to manipulate and move God** the more you are going to realize that God is sovereign over everything.

- Man can build complex computers, but he cannot change the mind of God.

- Man can move the mountains with great equipment, but he cannot change the immutable works of God.

... and here is why this is so important to those of us who have put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It doesn't matter how unwanted you feel—you are not unwanted by the Lord Jesus Christ ...

... will be with you, in you, and for you no matter what others may say or do.

Being unwanted by people cannot stop you from being blessed by God.

... but this lesson gets even more wonderful.

Rachel's over there conniving and conspiring trying to find some way to have a child—when all she needs to do is just stop doing and just start trusting God.

That's what you and I need to realize—

... the blessing of God are available to everyone who will turn from themselves to God

... even the Rachels of this world!

Trust me when I say this to you today—

... There is an unseen all powerful God who loves you and wants to bring you into relationship with Him

*... and the Lord's desire for you has only one motivation: **that He might receive pleasure by doing you good.***

I want you to look at what happened when Rachel's heart was changed.

²² Then God remembered Rachel, and God gave heed to her and opened her womb. ²³ So she conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach." (Gen. 30:22-23)

When Rachel finally quit trusting in herself and started trusting in God everything changed.

... God even took away her reproach.

Today you have two choices.

... You can live under the reproach and sorrow of feeling **unwanted and unappreciated**

... or you can accept the love that God has offered you.

We all know something of the **pain and poison**, but do we know of the **providence and pardon?**

Everything that has happened in your life up to this point has been God drawing you to himself so that he might FORGIVE YOU ... PARDON YOU ...

... so that you might know the freedom that comes from belonging to Christ.

What a terrible thing it must be to live your whole life without knowing the pleasure of pardon of the Lord Jesus Christ.

... (and if you don't) you can know it today ... all you have to do is come to Jesus.