

# PENTECOST 7

## Proper 10 - Year A

*This Bible study was written by Reagan Gonzalez of the Seminary of the Southwest in 2017.*

### Genesis 25:19-34

<sup>19</sup>These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, <sup>20</sup>and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. <sup>21</sup>Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife because she was barren, and the Lord granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. <sup>22</sup>The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. <sup>23</sup>And the Lord said to her,

"Two nations are in your womb,  
and two peoples born of you shall be divided;  
the one shall be stronger than the other;  
the elder shall serve the younger."

<sup>24</sup>When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. <sup>25</sup>The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle, so they named him Esau. <sup>26</sup>Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel, so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

<sup>27</sup>When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. <sup>28</sup>Isaac loved Esau because he was fond of game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

<sup>29</sup>Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. <sup>30</sup>Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!" (Therefore he was called Edom.) <sup>31</sup>Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." <sup>32</sup>Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" <sup>33</sup>Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. <sup>34</sup>Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

#### Commentary from Reagan Gonzalez

The narrator of this passage describes Jacob's success over his brother Esau, and in doing so we learn something about God. We learn that Jacob, the younger brother, even from the womb will be served by his older brother. We hear of Esau's displays of masculinity and skills from birth in a variety of trades, while we are only told that Jacob is a quiet man. As the older brother and a successful man, Esau should be the favored choice for God's future people, and yet it is Jacob whom God chooses. Jacob receives his brother's birthright, setting him on the path that will lead to his new name, Israel, and his heritage as the father of the twelve tribes. In this passage, we see a God who favors the weaker brother, an individual of lower stature, who is not supposed to be destined to accomplish great deeds. This story presents us with a God who "casts down the mighty and lifts the lowly," who stands up for the weak and leads them to acts beyond imagination.

#### Discussion Questions

I wonder who the weak and lowly are in your community. How are you and your community meeting their needs?

I wonder who you are in this story today. Do you relate more to Jacob or Esau in the present moment? Why?

## Psalm 119:105-112

- <sup>105</sup> Your word is a lantern to my feet \*  
and a light upon my path.
- <sup>106</sup> I have sworn and am determined \*  
to keep your righteous judgments.
- <sup>107</sup> I am deeply troubled; \*  
preserve my life, O Lord, according to your  
word.
- <sup>108</sup> Accept, O Lord, the willing tribute of my lips, \*  
and teach me your judgments.
- <sup>109</sup> My life is always in my hand, \*  
yet I do not forget your law.
- <sup>110</sup> The wicked have set a trap for me, \*  
but I have not strayed from your  
commandments.
- <sup>111</sup> Your decrees are my inheritance for ever; \*  
truly, they are the joy of my heart.
- <sup>112</sup> I have applied my heart to fulfill your statutes \*  
for ever and to the end.

## Discussion Questions

I wonder in what ways has Scripture been a comfort to you in times of trouble.

Do you have any portion of Scripture memorized and “applied to your heart”? If so, how did you choose it?

### Commentary from Reagan Gonzalez

Psalm 119, written after the Exile, emphasizes the importance of God’s word in living a faithful life, especially in times of need and strife. From verse 112, we hear that the word of God is not simply something to be heard or read, but something to be applied to the heart, inwardly digested and lived. The beauty of the Psalms is their ability to meet us where we are. This psalmist prays in full confidence of God’s support, all the while acknowledging the difficulty in doing so. As 21st-century readers of the Psalms, we can be comforted by the timelessness of God’s guidance. This psalm, prayed thousands of years ago to bring comfort to this people still brings comfort and hope to those who can still feel troubled and trapped.

## Romans 8:1-11

**8** Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. **3** For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, **4** so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. **5** For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. **6** To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. **7** For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed, it cannot, **8** and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

**9** But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. **10** But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. **11** If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

## Discussion Questions

I wonder how you get ready to listen to the spirit of God.

I wonder what distracts you from living in the spirit. What might keep you focused?

### Commentary from Reagan Gonzalez

The juxtaposition of flesh and spirit is repeated over and over again in this passage. It can be easy in our world to attend services on a Sunday morning and switch gears back into our secular lives as we drive out of the parking lot. However, we are called to live into the spirit of God that dwells in us. As humans we are fleshy creatures; our bodies crave food, we grieve over the loss of loved ones, and we don't have to watch news channels very long to see the weaknesses of governments and societies to protect the weak. These human parts of our lives are not to be turned off or altogether rejected, but as followers of Christ, we are called to live with a spirit of hope as well. It is this spirit, working through us, that will help us create a better world for all those who inhabit it.

## Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

**13** That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. <sup>2</sup>Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup>And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup>And as he sowed, some seeds fell on a path, and the birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup>Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup>Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup>Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup>If you have ears, hear!"

## Discussion Questions

I wonder which seed you are today.

I wonder if you have found the good soil.

### Commentary from Reagan Gonzalez

It is easy to be distracted from living a deep spiritual life. It can be easy to forget how to get ready to come close to the holy, how to open ourselves to the voice of the Good Shepherd. This parable gives imagery to the importance of hearing and understanding God. When this happens our minds can be like good soil, ready for growth and maturity. But often, we find ourselves among thorns, scorched by the sun, or a bird's snack. While the goal is to be good soil, to always understand and respond to God, it is nearly impossible to accomplish this all the time. We are not just one of these seeds, but we are all of these seeds at one time or another. Growing in faith requires practice; sometimes we find ourselves in the good soil and sometimes we find difficulty and questions, but the key is to keep practicing. God is always present and waiting to greet us, we must continually practice being good soil, knowing that even when we fall among the thorns God will be there to help us try again.

I wonder what you hope to grow into.